

The Five Incorruptible/Imperishable Crowns of Heaven

Pondering Prophecy Winter/Spring 2018

1) **The Imperishable Crown** – ([1 Corinthians 9:24-25](#))

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [disciplined] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (NKJV). All things on this earth are subject to decay and will perish. Jesus urges us to not store our treasures on earth “where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal” ([Matthew 6:19](#)). This is analogous to what Paul was saying about that wreath of leaves that was soon to turn brittle and fall apart. But not so the heavenly crown; faithful endurance wins a heavenly reward which is “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” ([1 Peter 1:3-5](#)).

2) **The Crown of Rejoicing** – ([1 Thessalonians 2:19](#)) “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” The apostle Paul tells us in [Philippians 4:4](#) to “rejoice always in the Lord” for all the bountiful blessings our gracious God has showered upon us. As Christians we have more in this life to rejoice about than anyone else. Luke tells us there is rejoicing even now in heaven ([Luke 15:7](#)). The crown of rejoicing will be our reward where “God will wipe away every tear . . . there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

3) **The Crown of Righteousness** – ([2 Timothy 4:8](#))

“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” We inherit this

crown through the righteousness of Christ which is what gives us a right to it, and without which it cannot be obtained. Because it is obtained and possessed in a righteous way, and not by force and deceit as earthly crowns sometimes are, it is an everlasting crown, promised to all who love the Lord and eagerly wait for His return. Through our enduring the discouragements, persecutions, sufferings, or even death, we know assuredly our reward is with Christ in eternity ([Philippians 3:20](#)). This crown is not for those who depend upon their own sense of righteousness or of their own works. Such an attitude breeds only arrogance and pride, not a longing, a fervent desire to be with the Lord.

4) **The Crown of Glory** – ([1 Peter 5:4](#)) “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Though Peter is addressing the elders, we must also remember that the crown will be awarded to all those who long for or love His appearing. This word “glory” is an interesting word referring to the very nature of God and His actions. It entails His great splendor and brightness. Recall Stephen who, while being stoned to death, was able to look into the heavens and see the glory of God ([Acts 7:55-56](#)). This word also means that the praise and honor we bestow to God alone is due Him because of who He is ([Isaiah 42:8](#), [48:11](#); [Galatians 1:5](#)). It also recognizes that believers are incredibly blessed to enter into the kingdom, into the very likeness of Christ Himself. For as Paul so eloquently put it, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” ([Romans 8:18 NKJV](#)).

5) **The Crown of Life** – ([Revelation 2:10](#)) “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” This crown is for all believers, but is especially dear to those who endure sufferings, who bravely confront persecution for Jesus, even to the point of death. In Scripture the word “life”

is often used to show a relationship that is right with God. It was Jesus who said, “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly” ([John 10:10](#)). Just as things such as air, food, and water are vital for our physical lives, Jesus provides us what is required for our spiritual lives. He is the One who provides “living water.” He is the “bread of life” ([John 4:10](#), [6:35](#)). We know that our earthly lives will end. But we have the amazing promise that comes only to those who come to God through Jesus: “And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life” ([1 John 2:25](#)).

Why Rewards in Heaven?

God will give rewards in heaven at the [bema](#), or the judgment seat of Christ, based on our faithfulness in service to Him ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#)). The rewards will show the reality of our sonship ([Galatians 4:7](#)) and the justice of God ([Hebrews 6:10](#)). God will give rewards in heaven in order to fulfill the law of [sowing and reaping](#) ([Galatians 6:7–9](#)) and make good on His promise that our labor in the Lord is not in vain ([1 Corinthians 15:58](#)).

One reason for the rewards in heaven is the fact that Jesus shares His reward with us. Paul said, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” ([Galatians 2:20](#)). Our lives are “hidden” with Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God ([Colossians 3:1–4](#)). We die with Him and we live with Him and we share in His joy ([Romans 6:8](#); [Matthew 25:21](#)). In heaven we will dwell with Him ([John 14:1–3](#)). Our lives are inextricably linked with Christ’s. The reward He receives is shared with all of us: “If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and [co-heirs with Christ](#), if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” ([Romans 8:17](#)).

Our rewards in heaven depend on the goodness and power of God. Through Christ’s resurrection we gain an inheritance in heaven; on earth our faith is tested and results in praise and glory and honor when Christ is revealed ([1 Peter 1:3–9](#)). The things we do in this life

are only permanent (that is, carried with us into heaven) if they are built on the foundation, which is Christ ([1 Corinthians 3:11–15](#)).

The rewards we gain in heaven are not like the rewards we earn here on earth. We tend to think in material terms—mansions, jewels, etc. But these things are only representations of the true rewards we will gain in heaven. A child who wins a spelling bee treasures the trophy he receives not for the sake of the trophy itself but for what that trophy means. Likewise, any rewards or honor we gain in heaven will be precious to us because they carry the weight and meaning of our relationship with God—and because they remind us of what He did through us on earth.

In this way, rewards in heaven glorify God and provide us with joy, peace, and wonder as we consider God’s work in us and through us. The closer we were to God during this life, the more centered on Him and aware of Him, the more dependent on Him, the more desperate for His mercy, the more there will be to celebrate. We are like characters in a story who suffer doubt, loss, and fear, wondering if we will ever really have our heart’s desire. When the happy ending comes and desire is fulfilled, there comes a completion. The story would not be satisfying without that completion. Rewards in heaven are the completion of our earthly story, and those rewards will be eternally satisfying ([Psalm 16:11](#)).

We are told to store up treasures in heaven!

Jesus told us to “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” ([Matthew 6:20](#)). He linked this command to the desire of our hearts: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” ([Matthew 6:21](#); see also verses 10–20).

The Lord will be faithful to reward us for the service we give Him ([Hebrews 6:10](#)). Our ministries may differ, but the Lord we serve is the same. “The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor” ([1 Corinthians 3:8](#)).