**Learn in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**What does the Bible say about the future?**

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” ([1 Corinthians 2:9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co2.9))

*Our society is obsessed with the future. Movies often feature a dystopian future where humankind is fighting machines or each other. Countless articles and podcasts attempt to predict where the economy is headed or which technological advances will change our life. Sports journalists are paid to predict the outcome of games. Predictions about the presidential election fill headlines every four years. Many people read and dissect their horoscopes—all in an effort to know the future.*

*But what does the Bible say about the future? While it was written thousands of years ago and much of its contents has already taken place, we do get a glimpse of the future in the Bible. We know there is life beyond this life. We know the brokenness and pain in this world will not last forever. We know God will make all things new, and He will right every wrong. In renowned author J.R.R. Tolkien’s book,* The Return of the King*, Samwise Gamgee asked Gandalf, “Is everything sad going to come untrue?” The Bible answers that question with a resounding* yes!

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| First time leading Learn for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**A TV judge, music competition judge, or justice of the government’s highest court: Which of these judge jobs would you most want to have and why? |

When you think of a judge, what image comes to mind? Do you think of someone in a black robe holding a gavel on an elevated seat in the front and center of a courtroom? Each of those items communicates something important about what it means to be a judge and what it means to be judged. The black robe reminds us of the seriousness of the work of a judge—justice, lives, and futures are at stake. The work of a judge has impact—when his or her gavel strikes the sound block, it resonates and means something decisive. And the seated position of the judge communicates the authority of the work of a judge—his or her word is final.

The Bible teaches us that in the future, Jesus will judge all people. He will judge justly, His judgments will have eternal impact, and His word will be final. Even the absolute best human judges have limitations. They cannot see all, know all, or be perfect in their judgments. Jesus has none of those limitations. He is omnipresent and omniscient. That means He sees all and knows all. And some day He will judge everyone.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your response to this question: Have you been a part of a court trial in a way that makes the concept of Jesus as final judge especially meaningful? How so?



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| **QUESTION**Have you been a part of a court trial in a way that makes the concept of Jesus as final judge especially meaningful? How so? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

One of Jesus’ favorite teaching methods was telling parables. A parable is a short story intended to communicate a spiritual truth, often about the nature of the kingdom of God. Many of Jesus’ parables could be difficult to understand. Usually He would give explanation; sometimes He didn’t need to.

In [Luke 16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk16), we find one of His most clear and compelling parables. The vivid imagery and the emotional storyline make this story memorable and impactful. While the details may raise some questions, the overall messages are strikingly clear: Consequences exist for each of our choices, an eternity is awaiting us, and Jesus is Lord over it all.

**Jesus Sees the Choices We Make in This Life**

Read [Luke 16:19–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk16.19-23).

This story is about two men. Their lives were very different—one seemingly had everything and one had nothing. They lived right next to each other, but their life experiences were miles apart. The listeners may have expected the quality of their earthly life to continue into eternity, but the parable flips the script here. Through this parable, Jesus is teaching us something very important about the choices we make here and now. He sees our choices in this life, and they determine what happens in our next life.

Jesus is not teaching us that all rich people are wicked or that all people stuck in poverty are righteous. The assumption in this parable is the rich man built his identity upon his riches while Lazarus placed his hope in God. This is the only one of all Jesus’ parables in which a character is mentioned by name—Lazarus. It’s possible that the name given to the poor man was to provide status and dignity to someone who had neither in the eyes of many. It also later revealed the rich man’s personal knowledge of Lazarus as he called him by name in the next passage we’ll read.

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| **QUESTION**How does this passage contrast the values of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world? |

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| **QUESTION**What does this story suggest is dangerous about building our identity on wealth and possessions? |

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| **QUESTION**Which of these two men do you most identify with and why? |

**We’re Accountable for the Choices We Make in This Life**

Read [Luke 16:24–26](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk16.24-26).

Jesus described a physical divide in this afterlife scenario to teach about two drastically different eternal destinations. During his lifetime, the rich man barely knew need and would have gladly distanced himself from someone like Lazarus. Now he is desperately in need of the simplest of provisions—a drop of water—and he wants Lazarus near him.

Father Abraham explained the connection between their temporary life and their eternal life. Again, the point is not that suffering on earth automatically means comfort in heaven or vice versa. Jesus also wasn’t teaching that access to eternity with God is earned through works. The main truth is that the choices we make now affect our eternity. Walking down a road of greed leads away from God. But walking in a lifetime of humility points us toward an eternity with our Lord. And once this life is over, it will be too late to change paths or make our case before God.

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| **QUESTION**How does this portion of the story challenge and confront you? |

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| **QUESTION**How does this portion of the story encourage you and give you hope? |

**Jesus Is Our Only Hope for This Life and the Next**

Read [Luke 16:27–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk16.27-31).

The story doesn’t seem to end very hopefully, but it does point us to our only hope. The rich man is sure his brothers will change their life if they are scared by a man returning from the dead to tell them about eternal torment. But the only truth that changes the human heart—and our only hope before the perfect Judge—is God’s truth. And we can experience that personally through accepting the good news about Jesus. The Scriptures were given to us to reveal our need for Jesus. Even the Old Testament serves that greater purpose ([Luke 24:27](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk24.27)). The story ends with a nod to what Jesus came to do—live in our place, die in our place, and rise from the dead for us. Jesus is our only hope for this life and the next!

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| **QUESTION**How has the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus to you recently through the Bible? |

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| **QUESTION**How can the Bible help you share the eternal hope of Jesus with others? |

Read [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co5.10).

Years after Jesus told this story, the apostle Paul taught the church at Corinth that none of us will escape judgment. Our hope on that day is that the deeds we did are in line with a heart that has been transformed by the gospel. We do not save ourself through our good deeds, but our good deeds can reveal the genuineness of our salvation. We must determine to honor our Judge, Jesus, by living worthy of the salvation He has provided.

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| **QUESTION**What is the connection between how we live and what we love? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *The name of the beggar, Lazarus, was a common Greek form of the Hebrew name Eleazar, meaning “God has helped me.” Jesus’ use of the beggar’s name, while not including a name of “the rich man,” was an indicator of his Hebrew-speaking audience. Although the man was a beggar, he relied on God the Father to help him fulfill his daily needs, unlike the nameless rich man.* |

**Reflect**

**Jesus Will Judge All People**

One of the central questions of the Christian faith is “How can God be both the just and the justifier?” In other words: How can God judge us rightly and fairly, but not condemn us? To resolve that tension, we must look to the Cross where the justice of God and mercy of God collided. Jesus took the justice we deserved, and we received the mercy Jesus deserved.

One theologian said it this way, “For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be.”

Jesus is a righteous judge; none will escape His judgment. He sees all, knows all, and will hold every human being responsible for their every action, word, and thought. Our only hope is that the Judge first became the guilty defendant—He paid the price for our crime! And now that same Judge is our faithful Advocate—He speaks for us ([Romans 8:34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro8.34))!

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**What do the recent choices you have made reveal about who or what you love most? |

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| **QUESTION**How can reflecting on eternity shape the way you live here and now? |

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| **QUESTION**What hope will you have when you stand before Jesus, the righteous Judge? |

**Activate**

Many people like the idea of Jesus as a good teacher, kind man, or great example. But Jesus as Judge is hard to swallow. People don’t want to be judged. We want to lead our own life and not have to answer for the choices we make. But the Bible teaches us about a righteous Creator to whom we are all accountable. We have been bought with a price—we are not our own ([1 Corinthians 6:19–20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co6.19-20)). This is a truth we must be willing to share.

**Challenge**

Have a conversation with someone who likes the idea of Jesus but would not be open to being accountable to Him. Ask that person if knowing about Jesus has changed their life. Then share with them how knowing Jesus (not just *about* Him) has changed your life. Look for an opportunity to share how the teachings of Jesus have both placed demands on your life and freed you to live.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week. |

Before next time, continue to spend time in God’s Word with the personal devotions.

**What We Believe**

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| **Official Doctrine**There will be a Last Judgment in which the wicked dead—those who have died without accepting Christ’s salvation—will be raised and judged according to the way they lived. Anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life (the recorded list of people who received Christ’s forgiveness), together with the devil and his angels, the beast, and the false prophet, will be sent to everlasting punishment in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (sulfur), which is the second death ([Matthew 25:46](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.46); [Mark 9:43–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk9.43-48); [Revelation 19:20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re19.20); [20:11–15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re20.11-15); [21:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re21.8)).**The Significance of This Doctrine**God is a God of love. But He is also a just God. He cannot allow sin and wickedness to go unpunished. One false teaching suggests that all people, whether righteous or wicked, will eventually be saved. But this is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. This doctrine is important because it reminds all humans that the wages of sin is death ([Romans 6:23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro6.23)), that there is a judgment of everlasting punishment awaiting the devil, his cohorts, and all people who have not accepted God’s gracious provision of salvation. |

**Learn on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: Jesus Will Judge All People**

Read [Luke 16:19–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk16.19-31).

Look back over Learn in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about the truth that Jesus will judge all people? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: Jesus’ Judgment Is Fair and Final**

Read [John 5:19–30](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn5.19-30).

There are some important truths we can learn from this passage about Jesus, the just Judge. We learn that the Son and the Father coordinate together in everything they do—even judgment. We learn that Jesus has the authority to judge because He is divine, and we learn that Jesus’ judgment is just. We don’t have to worry that Jesus will get it wrong!

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| **QUESTION**What about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son is most remarkable to you? |

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| **QUESTION**How does it help you to know that Jesus has authority to judge? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some situations that you need to give to Jesus, trusting that He is a just judge? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: Jesus’ Judgment Will Be Severe for the Unrepentant**

Read [Mark 9:42–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk9.42-48).

This is a jarring passage filled with intentionally shocking imagery. Jesus was not saying that we should maim ourself or even that doing so would solve our sin problem. He was saying that sin is a heart issue more than it is a hand, foot, or eye issue! Jesus was using extreme language to make a very important point: We must deal with our sin here and now or else His judgment will be much worse than anything we can imagine. As crazy as it is to give up an eye in order to avoid sin, it’s a trade that unrepentant sinners would gladly make when they reach the other side of eternity. This is a sobering warning for us. Repentance must be a regular part of a believer’s life.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think Jesus’ main point is in this passage? |

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| **QUESTION**How does Jesus use strong language to emphasize the danger of sin? |

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| **QUESTION**How can you make it a regular practice to assess your life for anything you need to change or turn from? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: Jesus Has Been Appointed by God to Judge**

Read [Acts 17:22–34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.22-34).

In this passage, Paul was preaching the gospel to members of a highly secular society that tolerated all kinds of beliefs, but most didn’t know the true God. Sound familiar? He ended his message with a warning: There is a Judge and there is a Judgment Day. Paul knew that Jesus’ judgment will be just. And according to verse [31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.31), Jesus has been appointed this judge by God the Father. He has the authority to judge, and He proved His authority by rising from the dead.

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| **QUESTION**What do you notice about how Paul attempts to connect with this audience? |

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| **QUESTION**In verses [29–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.29-31), what warnings does Paul give to the Athenians? |

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| **QUESTION**Based on this passage, what does His resurrection from the dead prove about Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: Jesus Will Judge All at the End of Time**

Read [Revelation 20:11–15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re20.11-15).

This passage reveals the judgment of all, both the great and the small. No one escapes judgment. Books containing a list of our deeds, good and bad, are part of this judgment. Nothing and no one can escape the all-seeing, all-knowing Judge. In this scary scene, there is an amazing glimpse of hope—the Book of Life. If your name is written in the Book of Life, you are safe from the second death.

We know from [Revelation 3:5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re3.5) that the Book of Life contains the names of those clothed in white garments. These white garments represent the righteousness of Jesus. The way you and I are made righteous is by placing our trust and hope in Him. Our names are secure in the Book of Life because of Jesus!

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| **QUESTION**What is frightening about the thought of books containing all your deeds? |

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| **QUESTION**What is encouraging about the thought of your name being in the Book of Life? |

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| **QUESTION**What did Jesus do to secure our name in the Book of Life? |