
NT 14 – Crowns and Rewards – Part 2

We are going to continue our mini-series within a series as we talk about crowns and rewards. I did session one on crowns and rewards introducing it. I'm going to continue with some additional introductory comments before looking specifically at the five crowns in detail as they show up in the epistles.

Here is a list of the five crowns with their scripture references:

The incorruptible crown	1 Corinthians 9:25
The crown of boasting or rejoicing	1 Thessalonians 2:19
The crown of righteousness	2 Timothy 4:8
The crown of life	James 1:12
The crown of glory	1 Peter 5:4

So when I approach this, there are a number of questions I wanted to answer.

Why did God use crowns?

Why are there five?

Is there consistency amongst the five?

What message is God seeking to communicate with these crowns as rewards for disciples, for believers?

What details do we have in the scripture about what we need to do in order to receive these crowns?

We really want to be careful about what's **not** rewarded because we can dedicate our time and our life to things which we think God wants us to do and we think will be rewarded but really are not according to the scripture. We really do need to dive into the scripture to find out exactly what it is that God wants. Remember what Paul says,

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. **25** Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **26** So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. **27** But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

I don't want to run aimlessly. I want to know what my goal is and I want to know specifically what it is that I need to do in order to receive my rewards. I don't want to be DQ'd.

So it behooves us to really study this. I was thinking again this morning about the importance of study. And as I've looked at this issue and the different comments that commentators make, I see that it's all over the ballpark. We want to be clear because God is clear about what we need to do in order to receive these rewards.

This is not really complicated and it's not really a mystery and it's not really a big puzzle. When we look at it, it becomes very simple and clear. There is an assignment given by God. We are commissioned in one sense, as I said last time, it is like a job description. We're given tasks and responsibilities and objectives and goals as disciples. And then there is the corresponding and accompanying rewards and the acknowledgement from God that we have accomplished that. There's the recognition that we have been successful at doing what God has assigned us to do. That's really what the crowns are.

Cumulatively, they are the recognition, the acknowledgement that we've been successful at being disciples.

Just for example, the crowns talk about being rewarded for winning others and teaching them the Word. That's the crown of boasting, the crown of rejoicing. Well, it's simply carrying out and doing what God has commanded us to do as disciples.

Matthew 28:19

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

When you do that, you are rewarded with the crown of boasting or the **crown of rejoicing**.

James talks about going through trials and resisting temptations, and you are given the **crown of life** for doing what we're supposed to be doing.

We're supposed to be humble and obedient and submit to what God wants us to do. And for that we get the **crown of glory**. As it says in Peter, in order to do all this, we need to exercise self-control and be disciplined.

From I Corinthians 9 it says as we exercise self-control in all things we get an **incorruptible crown**, an imperishable crown that lasts forever, forever.

And then if I persevere and go all the way to the end, Paul says in writing to Timothy, I'll get the **crown of righteousness**.

So, it's really very simple. If I were to really simplify this, I would say that crowns are available or given to the disciple. And you think, well, that's really simple. Okay, Michael, I'm a disciple, I'm a follower of Christ, so I'm going to get all these crowns. But I would say, wait a minute, we need to clearly define disciple from the scriptures. The gospels and the epistles really define what a disciple is.

As Christ stated, a disciple is to forsake all and follow me; deny yourself and follow me; pick up your cross and follow me; he who saves his life shall lose it. I've covered that so many times. But that is what Christ says about being a disciple. Then the epistles flesh that out and give us the details on what it means to be a disciple and how to be transformed to be one.

Thesis: The Crowns Are Rewarded To The Disciple

My thesis really on this is very simply:

The crowns are awarded to the disciple.

We are going to study the Word together to show how this plays out.

My expanded thesis which we will prove from the Word of God is:

The crowns cumulatively represent the fullness of the rewards available to the disciple as outlined by Christ and then detailed by the commands inherent in the reflexives of the New Testament.

And of course we can expand on that even further:

The five crowns in the epistles, as discussed by Paul and James and John and Peter, taken together as a whole, represent and paint a vivid picture of the fullness of the rewards available to the genuine Christlike disciple, the real disciple, as outlined and modeled by Christ himself in the Gospels, and then detailed, explained, fleshed out in the epistles and modeled in the Book of Acts.

These commands of what it is to be a true disciple are inherent in the reflexives in the New Testament. So that is where we're going. When you think about painting a picture, the Gospels paint a picture of the entire life of Christ. They need to be read cumulatively. So, you see all of his attributes and characteristics collectively, because if you read selectively and look at and pick out individual parts of the gospels, you see sometimes he's angry and sometimes he's really merciful and compassionate, and sometimes he's in your face as with the scribes and Pharisees, and other times he's expressing gentleness and mercy.

Why is that? You need the totality of the big picture of who Christ was. As Hebrews 1:3 says, he was the exact representation and manifestation of the attributes of God.

Hebrews 1:3

3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the Word of his power.

So we need that big picture of Christ as painted in the gospels. Then the epistles paint a picture of what the disciple looks like and how to be transformed in order to be one. Then the Book of Acts paints a picture of what a church should be, could be, when people are living the mystery, the secret, when they are individually living according to Romans and being transformed, and then collectively as a church living out Ephesians.

So, it's the big picture. Do you see why we need to study? We need to know Christ and the gospels. We need to know what the epistles teach on how to be transformed. We need to know the Book of Acts and how they did it so we can learn to do it. The rewards, the crowns, also paint a picture of what it means to be a disciple because of what we'll be rewarded for. Why is that so important? We are going to have a reward status for ALL of eternity based on what we do in this short life.

You know, if you have a credit card and you get points for certain things or you get rewards and you want to check online. What's my reward status? Where do I stand right now? How many points do I have before a free toaster oven or free trip or free hotel night? What is my reward status? That is a trite example!

God paints a picture for us of our **reward status for eternity**. How important is this that we know now what it is that we need to do in order to be given the fullness of the rewards that are available? And that's what the crowns do. That's what they talk about as we look into it. And

then cumulatively, we get the picture of really what a disciple is supposed to look like and how we can actually do that.

But you know, we already know the end, folks, don't we? We already know what the end of this book, the end of this story, the end of this movie looks like!

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose

We as believers are called according to his purpose. What is that purpose?

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also **glorified**.

That's the end. That we will be glorified with Christ in the eternal kingdom. Hence one of the rewards stated in I Peter 5, which happens to be the last one, is the **crown of glory**.

We started this series in the New Testament from John 12 about Christ saying he's going to be glorified but glorified in his death! We are going to get the fullness of the rewards and the fullness of the glory that is available to us by also dying to self, dying to the flesh, dying to the world, and living according to the new nature.

We know from I John 3 that we're going to be like him, we're going to see him as he is.

I John 3:2,3

2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

So that's where it's going. And now here is the kicker, we get rewarded for living like that! Even though we are in the midst of this cesspool of sin and iniquity called the world, run by the God of this age and the course of this age is run by the devil, we get to stick our thumb in his eyes and live out the purpose of ages. As we do, the angels in heaven rejoice and say, see, devils, see, it's actually possible to live out a Christlike life even in the midst of your sin polluted and corrupt world.

God is glorified now by our doing that. We will be glorified for eternity by doing it. It takes doing what Christ did, which is that he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. As we humble ourselves and are obedient to the Word and live out true discipleship, then we too will be glorified for eternity.

I don't know about you, but I know that I want for me and for you the fullness of the rewards that are available. That's the purpose of our covering "A" these crowns, and then "B", the reflexives! The commands in the reflexives tell us what to do in order to get the fullness of the rewards.

We have read and we will continue to read I Corinthians 1:3 that, yeah, the believers are going to survive the fire, but we don't want to stand there at the [bēma](#) with everything else being burned up and with nothing to show for what we've done during our lives.

We absolutely need to know from the Word what it is that we're supposed to be doing!

Why does God use crowns to communicate this?

Crowns are the reward, meaning we are going to forego something now in this life to be rewarded later. I've said it so many times, but we need to repeat this because it's just the truth. Throughout the Word, every single individual is looking forward to eternity; to Eden restored in the Book of Revelation; or Millennial Kingdom and then the Eternal Kingdom.

Why? Because that's where we're headed. That's where we're going. Since the fall of man in Genesis 3:15, God has wanted to restore that. So to get the fullness of the rewards that are available for eternity, God tells us what we need to do. Way back in the summer, I taught about Eden, and Eden Prairie, illustrated that everybody wants to get back to Eden now. Everybody is focusing on making their life so wonderful now.

Well, God says this is just a drop in the bucket. This is just a short period of time. Focus on Eden in the future. People today have their bucket list of all these things they want to do and take in and accomplish and experience in this life. They want to get glory in this life, and recognition and joy and enjoyment for goodness sakes.

If we believe the Word, then we know that what's coming is for eternity. And it's so far greater. The Bible talks about our inheritance. We want to get the full inheritance. We don't want to be like Esau who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. He was hungry, right then. He wanted to eat right then.

Now! I want my Big Mac now. Have it your way now. And he did, and he lost it. And Jacob was given the inheritance. So I believe that's why God uses crowns to communicate this.

The Hope is a Huge Topic

Romans 5:2

[2](#) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. That's what we rejoice in. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. That is what's coming.

Ephesians 1:18

[18](#) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints

The prayer is in order that you may know the hope of his calling. The hope!

Colossians 1:27

[27](#) To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We have the down payment. We have the guarantee of our inheritance with the spirit of God within us, so we know we can manifest that spirit and have the fruit of the spirit in our lives.

Thessalonians 2:19

19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

What is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of God at his coming? We will cover this in depth.

I Timothy 1:1

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

O gosh, there are so many verses.

I Timothy 4:10

10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

We have put our hope in the living God. I encourage you to read all of these on your own, individually and in the context first.

I Peter 1:13

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Set your hope fully on the grace to be given when Christ returns. We know what it is to be fully committed to somebody and to something, and that's what we should be committed to: the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I've read one commentator who said that the crowns are sort of like "extra credit." We're saved, so you do some more things and receive "extra credit." I fundamentally disagree with that, because I believe the crowns are awarded for being a true disciple in accordance with what our job description is. We will be commended and rewarded for doing what we're supposed to be doing. We do that because we know that God has promised us the rewards.

God's Record of Fulfilling His Promises

Think about God's track record in fulfilling promises. In the Old Testament, they were promised the promised land for Old Testament Israel, and they got it. Our "promised land" right now is in Christ. Are we able to perform manifestations of the Holy Spirit and thereby manifest fruit of the Spirit? We are in Christ and Christ is in us; we are citizens of the kingdom now. Yes, the kingdom of God is within you.

The Millennial Kingdom is promised. The new heaven and new earth are promised. Can we totally rely on that? The answer is yes, the eternal kingdom is promised. And if you look back throughout all of the scriptures, which we know not only Christ grew up on, but Paul was well schooled in them as well; we always see God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises.

Joshua 23:10

10 One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you.

Joshua 23:14

14 “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you.

Joshua says, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed. Of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you, all have come to pass for you. Not one of them has failed. Not ONE of them has failed. That is what we can rely on throughout all of the scriptures and throughout all of history!

God promises. Man believes and is faithful. God delivers.

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Be very careful then to love the Lord your God, because it was so clear with blessings and cursings in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. How often did this play out in the entire Old Testament? Sometimes you feel like saying, duh, what’s the matter with you folks? It’s written right there. You adhere to it, you’re blessed. You don’t, you get the consequences. When are we going to ever learn?

The Ezekiel “65”

Consider Ezekiel. I call it the “Ezekiel 65”. God warned them of the consequences 65 times by saying “and then you **will know** that I am the Lord”. Then you’ll know that I’m the Lord and that the Word is true.

Speaking of Ezekiel, let’s go to chapter twelve.

Ezekiel 12:25

25 For I am the Lord; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord God.”

I’m the Lord. I will speak the Word that I will speak not what anyone says I’m supposed to speak or not what anyone says. But I’m going to speak what I will speak, and it will be performed.

Christ Learned His Identity from the Old Testament

Goodness gracious. Now Christ read this. And Christ learned his identity from the Old Testament. He learned who he was and what he was supposed to do, and then what he was promised in terms of rewards. And then what did he do?

He believed. He obeyed. He carried it out even though it was tough. And in the garden of Gethsemane, he said, is there any other way? But no, he endured.

He was obedient unto death. He humbled himself. And then how was he rewarded? He was seated at the right hand of God, he was given a name above all names, he became heir of everything that God is, everything that God has, etcetera.

We are joint heirs with Christ! What should we spending our time doing?

Jeremiah 1:12

12 Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.”

Nehemiah 9:8

8 You found his heart faithful before you and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.

So we read in Joshua, written around 1514 BC, saying, all the promises come to pass.

We have read in Jeremiah around 570 BC, saying, all the promises come to pass.

And now we have Nehemiah after the captivity, in Nehemiah 9:8, saying, you have found his heart faithful before you and made with him the covenant to give his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite.

And you have kept your promises, for you are righteous, because **that is who God is, and he keeps his promises.**

The End Times vs Our Role Here and Now

So when we think about the rewards and the crowns, we say, okay, I am going to get on board, and I’m going to get busy doing what God wants me to do. We will do an examination of the verses regarding the crowns, in their context, and it will become crystal clear what it is that a disciple is supposed to be doing.

It’s our human nature. Sometimes we want to know about end times and when the end is going to come, and “are we there yet”? There are many things which the Word says are going to happen yet it doesn’t give us a lot of detail on them.

We have detail on the Tribulation, etcetera, but then we look at something like crowns, and we say, well, what exactly is a crown? And new bodies? What exactly is my new body going to be like? And what’s eternity going to be like? And what’s the Millennial Kingdom going to be like? We have information from the Word, but we don’t have the details spelled out in a crystal clear fashion.

What we do have that is crystal clear is what we’re supposed to be doing now! There’s no question about how we’re supposed to be doing what’s important to God now. There is no question about how we please God now! **There is no question about what we are to do in this life in order to get those crowns for all of eternity.**

As we look at them, we will see that it’s consistent that:

We’re supposed to be holy.

We’re supposed to be godly.

We're supposed to be blameless, sanctified, set apart from the world.

We're supposed to be purified, clean, holy.

We're supposed to be living epistles.

We're supposed to have the Word in our heart.

We're supposed to be winning others to Christ.

We're supposed to exercise self-control, self-discipline.

We're supposed to manifest fruit of the spirit.

We're supposed to be Christlike.

We need to renew our minds, in order to be transformed.

Those things are all crystal clear!

And everybody in the world today wants to know when is the second coming?

What's happening in the Middle East?

What's Russia doing?

What's Ukraine doing?

What's Iran doing?

What's Iraq doing?

Is this really the end?

When, regardless of when the end comes, when the end does come we will all appear before the [béma](#), the judgment seat of Christ, and then we will be rewarded ONLY for having done the things commanded. So those are the things we should be focused on.

Again, very simply, Christ said, a disciple is, a disciple does, and the disciple will be rewarded. The epistles then flesh that out. What do we do in order to be Christlike?

You may say, well, that's impossible. But no, it's not! We had Pentecost. We have an explanation of what happened with the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and what happened on Pentecost. We know what our new identity is. We know how to take advantage of that gift of holy spirit which is now in us and working within us to help conform us into the image of his son now. We know how we can be transformed to be Christlike. These details about the rewards will motivate us and keep us going. This insight will show us how this genuine discipleship is going to impact our personal eternity.

The rewards paint the picture of that!

We endeavor to rightly divide the Word because we want to be sure and be right about what God has communicated to us. Why? Because God's Word can't be broken. We want to be sure about what it actually says. So, we're living as He has commanded us to live.

You remember Adam and Eve got in trouble because they added a word, changed a word deleted a word from what God actually said, and they fell.

We know all the way back in Deuteronomy before the Children of Israel went into the promised land, God said, via Moses, you don't add to it, you don't take away from it.

Deuteronomy 4:2

2 You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

Deuteronomy 12:32

32^b “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

God reiterates it. It’s the Word, it’s true, it is written.

And then all the way in the end of the book, we have Revelation 22.

Revelation 22:18,19

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, **19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

It says, you don’t add to it, you don’t take away from it. Could it be any clearer? What is Christ’s response to the devil when he’s tempted three, four times.

It is written.

It is written.

It is written.

Take a hike, bud. I’m standing on “It is written” because God fulfills his promises. So be gone.

We can do the same thing. We study so we’re sure about what it says.

2 Timothy 2:15 KJV

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Rightly dividing the Word of truth and rightly dividing isn’t dissecting. Rightly dividing is showing how it fits together with the entire Word, the context, what it really means, so we know what it is that we can be doing.

I think oftentimes of the Book of Acts, they didn’t have the scriptures, the New Testament, to sit down and study, but they listened to the Word. They believed it, they heard it, they saw it modeled, and they lived it, and there were signs, miracles and wonders following them because of their belief.

And yet we get so distracted about so many different things. I thought about the Word and understanding the context and why we’re going to go into the context of each one of these crowns.

Here is an example:

This morning, Kathy was in her office finishing her sermon. I checked in and asked, “how are you doing in there?” She said, well, I’m just now printing the **draft** of my sermon, and I just let the dog outside and it’s cold outside, so there is a breeze coming in.

And I said, well, you’re printing the draft. I said, good, because there’s a **draft** coming in through the back door. And I said, once you finish your sermon, we’ll go down to the local pub and we can have a **draft**.

And I thought there, in two minutes, we have three usages of the same Word, “draft.” In order to understand what draft means, we need the context of each situation. So I will draft a response for you in just a minute.

As we look at crowns in God’s Word, We’re going to look at the context of each of the five sections, put them all together, and then again, I believe my thesis will be proven true:

The crowns cumulatively represent the fullness of the rewards available to the disciple as outlined by Christ and then detailed by the commands inherent in the reflexives of the epistles.

That is where we’ll be going. That is why we study, because we want to know. It says that God doesn’t want us to be ignorant, he wants us to know what the truth is so we can live it out.

I’m thinking right now again that I am grateful to those few people who said to me, Michael, you said you were going to do rewards. And they held my feet to the fire and look at the fruit that has resulted from somebody saying, hey, we need to do this!

We’re going to study it. I encourage you to consider it deeply. I do want feedback.

You’ll have ideas and thoughts about the Word, about the context, about the life of Christ, about the Book of Acts, about them living it out, about rewards, about eternity. I always want to hear from you.

So, I think I’m going to wrap up this session because with the next we’ll get into the specifics and again we will see the beauty, the greatness, the magnificence of the Word, how it fits together, how it paints a clear picture of how it is that we can live as ambassadors, as disciples.

Just think of that! Think of all the different descriptors God uses in order to give us a clear picture of what a disciple is, what a Christlike person is: an ambassador, a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, all to make it live for us so we can understand how to live.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the greatness of your Word, for your love for us, for you communicating the truth to us so we can know clearly what it is to be a disciple of Christ and to be a living epistle in this day and time, to be an example.

And regardless of what the world is doing, what the world thinks, what other people think, think of us, what religion’s doing. We can be lights in the world and we can shine as examples of what Christ is supposed to be like, both individually and as a group of believers standing together.

We give you the glory and praise and thank you for your grace, mercy and peace in each one of our lives. And I pray for each individual listening to this, that they can be blessed by it. So that you work within their hearts, so that you enlighten their understanding.

We can know the hope of the calling. We can know the inheritance that lies before us. And that we want to maximize what we do in this life. So we maximize our reward status for eternity.

We give you the glory and praise. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.