

The King of Two Crowns: The Crown of Victory

Ephesians 4:8; 2 Timothy 4:8; Jams 1:12; 1 Corinthians 9:25

MPS Jesus wore a crown of thorns to reward all who believe in Him with His crown of victory.

OBJ Every person should believe in Jesus because of three rewards of the crown He gives.

INTRO “To the victor go the spoils” is a phrase coined by the American senator, William L. Marcy from New York, in 1832. Marcy was defending the spoils system, in which victorious politicians award appointments and jobs to their friends and supporters. The award of spoils, though of a far better and greater kind, is exactly what we celebrate on Easter.

Resurrection means that one must first look back to understand and apply, then look forward to stay focused eternity.

Luke’s gospel account of our Lord’s resurrection model’s this for us.

⁵And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” ⁶He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Luke 24:5-9

What a striking question, and on such a mournful morning! The reality of the empty tomb pressed them to “look back”, to remember what He had said and all that had occurred. Then, in recounting his words, they “look forward” to all that it meant for eternity, and finally what it means for their lives now.

Jesus’ resurrection stands unmatched in every way! In historical significance, this event divides all of history. In terms of anthropology and the understanding of mankind, there’s no limit to the questions of study for this kind of person. (Questions the Bible answers!) In medical terms, can you imagine the fame of the physician who heals from death! The impact is unlimited, but in no area more so than the essence of the resurrection as revealed in the Bible. Jesus’ resurrection is His great victory over sin, Satan, death, hell, and the grave. First Corinthians 15 records Paul’s extensive explanation for the impact of the resurrection, which follows this basic pattern of “look back, look at what it means, and look forward” to eternity. **Jesus’ resurrection changes everything, past, present and the future.**

We begin by looking back. This is how we began this two-part series. We “looked back” on Good Friday at Jesus’ crown of thorns to understand what that crown meant and why it mattered. We remembered that His crown of thorns was one of shame, guilt, and condemnation, where he died on the cross to atone for sin. It was not His sin, for He was sinless and perfect. But he was “made to be sin” to accomplish the work the Father sent Him to do. (2 Corinthians 5:21) **Jesus willingly chose to wear the crown of thorns and die on the cross for the sins of people.**

We remember how Jesus accomplished what he did for us in His death. Ephesians 4 records,

“Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” ⁹(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) Ephesians 4:8-10

Scholars debate whether this means that Jesus descended into Hades or is this a reference to the incarnation. Early church leaders believed this referred to Hades¹, while later scholarship said only to His incarnation. But today there is a move back toward the historical position. What we can confidently state is that Jesus willingly walked in to Satan’s domain and defeated Him. He laid his life into Satan’s hands in death, but he could not hold him. He locked himself in Satan’s abode, the grave, but it could not contain Him. Regardless of where exactly they met, Jesus defeated Satan once for all so that Paul could boast, *“Death is swallowed up in victory.”* (1 Corinthians 15:54d)

¹ Peter Thomas O’Brien, [The Letter to the Ephesians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 294. O’Brein states, “The early fathers associated Ephesians 4:9 with 1 Peter 3:19 (‘he went and preached to the spirits in prison’), which they interpreted as Christ’s ‘harrowing of hell’. But there is no obvious reference to Hades or hell here in Ephesians.”



Finally, we consider what this means for our life to apply it. Jesus descended, to accomplish His victory that He might ascend. But when Jesus ascends, he doesn't collect all the spoils to Himself. Look what this King did instead, *"He gave gifts to men."* (Eph4:8) Jesus distributes His spoils to His people. Paul rejoices in this when he states, *"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:57) **Jesus won for us to give His victory to us.**

TRANS Jesus flips the idea of a victor's spoil upside down. He is the King who doesn't collect the spoils for the royal treasury but gives the spoils of His victory to His people. This is what I want us to see as we look at Jesus' second crowns.

Jesus wore a crown of thorns to reward all who believe in Him with a His crown of victory.

ILLUS Crown in the New Testament

In the New Testament time, "crown" referred to "a laurel wreath"² worn at banquets, given to victors in athletic competition, and for civic or military honor. Crown is a metaphor that indicates "rule or royalty, glory or honor".³ A crown identifies a King, who represents a kingdom. Some become king by being chosen, and some are chosen King after victory. **Jesus was chosen King by birthright and enthroned by victory; He is crowned as King of the Kingdom of God.**

Several New Testament authors use "Crown as a metaphor to represent the reward we receive from King Jesus. On Resurrection Sunday, we remember the crown of thorns Jesus wore to win His crown that demonstrated His kingdom as supreme above all others. And it is this crown he gives to those who believe in Him as a reward of His Kingdom.

OBJ THREE Rewards of Jesus' crown of victory.

1. Crown of Righteousness

Paul, now old and near the end of his ministry, writes to a young Timothy. He charges Him to remain steadfast in his ministry or preaching the Word. He concludes by recognizing that his own ministry and life are nearing the end. But he does so with rejoicing because he knows what awaits him. He says,

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8

Paul looks forward to His great reward that will be given to Him by the Lord Jesus, his crown of righteousness. This crown is not a recognition of Paul's righteousness, but of Jesus' righteousness given to all who by faith believe in Him. This is the essence of salvation in Jesus Christ, that by faith we are made righteous in Him because His righteousness is imputed to us. Jesus' righteousness placed on us sets us free from trying to earn God's love, from trying to accomplish our own washing of sin and wrongdoing, and from trying to achieve something we can never attain to, so we can live and walk in the light of His righteousness and truth. When you believe in Jesus to repent of your sin, He forgives you by the work of His first crown of thorns to bestow on you His crown of righteousness. There is no good reason not to believe in Jesus. **This first reward is the essence of Jesus' two crowns; he wore our crown of thorns, of sin's shame, guilt, and condemnation, that by faith we might receive His crown of righteousness.** (Romans 3:22)

2. Crown of Life

James, the Lord Jesus' brother, and John, the disciple Jesus loved, use the same reference of crown of life. Both use the term as Jesus' reward for endurance and perseverance, with a focus on faithfulness to the Lord Jesus.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

James opens his letter by encouraging Christians in the First Century to endure all trials, understanding that Jesus is producing Christlikeness in one's life through each trial. He culminates the Christian's ultimate reward of God's promise as the crown of life. James explains that the Christian's promised reward from Jesus provides the motivation one needs to

² Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Crown," Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 555.

³ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Crown," Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 555.



endure the hard times of life. When we understand and stay focused on trusting in Jesus' reward for us, we are strengthened to face and endure whatever may come in this life.

John records this same truth, but they are not his words. Jesus tells the church at Smyrna that some will suffer from persecution, and some even unto death, but none should fear because of His promise. This resurrection means we live fearless!

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10

James and John record Jesus' promise of His highest reward to those who remain faithful to Him. And how important this is for us today when it becomes easy to ask, "Is it worth it to remain faithful and obey the Lord? How bad could it be because it would be so much easier to just give in?" In the same way, one of the most common objections to believe in Jesus is the issue of evil and suffering in the world, which causes people to ask, "If God was really powerful, why does He allow suffering or why doesn't He just stop all evil?" These questions only make sense to a worldly-minded way of thinking that reveals one does not understand God nor the true nature of evil. The Bible teaches that this way of thinking is absent of faith. These questions presume people to be good by nature, without sin, and that we are okay without God. God doesn't end all evil because He is patient, waiting because He wants all who are sinful to repent and believe in Him. If God destroyed all evil, those who rejected, denied, ignored, or simply neglected Him would be destroyed with it. The resurrection proves that Jesus is worthy of our faith even in suffering because His resurrection gives meaning and purpose to everything. **The crown of life declares that Jesus' resurrection means that suffering in this world is never wasted, and that this becomes the Christian's power to live faithful to the Lord.**

Have you confessed your need for God by repenting of your sin? This is the only way to receive Jesus' crown of life by faith.

TRANS Finally, Paul also speaks of another reward as a crown.

3. Crown of Glory

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. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Paul states that all compete to win the prize, but only one wins it. If you want to win the prize, you must compete in such a way to win. He goes on to say that this requires self-discipline, not giving in to what is easier or feels better but staying focused on what is essential to win the prize. And all of this is for a perishable wreath. "Wreath" is the same word for crown. Every wreath / crown rewarded in this world is perishable, but Christians live for an imperishable wreath. Every day holds temptations and trials that cause one to ask, "Is the Lord's way, obedience to His Word, worth it?" There is no end to the number of distractions and temptations that lure us to disregard the Lord and His Word, but this easy way is a false hope with a fading glory. The glory of the crown we are given is not ours, but the Lord Jesus! In Christ, our lives are not lived for us but for Him, so that in eternity our lives are not adorned with our glory but His eternal glory! **Jesus' crown of glory is the Christian's great reward for eternity, and our motivating power of hope for today.**

Have you by faith settled in your mind and heart that, "Yes, Jesus is worth it, every day in every situation"?

CLOSE In the Kingdom of God, "To the victor's faithful followers go His spoils!" Jesus is the King of Two Crowns: his crown of thorns was the King dressed for battle; his Crown of victory is the King victorious blessing His people. Jesus has a crown for you, friend, one of which He desires to bestow on you for the glory of His Name and the goodness of His Kingdom, with the power to walk in His truth and wisdom, and the promised hope that never perishes, spoils, or fades.

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