

Jesus and His “Crowns”

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Just why, I did not know, but the Spirit of God began recently to quicken to my mind and heart a scriptural truth from the book of Hebrews. The words kept coming repeatedly to my mind, and then my heart would meditate in order to extract the truth the Lord was trying to reveal to me. In time, I realized the Lord was opening to me a series of related truths that I was to put into writing.

The scripture that kept coming to my mind and upon which my heart meditated much is found in Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

When was Jesus “crowned” with glory and honor? We see from the above scripture that this “crowning” was for the purpose of preparing Jesus for the experience of the cross where He would “taste death” for every man.

Before I elaborate on the above question, I want to point out that there are two Greek words to be considered when sharing the truths of the scripture on “crowns,” or being “crowned.” One is *stephanos*, which denotes a chaplet or circlet. This word was used for the laurel wreath awarded to the victor at the Greek athletic games, or for a festive garland used on occasions of rejoicing. This word is used by the New Testament writers as symbolic of that special reward to be given to those Christians who are referred to as the “overcomers.” (More on this later.) The other Greek word is *diadema*. It is always a symbol of royalty. In the book of Revelation, both of these words are used with reference to Jesus. In Revelation 14:14, Jesus is seen with the *stephanos* crown on His head, and in Revelation 19:12, He is seen with the *diadema* crown on His head.

Going back to Hebrews 2:19, where we read that Jesus was “crowned with glory and honor,” the Greek word that is used is *speohanoō*, which is the verb form of the noun *stephanos*. Thus, when it says that Jesus was “crowned,” it certainly relates to some experience in His life which was essential to the successful fulfillment of that aspect of His mission on this earth to be a total victor or “overcomer,” even as He Himself testified near the close of His life as recorded in John 16:33: “In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (See also Revelation 3:21). Now when was Jesus “crowned with glory and honor” in preparation for His sacrifice on the cross? I personally believe that this took place on what we call the “Mount of Transfiguration” as recorded as follows in Matthew 17:1-8: “And after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias (Elijah) talking with Him.” Luke’s account of this event adds these words: “and spoke of His decease (death) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:31). This links this experience more clearly with Hebrews 2:9. “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias (Elijah). While He was yet speaking behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him.’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. And Jesus

came and touched them, and said, 'Arise and be not afraid.' And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save only Jesus."

To be "crowned" can symbolically mean to be adorned. In this experience of Matthew 17:1-8, we see that Jesus was first, as stated in Hebrews 2:9, "crowned" (adorned) with glory. This is when He was transfigured and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. In Luke's account, (Luke 9:32) it states when this transfiguration took place that the disciples "saw His glory." It is my conviction that if had not been necessary for Jesus to stay on the earth (in the flesh) in order to carry out God's purpose for Him to die as a substitutional sacrifice, this transfiguration experience would have been Jesus' time to have had His immortal physical body changed into a glorified body. (But that is another subject, too vast to go into here, for it relates to God's purpose and pattern for mankind that was from the beginning, and will again be re-established in the millennium and the ages beyond). Immediately after the disciples saw His glory, Jesus was "crowned" with honor. This came through the dignity and esteem bestowed on the Son by the words spoken by the Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." Further confirmation that Hebrews 2:9 was fulfilled on this Mountain of Transfiguration experience is found in 2 Peter 1:16-18 "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming (Gr. *parousia*, meaning "presence") of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased' and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

Hebrews 2:9 states that this "crowning" was to the end that Jesus, "by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." That this "mountain top" experience was definitely connected to His impending death is testified to by the fact that Moses and Elijah appeared talking with Him specifically concerning the death that He should accomplish at Jerusalem. And in preparation for that, the Father conferred upon Him grace (favor or graciousness), not only to encourage Jesus with a foretaste of the glory that was to come (John 4:34), overcoming all that the devil could "throw" at Him (John 16:33), but also to reinforce His determination to unflinchingly go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:53) where He would successfully consummate the "overcomers" task assigned to Him and conquer death, hell (Hades) and the grave (Revelation 1:18).

After Jesus was "crowned" by the Father, He had to suffer the ignominious mockery and shame of being crowned by man. Yet, even that had a prophetic significance to it. After Jesus was arrested and taken before the Roman authorities, we read the following in Matthew 27:27-31: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorian and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him." The word used in this passage for "crown" is again the word *stephanos* which is the word used by the Greeks for the victor in any athletic contest. It is used repeatedly in the N.T. for those who conquer, gain the victory (over sin and self) namely, the "overcomers." Although the soldiers put this crown of thorns on Jesus, along with a robe and a reed (symbolic of a ruling scepter) in order to mock Him and make Him an object of ridicule, there was great prophetic significance in this act. First, it

was a token of His victorious, overcoming life in the face of all obstacles and attacks of Satan working through sinful man. But even more significantly, it was a symbolic portrayal of the fact that Jesus was taking upon Himself the totality of the curse that came upon all creation (including man) when Adam and Eve sinned. A part of the judgment of their disobedience is described in Genesis 3:17-18: "Then to Adam He said, 'because you listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from it; cursed is the ground because of you: in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.'"

The fact that Jesus wore a crown of thorns was a dramatic portrayal that He bore that the curse that came upon all creation, even as we read in Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'" It should be understood that the "curse of the law" referred to in the scripture quotation are the consequences of breaking the original Law, beginning with Adam and Eve's disobedience of the law God gave them not to eat of a certain tree, and continuing down through all the disobedience of Israel to the law of Moses. Further, it is interesting to note that when the soldiers dressed Jesus in the trappings of a king and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews," we read in Matthew 27:31, that "after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to be crucified." But we read nothing of them removing the "crown" of thorns that they with cruelty "crushed" down into His scalp until the blood flowed freely. This means that evidently He wore that crown of thorns while hanging on the cross, punctuating the symbolic truth that He bore the total curse that came upon all creation. Significantly, this provision encompasses even the "thorns" that were a part of the curse on the earth by which sinful man would be required to toil in the "sweat of His face." Thus, the symbolism includes the Lord bearing or becoming a curse for man himself, since through man and his sin everything upon this planet was affected. This is why Paul says in Romans 8:19-23: "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility (because of the curse), not of its own will but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, our we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption (from death) of our body." All "kingdoms" of this earth - mineral, vegetable, animal, and human - are not only to be restored to "paradise" conditions, but will also continue to progress in God's plan in the ages to come to the ultimate of the completed and perfected state originally ordained for it.

Paul admonished Timothy that "if one competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." (2 Timothy 2:5). I mentioned before that in Revelation 14:14, John sees Jesus with a golden "*stephanos*" crown on His head. This means that while on earth He competed according to the rules that the Heavenly Father stipulated for Him. Thus He received the victor's (overcomer's) crown. This is confirmed by His own words which were mentioned earlier from John 16:33, and also by the words in Revelation 5:5 in the vision given to John: "And one of the elders said to me, 'Stop the weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.'" Both His victory and the promise that others will also share that victory - the "overcomers" - is clearly

stated by Jesus in Revelation 3:21: “He who overcomes, I will grant him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne.”

The “game plan” for Jesus’ life was stated in the Old Testament many years before He came to this earth. The Psalmist spoke words prophetic of the Messiah when he uttered words recorded in Psalm 40: “Then I said, ‘Behold I come: In the scroll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O My God; Thy Law is within my heart.’” (Psalm 40:7-8). Not once did Jesus ever deviate from the “game plan.” He not only did the Father’s will in every aspect of His life, but He delighted to do so. In His own words Jesus declared, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and accomplish His work.” (John 4:34).

Towards the close of His earthly ministry, realizing that the consummating phase of the Father’s work loomed close at hand - even the giving of His life on the cross - He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Luke 9:51 records this. From there on He unflinchingly faced all obstacles and abuses which accompanied that final journey; the savage attacks of the religious leaders, the betrayal by one on his own, the garden of Gethsemane, the mock trials, the physical and verbal attacks by the Roman soldiers, the rejection of His own people crying, “crucify Him,” and the horrible scourging which ripped His back and legs into bloody shreds of flesh. Then, without wavering in His commitment He carried His cross, traveling the lonely road to Golgotha to pour out His life’s blood for you and me. Hebrews 12:2, tells us that “for the joy set before Him (in anticipation of its results), He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Since Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15), there was a moment as Jesus contemplated the cross, that a thought flashed through His mind (no doubt a “fiery dart” from Satan - Ephesians 6:16), and suddenly His soul was troubled. We read about it in John 12:27-28: “Now my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify thy name.’ There came therefore a voice out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’” In the Greek language, the question Jesus asked implies a strong negative. In other words “NO, I would not ask the Father to save me from this hour.” Jesus always spoke of “this hour” as indicative of the time He would give His life on the cross. And for this very purpose, He affirms, He came into the world. Therefore, with resolute will and determination, He quickly rejects the very thought that would thwart the Father’s purpose, declaring absolutely that He would not ask to be spared from the supreme sacrifice. Further confirmation is found in the words of Jesus when the soldiers came to take Him after Judas had identified Him with the kiss of betrayal. Peter tried to defend the Master and cut off the ear of the high priest’s slave. Then Jesus said, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11).

Was not Jesus the epitome of integrity? Was He not a man of His word? Would He say on the one occasion that He would emphatically not ask the Father to save Him from His hour of destiny to die for the sins of the world on the cross, and then change His mind? Perish the thought! Yet, tradition teaches that Jesus, while praying in the garden, asked the Father to remove that cup of sacrifice on the cross if it be possible, even though He was willing to submit to the Father’s will providing there was no alternative. I personally cannot accept this traditional concept. What really happened in the garden as Jesus prayed? I will come to that shortly.

But first, let me digress to share a thought that I believe will be helpful to you. In John 12, after Jesus rejected the thought that He would ask to be saved from His “appointed hour.” He then simply prayed, “Father, glorify Thy name” (John 12:28). Here is what I believe to be an

important KEY in prayer. The Father answered, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." Since Jesus lived a perfect life, everything He said and did glorified the Father, and when facing the supreme "hour" or destiny, Jesus' one desire was that what He would accomplish in that sacrifice would glorify the Father. Certainly the testimony of millions of lives down through this age that have been ransomed and transformed to the glory of the Father through Jesus' sacrifice attest to the truth of what the Father spoke in answer to Jesus' prayer. But should not this prayer be an example also for us? Like Jesus, our supreme motivation in everything we do or that transpires in our lives, should be that both Jesus and His heavenly Father should be honored and glorified (see Matthew 5:16). And an important **key** to always remember when faced with problems, difficult situations, or perplexities which baffle you, and you are not sure just how to pray, is the following thought. Humbly bow your heart and in all sincerity utter the same words that Jesus did, "Father, glorify Thy name." Then leave it in His hands. Continue to daily utter these words, and you can be absolutely confident that glory will eventually abound to the Lord in your life and circumstances.

Now to view what happened in the garden of Gethsemane from a different perspective than the traditional. The problem is, we have not carefully considered the significance of what took place in Jesus' experience at that time. Before quoting the details from the gospel records, let me point out the symbolic significance of Jesus' going to pray in the garden called Gethsemane. Or are we to suppose it "just happened" that way without portraying a portion of God's plan? What "fools" and "slow of heart" we have been (Luke 24:25) not to perceive and believe that everything Jesus did and every movement He made was prophetic (Revelation 19:10). When we read the gospel records carefully, from which I will quote shortly, we will find that the vicarious suffering of Jesus on the behalf of fallen humanity began in the garden, when the crushing weight of the sins of the world began to bear down on Him. But why in a garden? Because the original pair (Adam and Eve) sinned and precipitated the "fall" of mankind in a garden (Eden). Therefore, Jesus began that vicarious suffering which would eventually "bear away" the sins of the world and all the consequences thereof, in the garden of Gethsemane. Do you realize that the first drops of Jesus' sinless, incorruptible, Divinely infused blood fell on this sin-cursed earth in that garden? A dramatic indicator that His cleansing blood would eventually enable God to remove the curse and bring the earth back into Edenic (paradise) conditions. God Himself shed the blood of animals in the Garden of Eden (typifying the blood of Jesus Christ) in order to clothe Adam and Eve with garments of skins (Genesis 3:2). This was to portray, by type, how Christ's righteousness would be imputed as a covering (Romans 4:22-25) to all who exercise faith in Him and His blood shed for the remission of sin, and thus also assuring for them an eventual restored Edenic garden of paradise.

The garden where Jesus agonized in prayer, until droplets of blood oozed from His brow and dropped to the ground, was called Gethsemane. (Don't ever think that the precious, incorruptible blood of Jesus, (1 Peter 1:18-19) was ever lost. Although a portion was taken into heaven (Hebrews 9:12), every drop that fell into the earth is still there, doing a cleansing work until all creation is set free from the bondage of corruption - Romans 8:23). In the Greek language, the word translated Gethsemane means "the place of the oil press." The garden was either near or in an olive grove. Also an oil press was located there in which the ripened olives were placed to be crushed so that the oil might be extracted. In God's symbolic language, olive oil is a type of the Spirit. The olive tree is a type of God's covenant people, beginning with God's covenant to Abraham (See Romans 11:16-24). Paul indicates in this passage that some of the

natural branches of the Olive Tree were “cut off” because of unbelief in the promised seed of Abraham (Jesus the Messiah) and this made possible the grafting in of believing Gentiles into the covenant tree, becoming the sons of Abraham that in faith in Christ (Galatians 3:7, 14, 25). God had promised Abraham that in his “seed” all the nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Paul indicates in Galatians 3:16 that this promised seed was Christ. The point I want to make is that not only was Jesus the fulfillment of the covenant promise (the promised “seed”), but also the “crowning fruit” of that covenant. His perfect life represented, as it were, the perfected fruit (olive) of that covenant people. But in order that He might impart the essence of His life to all who would receive Him, He had to be “crushed” in Gethsemane (“the place of the olive press”) that the “oil” of His Spirit might become available to “flow”. This “flow” would come through His personal representative, the Holy Spirit, as the “healing balm”, eradicating through transformation, the “disease” of sin and all of its effects. This would take place by the regenerating, sanctifying, anointing and filling of human vessels with the “golden oil” of His life and power.

Now let’s take a look at what happened in the garden. Quoting from Matthew’s gospel, we read: “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with me.’” Matthew 26:32-38. Now, stop and think; did Jesus mean what He said or not? Jesus was aware that His strength was fast waning - that He was nigh unto death there in the garden. Luke 22:44 says, “and being in agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” I have heard that blood oozing from the pores is a sign of a ruptured heart. I cannot verify that, but we do now that He was deeply grieved, distressed and in agony. The Greek word translated “agony” in Luke 22:44 means literally an intense struggle. Jesus was in the midst of a life and death struggle in the garden as the weight of the sins of the world began to bear down on Him, as well as the mental-emotional trauma in anticipation of the events just at hand: the treacherous betrayal, the mock trial and false accusations, the rejection by the leaders of the nation, the physical and emotional abuse of the Roman soldiers, the terrible scourging which ripped and scarred the flesh of His back, buttocks and legs, and, finally, in a state of unthinkable pain from the scourging, the long torturous journey to Golgotha carrying the cross upon which He would give His life to “bear in His body” the sins of the world.

Some might point out that the Romans had crucified thousands on crosses for it was a common means of execution for criminals, insurrectionists, etc. But there were two important differences in Jesus’ crucifixion. All others crucified had no choice. They were forced against their own will to submit to the cruel and agonizing means of death. But in contrast, Jesus was not forced against His will to be crucified. At any time during the ordeal, from the time He was arrested in the garden through all the indescribable agony that followed, even while on the cross, He had the authority to call on the twelve legions of angels to deliver Him (Matthew 26: 53). He willingly let Himself be taken in order to voluntarily lay down His life, even as He declared as recorded in John 10:17-18. The other difference is that all others suffered in crucifixion just for their own crime, whereas Jesus had committed no crime. He laid down His life as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Isaiah 53:6 says that “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” The same thought is expressed in different words in 1 Peter 2:24: “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”

Isaiah 53:11 declares that, “He shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” This is so because of the millions who were to be delivered from sin and death through the Lord’s sacrifice. I submit that the “travail of His soul,” although consummated on the cross when He made “His soul an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10), began in the garden of Gethsemane (the place of the oil press) where the agonizing “crushing” for our sake began. When the pressure became so great that He pleaded with His disciples to watch and pray with Him, for He was nearing the point of death, He went apart a short distance and fell on His face crying out to the Father, “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:38-39). Matthew 26:39-44 records that three times He prayed the same words.

The question is, what cup did Jesus ask to pass that He might not drink it? The traditional teaching is that the “cup” Jesus asked to be removed, if possible, was the appointed “hour” of sacrificial death upon the cross. However, if we accept this explanation, then we have to accuse Jesus of doing what He said He would never do, as I previously pointed out in John 12:27-28. And to me this is totally unacceptable. Jesus could not deny Himself or any work He spoke and still be THE TRUTH (John 14:6).

The record is clear that while agonizing in the garden, Jesus became aware that He was approaching the point of death (Matthew 26:38). Yet, He knew that if He expired there, He could not fulfill the appointed destiny He had previously declared unto His disciples; that He must go to Jerusalem, and after suffering many things at the hands of the religious leaders, be rejected and killed, and then be raised again the third day (Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23; Luke 9:21-22). Therefore, He prayed earnestly to the Father that this (present and imminent) cup (of waning strength and impending death in the garden) pass, that He might finish the course of events previously shown to Him by the Father. That Jesus knew these events is declared in John 18:4. “Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him...” However, in order to show His complete submission to the Father, and in case there was some “mystery” about the events of His “passion” (Acts 1:3) that for some reason the Father had withheld from Him, Jesus, even though earnestly petitioning that He would be spared death in the garden, added the words, “nevertheless (even though I have prayed otherwise) not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

Another scripture in the book of Hebrews has a direct bearing, I believe, on this garden episode, further confirming the perspective I have given. Speaking of Jesus, the author says, “who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared” Hebrews 5:7. At no other time is recorded in the gospels that Jesus prayed with the intensity (strong cryings) to the Father that He be saved from death, but when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane. The expression that He “was heard,” is tantamount to saying, “His request was granted.” Now, if we take the position that Jesus was requesting that the “cup” of death on the cross pass, and He be released from drinking it, then we must conclude from we know that Jesus did go on to give His life on the cross, which He would not have done if His “cryings” to be delivered from death was indeed the death of the cross.

The only explanation that harmonizes all of the scriptures related to this subject, and is consistent with the nature and character of Jesus as THE TRUTH, is that “the cup” Jesus pleaded to be exempt from was an imminent and untimely death in the garden which would rob Him of fulfilling the culmination of the ordained purpose for which He came to this earth. That purpose

was the paying of the ultimate and total price for the sins of the world by giving Himself as a vicarious sacrifice on the cross which lifted Him up in death, that He might draw all men unto Himself (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33). A further confirmation that Jesus' prayers in the garden were heard and that "cup" of death "passed" from Him, is the statement in Luke's account of what happened following His "crying out" to the Father. Luke 22:43 says, "And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." That life and death struggle had been won! He was given the supernatural infusion of strength to go on and "finish the course." Praise the Lord! To me this understanding greatly enhances my appreciation of the incredible love of my Savior. Never once did He flinch or waver in His determination to willingly lay down His life and "walk" into the "jaws" of death to "pay fully" for my salvation. He "overcame" everything the devil could "throw" at Him; every obstacle and temptation that the world could use to cause Him to stumble, to allure Him from His appointed destiny, or pressure Him to submit to any selfish desire or ambition. He declared to His disciples, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). These words were spoken to His disciples at the last supper, just before He went to the garden. In John's account of the Passover supper, Jesus' discourse to His disciples and His "high priestly" prayer to the Father, are recorded in John, Chapters 13-17. Then in 18:1 we read, "When Jesus had spoken these words he went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where there was a garden." Thus the statement in His Passover discourse: "I have overcome." This was not only a statement of victory over all worldly foes and pressures that He had experienced throughout His life up to that point, but a bold prophetic declaration that in the worst that was yet to come during the rest of the night and the following day - from the garden episode to the cross, absolute triumph over every contending circumstance and foe was already accomplished! What a blatant attack on the word and integrity of Jesus to say that in the garden He changed His mind and prayed to forfeit a victory that He previously declared was already won! Perish the thought!

We have seen that one of the two words used for "crown" in the New Testament was *stephanos*, which was a chaplet or a circlet. It's most usual use was a laurel wreath awarded to the victor at the athletic games, and is thus used symbolically in the New Testament as the "overcomers" crown. The Greek word translated "to overcome" or "overcomer" is *nikao* (verb) and *nikos* (noun). The word means to subdue, conquer, prevail, get the victory, triumph or overcome. This word is used numerous times in the N.T. of both Jesus and that select ("elect") group of Christians who shall share with Him in His "rule" in His coming Kingdom. In an article to follow this one, I will deal with this *Nikao* word as it applies to Christians. It will cover both the need and how to "overcome" and the seven special promises to the "overcomers" in the book of Revelation. The title of that article will be taken from a scripture found Revelation 3:11.

"LET NO MAN TAKE YOUR CROWN"

The second word used for "crown" in the New Testament is *diadema*. It signifies a crown of authority and power usually reserved for royalty. It is the kingly crown. Jesus is seen wearing this crown as He returns to this earth to reign as King. This is recorded in Revelation 19:11-12: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns (*diadems*)." What John saw was probably a many-tiered crown

showing the universality of His reign over all nations. In ancient times when a king conquered another nation, he would add another tier to his crown.

To summarize: In the book of Revelation, Jesus is seen two times wearing a crown. First, in Revelation 14:14, John sees Jesus with a sharp sickle in His hand, and with a golden crown on His head. The Greek word here is *spephanos* - the victor's crown or overcomer's crown. What John saw was a wreath of golden laurel twigs and leaves formed in the shape of a circlet. Secondly, in Revelation 19:12, John sees Jesus with the *diadema* - the Kingly crown. This was the many-tiered golden crown, very likely garnished with precious stones. The point that needs to be grasped is simply this: Jesus could never have qualified to wear the *diadema* crown unless He had first won the *stephanos* crown. And He set the pattern for all who would follow Him and aspire to share His Kingdom rule. We must first gain the *stephanos* crown (1 Corinthians 9:25-27), and then we have the promise that we will share His diadema crown (as "kings and priests"), for Revelation 3:11 says, "To him that overcomes (and gains the *stephanon* crown), to him will I grant to sit down with me on my throne (sharing the *diadema* crown).

When Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33), we have seen how this was both a factual statement up to that moment, and also prophetic of His absolute triumph in the events just ahead. But WHY this total victory - overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil; yes, even death, hell (*hades*) and the grave? Was it for His sake alone? A thousand times NO! This is why He said, "Be of good cheer." He was assuring His disciples that because of His total victory that they (and we could share in the "spoils". His victory is our victory. Because He overcame, we can overcome (if we learn the KEYS and apply them).

One great key is found in the very verse with which we began, as the Father adorns the Son with the *stephanos* crown, to show His approval, and to confer on Him the "grace" which would give Him total victory in the "final lap" of His appointed course. "But we see Jesus...crowned (*stephanao*) with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9). The word see here (in the Greek) means more than just to "behold," but to "perceive" (in spiritual depth and to "take heed" to. I will conclude with a scripture with a similar admonition that relates to our "race" for the *stephanos* crown. "Let us run with patience (persistence) the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." (Hebrews 12:1b-2a). "Looking" in this passage, in the original Greek, means "to consider attentively." (To Be Continued).

POSTSCRIPT

For those who do not have my articles on "The Third Day" and "The Third Day" (Supplement), I want to make a few comments on Matthew 12:40: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly: so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

In the article on the "Third Day", we began with a scripture in Luke 13:32 and showed that Jesus' words made no sense when considered purely from a carnal perspective of certain days at that time, but rather that He spoke out of His own consciousness of the OVERALL DIVINE PLAN, encompassing the future in terms of God's own cosmic time schedule for man. I believe the same principle applies to Matthew 12:40. It seems quite evident to me that Jesus was not speaking about His body laying a tomb for a period of 72 hours, since we have already shown that this is impossible. What then was Jesus trying to convey?

First, let us ask the question: where is the heart of the earth? Are we justified in calling a shallow tomb on the earth's surface, the "Heart" of the earth? Let us also remember that from the Divine perspective, one day with the Lord is a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8). Cannot we see that Jesus' words in Matthew 12:40 can only make sense as we let the Holy Spirit unveil to our understanding the truth of Jesus' vicarious atoning and cleansing sacrifice as it would effect this planet earth and the inhabitants on it for a period of 3000 years? The "three days and nights" Jesus spoke of would be three FULL days, and refers primarily to three thousand years that His SPIRIT, by media of His LIFE BLOOD, would be purging the HEART of the earth, and also doing a cleansing work in many human hearts. Two thousand years of this time is now almost over, and it will take another thousand years (the coming Millennium) before that blood has completed 3000 years in the heart of the earth; then can the curse be lifted from this planet, and a NEW phase of God's program begin for the earth and its inhabitants.

Notice that in Matthew 12:20 it is stated that the "Son of Man" would be in the heart of the earth. This would indicate the human part of Jesus: either His body, or His blood, which was the life of that body. Since we know that His physical body was only in a shallow tomb for less than three full days, then we can only assume that the "Son of Man" in this instance refers to His blood, which would be purging the heart of the earth for three thousand years.

Although it is quite evident to me that the explanation of the three days as portraying three thousand years is the primary one, yet I believe we can also see how this pattern was conformed to it terms of literal days at the time of Jesus' suffering. For note how Luke 22:44 indicated that Jesus' life-blood began to FALL INTO THE GROUND previous to His going to the cross. "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." This took place on Thursday night; thus was His blood in the earth Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights; and Friday, Saturday and a part of Sunday (daylight) was His blood there BEFORE He lifted a portion of it as He ascended to the Holy of Holies in heaven and deposited it there as a testimony and as a covering for those "under the altar" (Revelation 6:9).

It is my conviction, however, that the major portion of His blood was directed by the supernatural power of God into the heart or **bosom** of the earth (wherever that is) and it will remain there as a "fixed element" until the purging work is done. This raises another matter, which should have come to your mind if you have been thinking! Only incorruptible blood could remain in the earth without decaying. The blood, which flowed in Jesus' veins, was NOT that of an ordinary mortal. He did not sin, and therefore He was NOT subject to death. He made it clear before going to the cross that no one could take His life from Him. "No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received from my Father." (John 10:18). Even after laying His physical life down in death, by commending His Spirit into the hands of the Father and withdrawing from the body (Luke 23:46), that the body did not decay when it was placed in the tomb, for it had been prophesied: "neither wilt thou suffer your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10). If His body did not see corruption, neither did His blood. The Apostle Peter declares the incorruptible nature of the blood of Christ in 1 Peter 1:18-19: "forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your father; but with the precious blood of Christ, as the lamb without blemish and without spot (sinless). The precious blood of Jesus is here contrasted

with corruptible things; therefore, it must be incorruptible! Amen! For a better understanding of the larger scope of this subject, please order the two articles mentioned.

For further information, other articles or additional copies, write:

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