

## DO WE GET CROWNS IN HEAVEN?

*HOLY HOLY HOLY*

words by Reginald Heber

"Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
cherubim and seraphim, falling down before thee,  
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be."

This is actually a silly paper, after all it really doesn't matter if we do or don't get crowns in heaven. However in order to maintain Biblical accuracy it is worthwhile to spend time in the Word, after all the Word is good and accurate and healthy for studying.

Most people seem to think that we get crowns in heaven. The appropriate question here is: Why do they think that? Well, most people heard it in a song or a hymn. At least that's why I thought we all got crowns. Now that is a very good theological source, don't you think? (OK, I am being a bit facetious). Others seem to remember something in the Bible about throwing their crowns at Jesus' feet and thus are convinced that they get crowns.

The folks who believe we get crowns believe that we get them at the exclusion of others who don't get crowns. The theory here being in part that since we don't get judged by works, the crowns are rewards for our works. Thus those who are "holier and better" get crowns above those sleazy beer drinking non-committal Christians. Even our "Open Bible" publishers are convinced that we get crowns at the exclusion of others. My premise is that there is not enough in the Bible to base any solid theology on this, at best, there is a single vague verse that implies it. All the other "apparent" weight that we presume is actually non-existent once carefully scrutinized.

Let's study the verses together. In the original appendix that I used to distribute with this paper was every single New Testament verse that has the word 'crown' or some superset of it (like crowns or crowneth). They were found using a computer & then they were separated into three groups:

- a) the crowns of Jesus,
- b) the crowns of the beast and his minions, and
- c) the crowns that we or others get (like the ones Paul mention).

I have kept group c) because that's the group that we are interested in.

The other groups are obviously not about us and if you wish to see them go to [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) and look up crowns. Or look in your Bible.

So now looking at group c), we find that there are only 10 occurrences of the word crown or crowns or some derivation of the word in this context. They are attached to the end of this paper. Naturally due to the limitation of paper (and copyright considerations) I did not copy the entire chapter out. But as you go along, pull out your own Bible and make sure I am looking at each incident in the correct context.

Let us take reference 10. first because this is the one verse that everybody is thinking of when they think about crowns (all emphasis is mine).

#### Revelation - Chapter 4

4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

This is the only reference in the entire Bible about anyone casting crowns at the feet of Jesus!

Seriously now do you honestly think that you are one of the 24 elders? Because if you are you will get a crown that you will throw it at Jesus' feet, but if you are like everybody else (like Martin Luther, or like Billy Graham etc) you aren't an elder.

This verse is the verse that people vaguely remember and cast about as their justification of receiving crowns.

Now lets take the rest of the references one by one (but not in order):

Ref. 2. I Corinthians - Chapter 9:24.

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

This passage seems to imply that we are doing everything for an incorruptible/everlasting crown. But the whole verse is referring to symbolic things, we are in a symbolic race, we have a symbolic incorruptible/everlasting crown (This is eternal life that Paul is mentioning). Finally this passage does not mention this as a reward for any particular deed, just as a reward to having completed the race. Hopefully all who are in heaven have completed the race. So they all will get this incorruptible crown. So it is not at the exclusion of others nor is it for something special that you do.

Ref 3. Philippians 4

1Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

This is my favorite. Here is Paul talking about his own crown. And what is it? Gold? Silver? No, it is the people themselves. Surely this is also a figurative crown; or could we imagine these people will be standing in a circle on Paul's head in heaven - being his literal crown? This gives weight to the next reference.

Ref 1. I Thessalonians - Chapter 2

17 But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.

18 For we wanted to come to you--certainly I, Paul, did, again and again--but Satan stopped us.

19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?

20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

So it's not that we get a physical crown, these are people who are his crowns. Read ref 3. again.

On to ref 4.

Ref 4. II Timothy 2:5

4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer.

5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

The Living Bible paraphrases it this way: "Follow the Lord's rules for doing his work, just as an athlete either follows the rules or is disqualified and wins no prize."

Heavenly crowns? No real strong implications here, it could mean a number of things. It certainly doesn't talk about getting an actual crown as a reward for good deeds or anything. Maybe for the mastery of something, and a lawful mastery of course. Try a commentary if you still think this refers to a spiritual crown in heaven that we get at the exclusion of others.

Ref 5. II Timothy - Chapter 4

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.

This is another of my favorites. Proponents of Crowns say "Here it is in black and white - Paul is going to get a crown of Righteousness in heaven."

Well, look at the rest of the verse. Who else gets the crown? Everybody who longs/loves (KJV) the appearing of Jesus. Do you even think that there will be people in heaven who won't love or long for the appearing of Jesus? No, of course all of us who are saved love his appearing, thus all of us are going to get crowns of righteousness. If this is a physical/spiritual crown everybody gets one.

I , and since I carry no weight, Merrill F. Unger Th.D Ph.D ETc. of the commonly used Unger's Bible Dictionary believes that this is also a figurative crown. All of US, "will be crowned in righteousness". Just like Jesus will be crowned in beauty. This certainly does not seem like a crown that is obtained at the exclusion of any others.

Ref 6. James - Chapter 1

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:  
for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of  
life, which the Lord hath promised to them that  
love him.

Do you love the Lord? May I be bold enough to say that only those who love the Lord will be saved and in Heaven? Now read the last part of this verse "which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. " So like Ref 5. this crown of life is for everyone.

Incidentally what do you think the crown of life is? I'd say (with a lot of theological support) that James is talking about Eternal Life. I daren't try wearing that on my head at the exclusion of a fellow believer.

#### Ref 7. I Peter - Chapter 5

1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;

3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

This is probably the only verse that sort of even hints that the shepherds and pastors and teachers and elders could receive a crown of glory. However most Bible commentators feel that this is also a figurative crown not a physical/spiritual crown. It is more probable that this verse indicates that those who have been shepherds will be esteemed or share some of Christ's glory (in a minute way). But as far as proposing an entire system of rewards based on crowns, one slightly vague verse does not theology make.

#### Ref 8. Revelation - Chapter 2

10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The crown of life - what is it? Eternal life! Or could we imagine that it is a physical crown? Referring back to Ref 6 above, seems to imply that it is also "which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Again, do you love the Lord? I think all of His sheep do.

#### Ref 9. Revelation - Chapter 3

7 "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

As we read the whole passage - we realize that God isn't talking about a physical crown but is again talking about eternal life and the persecution of the Church. Don't let anyone take it away from you. Read it again. " Hold on to what you have ." It could be that we already have it – in which case what would that be? Eternal Life? Most probably! As far as the stuff in verse 12 onwards, that would be for all believers. Again this reference to a crown is rather vague and not really usable to nail down any definite theology.

So that is all the references to crowns that relate to us mere mortals. Not much of a case to prove that we get crowns. Is there? Certainly not enough to base theology on.

So as I said - who really cares if we get crowns or not? I don't.

"I just want to hear my Father say 'Well Done'. Wanna' be a God-pleaser, don't wanna' be a man-pleaser.' Petra

Forever as always in the service of the Powerful Creator and Merciful Saviour.

Neil Mammen, San Jose, CA (from a challenge given to me by my housemate Dan Darms to actually try to prove the Bible says we get crowns.)

1988

(Written after hours at AMD on an IBM XT running at 10MHz using a KJV Bible Search Program)

Updated May 22, 1999 (on a Pentium 400MHz, using [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), it took just as long to update it on the faster machine as it took to write it originally, proving that faster machines don't necessarily make us more productive).

### **KJV search for "crowns"**

(only kept that ones that apply to mankind and not God)

#### 1. I Thessalonians - Chapter 2

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

## 2. I Corinthians - Chapter 9

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

## 3. Philippians 4

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

## 4. II Timothy - Chapter 2

4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first

partaker of the fruits.

#### 5. II Timothy - Chapter 4

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

#### 6. James - Chapter 1

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted

of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil,  
neither tempteth he any man:

#### 7. I Peter - Chapter 5

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye  
shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the  
elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another,  
and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth  
the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

#### 8. Revelation - Chapter 2

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty,  
(but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of  
them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are  
the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt  
suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you  
into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall  
have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto  
death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the  
Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh  
shall not be hurt of the second death.

## 9. Revelation - Chapter

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

## 10. Revelation - Chapter 4

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

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