

Text: various

Well, I asked you for more questions and I received several last week right after the services. I tried to make notes of it, but I am afraid I messed one up. I wrote down the word, “Euphrates,” but nothing else. If one of you had a question on that, please remind me, because it is completely out of my head now.

Some of the questions will take some thinking, so it may be a bit before I get to them. Today I will deal with one that I have thought about before, so it wasn’t so hard to answer.

The question is, “What about the crowns promised to believers? Are they literal crowns or not?”

To answer, we will survey what we mean by the crowns and mention a few things that are said about these crowns.

I. The believer’s crowns**A. The crown of victory (1 Co 9.25)**

¹ Cor 9.25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

1. Two words for crown in the NT

- a. *Stephanos*
- b. *Diademos*

2. *Stephanos*:

“It is the crown of victory in the games, of civic worth, of military valour, of nuptial joy, of festal gladness—woven of oak, of ivy, of parsley, of myrtle, of olive, or imitating in gold these leaves or others—of flowers, as of violets or roses (see Athenæus, xv. 9–33); the ‘wreath,’ in fact, or the ‘garland,’”¹

3. *Diademos*: the kingly crown, “the emblem and sign of royalty”²

¹ Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1880), 78.

² Trench, 78.

B. The “crown” passages

1. 1 Co 9.25 (Imperishable crown)

^{1Co 9.25} Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

2. 1 Thess 2.19 (Crown of rejoicing)

^{1Th 2.19} For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

3. 2 Tim 4.8 (Crown of righteousness)

^{2Tim 4.8} in the future 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.

4. Jas 1.12; Rev 2.10 (Crown of life)

^{Jas 1.12} ¶ Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

^{Rev 2.10} ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

5. 1 Pt 5.4 (Crown of glory)

^{1Pt 5.4} And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

C. The recipients of the crowns

1. Imperishable crown → those who live a disciplined Christian life (1 Cor 9.25)
2. Crown of rejoicing → for evangelism and discipleship)1 Thess 2.19)
3. Crown of righteousness → for living for the Lord’s return (2 Tim 4.8)

4. Crown of life → for enduring trials (Jas 1.12; Rev 2.10)
5. Crown of glory → for faithfully shepherding God's flock [pastor's only!!!] (1 Pt 5.4)

D. The use of these crowns [according to some]

1. To identify the saints in the throne room of heaven (Rev 4.4)

Rev 4.4 Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

2. To give all the glory to God as the scene unfolds in heaven (Rev 4.10)

Rev 4.10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

I have heard these matters preached as literal crowns of victory which we "will use to give glory to God after the Rapture.

II. The literal character of the crowns, yes or no

A. The language could be symbolic

1. Crown of rejoicing = the joy we have at seeing souls won with us in heaven
2. Crown of righteousness = the crown which is righteousness (when the Lord calls us up, the sin nature is done away)
3. Crown of life = the crown which is life

B. There are other metaphors used to describe future rewards

1. Gold, silver, precious stones (1 Cor 3.8-14) [and wood, hay stubble... not exactly a reward!!]
2. Clothed in white, in fine linen (Rev 3.5, 18, 19.7-8)

Rev 19.7-8 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

“fine linen is ...” symbolic language

C. Conclusion: probably metaphor

“we should probably interpret them as metaphors rather than as literal crowns.”³

III. The real promise of reward

A. Jesus urged believers to labor for a reward

Mt 6.19-21 ¶ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.²⁰ “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

1. There is such a thing as treasure in heaven for individuals
2. We ought to store it up for ourselves (says Jesus)

B. What all believers will inherit

1. Entrance into God’s kingdom (John 3:3, 5; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5)
2. Eternal life (John 3:16, 36; et al.)
3. Acceptance by God (Rom. 5:1; 8:31–39)
4. No condemnation (Rom. 5:9; 8:1; 1 Thess. 1:10)
5. Resurrection or translation (1 Cor. 15:53–57; 1 Thess. 4:13–17)
6. Glorification (1 Pet. 1:9⁴)

C. What faithful believers will inherit in addition

1. Abundant eternal life (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10)

³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jas 1:12.

⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jas 1:12.

2. Reigning with Christ (Luke 19:17, 19; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26–27)
3. Praise from God (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17; John 12:26; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:4)
4. Intimacy with Christ (John 15:14)
5. Various rewards (Matt. 5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18; 10:41–42; 16:27; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23, 35; 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; 9:16–18, 25, 27; 2 Cor. 5:9–11; Phil. 4:1; Col. 3:24; 1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:18; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8; Heb. 11:6; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 John 8; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 28; 3:5, 11, 12, 21; 11:18; 22:12)

These passages bear further study, but the Lord lays down some incentive for believers who give their whole heart to the Lord.

Conclusion:

As we can see, the language around the crowns doesn't demand a literal interpretation. I think it is probably symbolic.

However, I also think that it is quite clear the Lord promises to reward faithfulness.

In the end, it doesn't matter if you gain riches, fame, popularity, or possessions on earth. If you are faithful to the Lord you will have an eternal reward.