

SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

PART 56

REWARDS & INHERITANCE, PART 8

What kinds of rewards will be awarded at the evaluation? We've already discussed the concept that a highly visible reward will be appointments to positions of responsibility and leadership in the Messianic Kingdom. We've also previously discussed the concept of an abundant entrance into the Kingdom introduced in 2 Peter 1:5-11 based on personal godly behavior, good works, and the Christian behavioral traits we are to exhibit during our service to the Lord.

The Bible refers to "crowns" that are rewards believers may be awarded. There are two words denoting a crown in the New Testament Greek but only one of them is used in connection with the doctrine of rewards for believers.

Crown, *στέφανος*, refers to a wreath consisting of either foliage or of precious metals formed to resemble foliage and worn as a symbol of honor, victory, or as a badge of high office. "In Class[ical] Gr[reek], not used of a kingly crown but of the crown of victory in games, of civic worth, military valor, nuptial joy, festival gladness. Woven of oak, ivy, myrtle, olive leaves, or flowers. Used as a wreath or garland" [Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s.v. "*στέφανος*"]. Both Peter and Paul indicated the perishable nature of this crown when they compared it to the reward crowns and wrote the believer's reward would be imperishable and never fade away. This word is used in a number of different ways, but when Paul used it in relation to rewards, it is connected to the concept of the victory wreath in the athletic games of the Greeks.

1 Peter 5:4⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown [*στέφανος*] of glory.

1 Corinthians 9:25²⁵Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath [*στέφανος*], but we an imperishable.

The word *στέφανος* is connected with crowns of gold but since that word can refer to a wreath crown fashioned from a precious metal, it does not necessarily imply an imperial, gold, jeweled, kingly crown as we might otherwise understand the meaning of a crown today although it seems to carry that meaning as well. "Other uses of *stephanos* show it could signify a crown worn by a ruler, but the connotation of victory

was probably always present" [Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 288]. As always, context is important but even that may not be sufficient to specifically identify this crown in all instances. In ancient Greek, "The στέφανος played a part in many ancient customs and bore diverse connotations: victory (as in athletic games), festivity, worship, public office, kingship, etc. Often worked in gold, a wreath was awarded by Greek states as a high mark of honor, esp[ecially] in recognition of public service" [*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s.v. "στέφανος"]. Probably, since the word στέφανος describes them as gold crowns, the crowns in Revelation 4:4 are gold but are fashioned into a wreath rather than into a crown as we picture them in our understanding of crowns today. However, we will see that στέφανος can be used to identify a crown that is more in line with our way of defining a royal crown. The elders may be wearing either a gold crown as we understand it or a wreath crown fashioned out of gold; we simply cannot know from the text.

Revelation 4:4⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns [στέφανος] on their heads.

The other word used for crown, διάδημα, is a type of crown employed as a symbol of the highest ruling power in a particular area and therefore often associated with kingship. Again, however, this is not the gold, jeweled crown as we understand crowns to be today in our western culture. This crown has a distinct Middle Eastern understanding attached to it. It was "the band round the τιάρα of a Persian king; [it was] the badge of royalty" [G. Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "τιάρα"]. The diadem has its origin in the headdress of ancient Persian kings. In Isaiah 62:3, the Septuagint uses it to translate the Hebrew, תְּכָנִיף, [lexical form: תְּכָנִיף] which means a "turban, hood. It indicates a headpiece often worn by persons in authority in the ancient Near East. It was created by folding long pieces of cloth around a person's head" [Warren Baker and Eugen Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, s.v. "תְּכָנִיף"]. Abbott-Smith used the word "tiara" and that is a word we use in English to denote "a jeweled ornamental band worn on the front of a woman's hair" (think beauty queens) but the dictionary also notes its historical use as "a turban worn by ancient Persian kings" [*The Oxford American College Dictionary*, s.v. "tiara"]. The Abbott-Smith lexicon differentiates then between the turban, or tiara, and the band, or diadem, wrapped around it and that is the correct way to understand the use of these words. The Greek word διάδημα was also used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew תְּכָנִיף which means a "royal headdress". It referred to a "high royal turban, i.e., a decorative wrap around the head. Note: 'crown' as a translation [of διάδημα] should include a ftn [footnote] this is not the jeweled metal diadem as is invoked in the western thought and tradition" [*Strong's Concordance*, LOGOS electronic edition]. The point is

diadem does not refer to a metal crown as we think of it, but to a turban, the tiara, with cloth ribbons, the diadems, tied around it. "The use of a royal headband was borrowed from the Persians by Alexander the Great and then by subsequent kings generally" [*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s.v. "διάδημα"]. Obviously, this concept was around long before Alexander the Great but he took note of it and introduced its use into the Greek culture. Drawings of the Lord returning to planet earth at the Second Coming that have Him wearing one or more metal type gold, jeweled crowns are inaccurate. The diadems describing the Lord's headgear when He returns are "thin headbands, each worn over another....significance attaches to the fact that the horseman, who is identified as 'the Word of God', wears a multiplicity of crowns, undoubtedly an indication that the power and extent of his kingship far exceeds that of the dragon and the beast" [*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s.v. "διάδημα"]. "In ancient times the diadem was worn by kings as a badge of royalty; hence, emblematic of power and distinction" [*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "diadem"]. When a king was conquered, it was common for the victorious king to remove the diadem from his conquered foe's turban and place it on his own turban. This is the same symbolism that is exhibited in 2 Samuel 12:30 when David defeated Rabbah the king of Ammon and removed the conquered king's crown and placed it on his own head. This is the picture behind the "many diadems" the Christ will be wearing when He returns as the conquering King of Kings. It is not accurate to picture the "many diadems" as metal crowns stacked one on top of the other as I have seen in some artist's renderings of the Second Coming.

Dr. Wall provided a good explanation of this situation. "In the ancient Middle East, the turban worn by Persian monarchs was called a *diadem*. It was quite different from the *diadem* we normally think of when we speak of the regalia worn by a European king. In its basic meaning the word *diadem* refers to something that is 'wrapped around.' In the Middle East, the *diadem* could be the royal turban itself [what Abbott-Smith called a tiara], which was made by wrapping a long cloth about the head to form a headdress, or it could refer to a colored ribbon, usually blue and white, tied around the turban to indicate royalty. When a king conquered a kingdom, he then might require the vanquished king to bow before him as he placed his foot on his neck as a symbol of victory. The victorious king might also take the ribbon from the conquered king's turban and add it to his own.

If a man ruled over many kingdoms, he could be crowned with 'many crowns,' or *diadems*. We sing the hymn 'Crown Him with Many Crowns.' This hymn probably should not be thought of as a picture of placing a number of golden crowns on Jesus' head but rather as a picture of crowning an oriental monarch with a turban on which had been wrapped ribbons representing every nation of the earth, thus acknowledging Jesus as King of kings and Lord or [sic] Lords.

In the New Testament, *diadem* is used to refer to the kind of crown only Jesus gets. Believers do not get *diadems*" [Joe L. Wall, *Going for the God: Reward or Loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ*" p. 89]. This is the historical background for explaining the "many crowns" Jesus will be wearing when He returns. The diadems represent all the nations of the world He has conquered and will rule during His Millennial Kingdom. Obviously, no one can wear many turbans, but a large number of ribbons, the diadems, can be wrapped around one turban.

Isaiah 62:3 ³You will also be a crown [צִטְרָה, στέφανος] of beauty in the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem [דָּוָד, διάδημα] in the hand of your God.

Esther 8:15 ¹⁵Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold [צִטְרָה, στέφανος] and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

The translators who interpreted the Hebrew into the Greek Septuagint translated צִטְרָה by using the word στέφανος. This Hebrew word means a "crown, i.e., a precious metal adornment worn on the head often as a symbol of rulership or high status" [*Strong's Concordance*, Logos Electronic Ed.]. However, this Hebrew word can mean a crown or a wreath [James A. Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew: Old Testament*, s.v. "צִטְרָה"]. The first use of the word "crown" in Isaiah 62:3 may refer to a wreath made of precious metal. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that there is some overlap in the use of these words and a gold crown as we picture it is what is being described here. I don't want to dogmatically force these words into rigid meanings that cannot overlap because they may do so and they may carry a wider range of meaning. Yet, in Isaiah 62:3, there seems to be a difference between στέφανος and διάδημα. Esther 8:15 speaks about a large crown of gold which brings to mind our more common understanding of the makeup of a crown. But we also have to remember this was a Persian regime in which the kings wore turbans. Mordecai was not wearing a diadem; therefore, it is possible that Mordecai wore a crown as we think of it or it is possible he was wearing a gold wreath type of crown. We simply cannot tell from the text, however, a "large crown of gold" lends itself to thinking of a gold crown as we tend to think of them rather than a wreath fashioned from gold.

David conquered the king of Ammon and he wore a crown that seems to be exactly what we think of when we hear the word "crown" and it was translated in the Septuagint by the use of στέφανος. This crown doesn't seem to have had any possibility of being a wreath crown fashioned out of gold.

2 Samuel 12:30 ³⁰Then he took the crown [הַקִּטְוֹן, στέφανος] of their king from his head; and its weight was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head....

1 Chronicles 20:2 ²David took the crown [הַקִּטְוֹן, στέφανος] of their king from his head, and he found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there was a precious stone in it; and it was placed on David's head. And he brought out the spoil of the city, a very great amount.

The word διάδημα is used only three times in the New Testament and all three are in the book of Revelation. The first use refers to seven diadems on the head of the great red dragon (Rev. 12:3), the second use refers to ten diadems on the head of the beast (Rev. 13:1), and the third use refers to the Lord's "many diadems" on His turban as He returns to earth (Rev. 19:12). The fact that the dragon and the beast are wearing diadems speaks to the power and authority they have at the time. Some commentators downplay the significance of the diadem the Lord will be wearing by noting His enemies also wear diadems. That's true; they will be wearing diadems. However, the concept of wearing a diadem does not speak to the quality and godliness of the ruler; it simply identifies the fact of rule and the authority that accompanies a rulership position whether that authority and that ruler are good or evil. The Persian kings were certainly cruel, evil men, but they wore diadems on their turbans.

Revelation 12:3 ³Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems [διάδημα].

Revelation 13:1 ¹And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems [διάδημα], and on his heads were blasphemous names.

Revelation 19:12 ¹²His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems [διάδημα]; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

In Revelation 19:12, the Bible indicates Christ will be wearing "many diadems" when He returns but during the events leading to His crucifixion, He was forced to wear a crown of thorns. This was the Roman soldier's way of mocking His claim to be the King of Israel. They were mocking Him by putting a crown on Him that was not a king's crown, by placing a robe around his shoulders that was not a royal robe, and by giving him a staff that was only a shadow of the real thing.

Matthew 27:27–29 ²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. ²⁸They stripped Him and put a scarlet

[κόκκινος] robe on Him. ²⁹And after twisting together a crown [στέφανος] of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Of course, the Roman soldiers were mocking Him for His claim to be King of the Jews (Mt. 27:11) but He was just as He said He was, the King of Israel. Beyond that, He is not only King of the Jews but He is King of His entire creation. Royalty is not indicated by using the word στέφανος for a crown and these soldiers didn't consider Him to be royalty; they are ridiculing Him.

"The word *stephanos* is used to describe the crown that the Servant-Savior wore to His death on Calvary. In a twist of divine irony, though man sought to humiliate Him with a crown of thorns to wear and mocked Him as an imposter messiah-king, in reality His humiliation and suffering proved He truly is the Christ, and He achieved the greatest victory the world will ever know. He stands in perpetuity as the Victor of all victors and King of all kings who will wear a different crown, a monarch's crown, the *diadema*, when He returns to take back the earth" [Thomas L. Stegall, "Rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ" in *Freely By His Grace: Classical Free Grace Theology*, pp. 462-463]. The use of στέφανος for the crown of thorns is supremely accurate; Christ Jesus was the ultimate victorious One on the cross. He wore the victor's wreath crown first; the King's crown will be worn at His Second Coming to inaugurate His rule over the Messianic Kingdom.

As a side note, Matthew 27:28 seems to be contradicted by Mark 15:17 and John 19:2 concerning the color of the robe placed on Jesus during this time. Matthew writes that it was a "scarlet" robe [κόκκινος] while Mark and John refer to it as "purple" [πορφύρα].

Mark 15:17 ¹⁷They dressed Him up in purple [πορφύρα], and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him;

John 19:2 ²And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple [πορφύρα] robe on Him;

Scarlet, κόκκινος, means scarlet, pertaining to bright red obtained from the grain of a small bush which was full of little worms or maggots whose fluids were scarlet. Purple, πορφύρα, refers to the color purple resulting from the dye the purple mussel, a shellfish, provided [Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s.v. "κόκκινος" and "πορφύρα"]. These two dyes were the "most expensive dyes and thus most luxurious colors. The first would signify royalty [purple], the second authority [scarlet] (it was probably a worn officer's cloak)" [Grant R. Osborne, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*, p. 1030]. This robe was probably the

cloak of a Roman army officer as noted by Osborne and used as a prop for the robe of a king. The soldier's cloaks were red, however, BDAG noted this red cloak was called ἡ πορφύρα χλαμύς (the purple cloak) by a secular source (Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.150) referring to a military cloak or mantle worn by Roman soldiers [Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, “πορφύρα” and “χλαμύς”]. Another commentator writes, “They clothe him with a loose reddish purple outer garment worn by soldiers and travelers” (Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary: Matthew*, p. 414). Unger suggested the robe “...was apparently a soldier's cloak, so faded that it resembled royal purple” [Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Gospels*, p. 195] but the color change these two commentators reference is simply speculation and we already have a simple, reasonable explanation. It was referred to as a purple cloak even though it was red in color. Constable identified the robe as “probably the reddish purple cloak that Roman military and civil officials wore,” [Matthew 27:8] and concerning Mark 15:17 he said, “The Greek word *porphyran* elsewhere describes colors from bright red to deep blue” [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible*, pp. 6:252, 401]. Constable cited J. A. Alexander and his commentary on Mark for that statement, but I could not find any indication anywhere in the lexicons that πορφύρα meant anything other than “purple.” It could not find any reference indicating it could refer to a range of colors nor did I find a reference to reddish purple.

In conclusion, it seems to be clear that a διάδημα refers not to a crown as we think of it but to the ribbons tied around the royal Persian turban or tiara. This concept was subsequently adopted by others, notably Alexander the Great, and spread to other cultures. The victor's crown, or στέφανος, most often refers to a wreath type of crown. However, the word was used by the translators of the Septuagint to refer to a gold, jeweled, royal crown as we typically think of it. It is equally clear that the διάδημα and the στέφανος are two different types of crowns and the meaning of στέφανος seems to be capable of understanding in a broader way. Of the two words, διάδημα seems to be more precise than στέφανος. As always, we must allow context to determine the use of words in each specific instance. We also have to allow for the fact that perhaps we cannot be as precise in this matter as we would like to be. There is no dispute that when Paul was referring to rewards, he did so with the background and context of the award for the winner of a Greek athletic contest and that is why he always used the word στέφανος to refer to the believer's crown rewards. Paul never stated or even implied that believers will wear some sort of royal, rulership type of crown that Jesus will wear upon His return.

The crown of righteousness.

2 Timothy 4:6–8 ⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought [ἀγωνίζομαι] the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸in the future there is laid up for me the crown [στέφανος] 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.

This crown seems to be awarded to those who have lived a faithful life which is a component of sanctification salvation. Paul identifies several components that will be evaluated for this award: 1) fighting the good fight; 2) finishing the course; 3) keeping the faith; and 4) loving His appearing.

What does it mean to fight the good fight? Christians are surrounded by a constant, intense state of spiritual warfare whether we realize it or not. Satan's world system is actively opposing the Church. It is a struggle to remain faithful and it takes effort. Paul said he fought the good fight. Fought, ἀγωνίζομαι, is a verb in the perfect mood meaning it is completed action with continuing results. It is in the middle voice meaning we are active participants in this fight, or at least we should be active participants in it because this reward, the crown of righteousness, flows from fighting the good fight. It requires effort on our part and the word means to compete, fight, or struggle; to strive to do with intensity and effort. "...the word group is used with ref[erence] to opposition, conflict, and suffering" [*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s.v. "ἀγών"].

Many commentators believe this is referring to godly living, and it is, but that isn't the end of it. Fighting the good fight means not only resisting temptation and living a godly life, but it means combating the darkness in the world by preaching the gospel which was Paul's mission and by countering false teaching in the church and in the world. It is done by knowing and living out sound doctrine. Our fight is informed by the Word of God and we can be effective only to the extent that we employ it. Paul didn't call the Word of God the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) for no reason. We also fight the good fight by participating in and building up the body of Christ. The meaning of this word carries the concept of intensity, we get our English word "agony" from this word, and the sense of it goes beyond living a godly life and entails suffering, mental and/or physical [*The Oxford American College Dictionary*, s.v. "agony"]. Paul is saying that he stayed true to his ministry despite the hardships he endured in so doing. He stayed faithful to engage in the ministry to which he had been entrusted. Most of us are not called to the same mission, evangelism, to which Paul was entrusted, but we all have gifts we are to use to build and equip the body of Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:23–27 ²³...in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. ²⁴Five times I received from the Jews thirty-

nine lashes. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; ²⁷I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Paul recognized that he could fail to fight the good fight and he counseled Timothy, and by extension all of us who follow, that to live the life of a Christian is to live a life of persecution.

1 Corinthians 9:24–27 ²⁴Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

2 Timothy 3:12 ¹²Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Fighting the good fight is partnered with finishing the course and keeping the faith; in terms of rewards, these things are a unit. Perseverance is an important Christian sanctification trait. We don't retire from living a Christian life. We fight the good fight to the end just as Paul did. As long as we are able to continue on, continue on is what we are called to do. Obviously, we can all reach the point where we are limited by physical infirmities but even in that situation living the Christian life to the best of our ability is our responsibility. That is part of being a good steward of that which the Lord has entrusted to us. We are to know sound doctrine, guard it, and pass it on to others just as Paul counseled Timothy to do.

2 Timothy 1:13–14, 2:2 ¹³Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.... ²The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

It is somewhat unclear exactly what this crown of righteousness is. It may refer to righteousness as the reward itself, or it may be seen as the recognition given to the believer by the Lord for faithful, righteous behavior. The latter option seems the most viable to me. "Probably this was a reward to be given for pursuing the practical righteousness which pleases God. It is suggested by some, however, that it refers to

imputed righteousness which is even now possessed by believers, but in 'that day' of Christ's appearing will shine forth as a crown" [Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 288]. If imputed righteousness is the requirement, then all believers receive this crown and that is not suggested by the perfect middle use of ἀγωνίζομαι; if that were the case, it would be passive and it wouldn't be qualified by suggesting this crown is for those who "have loved His appearing."

We know that not every believer will love His appearing. Some will be ashamed (1 John 2:28) because they have not fought the good fight and finished the course well. Some people are more enamored of this life now than they are the prospect of eternal life in the presence of the Lord. Some people do not believe there are any rewards beyond justification salvation. "Jesus Christ is the Judge who will bestow the award in connection with his return, both to Paul and to all those whose righteous actions demonstrate their longing for Christ's return" [Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 249].

"The crown of righteousness is God's reward for a faithful and righteous life; and our incentive for faithfulness and holiness is the promise of the Lord's appearing. Because Paul loved His appearing and looked for it, he lived righteously and served faithfully. This why Paul used the return of Jesus Christ as a basis for his admonitions in this chapter...If we love Christ's appearing, live in obedience to His will, and do the work He has called us to do, we will be crowned" [Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, vol. 2, pp. 255-256].