

The Doctrine of Crowns

Introduction--The Bema

1. At the judgment seat of Christ, or the **Bema** (as it is called in the Greek), crowns will be awarded.

1.1 The **Bema** was a place where a king, judge or procurator might sit to adjudicate a matter or reward an outstanding athlete or military hero. It is from the **Bema** that the judge would issue punishments or rewards.

1.1.1 With reference to the subject of crowns, the judgment seat of Christ relates more to rewards.

1.1.2 It was at the **Bema**, during the Isthmus Games, that a winning contestant received his special reward called a **Stephanos**.

1.1.3 It is to this analogy the New Testament speaks when it describes Church Age believers appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. Rom 14:10 and 2Co 5:10

1.2 The word **Bema** appears several places in the New Testament.

1.2.1 Jesus was brought before Pilate's **Bema**.

Mat 27:19 When he was set down on the "**judgment seat**", his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Joh 19:13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the "**judgment seat**" in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

1.2.2 Herod Agrippa made his final speech from a **Bema**. Acts 12:21.

Acts 12:21 And upon a set day Herod Agrippa, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his "**throne**", and made an oration unto them.

1.2.3 Gallio, the governor of Achaia, judged Paul from a **Bema**.

Acts 18:16 And he drave them from the "**judgment seat**".

1.2.4 Paul was brought before a **Bema** (the judgment seat of Festus) on his way to Rome.

Acts 25:6 And when Festus had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the "**judgment seat**" commanded Paul to be brought ...

Acts 25:10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's "**judgment seat**", where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest ...

Definition and Concept:

1. Let's look at crowns as they relate to the judgment seat of Christ.
2. Paul describes the events taking place at the **Bema**, where crowns are awarded, in 1Co 3:11-15.
3. The word for crown in the New Testament is **Stephanos**. It was actually a wreath. The word appears in Scripture to describe

Jesus' crown of thorns,

Mat 27:29 And when they had platted a "**crown**" of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

something of value,

1Co 9:25 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.

Phi 4:1 Therefore, 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!

1Th 2:19 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?

2Ti 4:8 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.

Jam 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the "**crown**" of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Rev 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 (church at Smyrna - 100-300 A.D.), 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.

1Pe 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the "**crown**" of glory that will never fade away.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon to you, the church at Philadelphia - the church just before the rapture). Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your "**crown**".

the church resident in heaven--casting their crowns before the throne of God,

Rev 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.

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their “**crowns**” before the throne and say:

power given the Antichrist,

Rev 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a “**crown**” was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

demon warriors,

Rev 9:6 During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

Rev 9:7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like “**crowns**” of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.

Rev 9:8 Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.

Israel divided into twelve tribes,

Rev 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a “**crown**” of twelve stars:

and the royalty of Jesus just before He returns.

Rev 14:14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a “**crown**” of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

4. At the **Bema** there will be three crowns awarded to believers:

4.1 a crown of righteousness to the believer who gets to maturity,

4.2 a crown of life to the believer who gets to maturity and holds it under pressure

4.3 and a crown of glory to the pastor-teacher who does his job.

4.4 The crown of righteousness and the crown of life would seem to be available to all believers, whereas the crown of glory is reserved only for the pastor-teacher.

Summary

5. The crown of righteousness is awarded to the ordinary believer who reaches a level of spiritual maturity deemed special.

2Ti 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2Ti 4:8 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.

5.1 R. B. Thieme says of this crown, "It would seem to be available to those who have acquired enough doctrine to appreciate and anticipate the Rapture of the Church and the blessed events following."

5.2 This crown of righteousness is mentioned only once in Scripture, where Paul speaks of his acquiring it because he anticipates his death at the hand of Nero because of his stand for Christ.

6. The crown of life is available to all believers who not only reach maturity but are able to hold that level even amid significant pressures.

Rev 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.

6.1 There are those who see this crown as available only to believers of the Tribulation.

6.2 This, however, flies in the face of the fact that in every age believers are deluged with pressure and testing from old Satan under the permissive will of God.

6.3 Its appropriateness for believers in all ages would seem to be strengthened by the fact that James mentions the crown of life.

Jam 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

7. The crown of glory is available only to the pastor-teacher who is faithful to the task of studying and teaching, both when it is convenient and when it is not convenient.

1Pe 5:2 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;

1Pe 5:3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

1Pe 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

8. Fittingly, in our new natures we are seen in heaven casting our crowns at the feet of Christ. Rev 4:10-11

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

Rev 4:11 "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."

9. Crowns are awarded after appropriate testing at the **Bema**, the **Bema** follows the Rapture of the Church.

9.1 Your right pastor-teacher will be with you at the **Bema**, for in a sense it is his evaluation too.

Phi 4:1 Therefore, 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!

1Th 2:19 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?

1Th 2:20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

10. The **Stephanos** in ancient Rome was a wreath given to both athletes and military heroes who had distinguished themselves.

10.1 With it went a large monetary stipend, a parade honoring the recipient (much like a ticker-tape parade for the team winning the World Series), a significant land grant such as 1000 acres on the Brazos between Waco and Bryan and a lifetime exemption from taxation for self and family.