

3 Crowns of Jesus

Introduction. In 1945, Russian and German troops were battling over Budapest. Some Hungarian officers fled to Austria, taking with them Hungary's crown of St. Stephen. It was given to the first king of Hungary, Stephen I, by Pope Sylvester II in the year 1000. It was then 977 years old and the crown jewel of Hungary. American troops captured the officers and the crown and moved it to Fort Knox, Kentucky where it was stored for 32 years to protect it from the Soviets. When Jimmy Carter was president, the crown was returned to Hungary.

Needless to say, crowns mean a lot to people. They represent regality and identity. But they're largely ceremonial. When Jesus came to Earth, He possessed three crowns that are critical to understanding His nature and work, along with understanding our future and our world.

I. A Crown of Suffering

- A. In Matthew 27:27-29, the Roman soldiers created a crown of thorns for Jesus.
- B. The Jews have mocked Jesus as Messiah (Matthew 26:67-68); here the Roman soldiers ridicule Him as king.
 - 1. The whole scene, while it degenerates in v. 30 into physical abuse, is primarily one of humiliation rather than of torture. The soldiers dress Jesus as a pretend king, with a robe of royal color and a crown.
 - 2. For a crown, the soldiers form a wreath of thorns from palm spines or acanthus and crush it down on Jesus' head in imitation of the circlet on the coins of Tiberius Caesar.
- C. Hebrews 5:7 really shows the emotional weight of what Jesus went through. Isaiah 53:3-8 made it very clear that the Servant who would come to save the Jews and Gentiles would suffer.
- D. Because Jesus suffered, He knows how to handle people who go through a lot (Hebrews 2:18; cp. John 14:1; 16:33). He is with us and instilled us with ability to cope with life (Philippians 4:19) and be victorious (Romans 8:37-39).

II. A Crown of Honor

- A. In Hebrews 2:9, Jesus is crowned with glory and honor.
- B. We don't see Psalm 8 fulfilled in the human race at large, but it's fulfilled profoundly and completely in the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus according to God's gracious plan for mankind's salvation.
 - 1. Jesus has become our "captain" or "pioneer" of salvation (v. 10) and will restore the God-given destiny of all mankind (Revelation 22:1-2).
 - 2. Restoring humans to God's original intent required cleansing from sin (1:3) that could be provided only by sacrificial death (chapters 8-10).
- C. Certainly all of this is worthy of our praise to Jesus (Philippians 2:9-11). For voluntarily going through this (John 10:17-18), He's worthy of glory and honor (Revelation 5:11-14). And it's not only Jesus Himself who gains glory through suffering, but all His faithful followers (cp. Romans 6:8-11; 2 Timothy 2:11-12).

III. A Crown of Victory

- A. In Revelation 14:14-16, Jesus is crowned as a conqueror.
 - 1. This section follows a brief pause to encourage the faithfulness of the saints. John now is returning to the theme of divine judgment on the world. He does this by first describing the judgment in terms of a harvest (vv. 14-20) and then by the seven bowl plagues (chapters 15-16).
 - 2. The golden crown symbolizes Jesus' victory over the nations and His regal authority (cp. 19:11-16).
- B. No unrighteous nation will stand in His presence (Proverbs 14:34). We should respect our government and pray for it (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:2), but Daniel 4:17, 32 showed us that God brings up nations and He tears down nations — not arbitrarily — but based on their righteousness (cp. Isaiah 10:5-11; Jeremiah 1:10; Habakkuk 1:1-2:20). John shows that Jesus does the same.
- C. Nations can't survive His power and withering retribution (Revelation 14:10; 16:19). The assurance of victory demonstrates how powerful He is over sin and death (Matthew 9:1-7; John 5:21). Just like Jesus will judge the nations, He'll judge each of us (John 5:26-29; Acts 17:31). This is a situation that you want to be on the right side of when all things come to an end.

Conclusion. So many people are turned off by a name. That's why so many religious groups have went to a more community-minded name for their churches. These people need to be taught about the singleminded nature of Christ's church — if that opportunity ever opens up.

In the meantime, we can teach people about Jesus Christ. He's the world's most prominent figure, and He's ultimately the answer to mankind's problems.

The essence of the crowns of Jesus tells a narrative that mankind needs to hear, and one which will hopefully convert them — not to denominationalism or ecumenicalism — but to the gospel of Christ, to walking in holiness as His disciple.

There's one more point that you need to think about today. Just like the Master, you've got a crown. It's been promised to you through the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10). I want to finish today about keeping your crown. The saints in Philadelphia were told to hold fast to what they have so that no one would take their crown (Revelation 3:11).

Throughout life, there will always be someone or something trying to take your crown, people trying to make you look bad, or tempting you to do evil. What they're really doing is trying to get your crown. Don't let them have it.

I'm asking you to keep your crown on. You may have been through temptation, disappointment, or loss. You have to hold fast to what God has given you through Jesus Christ. We imitate Him and the people like Him (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17). Reach the fulness of your destiny by holding on to what's been given to you.

I am deeply indebted to Chris Reeves for the use of his material.