

Our Crown

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 10/31/2015

When I was working in Pasadena in the 1980's, we really thought that the **work of God** was going strong. There were lots of radio stations and lots of publications. We had huge congregations in almost every major town in the country – and many around the world.

But, you know the story: Men rose up among us with strange doctrines and teachings. I witnessed the terrible devastation of the congregations. Not only did we lose some 70% of the folks in the congregations – we lost ministers and evangelists as well. When the dust settled – there was great lost.

1Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

This Corinthian congregation had not grown much spiritually.

Paul explains some **basic aspects** of true Christianity to them.

1Corinthians 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

1Corinthians 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase**.

Paul explains that when someone grows spiritually – it was not the minister who brought about that growth. **God gave the increase**.

1Corinthians 3:7 So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase.

1Corinthians 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive **his own reward according to his own labor**.

A minister's reward is commensurate with how hard he worked with God to bring about results.

1Corinthians 3:9 For **we are laborers together** with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

1Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.

1Corinthians 3:11 For other **foundation** can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1Corinthians 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

1Corinthians 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall **receive a reward**.

1Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The Scriptures equate fiery trials with selection and refinement.

The sad thing is that much the same thing happened to Paul as happened in **Pasadena** and the Worldwide Church of God.

2 Timothy 1:15 This thou know, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me.

After all the hard work that Paul put into his congregations – they fell away to apostasy. Yes, Paul counted that as a great loss. But, Paul did not lose his **salvation** or his personal **reward** for all of his hard work – in fact Paul's words are still feeding the Church of God today. There are many false teaching going around today that cause people to take their minds off of what our focus should be.

One account that I heard recently is a teaching that you can **lose your crown** – and still make it into the Kingdom. The adherents of that **wrong teaching** interpret Paul's words in 1Corinthians 3:15 that way. They think that is what is being said here. They teach that Paul **lost his crown** but he himself shall be saved.

The Scriptures do not bear that out. Near the end of his life, Paul says to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

2 Timothy 4:8 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**.

2 John :8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought [worked for], but that we **receive a full reward**.

Mark 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, **he shall not lose his reward**.

Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and **my reward** is with me, to give every man **according as his work** shall be.

Galatians 6:7, 8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The principle is clear, as Christians we reap the **good** we sow, and we reap also the **wickedness** we sow unless we repent of it.

What will it mean to have a **crown** in God's Kingdom? One thing that we in God's Church must understand is that we are **not** now being called **only** for salvation. God has not called and selected us just so that we can be assured of being in His Kingdom. The true brethren in God's Church have been called for a very **special** function.

The purpose of our **reigning** with Jesus Christ throughout the millennium is to take part in bringing **others** to salvation. That is what **our crown** is all about.

Revelation 5:10 [Jesus] hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall **reign** on the earth.

The Holy Scriptures speak of our having a crown in the next life. The problem that we sometime make in this commonplace world is in seriously underestimating the significance of our role in the Kingdom of God. We are not even in kindergarten now compared to what it will be like as spiritual beings in the world tomorrow.

1Corinthians 2:9 As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

It is too great – it is too magnificent to even imagine – but we should at least know what the Scriptures tell us. Remember what an incredible new concept it was for us when we were first being called – and we learned that we were destined to be **God-beings** – in the very family of God. The world believes that a person pretty much stays the same in the after-life – and just goes to heaven.

We learned that, not only will we be greatly changed – but we will be in the **God-family** and be like God. The bible has a lot to say about what we will be doing when that time comes. The Bible teaches us **greater truths** by comparing and contrasting the physical things we can comprehend to the **greater spiritual reality** that **is** the Kingdom of God.

God's word tells us we will have a crown. What are we to gather from that?

A crown has historically been a symbol of **rulership**.

Our future crown will represent our qualifications to rightly represent the way of God's Kingdom on this earth.

Our crown will mean that we have the authority to serve as an agent for Christ.

Only those who are **crowned** will meet God's qualifying prerequisite to say, "This is the way walk ye in it."

Isaiah 30:20-21 Your eyes shall see thy teachers: And your ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, **This is the way, walk ye in it**, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

Our crown is about the **standing** we will have in God's Kingdom.

We are warned to take this matter very seriously. It is possible to **lose** our crowns – we can be disqualified. Those who cannot wait to be in **control** of others will never be in charge. God does not work that way. The Kingdom is not about being 'Boss' over others. It is not about wanting and being able to tell other people what to do – and having it **our** way.

Having a crown is about being able and willing to stand on our own two feet – while remaining as meek and humble as Jesus is. Now, that is a monumental task!

But it is a false humility to say, "I don't care if I have a crown or not, just as long as I'm in the Kingdom of God." I've heard folks say that they would be happy to be a **door-keeper** in the Kingdom, and nothing more. Some have **erroneously** concluded that you can lose you crown and still attain unto salvation.

So the question becomes, is anyone able to **reign** with Christ without a crown? Jesus says the He **works** and his Father **works** (John 5:17).

What kind of work would someone be doing for a thousand years if they were unqualified to **reign** with Christ? What would they be doing with their time – sleeping and loafing?

There is a **purpose** in the Church brethren being called now. Our Christian walk is all about overcoming – now, in this age.

Revelation 2:26 And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give **power over the nations**:

That means reigning, ruling and teaching nations of peoples. If we refuse to be overcomers – how will we ever be able to teach others to be overcomers? Jesus said:

John 16:33 ... In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; **I have overcome** the world (Revelation 3:21).

He was setting us an example that we must follow in His steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

First, let's **establish** that we do receive a **crown** – by looking at a few examples.

Revelation 2:10 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**.

1 Corinthians 9:25 And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but **we an incorruptible crown**.

1Peter 5:4 When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a **crown of glory** that fades not away.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive **the crown of life**, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Now let's add a little understanding to what we know about the Kingdom of God. I suppose we've spent a lot of our time in God's Church – just wanting to be there in the Kingdom...

But let's go a little **farther** in our thinking and ask the question what we will be doing with our time, our power, our might **and our crown** in the Kingdom?

Now here is a concept that we are not unfamiliar with: We will be **joint-heirs** with Christ (Romans 8:17). That means – incredibly – that we are to **receive** whatever Jesus has received.

With Jesus Christ ruling as King over all the earth, we, as **co-heirs** with Him (Romans 8:17), will be regarded as princes **ruling** under Him. He will give His true followers positions of rulership in His Kingdom, where, it is specifically stated, "we shall reign on the earth."

Matthew 25:22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

Matthew 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will **make thee ruler** over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Keep in mind that a **crown** is indicative of **rulership**.

Matthew 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

Matthew 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

Matthew 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Matthew 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Matthew 25:28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

Matthew 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Let's notice what God says about those who have **been called** – but refuse to strive for the Kingdom.

Matthew 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into **outer darkness**: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus does not say that they get to sit around heaven all day and watch the others do the work of God.

Notice how Jesus will **deal out the crowns of rulership** when He returns in power.

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory:

Matthew 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

Matthew 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit the Kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

We **inherit the Kingdom** – not just a **place in** it – but a position of **reigning** in the Kingdom that we have inherited with Jesus Christ.

Reigning requires a **crown**. Jesus says:

Revelation 3:21 To him that overcomes will I grant to **sit with me in my throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, **crowned with glory and honor**.

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man **take thy crown**.

Luke 19:17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been **faithful in a very little**, have thou authority over ten cities.

That takes a **crown** in order to **reign** over ten cities. Jesus is not talking about city government here – over the sewer and water systems. No, He is speaking about the **work** the resurrected Church brethren will continue to do in the world tomorrow.

The **purpose** of the **Church** is nothing less than to ultimately bring all mankind to be of one Spirit – bringing the entire world to salvation as co-saviors with Jesus Christ - beginning in the millennium and on through the Last Great Day.

The Bible uses the word **Zion** [Sion] when speaking of the work of the Church brethren in the future.

It is a fact that Jesus Christ came to this earth as our Savior. But do we comprehend that we are to follow His example and also be **co-saviors** with Christ?

Psalms 132:13-14 “The Lord has chosen **Zion**; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

We know that we are the temple – God dwells in us. Brethren, make the connection here that God dwells in both **Zion** and the **saints** – because they are one and the same!

The saints are, “...an habitation of God...” (Ephesians 2:22)

Let’s go through some steps here. These terms need to be studied in order to become familiar with them.

Isaiah equates **Zion** with the **Holy City, Jerusalem**. They are one and the same thing.

Isaiah 52:1 “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O **Zion**; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the Holy City.”

And, the **saints** – the Church Brethren - have the name of the city of God, which is New Jerusalem – because they are also one and the same!

Revelation 3:12 “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the **city** of my God, which is **New Jerusalem**.”

When we put these few verses together, we see that **Zion** is the **resurrected Church**. What we find shows that the Old and New Testament Scriptures are consistent in confirming that Jesus Christ will marry the Bride – the saints - the Church – Spiritual Israel – Mount Zion – The Firstborn – New Jerusalem – the City of the Lord. Zion is the eternal city Abraham sought (Hebrews 11:10).

Notice how Paul ties some of these descriptive terms together when speaking of the resurrected saints – the Bride of Christ. Paul says:

Hebrews 12:22-23 “You are come unto Mt. **Zion**, and unto the City of the Living God, the Heavenly **Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly, and **Church of the**

Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

That includes the saints! “The spirits of righteous men made perfect,” is an ideal picture of the prepared Bride of Christ. This is how Isaiah describes the glory and riches of New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ:

Isaiah 59:20-21 “The Redeemer shall come to Zion...My covenant [is] with them, says the Lord; My Spirit is upon you... and they shall call you, the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 59:20- 21, 60:14)

The world is entirely blinded to what the true **purpose** of the Church is.

New Jerusalem is called the Bride because it encompasses all who are the Bride. Jesus shares his intimate feelings for His Bride with us – because it is His intent that we be His Bride. Let the Bible interpret the Bible.

Revelation 21:9-10 “Come hither, I will show you the **Bride**, the Lamb's Wife...and he showed me that great city, the Holy **Jerusalem**, descending out of heaven from God.”

The **Bride** of Christ and Holy **Jerusalem** are one and the same!

Here is why we wear a crown. God has great plans for His Church – yet in the future. We saw how prophetically, **Eve** is the physical type of the **spiritual Church**. In the same way that **Eve is the mother** of all physical men – the role of the Church in tomorrow’s world is to be the **Mother** of all who are becoming **spiritual**.

The Bride of Christ and Holy Jerusalem are one and the same! That is why Paul says:

Galatians 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the **mother of us all**.

The Church – the saints – the Bride – the Body of Christ is called by God for the purpose of being the firstfruits of God's salvation in order to **call the entire world to salvation** – first in the millennium and then for all mankind – **reigning** and ruling as kings, priests, servants, teachers, and co-saviors with Christ.

Obadiah :21 And **saviors** shall come up on mount **Zion** [the Church] to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

The "saviors" are the glorified members of God's Church. They are "co-saviors with Christ."

Isaiah 40:10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his **reward** is with him, and his **work** before him.

Beginning in the millennium, the Church, which will have become the Bride of Christ, will be God's instrumentality in aiding Jesus Christ in bringing about salvation to all mankind.

End: Our Crown