

Rewards at The JUDGMENT SEAT of CHRIST

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CROWN here is *stephanos* in distinction to *diadema*

Stephanos
wreath, the prize,
awarded to the Victor of the games, to athletes,
but also as military Victors,

while
Diadema
is Royal Crown !

Start with Church of Smyrna..

There are several reasons why we will start with Smyrna.

- (1) Is one of the most Christ-like churches in history;
- (2) Is one of the primary reasons is that you will note that the **CROWN** is given to the assembly, not just one person but the entire assembly is mentioned. Which lets us know and encourages us that an entire assembly can receive reward of this **CROWN** at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- (3) Each of the **CROWNS** distributed at the Judgment Seat of Christ are associated with some aspect of the Christian life and here this **CROWN** is related to extreme adverse suffering.

Let us talk about where the city got its name!

From its primary *product!*

Its primary money maker was the export of an ***aromatic extract***. This extract or spice was used in ancient world for embalming the dead.

Smyrna:

Transliteration of the Greek ***smurna*** translated: **myrrh!**

A Spice, An extract, produced by incisions made on a small thorny tree, droplets soon hardened into a bitter aromatic gum, used in incenses, and perfume used also medically:

Heavily used to embalm the dead. The extract is used for joyful occasions as perfume but also associated with lamentations over the dead.

Revelation 2:8-10

8

“And to the angel (messenger) **of the church** (assembly) **in Smyrna** (Smyrna is also called *Glory of Asia*; **it was center of Caesar worship of all of the Roman Empire. *birthplace of Homer.*)
write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, (of course this refers to JESUS CHRIST) **says this:**

9

'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), (no Prosperity Gospel) **and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.**

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.

POVERTY, TRIBULATION, DIRECT ATTACKS FROM SATAN:

According to the way many Christians think, (Job's 3 friends) these believers were doing all wrong! ***They were deserving of what they were getting... yet this church is one of only 2 doing it right!*** Yet they are small, poor, and suffering!

And at the Judgment Seat of Christ they will be rewarded with **CROWNS**. And people the most assuring words in all this are the words at the beginning of verse 9 where Jesus says... **I know.**

I KNOW your tribulations.

I KNOW your poverty.

I KNOW those who slander against you and plot against you.

I understand all you are going through!

*And I have prepared an award for you
that will shine all through eternity.*

When suffering, adversity just keeps coming- people often look for somewhere else to go... that has got to be another church, somewhere where all this tribulation is not present.

But Jesus Christ message is not to look for a way out but His challenge is to Fear not and be Faithful.

Be faithful we cannot do this in the flesh, faithfulness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, so what JESUS CHRIST is telling them, is to continue to walk by Faith in the Holy Spirit and He will cause you to be Faithful.

until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

They suffer together—encourage One Another and in the future they will be rewarded together—This is really going to be something wonderful to watch at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

11 **'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'**

Before we examine **the *Wreath of Life***
let us take a quick look at **CROWNS**.
How did the people throughout the Roman Empire
and Jews understand **CROWNS**.

FROM BAKER ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE,

CROWN refers to a Headpiece symbolizing honor or high office.

The Old Testament refers to three kinds of **CROWNS**
in addition to using the word metaphorically.

One type of **CROWN** was worn by the high priest and Hebrew kings.

The high priest's "**HOLY CROWN**" was a gold plate engraved with the words "**HOLY TO THE LORD**" fastened to the front of a turban (Exodus 29:6; 39:30). It symbolized his consecration as the people's representative before God.

The Hebrew kings wore a **CROWN** light enough to be worn into battle (2 Samuel 1:10); perhaps a narrow band of silk studded with jewels. Like the high priest's, the king's **CROWN** also indicated a divinely appointed office (2 Kings 11:12; Psalm 89:39; 132:18).

A second type of **CROWN** was a massive gold and jeweled symbol of office worn by pagan kings and idols (2 Samuel 12:30; Esther 1:11). The prophet Zechariah placed such a **CROWN** on Joshua the high-priest to indicate the union of royal and priestly functions (Zechariah 6:11, 14).

A third type of **CROWN** was a wreath of flowers used at a banquet to symbolize joy and celebration (Isaiah 28:1).

The word "**CROWN**" is used metaphorically to indicate rule or royalty, glory or honor (Job 19:9; Psalm 8:5; Ezra 16:12), joy (Ezekiel 23:42), or pride (Job 31:36; Isaiah 28:3).

In the New Testament, the most common word for **CROWN** means a laurel wreath worn at banquets or given as a civic or military honor. The apostle Paul alluded to its use as an athletic prize when he urged Christians to be disciplined in striving for a “**CROWN**” that would not wither (1 Corinthians 9:25 KJV; 2 Timothy 2:5). Paul regarded his converts as his “**JOY** and **CROWN**” (Philippines 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19).

A victor’s wreath symbolizes the glory of Christ (Hebrews 2:7, 9) and the eternal life of Christians who have persevered (James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10; 3:11). In the Book of Revelation the victories of the locusts (9:7), the woman (12:1), and Christ (6:2; 14:14) are symbolized by laurel crowns. A different Greek word, meaning a royal crown, is used for the diadems on the heads of the dragon (12:3), the beast from the sea (13:1), and Christ (19:12).

Jesus’ crown of thorns was a circlet formed from a prickly shrub, an ironic parody of a victor’s wreath (Mark 15:17, 18). Its combination with the robe, scepter (Matthew 27:27-29), and satirical inscription on the cross that Jesus was “the King of the Jews” (Mark 15:26), were all meant to mock him as a defeated messianic aspirant¹.

Before we examine the Wreath of Life
let us look at a few references
to **CROWNS** not awarded.

Crown of Thorns

CROWN of LOVE: Jesus' **CROWN OF THORNS** was a circlet formed from a prickly shrub, an ironic parody of a victor's wreath (Mark 15:17, 18). Its combination with the robe, scepter (Matthew 27:27-29), and satirical inscription on the cross that Jesus was "the King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26), were all meant to mock him as a defeated messianic aspirant .

We have seen that loving as JESUS CHRIST loved will not make you look great and strong to the world and here the **CROWN** of Love is a **CROWN** of Thorns — worn by JESUS CHRIST in loving mankind—what He got for His love was ***CROWN OF THORNS***. Matthew 27:29; Mark 5:17; Gospel of John 19:2 and 5.

Then, there is the **Incorruptible CROWN**

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

24

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run,
(athlete) **but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way**
that you may win. (Every believer can win the wreath.)

25

And 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. (King James)
corruptible crown and incorruptible crown;

(NIV) ***Crown that will not last and Crown that will last forever;***

(NASV) ***Perishable wreath, and imperishable.***

Here – the NAS – more correctly **wreath** (just wished they had been so consistent all through the New Testament.)

Now this designation **imperishable** or **incorruptible** refers to the quality of **all the CROWNS** we will be looking at that are received at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Now we begin looking at the '**CROWNS**' '**Wreathes**' mentioned in respect of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

CROWN OF LIFE

This **CROWN** is for a select few in God's plan, this is for continuing to walk by Faith under severe suffering and testing, for not giving in to fear, for not leaving, not deserting. For being faithful even to death.

This **CROWN** is also mentioned in James 1:12

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.

From this verse we see that this wreath is given with two aspects:

- (1) First persevering under suffering.
- (2) And then to those who love Him.

Let us compare the qualifications of this reward in these two passages. (Revelation 2:8-11 and James 1:12)

James		Revelation 2
<i>under trial</i>	>	<i>Tested</i>
<i>once approved</i>	>	<i>do not fear; be faithful</i>
<i>receive CROWN of life</i>	>	<i>I will give you the CROWN of life</i>
<i>to those who love Him</i>	>	<i>endure tribulation; poverty, Blasphemy; suffer; cast into prison.</i>

All Christians – every one of you – have the opportunity to win the Wreath of Life.

Joe Wall words this very well:

“When Christians gather to pray for one another, and when they are truly honest with one another, they discover that all of them have problems and pain. Some trials have their roots in their relationship with their children or with their parents.

Some Christians struggle with the result of childhood abuse, others have major problems in their marriages or in their businesses.

Still others go under persecution at work or at school because of their faith.

Many Christians in this country have gone to jail for their stand on **MORAL ISSUES**, and in many nations of the world large numbers of believers have ‘faced’ and ‘do face prison and death, for their Faith.’ “

The point is that every believer will have the opportunity to receive this valued reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ for their perseverance in their Love of Jesus Christ in the power of His Spirit.

The secret to receiving this reward from JESUS CHRIST is found in the word **Who perseveres** in James 1:12.

It is a Present Active Indicative which means this should characterize your life. The Greek word is the compound ***hupomeno*** which is made up of ***hupo*** –under and ***meno*** –to remain... to remain under – any pressure that comes into your life to move you away from your Love of JESUS CHRIST.

And this includes remaining under the pressure of sin. As confusing as this may sound, note that both David and Samson, {known for their sins} are both mentioned in the great chapter on Heroes of Faith in Hebrews 11. Surprising to a number of self-righteous Christians is that some believers they thought were not even saved will receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ while they will be passed over of rewards. Many Christians who wrestle with some trends of sin or who battle in keeping their Faith, but in the final analysis they remained Faithful to the Lord.

C. I. Scofield, divorced, an alcoholic, which he will fight throughout his life will receive several different awards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Don't you ever give up on Christ or on yourself as His Servant.

He will never give up on you and is ready to be your friend throughout your tribulations, ready to hand you an award as His Faithful servant.

Don't listen to what others say, listen only to the loving, encouraging words of JESUS CHRIST.

"A person who perseveres may stumble, he may hurt deeply, and he may cry out to God as King David did repeatedly in the Psalms, but ultimately he remains true to his Lord, returning to Him for comfort and hope" ... Joe Wall.

And he will receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ while those self-righteous believers who judged and maligned him will stand ashamed. (1 John 2:28)

The important question is:

How to Persevere under Suffering and under Tribulations?



First, by maintaining in the tribulation a thinking in terms of eternity! –**living in light of eternity**–

[examples:]

A college student fighting through one course of study, but he/she maintains hope of graduation in the future.

Or one in prison, discouraged by the day-to-day shackles he perseveres thinking of the future date of being release from prison.

Or a soldier under the daily pressures of war perseveres in Hopes of that day when the war is over.

So, it is with the Christian persevering through the Tribulations of Life and Sin and Failures and Attacks and Discouragements... perseveres living in the **Hope**—confidence of eternity with his/her Savior-Friend, Jesus the Christ.

Note carefully in both Revelation 2 and James 1 is the assurance of standing before JESUS CHRIST at the Judgment Seat of Christ and receiving rewards for persevering.

James 1:12

12

And I will give you the crown of life... he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

The knowledge, the belief in this coming day will be strong enough to persevere through all suffering and tribulation.

And of course: **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

16

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

17

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

18

while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.



The assurance that we have been graciously supplied with the supernatural inner power of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 3:5 and

- 1 In Galatians 5:16 if you will *walk in* the Holy Spirit He will give you Victory over the inner struggle. Especially, in times of tribulation when your flesh nature wants to quit the Holy Spirit is there to give you the power to persevere.

- 2 Then in Galatians 5:18 you can be led of the Spirit when you do not know where to go or what to do ...
- 3 If you live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit Galatians 5:25 you will always return to the Lord after a moment of lapse of Faith.

IN TIMES OF SUFFERING OR TRIBULATION.

LOVE

God's great comfort to every believer —no matter the circumstance of your life—God loves you and He will pour His love into you by Faith in His Holy Spirit.

And oh, my dear friends, never overlook the fruit of the Holy Spirit

JOY

While we will look at this under the **CROWN OF JOY**, but in the struggles of life of the believer the Holy Spirit pours into our souls the strength of love through this joy.

PEACE

Here is the one that when you cry out to God in the middle of the night, not for happiness, not for wealth, but *please God just give me some inner peace at this time in my life.* He will pour this security of peace through His Spirit.

PATIENCE

Ah, here is the perseverance that the reward of the **CROWN** of Life is dependent. And this is freely, graciously given to you during the most difficult times of your life.

KINDNESS

One of the regrets after going through difficult times is when we were without kindness to others. Well the Holy Spirit has you covered as to how you will treat others in times of Tribulation... This is often called "The conduct of Spiritual Love"

GOODNESS

Sometimes in difficulties of life, while we are suffering, our character is wounded, we are without goodness, but here is the Mercy of God in that He supplies us with His Goodness through or by means of His Spirit.

FAITHFULNESS

Along with Patience this is the one aspect of our Christian life that we should cherish... remaining Faithful to God, to JESUS CHRIST.

In Revelation 2:10 JESUS CHRIST utters these words:

be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.

But oh, my Lord, I am so overwhelmed with all that is going on in my life... to which our loving-Savior-Friend responds...

I know your tribulations...

*and I have given you my Spirit that He will enable you to be Faithful. And then I will give you the **CROWN OF LIFE**.*

GENTLENESS When my flesh, becomes angry with the difficulties of life, that are going on in my family, in my life, angry with others, how thankful we are for the **gentleness** from your spirit in our dealings with others.

SELF-CONTROL The sweet victory supplied by His Spirit in the midst of adversity. The Self-Control to be Patient and Faithful to my Savior Friend.

How do we Persevere under the Tribulations of Life?

- I Living in light and anticipation of eternity future.**
- II Living in the Power and Leading of the Holy Spirit.**
- III Increasing in the knowledge of God
Colossians. 1:1-10 and**

Growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. 2 Peter 3:18

These mean that in the midst of **CRISIS, SUFFERING, you go to where the teaching of the Word of God can be found, even when you don't feel like it, even when you don't want to go,**

you persevere and **you continue to grow in the knowledge of God and of JESUS CHRIST your Savior-Friend.**

Then there is the Question **WHY?**

WHY must I suffer this way?

WHY must I have to go through this tribulation?

WHY must I suffer?

Almost every Pastor-Teacher who studies the Word of God has a list in answering this question.

I shall relay the list by Joe Wall.

- 1 Suffering in life ultimately will bring glory to God.
Philippians 1:20
- 2 Suffering can enhance our witness for Christ.
2 Corinthians 4:8-11
- 3 God uses suffering to develop godly characteristics in us such as patience, endurance and humility. James 1:2-3;
2 Corinthians 12:7
- 4 God sometimes uses suffering in our lives to illustrate divine truth to others. Life of the Prophet Hosea.
- 5 Suffering sometimes is used by God as divine discipline for our sins. Hebrews 12:5-6

- 6 God uses suffering to more fully manifest the sufficiency of His Grace in us. 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Believer Do Not fear death! Do Not fear life!

With all disappointments in life
—all the hurts, tribulations, even painful death,—
grasp the significance of your short sojourn in life!

Few in America have suffered this kind of death
but many have, are and will suffer to the point of death
— and remain faithful! —

*Do not fear life,
(do not fear all the things that may happen or can happen)
but do not fear death –
death for you is but an instant transfer to glory!*

*Life is to be welcomed each day, no matter conditions,
as an opportunity for God's love to be revealed!*

***Life is our opportunity to glorify our Savior-Friend JESUS
CHRIST. Death is but to be with Him – Face to Face Forever!***

Power of the Word of God

Power of The Holy Spirit

Power of Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ

Is the Power for Rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ

AND TO RECEIVE A REWARD
FROM JESUS CHRIST AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
IS BUT TO GLORIFY HIM FOR ALL ETERNITY.

GO FOR THE GOLD