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## **The Crowns of the Lord Jesus Christ**

by Lewis S. Chafer

*And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head... John 19:2.*

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

*His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns... Rev. 19:12.*

### **I. Crowned With Thorns.**

The crown of thorns symbolized Israel's rejection of her King. The nation was not rejecting a God-given sacrifice for their sins, though He became a Saviour for all men through their rejection of Him. Because of much prophecy the nation was expecting their Messiah-King. The Old Testament, by itself, would be a disappointing book. It discloses the final earthly blessings of Israel and the nations, but these blessings were not realized. The book closes with the predictions concerning the coming of "The Sun of Righteousness," the Messiah, with His forerunner, but they had not been seen. The New Testament opens with the birth, presence and ministry of the King and His forerunner. It also records the offer of the kingdom to Israel with all its promised blessings. One of the greatest highways of prophecy is that of the "Son of David," the Messiah-King. Because of these predictions, every devout Jew was awaiting the appearing of the One Who was to be the "consolation of Israel." A few received Him and rejoiced in His presence; but with the multitude this Scripture was fulfilled:

"As a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Isa. 53:2-3.

But in spite of all this, He was the Son of the Father's love in Whom the Father was well pleased. He was, and is, the King of Israel. Since the Jews expected that the Messiah was to come, their test of faith was to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was that promised One. They knew about the man Jesus and of His mighty works; but very few would own Him to be the Christ of God, the King of Israel. Saul of Tarsus knew Jesus of Nazareth and hated His name; but when Saul was saved, he began immediately to reason with the Jews in their synagogues that Jesus is the *Christ*. This was the issue with the Jews. Was Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews? An individual might believe Him to be that King; but the kingly claim was made to the nation, and the nation made answer. In spite of the fact that He was a King by birth in the Davidic line, and that He fulfilled every prophecy and

expectation, they answered the question by the assassination of their King. Before His death He offered Himself as the King of a *nation*: since His death He is offering Himself as Saviour to *individuals* of every nation and kindred and tribe. There is need of special emphasis here, for there are those who are unable to distinguish the fact that the Lord Jesus was first a "minister [to] the circumcision," or Israel, "to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers," and that through their rejection of Him, and through His death, He became Saviour to all men so that Gentiles may now glorify God for His mercy and grace. Such offers of His saving grace as were announced before His death were made in direct relation to His death. We read: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Every promise to Israel, though once rejected, will yet be fulfilled by the King when He comes again. This is not a theory; it is the teaching of the Word of God. Some claim to find difficulty in believing that God would offer the kingdom to Israel when He *knew* that they would reject the King and His kingdom. But God created man when He *knew* he would fall. He provided a redemption for the whole world when He *knew* that it would be rejected by the vast majority in the world. He commissions us to preach the Gospel to men whom He *knows* will not receive it. He took Israel into Egypt when He *knew* they would suffer and forget Him. He took Israel out of Egypt when He *knew* the long record of their sin and final apostasy. He took them to Kadesh-barnea and offered them a glorious entrance into the land when He *knew* they would rebel. Certainly we create no *new* problem when we discover that God offered His King to the people to whom He was promised, when He *knew* that they would reject their King. Such a revelation is in harmony with the records of *all* the dealings of God with the children of men.

Prophecy anticipated the birth of the King: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). So, in the Second Psalm, it is prophesied of the Son that He would rule with a "rod of iron." Prophecy, likewise anticipates the nation's rejection of the King. "He was despised and rejected of men." They "esteemed him not." Again, according to prophecy, His very rejection was to open His saving grace to all men:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5-6).

So, also, prophecy anticipated the return of the King when He will not be rejected, but shall reign over regathered Israel and the Gentiles in the earth. A prophecy by Moses, written thirty-five centuries ago, states that Israel will be regathered from their great dispersion when the Divine Presence *returns* to the earth.

"That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee" (Deut. 30:3,4).

Like many others, a prophecy found in Amos 9:11,12, has never been fulfilled; but the Spirit of God quotes this prophecy from Amos in Acts 15:14-18, and there indicates the conditions under which it will be fulfilled. This, Scripture states:

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle [house] of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

Two divine purposes for the Gentiles are mentioned in this passage. God, at the present time, is taking out from among the Gentiles a people. Later there is to be a blessing for all Gentiles; but Israel's kingdom and its blessings over all the earth are here again said to be realized when He *returns*. When it is taught that Christ was born Israel's King and that they rejected the King and His kingdom; that through His rejection and death a redemption for all mankind has been secured; and that the rejected King and His kingdom will be received by Israel when the King returns to the earth, it is no clever scheme of interpretation held by some "school" of students of prophecy. The Spirit has witnessed to this exact arrangement throughout all the prophecies of the Old Testament and we rejoice to discover every word of it to be fulfilled according to the New Testament.

All of this prophecy, is now accomplished excepting His return. He has come as Israel's King. He has been rejected. The blood redemption has been accomplished for all men. God is calling out a heavenly people from among the Gentiles. He will as certainly *return* and build again the Davidic order, which is Israel's kingdom, and all Gentiles will come to His light and kings to the brightness of His rising. The Son of God came first to the nation Israel as their promised King. At that time He did not minister to Gentiles. Few Gentiles saw Him or spoke to Him. He said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24).

During those days He sent His disciples out as heralds of the King and His kingdom and commanded them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5-6).

It was when He was rejected and crucified that He became God's Lamb "that taketh away the sin of the world." Not one of the rulers said: "I will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved;" but they did say: We will not have this man to reign over *us*. To thrust the present issues of salvation into this and similar Jewish situation, is to confuse two distinct dispensations. It obliterates the great lines of prophecy, and robs the Gospel of its distinctiveness and power. We are not now saved because we acclaim Jesus to be King, or because we bow to His authority. We are saved now by *believing* on a Saviour. It is one thing to face the kingly authority of the Lord Jesus as did the Jews; it is quite another thing to face the particular claims which His sacrificial death have made on every soul. Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," meaning the expected Messiah-King of Israel; but immediately after this Peter rebuked his Lord when the Lord Jesus had spoken of His death. Christ cannot save by His crown, by His authority, or by His glory. He can save only by His precious blood. Even His power cannot save us apart from the atoning sacrifice which He has made.

The Lord Jesus Christ was scourged, mocked, spit upon, set at naught and crowned with thorns in the common hall. And this in derision of His kingly claim. The Scripture states:

"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands" (John 19:1-3). Pilate said unto them: "Behold your king! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar." Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified" (John 19:14-16).

Pilate said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" God says to us, "Behold the Lamb!" In crucifixion the Son of God "was lifted up" as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. There is life in a look at the Crucified One. It is hardly possible to have looked to the Saviour as being the solution of all the problems of our lost estate and not be, to some degree, aware that we have looked to Him. To be saved is a personal consciousness, not of emotions, but of dependence on Christ: "I know whom I have believed." If we have not this consciousness, we do well to reconsider the grounds of our hope. The rejection and crucifixion of Christ was "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." God permitted His Son to be crowned with thorns, rejected, and crucified. But God was accomplishing His own great purpose in all this. He was reconciling the world unto Himself.

## II. Crowned With Glory and Honour.

The Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead and ascended up on high where He now is seated at His Father's right hand. There, too, He has been crowned with glory and honour. His present position and work is especially revealed in the letter to the Hebrews. One passage speaks of His present coronation.

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:5-9).

This passage is taken from the Eighth Psalm. There reference is made to the first man, Adam, in his original position over the earth; but the first man lost all this position through the fall and we are immediately introduced to the position and authority of the Second Man, the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, after the fall, fills all the Father's vision. The Last Adam was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. He died and rose again; for it was not possible that He, the Prince of Life, should be holden of death. The Word of God gives us the exact facts concerning His present position, and faith may now see Him in the highest heaven, "crowned with glory and honour."

As very God, He was always the embodiment of the highest glory and honour; but a new glory and honour had been made possible by His work of redemption. Returning from

earth into the full blaze of His eternal glory He carried into heaven those new glories and honours which had been acquired through His ministrations on earth. In heaven, the return of the Son of God from earth was an event of greatest moment. How great was His victory as seen by the Father and the holy angels! What honour and glory was His in the eyes of those who fully comprehended the eternal value of His redemption for a crushed and fallen race! Far too little consideration is given to the importance of the home-going and present ministry of the Son of God; yet there is no lack of emphasis in the Word of God. Fourteen passages describe the ascension of Christ and His present position in glory. Three may be noted:

"While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Matt. 22:44).

"When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3).

He ascended into heaven as (1) the perfect Man, (2) the perfect Saviour and (3) the perfect God.

(1) *The Perfect Man*. While here upon earth He was both the perfect human and the perfect God. He functioned His life within one or the other of these spheres; but never did He co-mingle them. He could say "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" as though He did not know. This was perfectly human. Yet John tells us that He "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." This was perfectly divine. As perfectly human He could say: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet in that cross it was God that was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. As Son of Man He was hungry: as Son of God He could turn stones into bread; but He did not minister to His human need by His divine power.

There are aspects of His presence and position in heaven which are to be classified as either human or divine. He now appears in heaven with His glorified human body in which the scars of crucifixion are forever to be seen. It will not do to speak of the days of His earth-life as the days of His incarnation. He has not ceased to be incarnate, nor will He ever cease to be. He carried His perfect humanity into heaven itself. He required no mediator, or priestly sacrifice for sin. As the Son of Man He was received into the highest glory on the grounds of His own perfection in the sight of His holy Father. Thus John saw in heaven, a man, in a glorified body, and he heard Him say: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Through His death and resurrection the highest positions were given unto Him. He is the "Firstborn from the dead," as to actual victory over death, and, being raised from the dead, He is seated at the right hand of God "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21). All things are put under His feet and it is given unto Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. So, also, the highest title is given unto Him. Because of the cross it is said: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

(2) *The Perfect Saviour*. He is a perfect Saviour as to what He has accomplished on earth,

and He is a perfect Saviour as to what He is now doing in heaven. He finished a work; yet He continues to work. Thus He is still a Saviour, even in heaven. He was a perfect Saviour as to what He did here on earth; for He faced "the wolf" — SIN; He conquered death; He vanquished Satan; and He "led captivity captive." Every aspect of this mighty victory over our foes is now guaranteed for us by His presence in glory in a human body that bears the scars of crucifixion. His work was accepted in heaven when He was received into heaven. By our union with Him, He is our present Saviour even though in heaven. We are "crucified with Him," "dead with Him," "buried with Him," "risen with Him," and seated in Him. We have life from Him, we are righteous, justified and accepted in Him. By being our "Advocate with the Father," He is our present Saviour even though in heaven. In this great ministry He does not make excuses for our sins: He does not plead for mercy in our behalf: He presents His own scars as evidence that He has borne the last condemnation for every sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." By interceding for us, He is our present Saviour even though in heaven. This means that He both prays for us and shepherds our souls. He saves us from a thousand pitfalls and snares of Satan. "I have prayed for thee." "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Crowns are promised to the believer; but the Lord Jesus Christ has won them all on the highest plane. He must have the superlative "crown of glory" for He is the Chief Shepherd over the flock of God.

As our Lord in the glory and as Head over all things to the church, He is directing all service here below, and will direct,

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

(3) *A Perfect God.* On returning to heaven He took again the robes of glory which had been so freely laid aside in order that He might suffer in our stead. The Twenty-fourth Psalm records the song of heaven which was sung when He returned to His place in glory.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Psa. 24:3-4).

Only One such has ever gone up into heaven from this sin-cursed earth. He was pure; He was holy; He was undefiled.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in ... Who is this King of Glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory" (Psa. 24:7,10).

As He now appears in heaven, the glory of God is on the face of Jesus Christ.

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

"Crowned with glory and honour..." (Heb. 2:9).

"Whom the heavens must receive until the restitution of all things..." (Acts 3:21).

He will then come forth as very God and very Man to take His own throne, the throne of David, and reign in righteousness and peace on the earth. He shall reign Whose right it is to reign, and He will then be

### III. Crowned With Many Crowns.

The last pages of the Bible describe the consummation of the ages. The Scriptures trace the purposes and mighty working of God from the beginning of those purposes, even before the foundation of the world, to their end. It is fitting that the closing pages of God's Book should record the final triumph and victory over all rebellion against God, and picture the eternal glories of the restored order that is to be. The second coming of Christ is the consummating event for which creation has so long waited and upon which the fulfillment of the purposes and promises of God are made to depend. This consummating event has been described a number of times in both the Old Testament and the New; but the last description is complete and language fails adequately to portray the power and glory of His return. It is then that He is to be crowned with many crowns. In many references to His second coming it is stated that He is to come in "power and great glory."

1. *He comes with power.* The Lord of glory proceeds forth from His wedding, out from heaven, followed by His spotless bride. Behold Him as lightning shining from the one part of heaven unto the other! He has a "rod of iron" in His hand with which to dash the nations "in pieces like a potter's vessel." "His eyes [are] as a flame of fire" and "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." That wicked one shall He consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity ... And he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble" (Isa. 40:15-17,24).

"God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting" (Hab. 3:3-6).

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him" (Psa. 50:3).

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy

garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come" (Isa. 63:1-4).

Here is the Messenger of the covenant, a refiner's fire, a purifier of the sons of Levi.

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12).

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31).

"For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth" (Psa. 96:13).

"They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him (Psa. 72:9-11). Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in (Psa. 24:9). Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle" (Psa. 24:8).

In these Scriptures we have an unfolding of the sufficiency of God in His power to transform the earth and to change the shadow of darkness and sin to the ineffable light of His glory. What He hath promised He will fulfil. All the lines of hope from the first promise of final victory given in Eden, to the present hour are focused upon the return of the King in His power, majesty and strength, and He will compass every issue of the ages and vindicate every purpose of God. We should not marvel that He is to come in renovating judgments to the earth; the marvel must ever be that He, the King of Glory, should have bowed the heavens and come down to this earth to die as an unresisting Lamb. The great conquerors of the earth have depended upon power and allegiance of their armies to execute their will. The King of Glory will conquer alone. His power by which He created all things is sufficient to bind the forces of darkness, transform the universe, and to consummate the hopes of all the ages.

*2. He comes with great glory.* His return in glory is recorded in Rev. 19:11-16. His glory is fourfold and is indicated by the four titles which He bears. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit has given four portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the four Gospels. In Matthew He is the Lion-King; in Mark He is the faithful Servant-Ox; in Luke He is the Man Christ Jesus; and in John He is the Eternal Word of God, symbolized by the eagle, the bird of the highest altitudes. He will possess His eternal glory as the "Word of God" which He had as very God before all creation. He will have a particular glory as the "Faithful and True" Servant; He has acquired a glory through the sacrifice of His human body and because of that sacrifice God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. It is His human name of Saviourhood, the glory and extent of which no man can ever know. He will also have the Kingly glory of David's throne in a thousand, thousand times more splendor than that of Solomon. He will then be "King of



kings and Lord of lords."

The passage reads:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:11-16).

As a crown is the fitting symbol of authority, pre-eminence and distinction, the Lord Jesus Christ, once crowned with thorns and now crowned with glory and honor will then hold every crown of authority by right and title. He will have won every crown of pre-eminence and distinction that can ever be in heaven above or earth beneath. It will be our unspeakable joy to cast our crowns at His feet and to join with the angelic host in the coronation hymn:

"Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all."

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