

Essay: Laying Crowns Before The Throne - Revelation 4:9-10 (NIV based)

PROBLEM DOCTRINE:

There is teaching occurring in churches that asserts that all believers will one day in heaven cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus (from Revelation 4:10), thereupon permanently relinquishing back to God all of the rewards that they had earned for serving God during this life on the earth. The conclusion from this teaching is that thereby all believers will consequently and subsequently have no rewards eternally and there will be no visible difference or distinction between believers in how sacrificially, extensively, and appropriately they served God during this life on the earth.

A major and devastating result of this teaching is that it effectively quenches, and/or nullifies, and/or removes nearly all motivations for believers to strive and excel at serving God during this life on the earth. Thereby, the Kingdom of Darkness makes great unopposed gains and victories when the people of God are not motivated to serve God.

The contents of this paper will show from close examination of the Scriptures in the original Greek, a careful and logical considering of the surrounding context, and expository and sound interpretation of the Scriptures, that this teaching about permanently relinquishing rewards is not accurate, not correct, not true, and not even close to what is actually happening according to the contents of Revelation chapter 4.

SETTING:

In Revelation chapter 4, John is describing the scene he is seeing in heaven, focusing on the throne of God, what is surrounding the throne of God, and what is occurring around the throne of God.

ANALYSES:

The "Twenty-four Elders" - Revelation 4:4

- - In this scene in Revelation 4:1-7, John sees in heaven that there are twenty-four thrones surrounding the throne of God, with twenty-four elders seated on those thrones.
- - By implication, these twenty-four elders are twenty-four humans who have been chosen by God to be the highest ranking among all believers, and they each have been given their own individual throne in heaven to rule over and reign in authority, while simultaneously themselves being under the rule, reign, authority, and throne of God.
- - The twenty-four elders "had crowns of gold on their heads". (v.4, "crown" = Strong's #4735; "gold" = Strong's #5552)
- - Notice that in this description, the crowns that these reigning twenty-four elders are wearing as they each sit on their own separate throne around the throne of God are not called "crowns of life", which common ordinary believers will wear in heaven, as recorded in Revelation 2:10 and James 1:12. ("crown" = Strong's #4735; "life" = Strong's #2222)
- - The implication, then, is that the gold of the crowns that these twenty-four elders wear signifies and symbolizes the exceptional rule and high authority positions that they hold in heaven. (as support of this signification, see Revelation 14:14)

- - Furthermore, the gold of the crowns of these twenty-four elders suggests that when these twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne (v.10), they are visually and verbally recognizing, "glorifying", and "honoring" the authority and "worthiness" (v.11) that God has over them and that God has over the exceptional authority that they have been given in heaven.

- - This evidence suggests that these twenty-four elders are not relinquishing their crowns of rewards nor their crowns of authority in heaven, but they are visually and verbally proclaiming and showing great respect and honor to the One who is infinitely Supreme over them.

The "Sea of Glass" - Revelation 4:6, with 15:1-4

- - In Revelation 4:6, John also reports seeing "before the throne" "a sea of glass, clear as crystal".

- - The "sea" or "lake" (Strong's #2281) is not necessarily made of glass, but it is "glassy, transparent" (Strong's #5193).

- - The glassy transparent sea was "like" (Strong's #3664) "crystal" or "ice" (Strong's #2930), suggesting it appeared crystal clear, without any impurities or disruptions of any kind.

- - In Revelation 15:1-4 is part of the account of John of another scene that he sees in heaven, and the same Greek words for "glassy transparent" (Strong's #5193) "sea" (Strong's #2281) are used twice in verse 15:2.

- - In that scene, the "sea of glass" is identified as being "mixed with fire" (v.15:2), and that there were martyred human believers standing "upon" (Strong's #1909) the "sea of glass", holding harps and singing (v.15:3).

- - From these two sections of verses in Revelation chapters 4 and 15, one possible and plausible meaning for the "sea of glass" is that it is a sea of believers, billions or trillions of believers amassed together in one group in heaven, collectively appearing as a "sea".

- - They have been purified by God, making them collectively appear "glassy" and "clear as crystal".

- - The "sea of glass" being "mixed with fire" perhaps means there were believers currently (at that time) experiencing the intense refining fires of severe persecution and martyrdom for their faith.

- - Those martyred human believers were "standing upon" the "sea of glass mixed with fire", perhaps meaning they were raised up and honored among their fellow believers for having been martyred in large numbers for their faith during this time of great tribulation on the earth.

The Absence Of Activities Of The "Saints" (Or The "Sea Of Glass")

- - In the account in Revelation chapter 4 through chapter 5 of the scene around the throne of God in heaven, John gives substantial details about the presence and activities pertaining to: the throne and the One sitting on the throne (vv.4:2-5); the twenty-four elders on other thrones around the throne (v.4:4ff); the four living creatures around the throne (v.4:6ff); a mighty angel near the throne (v.5:2); one of the elders near the

throne (v.5:5); the Lamb "standing in the center of the throne" (vv.5:6-7); a vast number of angels encircling the throne (vv.5:11-13); and "every creature" in the universe (v.5:13).
- - But there is only one short sentence that notes and minimally describes the presence of the "sea of glass" or perhaps a 'sea of believers', with no mention of any activities of the "sea of glass" before the throne of God in this scene.
- - Also notice that there is no direct specific mention by name of the "saints", which is interesting because further along in this scene in verse 5:8, the "prayers of the saints" are mentioned in regard to an activity of the twenty-four elders but there is no direct mention of the presence or the activities of the "saints" themselves.

Laying Crowns Before The Throne - Revelation 4:9-10

- - After the brief mention of the "sea of glass" in verse 4:6, the description next focuses on the presence and appearances of the four living creatures who are "around the throne", followed by a quote of what they proclaim.
- - In the original Greek, the phrases in verse 4:8 "Day and night they never stop saying, "Holy, holy, holy..." more accurately and literally translate as "And they have not rest day and night, saying "Holy, holy, holy..."", meaning these four living creatures continue to perform their proclamation function around the throne without ever taking any time to rest or leave. (Strong's #2532, #0372, #3756, #2192)
- - Then in verses 4:9-10 is described the conditional recurring situation under which the twenty-four elders respond to that which the four living creatures are doing and proclaiming.
- - In verse 4:9, the word "whenever" is used - "whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever", the twenty-four elders respond.
- - The Greek word #3752 that is translated "whenever" is composed of two Greek words: word #3753, meaning "when", "as relating to an actual event, something actually taking place"; and word #0302, denoting "a possibility, or uncertainty"; together these two words #3753 and #0302 mean "an often repeated or possible action in the present or future time", "when-so-ever, so often as". (Zodhiates, #3752, p.1067)
- - So the Greek word #3752 in verse 4:9 is accurately translated in English as "whenever", meaning "at whatever time that" or "every time that". (AHD - 'whenever')
- - The proper conclusion then is that the four living creatures make a verbal proclamation periodically, saying a statement that "gives glory, honor and thanks" to God and then waiting in silence for a period of time after which they then say another statement of glory, honor, and praise, repeating this cycle without ever leaving or resting from their functioning in this manner around the throne of God.
- - And "whenever" or at each periodic occurrence in which the four living creatures make a verbal proclamation, the twenty-four elders respond at that moment to the verbal proclamation, thus exactly synchronizing their periodic response to the periodic time intervals in which the four living creatures make a verbal proclamation. (v.4:9)
- - In each of these periodic synchronized responses, the twenty-four elders "fall down" before the throne, "worship" God, take an action with their crowns, and make a verbal proclamation of glory, honor, and praise to God. (vv.4:10-11)

- - The accurate translation from the original Greek of this action that the twenty-four elders take with their crowns is that they "impulsively throw" their crowns "in the presence of" the throne. (Zodhiates #0906, p.308; Strong's #1799)
- - The twenty-four elders are not "laying" or setting down their crowns - they are impulsively taking off their crowns and throwing them, or perhaps tossing them, or flinging them, or casting them - the same Greek word #0906 that is used in Matthew 4:18 for "casting a [fishing] net into the lake". (Note: There is a Greek word, #5087, that means "to place or lay", used in Luke 5:18 to lay a paralytic on a mat before Jesus. But this Greek word #5087 is not used here in Revelation 4:10.)

-- A proper and more accurate interpretation from the original Greek and in context clearly indicates that the following actions are occurring in this 'laying crowns before the throne' that is featured in Revelation 4:9-11:

- - - - the twenty-four human elders are each seated on their own throne of authority, which are arranged surrounding the throne of God;
- - - - the four living creatures are also around the throne of God, but they are not seated on any throne;
- - - - each periodic time in which the four living creatures make a verbal proclamation of glory, honor, and thanks to God, the twenty-four elders respond without delay to the verbal proclamation of the four living creatures;
- - - - in their response, the twenty-four elders take the actions of getting off their thrones of authority, falling down (or perhaps kneeling) before God who is sitting on His throne in the center, "and" worshipping Him, "and" throwing their crowns of authority in the presence of the center throne of God, and making their verbal proclamation to God of His worthiness, glory, honor, power, and creating activities. (Strong's #2532 - "and")

CONCLUSION:

- - Logically, in order to repeat this activity periodically again and again and again, subsequently the twenty-four elders must each time stand up, retrieve their own crown that they threw, go back to their own throne, sit down, and put their crown back on their head, so that they are prepared to repeat this activity again the next time the four living creatures make their verbal proclamation to God.
 - - The twenty-four elders alone are throwing their crowns, and there is no direct mention or even a hint that any saints are doing this activity.
 - - The twenty-four elders alone are doing this entire activity as a recognition of how the permanent and highest ranking authority among men that they have been given in heaven is vastly inferior to and subordinate to the authority and reign of God, who rightly deserves the highest praise, honor, worship, and glory due to His worthiness, power, creating, and sustaining.
 - - As has been defined and studied here in this paper, the original Greek words **do not** support in any credible way the notion that this activity of the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4:9-10 represents believers placing their rewards at the feet of Jesus, therein permanently relinquishing and returning their rewards that they had earned for serving God during their life on the earth.
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File name: LayingCrownsBeforeTheThrone-Essay____ (.htm, .rtf, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

Source: www.BelieverAssist.com