

January 2018

Frank W. Nelte

LET NO MAN TAKE YOUR CROWN

We are all familiar with Jesus Christ's statement in the message to the Philadelphian era of God's Church:

Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown.** (Revelation 3:11)

Do you understand the real significance of this instruction? And are there actually people who want to "take your crown away" from you? Is there a competition for the crowns that are available? And what type of crown are we talking about in this passage?

In our modern usage we think of "a crown" as the ornamental headgear worn by a king to represent his status as king. Typically royal crowns are made of gold and ornately decorated with a large number of precious stones. For example, the crown of King George XII of Georgia (he died in 1800) was decorated with over 200 precious stones (i.e. 145 diamonds, 58 rubies, 24 emeralds and 16 amethysts to be exact).

But such crowns are also difficult to balance on the head of a monarch. And a monarch may not shake his or her head when wearing a crown, or the crown would fall off. Thus, Queen Elizabeth II has mentioned that she may not look down during her speech when she is wearing the crown at the annual State Opening of Parliament, because the crown would slide off her head. So instead of looking down, Queen Elizabeth II always lifts up her speech notes to eye-level. You might take note of that the next time you watch the Opening of Parliament on TV.

The point is: royal crowns are **not intended to be worn every day**. Wearing a royal crown is reserved for special occasions, occasions when a crown signifies the status of royalty, and occasions for displaying the splendor of a kingdom. But crowns were not intended to be worn when kings went about their typical daily activities, as is sometimes wrongly portrayed in movies. And no king would ever "run around" with a crown on his head.

Now the New Testament makes many different references to "crowns". These references include:

- **"the crown of life"** (James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10),
- **"a crown of righteousness"** (2 Timothy 4:8),
- **"a crown of glory"** (1 Peter 5:4),
- **"a crown of rejoicing"** (1 Thessalonians 2:19),
- **"an incorruptible crown"** (1 Corinthians 9:25), and
- **"crowns of gold"** (Revelation 4:4).

These statements all refer to one and the same crown. The first five terms describe various attributes that the one crown embodies within itself. And the sixth term ("crowns of gold") refers to the appearance

and makeup of the crown.

All those who will be in the first resurrection are promised the status of "kings and priests" (see Revelation 5:10). And the status of "kings" will be signified by every individual in the first resurrection receiving from God a crown, one crown.

That one crown is at the same time "a crown of life", and also "a crown of righteousness", and also "a crown of glory", and also "a crown of rejoicing". And that crown is incorruptible, and it consists of gold.

In all of the verses referred to above the Greek word translated as "crown/s" is "**stephanos**". The related Greek verb is "stephanoo", which is suitably translated as "crowned".

But there is another Greek word, which is used only three times in the N.T., all three uses being in the Book of Revelation. And that word is in our English language KJV also translated as "crown". In every other place where the word "crown" appears in the New Testament it is always a translation of "stephanos".

So let's take a look at this other Greek word, which is "**diadema**", and which is used only three times. Then we'll see how these two Greek words, which are both translated as "crown/s" in the KJV, relate to each other.

THE GREEK WORD "DIADEMA"

This word appears only in the Book of Revelation. Here is the first occurrence.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and **seven crowns** (diademata) upon his heads. (Revelation 12:3)

The "great red dragon" is a reference to **Satan**; and the seven "heads" refer to the seven major human empires through which Satan has controlled and still continues to control the kingdoms of this world. The seven heads represent: Babylon (1 head), Medo-Persia (1 head), Greece (4 heads) and Rome (1 head).

So in this passage Satan is pictured as having seven "diademata" on his heads. He has one "diadema" on each of his seven heads. Note that here Satan does **not** have a single "stephanos".

Here is the second place where this Greek word is used.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns **ten crowns** (i.e. "diademata"), and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. (Revelation 13:1)

This is **the same "beast"** as in the previous verse we have looked at, but with a different focus. Where in Revelation 12:3 these "crowns" are on the seven heads, here in Revelation 13:1 the focus is on the 10 "horns", which are on the last of the seven "heads" (i.e. they are on Rome). The 10 "horns" refer to 10 "resurrections" or "revivals" of the Roman Empire. Again note that here Satan also does **not** have a single "stephanos".

Let's now consider the third and last use of this Greek word.

His eyes [were] as a flame of fire, and on his head [were] **many crowns** (i.e. "diademata"); and he had a

name written, that no man knew, but he himself. (Revelation 19:12)

This last reference where "diadema" is used refers to **Jesus Christ**.

So let's notice something. This word "diadema" is never used in the singular in the New Testament. It is either "**seven**" or "**ten**" or "**many**" diademata, but there are no references to one "diadema". Further, nowhere are Christians ever promised a "diadema". A "diadema" is not specifically pointed out as a reward for anything. Here in this last verse we see that **many** "diademata" are on Jesus Christ's head. So "many" can be on "one" head.

This statement should be something of a problem for us, because there is only enough space on any individual's head, including Jesus Christ, for **one "crown"** at a time. No king or emperor could possibly balance two crowns, let alone "many" crowns, on his head at the same time. That just isn't possible, nor is it even desirable.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "STEPHANOS" AND "DIADEMA"

Considering our two Greek words, here is what we have:

It is only possible for any individual to have **one "stephanos"** on his head. But it is possible for an individual to have **two or more "diademata"** on his head.

We need to recognize that "stephanos" and "diadema" are not really synonyms, even though both words have been translated in the KJV as "crowns". One of these two words means "crown" and the other word does not really mean "crown". These two Greek words refer to different things, with perhaps a certain amount of overlap between them.

The Greek word "diadema" is the root of our English word "diadem". And in ancient societies "a diadem" was not "a crown" as we today think of crowns. And neither does "diadema" refer to the ancient forerunner of modern crowns. That ancient forerunner of our modern crowns was **a wreath**, typically made of interlocking small branches and leaves of the bay laurel or some other tree. And later people made such a wreath out of metal.

But that is not what "diadema" referred to; it did not refer to "a wreath". I understand that in modern usage the distinctions between a crown and a diadem have become somewhat blurred, so that many people view these two words as almost interchangeable ... as did the translators of the KJV. But that is not correct as far as how they were used in New Testament times is concerned.

In ancient times a diadem was typically "**a headband worn for a utilitarian purpose, and which was then used as a badge of royalty**". And like a crown, this headband was then used to represent regal power and dignity. But it didn't show off the gold and diamonds and other precious stones that are typically found in "a crown". It wasn't nearly as showy as a crown. And for everyday life activities a diadem was **much more practical** than "a crown".

To illustrate the difference:

It would be totally impossible for a king to play a game of tennis with his crown perched on his head. But there would be no problem at all with a king playing a game of tennis with "a diadem" (i.e. a headband) or two on his head. Today many tennis players in fact wear headbands (i.e. in appearance somewhat like the diadems of old) to keep the sweat out of their eyes, and to keep their hair from flopping into their

faces. Headbands serve a very practical purpose, though today they are certainly not used to represent power or dignity. That is why they are just headbands and not really diadems, even though they might look similar to the diadems of old.

A diadem conferred power and authority on the wearer of the diadem. **The concept** of "a diadem" is to represent power and status; and that concept is expressed in a somewhat morphed form in all military armies, where a man's rank (general, colonel, major, captain, lieutenant, etc.) is expressed not as "a headband", but as an epaulette (French for "little shoulder") or a shoulder board. From about the 1700's onwards epaulettes have been used in various armies to indicate rank. For NCO's in the military "the diadem" is in the form of badges or stripes on the upper sleeves, lower than the insignia on the shoulder boards of commissioned officers.

In ancient times diadems served exactly the same purpose for kings, as do the stars on the shoulder and the stripes on the upper sleeves for people in the military. **A diadem was an expression of rank and position, specifically royal position.** A diadem was not any kind of "crown". But the use of the diadem had started with a utilitarian purpose in mind.

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament mentions that the word "diadema" referred to: "the blue band marked with white with which Persian kings used **to bind on the turban or tiara**; the kingly ornament for the head".

So the diadem served a practical function. Its function was **to help hold some headgear in place.** The diadem itself was not the headgear. It helped to hold something else in place. And yes, the diadem itself was then considered to be an ornament, but without losing its utilitarian purpose. A crown, on the other hand, never had a utilitarian purpose; a crown was always the attraction itself.

Now the fact that God in the Bible uses both words (i.e. stephanos and diadema) should tell us that **God is making a distinction** between these two words. They are not synonymous. God very deliberately did not use the word "stephanos" when referring to Satan in the Book of Revelation.

We can go through the whole New Testament from Matthew to the end of the Epistle of Jude, and "stephanos" is the only Greek word for "a crown" that we ever encounter. And then we can also go through the first half of the Book of Revelation, and still we only find the word "stephanos" (i.e. Revelation 2:10; 3:11; 4:4; 4:10; 6:2; 9:7; 12:1).

Notice Revelation 12:1.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head **a crown** ("stephanos") of twelve stars: (Revelation 12:1)

The Church of God is here pictured with a "stephanos" on her head. And **two verses later the focus switches to Satan**, and we are told:

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven **crowns** (seven "diademata") upon his heads. (Revelation 12:3)

Two verses apart we have two different Greek words: "stephanos" in verse 1, and "diademata" in verse 3.

So after seven different verses throughout the Book of Revelation have used the word "stephanos", suddenly totally out of the blue, and for the very first time in the entire New Testament we have the word "diadema". So in speaking about Satan, the Apostle John, clearly under divine inspiration, introduces the

Greek word "diadema" into the discussion.

Why did John suddenly use the word "diadema", when all along he had used the word "stephanos"? Why?

For a start, John wanted to make very clear that the word "stephanos" never applies to Satan. And on top of that, John wanted to make clear that what Satan has is something that is different from "the crowns" that God is preparing for those in the first resurrection. Satan does not have "a crown".

The Book of Revelation consists largely of John's description of the visions he saw. **John saw the things he describes**. And what John saw in verse 3 was different from what John had seen in verse 1. In verse 1 John saw "a crown" on the head of the woman. And **what John saw on the seven heads in verse 3 were not crowns!** That is why John did not say that he saw seven "stephanoi" on the seven heads. No, instead John said that he saw seven "diademata" on those seven heads.

John used two different Greek words two verses apart because what he saw on the head of the woman in verse 1 was **something completely different** from what he saw on the seven heads in verse 3. Those seven heads did not have any crowns on them; they did not have any "stephanoi" on them.

John wanted us to understand that there is a difference between a "stephanos" and a "diadema". These two words are not synonymous, even if in modern times the differences between them may have become blurred. **Guess who is behind the blurring of the distinctions between "stephanos" and "diadema"?**

Jesus Christ has both: **one** golden "stephanos" (Revelation 14:14), and also **many "diademata"** (Revelation 19:12). This in itself should also make clear that "stephanos" and "diadema" are not the same thing.

Satan, by contrast, has **no "stephanos"**, and **only one "diadema" on each** of seven heads (Revelation 12:3), and **only one "diadema" on each** of ten horns (Revelation 13:1).

Note!

The word "diadema" was introduced into the text of the New Testament for the explicit purpose of defining how Satan functions and operates. Satan is the leader of all the demons, but he does not have "a crown"; he only has "a diadem".

So what is the difference between "a crown" and "a diadem"? The New Testament distinction between the two Greek words is as follows:

Diadema refers to rulership, like a badge of authority. Historically such rulership belonged to royalty. So diadema was used to identify a king, but without the glamor of a crown. The focus of diadema is on the exercise of power. All three uses of the Greek word diademata in the New Testament refer to someone who exercises authority and rule (i.e. one reference to Jesus Christ, and two references to Satan controlling or ruling human kingdoms).

Stephanos refers to victory. It expresses the honor that comes with victory. Stephanos is awarded to all those who are victors. One of the clearest references in this regard is Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 4.

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

Writing shortly before the end of his life, Paul basically said: **I have been victorious** in remaining faithful to God and to His calling. And so Paul's logical response in the next verse was:

(therefore) henceforth there is laid up for me **a crown ("stephanos")** 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 Timothy 4:8)

The focus here is on the honor that is bestowed on all those who are victorious. The focus for "stephanos" is not on "exercising authority"; that concept is conveyed by "diadema". Here in 2 Timothy 4:8 the focus is on all those who will be victorious being honored by God.

So note!

All of the New Testament references that use the word "stephanos" refer to someone being victorious, and as a consequence therefore also being honored by God for having achieved victory.

In plain terms: in the Bible "diadema" refers to **power** and to **rulership** and to **exercising authority**; and "stephanos" refers to **victory** and to **honor**. And the purpose for introducing the word "diadema" at almost the end of the New Testament was to make clear that Satan has access to power and to rulership, but **his power is without either victory or honor**.

To get back to our earlier references:

"The crown of life" refers to **victory** in the pursuit of eternal life.

"The crown of righteousness" refers to **victory** in the endeavor to live in righteousness before God.

"The crown of glory" refers to **victory** in the pursuit of the hope of the glory God has set before us (see Romans 5:2).

"The crown of rejoicing" also refers to rejoicing in **victory**, in having lived in faith and in integrity before God.

"The incorruptible crown" Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 9:25 is a reference to the actual crowns that God will give to all those in the first resurrection. I suspect that these "crowns" will be worn by the spirit-born members of God's Family **for special occasions**, rather than being worn every day for all future eternity. That would be very much like kings today only wearing their crowns for very specific occasions, rather than all the time.

The New Testament Greek word for "a crown" (i.e. stephanos) is always associated with victory in some or other way. **What "a crown" actually looks like is far less important** than what it represents ... victory!

So here is something to consider:

Today someone can be a king or a ruler with great authority without actually ever being "victorious" in any way.

On the human level:

Someone can become a king by inheritance or by appointment. Such a "king" may or may not achieve any "victory" at some future point. With such a person **the status of king came first**, and any "victory"

may or may not come later. On the human level victory is not a pre-condition for becoming a king.

But in the Family that God is building:

Victory must come first, before God will grant the status of "king" to an individual in the first resurrection. With God's plan of salvation victory is in fact a prerequisite for God to grant kingship to anyone. With God there will be no kings who were not also victorious during their human lives. Before God "stephanos" (the symbol of victory) must come first, and then God will grant rulership to that victorious person.

That leads us to the following conclusions:

A diadem (i.e. "diadema"), which represents rulership, is not restricted to good individuals. Good individuals (e.g. Jesus Christ) can have diadems, and evil individuals (e.g. Satan) can also have diadems. Diadems are simply outward expressions or acknowledgments of a position of rulership that an individual may hold, and the concomitant exercising of authority that goes along with that position, be that individual good or bad.

A crown (i.e. "stephanos"), which represents victory, on the other hand, is reserved for good individuals. So Satan, for example, is shown as having seven "diadems" on seven heads, but he is never shown as having any "crowns" (ignoring the obvious mistranslations). Before God evil people are not eligible for any "crowns", because evil people never achieve victory before God.

And for the imagery presented in Revelation 12:3 and in 13:1 there are no crowns involved. The 7 heads and the 10 horns don't have any "crowns"; they only have "headbands" to represent their authority and power. But those "headbands" confer neither "victory" nor "honor" from God to those heads and horns.

Now to be clear: before God **crowns also represent rulership**, but in that case such rulership is a direct consequence of the victory that was achieved **first**. Conditions were met before this rulership position was given to the crowned individual. The most obvious "condition" that must be met is that we must grow and **overcome**. That's spelled out repeatedly in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21; 21:7).

The "many diadems" in Revelation 19:12 symbolize that Jesus Christ will **rule** as "**King of kings** and **Lord of lords**" (see Revelation 19:16). The use of diademata in Revelation 19:12 is clearly a reference to kingly power and authority. So Jesus Christ will have **one crown**, but **many diadems**.

Furthermore, to be clear about our "victory":

Gaining the victory which is required for receiving a "stephanos" (a crown) was made possible for us by Jesus Christ.

But thanks *be* to God, which gives us **the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**. (1 Corinthians 15:57)

As I already mentioned earlier, the Greek verb "stephanoo" is formed from the noun "stephanos", and the emphasis of this verb is thus also on being victorious! In the Book of Hebrews we are told:

You made Him a little lower than the angels; **You crowned Him** (stephanoo) with glory and honor, and did set Him over the works of Your hands: (Hebrews 2:7)

And two verses later:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little (i.e. for a little while) lower than the angels for the suffering of death, **crowned with** (stephanoo) glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should have tasted death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9)

The focus in these two verses is also on victory, rather than on royalty! In Hebrews 2:7 it shows that God has given man **victory** and glory and honor. And two verses later it shows that Jesus Christ likewise obtained **victory** and glory and honor. In fact, verse 9 is a prerequisite for verse 7.

To summarize: apart from the three places in the New Testament where the Greek word "diadema" is used, the word "crown" always expresses a focus on **victory** over something! Jesus Christ made clear in Revelation 2-3 that rewards in God's kingdom are for those who "overcome", and **overcoming implies being victorious!**

So:

When we today see or hear the word "crowns", we are conditioned to think of some ornamental headgear. We typically think of gold and diamonds and other precious stones, ornately crafted into something that can be balanced on the head of a king or a queen. We think of very formal occasions where **the focus is on the presence of royalty.**

And that is fine. But that focus is only the secondary focus in the Bible when the Greek word "stephanos" (a crown) is used.

When the Bible in the New Testament uses the word "stephanos", then the primary focus in most cases is not on royalty, but rather **a focus on victory!** That is the specific focus we see in expressions like "a crown of life", "a crown of glory", "a crown of righteousness" and "a crown of rejoicing" ... all these expressions focus on victory, rather than on royalty.

Different expressions focus on different facets of the victory that we must work for. So when you see the word "crown" in the New Testament **think "winner" rather than thinking "royalty".**

The Bible certainly deals with the concept of royalty, and I don't mean to minimize that. But that concept of royalty is conveyed in the New Testament by the use of the word "**kings**", rather than by the use of the word "crowns", as we see, for example, in Revelation 5:10.

And have made us unto our God **kings** and **priests**: and we shall **reign** on the earth. (Revelation 5:10)

The expression "we shall reign on the earth" refers to using the power that is also represented by a diadem. Reigning will then be a consequence of having been victorious (keeping 1 Corinthians 15:57 in mind) in the lives we led. Victory (represented by "stephanos") must come first, and reigning as kings (represented by "diadema") will then follow. Those who reign with Jesus Christ will exercise the power symbolized by diadems.

Earlier I mentioned that nowhere are Christians ever promised a "diadema". I said that because the word "diadema" is never used outside of those three places in Revelation. However, in practical terms a "diadema", while not promised, is implied for everyone in the first resurrection, because God promises rulership to all in that resurrection. **A "diadema" symbolizes rulership.** And so diademata are implied for the people in the first resurrection, even though the word "diadema" is never specifically mentioned for this group.

Being a king is a recognition of having a certain status. Having a crown is a recognition for an achievement, that achievement being victory. Having a diadem is a recognition of having been

given the responsibility to rule.

Now let's look at our earlier question.

CAN ANY MAN TAKE AWAY YOUR CROWN?

Let's look again at Revelation 3:11.

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no man take **your crown**.

We can now represent this statement as follows:

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no man take **your symbol of victory**.

The expression "hold that fast" is a translation of "kratei", a form of the verb "krateo". The noun "kratos" refers to power and force. So the whole expression translated as "hold that fast which you have" basically means: "**with all your strength hang onto what you've got**".

The expression "that no man take your crown" is a translation of the expression "hina medeis labe ton stephanon sou". "Hina medeis" means "that no man", and "ton stephanon sou" means "your crown" (i.e. your symbol of victory). These words are all straightforward.

That leaves us with the Greek word "**labe**" which is translated as "**take**".

"Labe" is a form of the Greek verb "lambano" (i.e. the second aorist active subjunctive form). This verb "lambano" holds the key to understanding Jesus Christ's statement in Revelation 3:11 correctly.

I have discussed this verb "lambano" in some detail in my article entitled "THE MEANING OF JOHN 10:17-18". Briefly:

The meaning of "**lambano**" is "**to receive**", as well as "**to take**". The difference between our English words "taking" and "receiving" is that in "receiving" somebody else is the active agent who gives to us what we are receiving, while in "taking" the focus is on our ability to take, whether or not someone else is willing to give. This distinction between "taking" and "receiving" does not exist in the biblical Greek verb "lambano" because this Greek verb covers both of these meanings.

Both meanings, "receive" and "take" are thoroughly represented in the New Testament. So a translation that conveys the correct intended meaning of Revelation 3:11 should read something like:

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no man **receive** your crown."

Or in an amplified form:

"Behold, I come quickly: with all your strength hang onto what you've got, so that nobody else receives your symbol of victory (i.e. your crown)." (the intended meaning of Revelation 3:11)

The difference between these two translations with the intended meaning on the one hand, and the typical mistranslations found in most English language versions on the other hand is one of focus.

The mistranslations imply that other human beings have the power to take from us the symbols

of victory (i.e. crowns) that God has prepared for us. That is not correct.

The correct translation shows that God may decide to give the symbols of victory intended for us to other people, if we don't put forth the maximum effort we are capable of, to hold onto God's truth.

The end result is the same in both cases, that the crowns intended for us will be taken from us. But **the outcome** (whether we receive a crown because we held fast, or whether we don't receive a crown because we did not hold fast) **is not in any way influenced by anything that anybody else may do!**

It is impossible for any human being "to take" from you the crown that God has prepared for you!

That crown cannot be stolen; it cannot be bought or sold. Yes, that crown can indeed be "taken away" from us, but it can only be taken away by God, and by nobody else. And in those cases where it is taken away by God, **then somebody else may receive it from God**. But that "somebody else" is never in the picture until after we have not "held fast".

Whether or not we end up receiving the crown set aside for each one of us is always a matter between two individuals: between God and each one of us individually. **No third party ever enters the picture** in the actual decision-making as to whether or not we will receive that crown. It is only in those cases where God has already reached the decision, that someone will not receive the crown God had intended to give to that individual, that **then God introduces a third party** into the picture ... the replacement for the person who will after all not receive the intended crown.

This process was exemplified in Old Testament times in the way God dealt with Saul and with David.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH SAUL AND WITH DAVID

In 1 Samuel 9:16-17 God said to Samuel:

To morrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and **you shall anoint him to be captain over my people Israel**, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to you of! this same shall reign over my people. (1 Samuel 9:16-17)

And Samuel then carried out God's instructions.

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured *it* upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it* not because **the LORD has anointed you to be captain** over his inheritance? (1 Samuel 10:1)

Later before all the people of Israel Samuel said about Saul:

And Samuel said to all the people, See you **him whom the LORD has chosen**, that *there is* none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. (1 Samuel 10:24)

God selected Saul to be king. It was God's intention that Saul would be **victorious!** As long as Saul would faithfully obey God, victory for Saul would always be assured, because God was going to be with Saul. God had set aside "a crown" for Saul, not only in this life, but also in the resurrection.

Now we know that later that crown was taken from Saul by God, and God then gave it to David. But here is the point:

God selected Saul to be king a full **ten years before David was even born!** Saul reigned for 40 years, and when Saul died David was still only 30 years old. So David was not even in the picture when God selected Saul. God wanted Saul to succeed, to be victorious, and there was no replacement for Saul somehow "waiting in the wings" and ready to take over that crown.

It was Saul who disqualified himself from the position God had given him. Saul's first transgression was when he very presumptuously offered "the burnt offering" instead of waiting for Samuel to do that (see 1 Samuel 13:9-10). That disobedience demonstrated a lack of faith in God. The second act of disobedience was when Saul spared the life of Agag and also did not kill "the best of the sheep and of the oxen" (see 1 Samuel 15:8-9).

After those two acts of disobedience Samuel told Saul:

And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with you: for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and **the LORD has rejected you from being king** over Israel. (1 Samuel 15:26)

Because of Saul's repeated acts of disobedience, God changed His mind about having made Saul king.

And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and **the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.** (1 Samuel 15:35)

The statement "the Eternal repented" means "the Eternal with a certain degree of sorrow changed His mind". That's what repentance is; it represents a change of mind.

But here is what we need to understand:

This verse reflects exactly how God feels about every single individual who today turns away from God's Church!

It reflects God's feelings because in every case when someone today walks away from God's truth, then that causes God a certain degree of sorrow; and **then it repents the Eternal that He had called that particular person**, and God is then forced to find someone else for the crown that God had set aside for that person.

To get back to our story, God then found a replacement for Saul.

... I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for **I have provided me a king among his sons.** (1 Samuel 16:1)

... And the LORD said, Arise, **anoint him: for this is he.** (1 Samuel 16:12)

This process is exactly what happens today in our age! Time and time and time again people who have been called by God for a specific crown, just like God had called Saul for a crown, walk away from that crown. And in so doing they cause God sorrow, and they cause God to repent that He had set a crown aside for them. And God then selects new people to be kings with Jesus Christ in the first resurrection, to fill those specific crowns.

The crown God had intended for Saul God took away and then God gave that crown to David. And God took that crown away from Saul because Saul "had rejected the word of the Eternal" (see 1 Samuel

15:23). And likewise today, God takes away the crowns God had intended for specific individuals when those specific individuals "reject the word of the Eternal"; and God then gives those crowns to replacements whom God has chosen. Sadly, this happens all the time.

This is the process that Revelation 3:11 is speaking about. What God did with Saul, God will still do today, when those who have been called by God reject the word of the Eternal. But it is never a case of the replacement person having any part in "taking away" someone's crown. It is always a case of the chosen person first "rejecting the word of the Eternal".

This correct scenario is blurred to some degree by the common mistranslation found in Revelation 3:11. There really is nobody out there who is trying "to take" your crown, your victory from you, though God will "give" those crowns to other people if we don't hold fast. And very sadly, that has happened thousands of times during the past five decades, that crowns intended for specific people were taken away by God and then given to other people.

The entire focus in this Scripture is on what we ourselves do, and not on what anyone else may do. So let's be sure that we "hold fast" to the calling God has extended to us, so that the crowns God has set aside for us will not be given to other people.

Frank W Nelte