



A crown of thorns, a robe and a reed.

Matthew 27:27 – 30; Mark 15:16 – 19; John 19:2 – 3

- **Matt. 27: 28 – 29:** “And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”
- **Mark 15: 17 – 18** “And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*, ¹⁸and began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!”
- **John 19:2 – 3 NKJV** “And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck Him with their hands.”

When it came to punishment and torment, there was no other dynasty that reigned with the cruelty of torture than the Roman Empire. Their punishments were not only extreme in the physical sense, but also meant to be highly destructive mentally. This is evident in how they treated Jesus in this situation. Stripping a prisoner of their clothing was meant to be embarrassing. It also sent a subliminal dual message to the public that dissidence would not be tolerated by the Roman government. In the case of Jesus, He was given His clothing to wear for the journey to Golgotha (**Matt. 27:31**), through the narrow street of Jerusalem, out of consideration of Jewish laws and customs regarding public nudity.

There seems to be a discrepancy between the Gospel of Matthew (**G2837**) and those of Mark (**G4209**) and John (**G4210**) about the color of the robe that was placed upon Jesus. A purple robe signified royalty, which would tie in with the title of “King of the Jews” which they had given Him. I have included an excerpt from one source who attempts to provide proof that what Matthew, Mark and John were seeing was actually the same thing.

“The garment placed upon Jesus after his brutal scourging likely was similar to the faded football uniforms mentioned above, but in His case we read of “a scarlet robe...faded to resemble purple” (The Wycliffe Bible Commentary). [It is difficult to imagine Pilate arraying Jesus' bloody body with a new robe. More likely it was one that had been worn and cast off as useless (Barnes).] According to A.T. Robertson, there were various shades of purple and scarlet in the first century and it was not easy to distinguish the colors or tints (1997). In fact, the ancients (especially the Romans) used the term purple when speaking of various shades of red (McGarvey, 1875, p. 361; Barnes, 1997). Consequently, these different colors sometimes would be called by the same name.

As one can see, there is no discrepancy in the Gospel narratives concerning the color of the robe Jesus wore. Just like others of their day, the Gospel writers simply used the terms scarlet and purple interchangeably." (apologeticspress.org)

There is another theory that may also explain what has been spelled out in the Scriptures. The account from Luke regarding Herod and his soldiers adorning Jesus with a gorgeous robe could have been the robe which Matthew saw before Christ was scourged by Pilate's soldiers, while Mark and John saw the Lord in a different robe that was placed upon Him after His scourging. The previous source's article makes complete sense that Pilate would not 'waste' a gorgeous robe on a person who has just been scourged. Perhaps, knowing Pilate's character, there was an exchange of robes with Pilate keeping the gorgeous robe for himself and adorning Jesus with a robe that was ready to be discarded. This would provide a perfect solution to the difference in robe colors seen by the different writers. However, this discussion is not mainly concerned about the color of the robe, since it was all done in mockery.

- **G2847 kokkinos (kok'-kee-nos)** from kokks 2848 (from the kernel-shape of the insect); crimson-colored: --scarlet (colour, coloured).
- **G4209 porphura (por-foo'-rah)** of Latin origin; the "purple" mussel, I.E. (by implication) the red-blue color itself, and finally a garment dyed with it: --purple
- **G4210 porphurous (por-foo-rooce')** from porphura 4209; purpureal, i.e. bluish red: -- purple.

Greek word definitions are from the Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary.

There have been many sermons containing references to the crown of thorns. In fact, there have been many assumptions and false facts given regarding this crown regarding the length of the thorns and the damage/pain it caused our Lord. Rather than reviewing all of the assumptive statements, let's look at the more important issue of why a crown of thorns. Again, part of the Roman torture was to humiliate the convicted person. In this case, Jesus is being tormented for His response to Pilate when asked if He was King of the Jews (**Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3**). This crown was made for Him out of mockery more than anything else. However, that doesn't mean there wasn't pain from the crown being set upon His head and then being struck with the reed (scepter) given to Him by the soldiers, causing the thorns to be pushed into His skull (**Matt. 27:27; Mark 15:19**).

The passages referring to this crown mention that the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns (**Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:17**). This meant that the plant/vine used to make the crown had to be pliable. This would more than likely eliminate larger plants that would produce large thorns. While it is virtually impossible to know exactly which type of plant was used to make this crown, there have been those who have ventured a guess. The most referenced choice is the *Euphorbia milii*, otherwise called **Crown of Thorns**. This plant seems to be somewhat pliable, making this a possible candidate for the actual crown of thorns. One other fact about the *Euphorbia milii* is that its white sap is poisonous if internalized in large amounts and that the sap may also cause a rash, much like poison ivy. If, in fact,

this truly was the plant used, the Romans may have been hitting it on Jesus' head so that the sap would run onto His head and face, causing irritation. This would have been just an additional means of torturing the Lord. Other plants mentioned by scholars and commentators were Spina Christi (Zizyphus Spina Christi) and the Nubk (Zizyphus lotus).

There is also symbolism regarding this crown of thorns. One of the results due to the fall of Adam and Eve was that God cursed the ground. Why is this important to know and understand? What the first Adam had caused due to sin was now being placed upon Jesus. The crown of thorns represents the struggles and pain of labor that came upon the earth as a result of Adam and Eve not following God's instructions. It is a foreshadow/type/example of the sin of the world being placed upon The Sacrificial Lamb. As one source so eloquently phrased it, "The Roman soldiers unknowingly took an object of the curse and fashioned it into a crown for the One who would deliver us from that curse." (gotquestions.org)

- **Genesis 3:17 – 18 NKJV** "Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field." "

They also placed a reed in His hand, signifying a scepter. The scepter was symbolic of what type of king he was. A gold scepter, inlaid with precious stones and carvings, indicated a very powerful king, someone to be feared and honored. A wooden scepter indicated that this king was someone who was in touch with and favored by his people. Wood is a type/foreshadow of humanity. To put a reed into Jesus' hand as a scepter was a mockery, as this stood for a weak king; one who would wither away and not last, just like the reed itself. Little did they know just exactly who they were mocking. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords; His rule and reign will be eternal. He is both a very powerful King that is to be feared and honored and a King who is in touch with and favored by His people. But one day, they, too, will bow their knees to Him.

- **Revelation 1:7 NKJV** "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen."

Prophecy & Fulfillment

The Messiah would be struck by His accusers.

Prophecy

Zechariah 13:7 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion," says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones.""

Micah 5:1 "Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; he has laid siege against us; they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek."

Fulfillment

Matthew 27:30 “Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.”