

The Crown Of Thorns
John 19:1-16

INTRO: There are four references to the crown of thorns in the Gospels; two of these references are found here in John 19 verses 2 and 5. In Matt. 27:29, we read: "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon 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!" Then in Mark 15:17, we have this account: "And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head."

Those soldiers who pressed the crown of thorns upon the sinless brow of Jesus Christ did not know that they were wounding the head of the sin bearer. Thorns are emblems of the curse of God upon creation. There were not thorns until man fell. When man fell, thorns came into existence (Gen 3:17-18). The crown of thorns says that Jesus Christ bore the curse of sin on His head: Jesus Christ is the curse-bearer.

I. VSS 1-5, THE KING OF THE JEWS— CROWNED WITH THORNS

- A. Vs 1, In an act of compromise, Pilate the Roman governor orders that Jesus be scourged.
 - 1. The Roman scourge had a short wooden handle to which several leather thongs were attached. The ends of the thongs were equipped with pieces of sharp bone and with lead or brass.
 - 2. The stripes were laid upon the victim's bare back.
 - a) The first blow, administered with all the strength the soldier could muster, knocked the breath out of the body. The second blow laid open the skin.
 - b) Often the body was so torn and lacerated that arteries, veins, and even inner organs and entrails were exposed.
 - c) This scourging often ended in death.
 - d) Pilate had ordered the torture of an innocent man.
- B. Vs 2, The scourging was followed by a mock coronation in the courtyard of the Praetorium (Mark 15:16).
 - 1. It is possible that one of the soldiers yelled to the others: "Let's crown Him King.." Another may have shouted: "What kind of crown shall He wear?" "A crown of thorns" is the answer.
 - a) Thorns are plentiful in Palestine. They are silent reminders of the curse of God upon the land. Soon they had woven a crown of thorns possibly from the *Spina Christi*.
 - b) With gruesome cruelty, the soldiers press the crown upon the brow of Jesus. Blood runs down his face, neck, and body.
 - c) Jesus is here pictured as bearing the curse that lies upon nature. He bears it in order to deliver nature and us from the curse (Rom 8:20-21).
 - 2. The crown of thorns mocked and tortured Jesus. Now one of them grabs a cloak and throws it around His soldiers.

3. Many pretend that Jesus is King, but He is not at home and work.
- C. Vs 3, Matthew tells us that they put a reed in His hand, a mock scepter. Then they marched around Him saluting in mockery and saying: "Hail, King of the Jews!" As they did this, they continually struck Him with their hands.
 1. Arthur W. Pink says of the preceding verses: "Here then is the Gospel of our salvation. The Savior scourged, that we might go free; He was crowned with thorns, that we might be crowned with blessedness and glory; He was clothed with a robe of contempt, that we might receive the robe of righteousness; He was rejected as king, that we might be made kings and priest unto God" (210).
 2. Jesus Christ suffered in our stead (Isa 53:5; I Pet 2:24).
 3. They praised Jesus, but did not mean what they said.
- D. Vs 4, Once again Pilate comes out to the crowd and tells them that he is bringing Jesus to them so that they may know that, "I find no fault in Him."
- E. Vs 5, Jesus was innocent, yet Pilate does not release Him. Instead he brings Him out before the crowd. His body is covered with wounds, blood runs down His face, neck, and back.
 1. On the head of Jesus is the crown of thorns. The purple robe is around Him. The soldiers had clothed Him as King, but they were only pretending. How about you?
 2. Pilate exclaims to the crowd, "Behold, the man!"
 - a) "Hasn't He suffered enough?"
 - b) That Pilate sought to get their sympathy for the release of Jesus is pointed out in verse 12.

II. VSS 6-11, THE SILENCE OF JESUS AND ITS EFFECT ON PILATE

- A. Vs 6, Pilate's appeal for justice fell on unsympathetic ears. They wanted Jesus to die.
 1. When they saw His beaten body and the crown of thorns, they cried out over and over: "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" Each of us must either crucify Him or crown Him. What is your decision?
 2. Pilate said to them: "Take ye Him and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him." This is the third time Pilate declares the innocence of Jesus.
 3. Pilate tries to throw the responsibility for His death on them, but it doesn't work that way. Each one of us must make our own decision about Christ.
- B. Vs 7, The Jews now put pressure on Pilate by alluding to a law found in Leviticus 24:16 stating that a blasphemer is to be put to death.
 1. Their claim was fraudulent. Jesus is the Son of God.
 2. Jesus is the "Word made flesh...."
- C. Vs 8, Pilate is more frightened than ever. Pilate is shaken to the very depths of his soul.
 1. His wife had had an agonizing dream. Perhaps He is a god, Pilate thinks (Matt 27:9).
 2. Jesus did not answer. Pilate deserved no answer. Pilate declared Jesus innocent, yet Pilate had Him scourged.

- D. Vs 9, Pilate questions Jesus as to whether he is from heaven or earth.
- E. Vs 10, Pilate now tries to push his weight around: "Don't you know who I am? I have authority to release you or have you crucified." How foolish to say such things.
- F. Vs 11, All through the Bible, the fact is established that all human government is God ordained, and that those in authority, whether they know it or not, are responsible to God for their conduct in office (Rom 13:1-2).
 - 1. Pilate's miscarriage of justice would not go unnoticed.
 - 2. There before Pilate, with a crown of thorns, was Jesus who will one day judge Pilate.
 - 3. Caiaphas had the greater sin, because he had the greater light.

III. VSS 12-16, JESUS REJECTED BY THE JEWS AS THEIR KING

- A. Vs 12, Jesus had regard for Pilate's authority; certainly He was no rebel. Pilate sought to release Jesus.
 - 1. The Jews go from a religious charge to a political one.
 - 2. Pilate knew they would complain to Caesar if Jesus was not crucified. Pilate would now weigh the political ramifications.
- B. Vs 13, "The pavement" in the Greek is *lithostrotos*: the place of Roman justice. Pilate sits down to pass sentence on Jesus. Jesus is wearing a crown of thorns that I may wear a robe of righteousness.
- C. Vs 14, A choice is here forced upon Pilate and on the Jews. Will it be Christ or Caesar?
 - 1. Everybody must make their choice about Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Matt 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me."
 - 3. "Sixth hour": six o'clock am Roman time.
- D. Vs 15, They make their choice. They say: "We have no king but Caesar."
 - 1. What? They hated Rome; they hated the occupying army; they hated Caesar.
 - 2. When you reject Christ, you accept "Caesar" as your king. When you reject Jesus, you take the world.
- E. Vs 16, This fulfills Psalm 94:20-21. They led Him away wearing the crown of thorns.

CONCLUSION: Jesus shed His innocent blood, His just blood, so the unjust could be saved (Rom 5:8).