

The Crown of Thorns is not the type of thing we would ordinarily keep as a souvenir. Yet as a Memento of Jesus' Passion it reminds us of some very important and wonderful truths.

A. We read about the Crown of Thorns in Jesus' Passion in Matthew 27:27-30

"27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole cohort of soldiers around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. 29 They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand, knelt in front of him, and mocked him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 They spit on him, took the reed, and hit him repeatedly on his head."

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The Crown of Thorns represents the greatest act of disgrace, mockery, and degradation. Jesus had become the laughing stock of Pilate's soldiers. It would only take a few soldiers to carry out Pilate's orders. Yet, we are told that the "whole cohort gathered around him." The Roman cohort was made up of about 600 men. They all wanted to get in on this and humiliate the man who claimed to be the King of the Jews. Ha! Look at Him now, condemned to be crucified. They put a scarlet robe on over his bloody body. They gave him a reed as a scepter, and for a crown "they twisted together a crown of thorns," and they mocked Jesus, bowing down to Him and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They kept hitting him on the head with the reed, driving the thorns ever deeper.

What a pitiful sight! Yet we just sang about how those

"Thorns Compose So Rich A Crown!"

The Crown of Thorns truly was a Rich crown for our King of kings.

-I- It was Rich in Meaning!

Those soldiers were acting out of the evil and cruelty in their own heart. They wanted to inflict as much pain and shame upon Jesus as they could. They had no idea that what they were doing actually had tremendous meaning and significance.

For the believer who knows the Bible, the crown of thorns immediately takes us back to Genesis, reminding us of the curse Adam and Eve brought upon the world by their sin. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, God told Adam, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you." Gen. 3:17-18 There were no thorns or thistles in the original, perfect creation that God had made. Now, because of sin, the world is full of them. In the Hebrew Old Testament there are 19 different words that describe thorns and thistles. Those soldiers didn't have any trouble finding thorns to make that crown. Thorns became a symbol of the curse upon the world because of mankind's sin. And now the soldiers placed a crown of thorns on Jesus' head. The symbolism is truly rich. Jesus' laid aside His crown of glory and took on our crown of thorns – our curse.

We have been studying the Old Testament sacrifices, especially the burnt offerings and the sin offerings—sacrifices that were pictures of Jesus' great sacrifice. One detail of those sacrifices jumps out at us. The person who brought the animal for a burnt offering or a sin offering to atone for their sins was supposed to lay his hands on the head of the animal before they killed it. That signified that the animal was taking their place, as their substitute. All their sins were symbolically transferred to the animal by that action.

Now the crown of thorns, that symbol of the curse upon the whole world, is placed on Jesus' head. The dreadful curse which has caused every kind of pain and suffering, sorrow and hardship was transferred to Jesus on His head. That pictures for us the whole purpose Jesus came to this world and why He went to the cross. He took the curse against sin upon Himself to free us from that curse. The Apostle Paul spells this out for us in Galatians 3:10&13, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in

all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” Then he adds, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).” And He bore it without complaint. Even though He had unlimited power as God, He allowed the soldiers to place the crown of thorns on His head and beat Him and mock Him, because He willingly accepted the world’s curse upon the sin.

This was not only a symbolic action. Those soldiers show the depth of depravity to which man has fallen. They were not just carrying out orders. They seemed to find pleasure in inflicting as much pain and shame as possible. The soldiers had already flogged Jesus, which was a most brutal whipping. Jesus was condemned to death by crucifixion which was the most cruel form of death invented by man. And yet these soldiers relished the thought of torturing and taunting Him even more. It's hard to believe people are capable of such heartless cruelty. That is the state of mankind in sin. Jesus was truly bearing the dreadful curse, and the worst of human nature and the sin that had so thoroughly corrupted the world. This all gives us a very vivid picture of what our sins inflict upon God. We Heaped scorn upon Him daily by our sins.

Jesus' Crown of Thorns is truly rich with meaning. It is also **Rich with Blessing**.

Jesus bore all the pain, shame and abuse of the world silently, uncomplaining, FOR US. The soldiers thought it was a joke that Jesus was called a king, but that shows the kind of King we have. He is not a king who sits in his gold plated castle and gives commands. He is a king who goes to battle for us. He is a king who takes all our burdens and troubles and makes them His own and suffers for us.

Remember, we were all under that curse. We all continued in the sin and disobedience of Adam and Eve. Therefore we suffer daily under the curse of sin. Think of all the “Thorns” we deal with today—not just the thorns in the garden, but all the thorns of life. As a symbol of the curse upon the world for Adam’s sake, the thorns represent everything that causes pain, hardship and sorrow. Paul spoke of his physical ailment, which he prayed earnestly for God to remove, as his “thorn in the flesh.” As long as we live in this world that is steeped in sin, we will bear many of these thorns in the flesh. They may be diseases, disasters, broken bones and other injuries, the hatred and abuse of others, you name it. But Jesus took all those upon Himself and suffered in our place. Isaiah said, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” He endured those thorns for us. That was because, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquity; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” 53:4-5. You could say He wore our crown of thorns.

It is true that we still feel the pain of those thorns in this life, but they become easier to bear knowing that Jesus has born them for us. He has taken the sting out of death and all the other thorns of life. By being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, He has reconciled us to God so that now He is with us, by our side through all the hardships of life. He is with us to comfort us and strengthen us and even make blessings come from those troubles. Therefore He has turned what was a curse against sin into a blessing for our good. Most of all He gives us the promise of eternal life where we will be truly freed from the curse of sin forever.

Never before have **Thorns Composed so Rich a Crown**. When you think of that Crown of Thorns remember what Jesus did for you and sing:

"What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul."

Hymn 723 Amen.