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# The Humiliation Of Jesus

*"They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" (Matthew 27:28, 29).*

All four Gospels refer to our Lord's being stripped of His clothing as He was prepared for crucifixion (see Matthew 27:28, 35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:23). In addition, John says that the casting of lots for His outer tunic was a direct fulfillment of the prophecy found in Psalm 22:18:

So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things (John 19:24, 25).

Hugo McCord believed Psalm 22:18 to be a specific prophecy that could have been fulfilled only by what was done to Jesus at the cross.

This prediction is one of the most precise of them all. It appears to show prior knowledge of a crucifixion detail composed of four soldiers, and a prior knowledge that Jesus would be wearing five garments. Easy it was for four garments to be distributed among four soldiers, but the fifth garment posed a problem. To divide it into four parts would ruin a wearable garment, making it four rags. That somebody might get use from the garment, the soldiers thought the fairest solution was to cast lots, and so it was done.<sup>1</sup>

Five articles of Jesus' clothing were divided among the soldiers. Each soldier received one article, while the fourth of them cast lots for the seamless robe that was kept in one piece. David Smith said,

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<sup>1</sup>Hugo McCord, *Messianic Prophecy* (Nashville: 20th Century Christian, 1967), 24.

... one got His cloak, another His girdle, the third His sandals, and the fourth His turban. There remained still His under-garment, the tunic. They would naturally have torn it into four pieces, but there was a peculiarity about it which caught their eyes and arrested their hands. It was seamless, woven all in one piece.<sup>2</sup>

The fourth may actually have been a loin cloth; Jesus may not have had a turban by the time He got to the cross. If McCord's understanding of this passage is correct, then it follows that Jesus was stripped completely of His clothing as a prelude to His crucifixion.

We do not know everything that took place in connection with our Lord's execution. The Roman writers who described the method of crucifixion related that the victim was crucified naked. The Jews, we are told, granted a loin cloth to those whom they had a part in crucifying.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, conventional art has always pictured Jesus as wearing a loin cloth during His crucifixion.

Whether Jesus was crucified naked or wearing only a loin cloth, the public exposure of His body must have been extremely humiliating. Describing this attack on His purity, His moral dignity, and His manhood, Matthew said of the soldiers who performed the crucifixion, "They stripped Him" (Matthew 27:28).

Our Lord experienced three types of pain

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<sup>2</sup>David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh: The Earthly Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 5th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), 497.

<sup>3</sup>*The Gospel of Nicodemus* x.

as He was raised up on the cross: the physical pain of being nailed to a cross, the spiritual pain of bearing our sins, and the emotional pain of public humiliation. The first Adam experienced physical and moral nakedness in the Garden of Eden because of his disobedience to God; the second Adam took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh as He suffered the shame of nakedness in His death.

*The identification it indicates.* We see in this humiliation of our Lord His complete identification with our human situation. He did not become almost a human being when He was born of Mary; He became truly human. He had a body like ours—a flesh-and-blood body, a body that had to be clothed to maintain the dignity of the One dwelling in it. He was just as much human as if He were not divine at all. When His hand was cut, it would bleed; when He was put on the cross naked or clad only with a loincloth, He experienced the humiliation that any one of us would have experienced, the shame of nakedness.

*The sacrifice it suggests.* We see in this horrid act of the soldiers' stripping Christ of His clothing that our Lord was willing to sacrifice His human dignity for our salvation. The deepest meaning of the incarnation is seen at Calvary. John said, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14a). Paul said that Christ was "made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). He became completely one of us.

Survey briefly His pain: He was rejected by His own, cursed of men, and mocked by His companions in suffering. Then, there was the merciless scourging, the nailing of His hands and feet, the thirst of fever, the throb of tortured muscles bearing the weight of the punctured body, and the longing for release from the pain-wracked body. However, let us not overlook the public humiliation caused by the stripping of His clothes. The removal of this veil of privacy and modesty was one aspect of martyrdom that the early saints dreaded the most. Some of them considered this humiliation worse than the torturous death. Jesus surely dreaded this part of the crucifixion.

*The death it pictures.* This fact of His humiliation reminds us again that the crucifixion of Christ was the goriest, lowest, most painful, and hideous type of death. *The Passion of The Christ*, a movie which was viewed by millions

in 2003, presented Jesus' blood, physical suffering, and torture in all the vivid, graphic colors of the cinema. However, do we think for a moment that we can capture on a screen the actual humiliation of the perfect, pure, divine Christ? Can human minds depict the humiliation of God? Those who crucified Jesus poured out upon Him the worst treatment that they could conceive. They sought a lingering, embarrassing, agonizing death. They wanted to extend it as long as the human body and mind would allow. They sought to humiliate the victim so completely that he had no dignity and no self-respect left. Any physical dignity, any observable decency was poured out upon the cross. Our Savior's enemies sought to take from Him everything of personal value as they killed Him.

*The price it depicts.* We see that our salvation was purchased by divine humiliation and degradation, not by divine glory. God did not bring eternal life through an awesome scene with angels singing and Jesus sitting upon a throne encircled by a glory outshining the sun. No, indeed! To be our Savior, Jesus became one of us in every aspect of true humanity. He lived with the limitations that we have, facing all the trials and hardships that we experience. In the end, He submitted to the cruel hands of Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers, allowing them to subject Him to the worst imaginable types of torture and mental humiliation.

In our study of what Jesus did for us, we often focus only on the crucifixion itself—the nails ripping through His flesh and the interminable six hours of suffering which ended with the cry "It is finished!" However, we must not forget the setting of the crucifixion—the scourging, the stripping, and the mocking of Christ—which added immeasurably to His grief and sorrow. He was stripped so that we might be clothed with the righteousness of God; He was laid bare before the world so that we might be covered inside and out with the glory of God!

Eddie Cloer



*The condescension of Christ meant not just His becoming a man, but also His suffering the worst humiliation that a man can experience.*