

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 27:27-31
“Behold the Lamb”

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Matthew 27:27-31

Verse 27

Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.

- As part of the trial ritual before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, Jesus had been flogged (see verse 26). Flogging was a severe beating. The prisoner’s back was bared. A whip imbedded with bits of bone and metal was used. These beatings were so brutal that they were often fatal.
- After the trial and the beating, Jesus was taken into the Praetorium, the governor’s palace. Apparently, because the Jews would not enter the home of a gentile during the Passover Feast, the trial and beating occurred outside of the palace.
- There, the entire “company,” what was known in the Roman army as a “cohort,” was assembled around Jesus. A “cohort” was composed on between 300 to 600 soldiers. So the group that was assembled around Jesus was large.

Verse 28-29

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said.

- There, in front of all the soldiers, Jesus was stripped out of the bloody clothes he was in.

- His nakedness was covered with a “scarlet robe.” This was most likely a “chlamus,” the outer cloak of a Roman soldier’s uniform. This garment was maroonish red in color. This robe was designed to mimic the royal garments a king would wear.
- The soldiers made a crown of thorns and put it on Jesus’ head. The thorn crown was designed to mimic the imperial crown of a king.
- A scepter made from the staff of a reed plant was put in Jesus’ hand. This reed was to represent the royal scepter, the symbol of the king’s power and authority.
- In so dressing Jesus, the soldiers performed a mock coronation. In a real coronation ceremony, these very details would have occurred in this exact order. The king would have been invested with a royal robe, a crown, and a scepter.
- Then the soldiers mocked Jesus. As at a real coronation, they knelt down before the king to pay homage and swear allegiance. That is exactly what they pretended to do to Jesus. They hailed him as the king of the Jews.

Verse 30

They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

- Despite their words, which paid homage to Jesus, the soldiers spit on him. Spitting on someone then, as now, is always a great insult and offense.
- To show that he had no power or authority, they took the staff, the symbol of power and authority for it was the scepter, and struck him with it repeatedly.
- The picture their mocking scene displayed was that of a broken, powerless, hopeless fellow.

Verse 31

After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

- Having had their fun and shown Jesus to be totally helpless, they redressed him in his bloody robes and led him off to be killed.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Behold the Lamb*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)