

He Wore Your Crown

By Jay Wegter and Shane Haffey

Thorns and thistles are growing outside of Eden's paradise.

On the island of Maui is one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. The founder of Amazon.com has an 80 million dollar compound near this beach. With its golden sand, turquoise water, vermillion bluffs, and green acacia forest it looks like a tropical paradise. But I had a rude awakening when I strolled into that acacia forest. The ground was covered with twigs and branches, each having an abundance of inch long thorns. After extracting these spikes from my flip flops, I began to reflect on a passage in Genesis. “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you. . .” (Gen 3:17b-18a).

Adam's sin brought into the creation a principle of both corruption and hostility (Rom 8:19-23). Man became mortal, work became toil, the curse weakened our race, and man's tender skin became subject to piercing from thorns, thistles, fanged serpents, and biting insects. Thorns are emblematic of the curse according to Genesis 3:18 for they bring pain and futility rather than food (Mt 13:7; Jer 12:13). For the ground will offer resistance as man grows grain for bread. Into this world that was “subjected to futility” is born the Son of God. Born of a woman, born under the law, and born into a world which God had cursed because of Adam's sin (Gal 4:4). The pure and innocent Creator of the universe became a victim in order to redeem us (Is 53:4-7). During our Savior's trial, thorns, which are the consequence of Adam's sin were pressed into Christ's holy head. God's Son experienced great reproach in His suffering and humiliation on behalf of His people (Heb 13:12-13).

Wearing a crown of thorns was part of Christ's curse bearing. He bore the curse of a broken law and bore the curse leveled against the creation due to the rebellion of the first Adam (Gal 3:10-13). Why this cruel painful crown? It was intended by Christ's enemies to mock His claim to kingship. This bitter crown of thorns was driven into His head instead of placing upon it a gold and gem-studded crown of which He was infinitely worthy. When Christ was suffering as our Substitute, sin was imputed to Him. The thorny crown signified a failed kingdom under Adam—a kingdom of delusion that would not endure. Thorns instead of gold mocked Christ's claim to be King of Israel and heaped shame upon Him for His supposed fraudulence.

It is here we rejoice, for every bit of the reproach He endured was for the sake of His own. To ransom them, He must bear the full consequences of their sin, including sin's shame. Wrath, separation from God, agony, and dereliction (as in abandonment due to failure and loss of function) fell upon Him. The forsakenness

Christ experienced in His passion is a wonderous and mysterious thing into which angels long to look (1 Pet 1:12). Christ's full substitution on our behalf included the mockery of the thorny crown—what a fitting symbol this is of Adam's failed co-regency. Instead of a crown fashioned after a cornucopia depicting bounty and harvest, the crown of thorns epitomizes the curse. For the thorns depict nature opposing a sin-weakened, mortal man who will die and return to the dust (Gen 3:19). Man, whose creational calling is to exercise rule and dominion will be punctured by thorns on his way to the grave. Regardless of utopian optimism, that is the human condition. How poignant this truth that salvation is not in our hands but must come from outside of us.

Adam's fiasco as planetary king produced an 'upside down' world. Adam's holy dominion was brief, ending in failure; for in his revolt against his Creator, he relinquishes his brief loyalty to God and follows the serpent. Adam's rebellion put the creature and the woman ahead of God Almighty. Instead of raising up God-fearing communities that knew God and were devoted to Him in worship and obedience, Adam introduces the reign of sin and death (Rom 5:16-21). Adam's failed dominion brought about death, disease, suffering, and thorns. Only a perfect 'second Adam' could reverse the ruin brought in by the first Adam (1 Cor 15:45ff.).

In spite of the curse upon all creation, God's goodness is evident in His common grace and continuous care of what He has made. He 'visits' the earth and enriches it, the hills drip with 'fatness'—He provides streams of water and grain (Ps 65:9-13). He attentively grants water and food for the creatures He has formed; He causes birds to sing, His works are filled with wisdom and wonder (Ps 104:10-24).

Christ's work of redemption ultimately restores planetary kingship upon Christ's spiritual seed (Ps 8:3-8; Heb 2:5-10).

By Christ's curse bearing He will restore perfect planetary kingship upon those who have been given to Him (Gal 3:9-14). When He publicly reveals the 'sons of God' He will lift the curse. All creation is eagerly waiting for this moment of liberation (Rom 8:20-21ff.). The third chapter of Second Peter sets forth three cosmologies, or world orders: **1) the pre-flood world, 2) the post-flood world, and 3) the new heavens and earth.** Our Savior's suffering was the cost of bringing in the everlasting 'third cosmology'—for this third and final cosmology will be the *new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells* (2 Pet 3:13-14ff.). But this glorious act of 're-creation' of the cosmos will not be brought about by a miracle of fiat declaration, no, judgment must first take place, justice must be served. The human nature that sinned must undergo its deserved punishment. Adam's revolt must be addressed head on. This is accomplished by the Last Adam. For Christ's penal substitution is the cost of our redemption, and the cost of restoring man's relation to a renewed creation.

In our Savior's curse bearing, He becomes the curse itself (Gal 3:9-13).

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us” (Gal 3:13a). Adam's revolt ‘crowned’ humanity with thorns, shame, and the mockery of failed dominion (Gen 3:17-18). That crown of thorns Jesus wore depicts just how hideous the legacy was that was left to us by Adam's failed dominion. But, because of the infinite dignity of our Substitute—that He is God very God, Holy Creator, Sustainer of all things created, He forms a new humanity to dwell in a renewed cosmos (Col 1:15-20). Thus, by virtue of the magnificence of His Person, and completeness of His work, He alone can rectify and reverse the wreckage caused by the first Adam.

Christ's painful crown is a thorny emblem of Adam's failed kingship and dominion.

The reproach our Savior bore is all unto one great end—to sanctify His people (Heb 13:12). By virtue of Christ's substitution, a guilt exchange takes place which exhausts the curse, pays for the cosmic treason, bears the shame, ignominy, and dereliction—reconciles to God, and makes a new humanity of priests and kings that will share dominion with Him in the new heavens and earth. In terms of this infinite price, let us consider afresh the wonder of Christ's humiliation in His passion. The fact His meekness was so great is marvelous to behold. Christ will pay for Adam's buffoonery; Adam's willful yielding to the serpent's lie which brought about a failed dominion.

Wonder of wonders, the guilt and shame of Adam's revolt and failure is charged to the account of our blessed Savior that He might bear it up to the cross and carry it away! (1 Pet 2:24; 3:18). The victory He has won He gives to His church (Col 2:9-15). The conquest of His enemies and our enemies is the cause of our inheritance and our adoption and our glorification (Rom 8:29-30; Col 2:9-15).

The suffering of Christ, including His reproach was vicarious.

In a matter of hours, the Jewish leaders sealed Israel's fate with a final repudiation of their only true King. That twisted thorny crown pricking our Savior's scalp and temples, made every thought enervating. That woven wreath of thorns was the only crown our King ever wore on earth. That inverted crown of mockery in place of honor signified the upside-down cursed world Adam had left to his progeny. In Christ's trial a symbol of creation's curse was placed upon Messiah's head. That token of blasphemous mockery is part of His agonizing wounding unto death. But it is God Himself who delivers the stroke and bruising. What a testament this is of God's love to sinners (1 Jn 4:10). For the One who planned that the piercing ‘diadem’ of thorns be driven into Christ's head is God the Father. “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him”

(Is 53:8-**10**) (see also Acts 4:27-28, Christ's suffering being predetermined by God).

It is likely that some low-ranking officer from a Roman cohort took the time to gather those thorns and weave them into a sinister, twisted weapon of shame.

Jesus of Nazareth did not fit the anticipated profile of a political messiah. Thus, who among God's chosen nation would have dreamed there would be no King and no Kingdom of spiritual offspring without first the bearing of the curse of a twisted, upside down cosmology! The creation over which Adam was to rule, has lashed back as painful thorns which draw blood. The Jews in willfully forsaking their Messiah, chose the reign of sin and death inaugurated by the first Adam. By rejecting Christ, they may have achieved the status of being a "friend of Caesar" for a day (Jn 19:12), but their murderous resolve and unbelief would further generational hardening (Rom 11:25-27).

Those who have 'eyes to see' and 'ears to hear' by means of the Spirit's work rejoice that all Christ did was as a representative, on behalf of His own (Mt 13:16-17). But, for the unbelieving Jews and all those who are yet in Adam there is nothing perceived as substitutionary about the death of Jesus (Is 53:8-9). It is the vicarious nature of the atonement that men gnash their teeth at. Yet, at the heart of the gospel is the work of our perfect Substitute giving His life "in place of" the sinner to make men new, restoring them to their created purpose, their *telos* (2 Cor 5:21).

***Telos* is a rich word in theology meaning the goal or design for which something was created.** The *telos* of mankind is a *telos* of glory. We are created to know, to live for, to behold, to enjoy, and to reflect God's glory. Christ as the last Adam was sent by the Father to create by means of redemption a new, realized *telos* which Holy Scripture designates as 'the new man' (Col 3:8-11). ". . .and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen, Behold He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So, it is to be. Amen" (Rev 1:5–7)."

Fallen man, estranged from his Maker and his *telos*, is a 'fugitive' under heaven awaiting sentencing.

For the present time the satanically energized world system seductively offers a distorted *telos*—a warped concept of dominion. Counterfeit dominion does not focus on the glory of God, instead, it reveals what's taught in Romans 3:23—the 'normalization' of a forfeiture of God's glory. This man-centered false *telos* is infatuated with selfish ambition—i.e. 'what an arm of flesh can do' (Jer 17:5-6; 9; Rom 2:5-11). Instead of giving glory to God, depraved man gives glory to the creation, to the

creature, and to his own accomplishments (Rom 1:25; Dan 4:30). Ever since the confusion of languages in Genesis, man has allegorically been ‘rebuilding’ the tower of Babel as a tribute to human potential.

With this ‘stolen glory’ man is constructing for himself a *telos* that terminates on self. Notice what the agenda was for building the ancient tower of Babel. “They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” “. . .The Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them” (Gen 11:4, 6).

But this theft of the divine glory is man imitating the devil, his spiritual ‘father’ (Jn 8:44). Man, in professing to be wise, becomes a fool (Rom 1:22). Like a sparking short circuit that is not completely severed, man’s constitution: *mind, emotions, intellect, body, spirit* became fragmented at the fall. Ever since, in appealing to a false *telos* he has been attempting to put himself back together and return to the garden. But his utopian ambition is not to recover the worship and glory of God and the enjoyment of his Creator. No, his striving is to ‘remake’ the whole man. He dreams of evolving into a man with bionic ability who possesses the tools and technology necessary to build his own utopian paradise—a new ‘Babel’ existing to praise transhumanism (2 Thess 2:3-4).

Mankind has inherited Adam’s ‘broken scepter’.

Sin, decay, and ultimately death is the great reminder that Adam’s race is *washed up*. Man’s fall has been likened to a shipwreck so devastating no profile of the vessel remains, only debris on the surface of the water. This present author has a ministry to elite soldiers and sailors. Through a series of tragic reports, I have indirectly witnessed the high suicide rate among the U.S. military. This terrible statistic betrays much concerning the human condition. Unregenerate men are internally furious, depressed, even suicidal over their weakened masculinity inherited from Adam. Consequently, they can’t live with themselves unless they can significantly impact their own world. That describes the fleshly effort to recover dominion apart from Christ. Men refuse to be impotent cardboard cutouts. For man was created to exercise rule and dominion over the works of God’s hands (Ps 8). As one pundit quipped, “fallen man cannot tolerate feebleness, he will either start an organization or shoot up a neighborhood. Alter his world he must, either through construction or destruction.”

The satanically inspired world system offers a myriad of ways to minister to one’s broken scepter. There is the gym, the dollar, porn, competitive sports, accumulation of possessions, political power, illicit sexuality—a veritable plethora of

false dominion options. These non-*telos* ‘score cards’ constitute the definition of futility! (Eccl 1:1-11). No man has ever been able to change the fact that he has a *telos* of glory. That *telos* is his inescapable creational identity. Even the reprobate in the depths of hell will still bear the image of his Creator. No amount of sin can destroy his *telos* of glory, but the more he accumulates in this world, or sows to his false score cards, the more he is storing up wrath for the day of wrath (Rom 2:3-9).

Attempts at dominion without the gospel result in idolatry. Notes Francis Schaeffer, fallen man seeks to bind the wounds of his original sin through false integration points. This truth provides insights into how and why this world’s system is so addictive. Men with the same kinds of scorecards join mutual admiration societies. It’s like a perpetual Oscar ceremony; men and women patting one another on the back, telling each other how wonderful they are. They admire the other’s badges of status and assure each other that their temporal scorecards are indeed legitimate. Into this world of carnal scorecards comes the shock of the incarnation of the Son of God.

Natural men rage against the diagnosis of the gospel, namely that Jesus Christ is indispensable to life, purpose, and heaven.

The incarnation infers that man’s case is so desperate that God must take human form, die, and suffer in our human nature that by his bloody death and humiliation we might recover our created *telos* of glory. God’s glory story is the recovery of His image through the redemptive work of His Son. So, consider the degree of deception the evil one gains by promoting this world’s system. The devil seeks to blind man to the true glory of God revealed in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:3-6), and blind man to his true *telos* of glory granted only by the knowledge of God in Christ (Jn 17:3).

The dismissal of the truth of human depravity gives man tacit permission to keep score on his own terms. Men flatter themselves, pronouncing themselves ‘sound’ for their cultural advancements, but it is nothing more than an exercise in the love of darkness (Jn 3:19-21). Only from faithful believers will men hear that there is no hope for them apart from the miracle of regeneration. And it is even more unnerving to hear it isn’t something they can’t initiate. How humbling to discover from Holy Scripture that apart from sovereign regeneration no man will recover his *telos* (Jn 1:12-13).

It’s as if each generation is echoing Nicodemus’ contemplation of Christ’s words about the new birth, “How can these things be?” (Jn 3:9). Regeneration bestows the ‘mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:12-16). Only by being born from above will we know God, and thus know our purpose, and the meaning of human existence. This provides insight into the reasons why tens of millions of Christians are martyred every century. For, the bad news portion of the gospel declares that man is a broken creature, a defiled rebel deserving of eternal misery, and that only by bowing knee and heart to

the Lord of glory can he be spared from his just condemnation. But even the good news portion of the gospel offends because it declares that there is no repair but by the bloody and shameful death of our suffering substitute (Rom 8:9-11).

Thus, the severity of the sin disease is made known by the costliness of its cure. Self-reliant fallen man balks at the cost of reconciliation to God. But the drastic measures to bring about healing is an indicator of how awful the disease is (1 Pet 2:24). Why did our Substitute have to undergo such an agonizing death? He did so to inaugurate a new principle of life and peace, for the old principle of sin and death had to be radically interrupted and replaced. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:2-4).

God utters a curse upon those who make an arm of flesh their strength.

The gospel comes into a world of men intent on ‘repairing themselves’—fixated on what the flesh is capable of (Jer 17:5-6). Thus, the natural man cannot bear to hear that apart from the Savior, his achievements are destined for the flame along with himself, so he deepens his animas, his hostility toward His Maker (Col 1:21). This obstinate commitment to his ‘score cards’ often leads to a spiraling, wallowing despondence that cannot be mitigated by the worship of creation any more than cancer can be cured by Tylenol. The best it can do is temporarily mask pain, but it offers no hope of recovery. The natural man seeks to bandage his wounds through false integration points only ensuring the continuance of the cycle of bondage. How poignant a reminder that the focus of our ministry must be the glorious gospel.

When we’re commanded to love not the world it means we are to release our old *telos* scorecards that we might hold more tightly to the cross of Christ. Paul states that the cross of Christ is his only boast (Gal 6:14). And in Philippians 3:8-11, he states, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Paul places his former gain in the loss column that he might gain Christ. But for those whose portion is solely this life, exchanging one’s soul for earthly gain is but a

humanistic effort to build an Edenic home here on earth. Here are Jesus' apt words in Mark 8:33-37, "But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.' And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'"

God is focusing His power and glory in the gospel of Christ.

God's interest is that through the paradox of the cross man can finally come home to God. Through the bloody sacrifice of the unblemished lamb of God, man, a broken sinner regains his *telos* of glory forever. Our Lord wore our shameful crown of thorns that we might share in His true, restored dominion. But to build the 'garden' here in accordance with the world's values is tantamount to forfeiting one's soul. The idolatry inherent in our stoney hearts must be dealt with before we can recover our purpose. There is no abiding place found for a man in God's cosmos without a new heart and without one's debt being cancelled (Rev 20:11ff.). The promise of a restored *telos* is first given back in Genesis 3:15. God would raise up a new King/Priest not of Adam's pedigree but a better Adam, a seed of the woman and the seed of God Himself. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

The Garden was not only paradise, but perfect fellowship with God.

After Adam and Eve were exiled outside the garden, the hope of returning to the garden appeared to be impossible. Four millennia later, Jesus makes this incredible statement, "I am the Door" (Jn 10:7). Christ is the true seed of the woman, and He alone is the narrow way back to Paradise. "I am the way the truth and the life, no man can come to the Father except through me (Jn 14:6). Man's original dominion mandate, to rule and reign as God's vice regents has never changed. But fulfillment of that calling is impossible apart from knowing God as a creature rightly related to Him.

Apart from the work of Christ, the enmity remains. For the seed of the serpent despises man's *telos* of glory. Our *telos* of glory as His image-bearers is to reflect the Lord's excellence in all our relationships. Peter's declaration that Jesus was the Christ provides an example of that restored *telos*. Later Peter would write to God's redeemed image bearers, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Ever since expulsion from the garden, man has sought a way to return to paradise that does not involve the incarnation of the Son, and His cross. Every century political systems arise that are fraught with collectivism and man-centered utopian ideologies. But they always produce dystopia instead of harmony. Christ our Substitute crowned with thorns is the only way man will recover this *telos* of glory. Only by the miracle of regeneration will a man exchange his carnal scorecards for the cross of Christ. But to the unregenerate, abandoning scorecards of status and security, and replacing them with the cross, the implement of death and torture is sheer lunacy. But the gospel is filled with paradox; “it is not according to man” says Paul (Gal 1:11).

The only way back to paradise is a restored relationship with the divine ‘Gardener’ (2 Cor 5:19-21).

In the coming Kingdom of God, the original Levitical formula is restored, “I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Lev 26:12). In this present gospel age, believers enjoy by faith this promise of the Father’s love, care, and presence, “. . . just as God said, I will be their God, and I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:16b-18).

But someday this promise of mutual love, favor, and indwelling will be experienced in person, face to face! “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:12-13). Mankind as the crown of creation (Ps 8) is designed with a *telos* of glory that can only be realized when the work of the God-man is applied to him. At the resurrection of the just, the redeemed will experience their return to paradise in which there is perfect fellowship with our Creator. For knowing Him, loving Him, glorifying Him, and reflecting Him as a creature made for that love relationship is what will make heaven a place of uncontainable joy. That is our *telos* recovered by the One who wore our crown and bore our curse (Gal 3:9-14). In that day, the original Levitical formula will have a heavenly version, expressed in this way.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these

words are faithful and true.” Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son” (Rev 21:3-7).

The rest of John’s Patmos vision is a series of culminating judgments on the impenitent offspring of Adam. These judgments all lead up to the unveiling of the glorified true King who is no longer wearing a diadem of thorns but instead His face is shining like the sun in full strength (Rev 1:16), and He is the illuminating ‘Lamp’ of the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:23). The saints will see the face of their Savior. To see this humble, lowly Man born of a woman, rise to such triumph is dazzling to our renewed senses—God glorified in our nature (Acts 2:36). What a cost it was for us to be that brand plucked from the fire! (Jude 22-23). Endless praise be to the One who for us, bore reproach and wore Adam’s cursed crown (Mt 27:29; Heb 9:27-28).

The true crown of dominion will be worn by Christ eternally, the whole of creation will be subjected to Him (Heb 2:5-9). “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. . .” (Rev 19:11-13).

Our Great High Priest in offering Himself as the sacrifice, was pierced with thorns and iron spikes—all that we might share in His resurrection and rise to newness of life in a creation free from corruption. “The twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created’” (Rev 4:11-12).

Maranatha! Come quickly Lord Jesus.