

22T01i Tough Questions? – Purple or Scarlet

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table.

Even if you have been a Christian for a long time, there are some things in the bible and in the traditions of the modern church that are tough to understand. I find many of these downright confusing. Some of these have troubled me for years.

We want to ask those “tough questions” and then do the research to see if we can find or develop a better understanding for these “tough questions”.

What do you know about how the Roman Soldiers mocked Jesus before He was crucified? Part of this was they put a robe on Jesus and a crown of thorns. John 19:2 “they put on Him a purple robe...Matthew 27:28 “put a scarlet robe on Him”, Mark 15:17 “they clothed Him with purple”, Luke does not have an account of this.

But did you notice something. John and Mark say purple robe or sash and Matthew says it was scarlet. Now purple and scarlet are not the same color. Is this a discrepancy in the Bible. Surely Not.

Let’s pray. Heavenly Father please guide our discussion today. Help me to stay out of the way, so you can use me. If I say anything wrong, please don’t let them remember my errand words but remember what you want them to hear regardless of my words. We trust you and we know you have promised the wisdom we need to understand your word in the Bible. Help us to let the Holy Spirit lead us and guide us. Bless our time together and I pray all these things in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

Okay. Scarlet or purple. There has got to be a reason for this. So let’s look at each more closely and in context.

First John 19:1-6 (NAS) *¹So Pilate then took Jesus and had Him flogged. ²And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and placed it on His head, and **put a purple cloak on Him**; ³and they repeatedly came up to Him and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and slapped Him in the face again and again. ⁴And then Pilate came out again and *said to them, “See, I am bringing Him out to you so that you will know that I find no grounds at all for charges in His case.” ⁵Jesus then came out, **wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe**. And Pilate *said to them, “Behold, the Man!” ⁶So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they shouted, saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate *said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him; for I find no grounds for charges in His case!”*

The Greek words translated in Verse 2 & 5 as purple cloak are **πορφυροῦν** porphuroun (Por-foo-roon) **ἱμάτιον** imation (im-at'-ee-on) or purple outer garment, cloak or robe in Greek. So, John means purple outer garment, a purple robe or purple cloak.

Next, Mark 15:16-20 (NAS) *¹⁶Now the soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. ¹⁷And they dressed Him in purple, and after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; ¹⁸and they began saluting Him: “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹And they repeatedly beat His head with a reed and spit on Him, and kneeling, they bowed down before Him. ²⁰And after they had mocked Him, they took the purple cloak off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.*

The Greek words translated in Verse 17 as dressed in purple are **ἐνδιδύσκουσιν** endiduskousin (en-did-oos'-ko-u-sin) **πορφύραν** porphuran (Por-foo-ran) which is clothed in purple in Greek. Verse 20 just says **ἐξέδυσαν** exedusan (esk-e-doo'-san) **πορφύραν** porphuran (Por-foo-ran) or took off purple. So both, Mark and John mean purple, so it must be purple.

So what about Matthew. Matthew was very particular in his word choices in his gospel. So let's take a closer look at Matthew 27:27-31 (NAS) *²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort to Him. ²⁸And they stripped Him and put a red cloak on Him. ²⁹And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and put a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ³⁰And they spit on Him, and took the reed and beat Him on the head. ³¹And after they had mocked Him, they took the cloak off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.*

Okay this says red cloak. NIV, NLT, ESV, NKJV, AMP and about 22 other translations say Scarlet, three English translations say crimson cloak and the NAS says red. But all of these are a variation of red.

The Greek words translated as scarlet cloak are **κοκκίνην** kokkinēn (Kok'-kee-nen) **χλαμύδα** chlamuda (khlam-oo-da) which scarlet cloak. **κοκκίνην** kokkinēn (Kok'-kee-nen) is a form of the word kokkinos (kok'-kee-nos) which is commonly translated crimson or scarlet but literally means dyed from the Kermes oak. This dye was a deep red dye. Both of these words are derived from the root word kokkos (kok'kos) which means grain or seed. So, no doubt Matthew means red cloak. Scarlet, crimson. A red cloak.

So this was not very satisfying. Both Scarlet and Purple were colors considered to be for royalty. Purple and Scarlet are used together in Revelation 17:4, 18:12 & 18:16 to symbolize royal adornment of Babylon.

But why the discrepancy between Mark & John, and Matthew. Well I don't know. Only the account in John has Jesus wearing the Purple robe when he is presented to the crowd after being tortured. The Accounts in Mark and Matthew, the robe of Scarlet or Purple is removed after Jesus is beaten before he is led to His crucifixion. So what do we do with this? So I decided to look to commentaries for help. I found very little useful in the many opinions out there. Some said it was neither color only symbolism, some

said it was a vantage point issue one saw purple the other red. None of this was very satisfying then I came across a website called answersingenesis.org which had a section of contradictions in the Bible. I found an article which was titled Was Either Matthew or John Color Blind? The author, Troy Lacey, gave a very plausible explanation. The red cloak or “chlamus” was most likely the typical Roman officers’ sash we often see in movies and pictures depicting this time period. It was a Chlamus. But in John & Mark the garment is referred to as a Himation or robe or outer garment. The author pointed out these were very different garments. So, it is very likely that Jesus was draped with a Scarlet Chalmus or short cloak, then it was removed. Then after the soldiers put the crown of thorns on Jesus, they put a purple robe on Jesus to mock Him as the King of the Jews. Which is why the robe is still on him when Pilot shows Jesus to the crowd, then the Purple robe is removed before they lead Him to the cross.

This is a very plausible explanation. Now I don’t know if this is true but I like having a possible plausible explanation for this apparent discrepancy. Amen.

Father God, thank you for giving us the resources and sources to answer these tough questions. we know you know all things. When we see how things fit perfectly in your plan. Wow. Only with God is this possible Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us. Help us to open the Bible and look into history to answer our questions. I pray these things in your name Lord Jesus, Amen

So let me leave you with this. Does it matter if it was purple or scarlet or both? No, it does not change the story at all. It does not change the fact that the historical Jesus was tortured and crucified for me and you. Yes, it could as the one author said and be both and different times. Or it could be vantage points or even the memory of the events was different for each author. Eyewitnesses can see the exact same event, yet see the details differently. Color is one of those details that could be that way. And either way it’s okay. This does not challenge the inerrancy of the scriptures in anyway. For people looking for errors, this might seem like an ah-hah moment but is it really. I think not. The story is not invalidated by a discrepancy of colors for an insignificant part of the story. Jesus was tortured and mocked. Was it Scarlet or Purple? I just don’t think it matters. Jesus died for me and that is the point of the story.

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table today. There are a lot of “Tough Questions” that we struggle with as Christians. I’ll keep trying to address some of them.

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See you next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.