

CROWN OF THORNS

by James A. Killian



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CROWN OF THORNS

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Crown of Thorns

Production Notes

CAST: Crown Maker, Onlooker, Narrator
(*Three adults, male or female*)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Matthew 27:27-31

SYNOPSIS: The Crown Maker is cold and calloused at the beginning of the drama. He willingly fashions the crown of thorns that will be placed on Jesus' head, seeing the act as an opportunity to ridicule this self-proclaimed king. However, through some thought-provoking comments from the Onlooker, the Crown Maker moves from arrogance to penitence and comes to realize that he really is making a crown for the true King. Although the Crown Maker and the Onlooker do not directly engage in dialog, they should react nonverbally to each other's words.

COSTUMES: The Crown Maker and the Onlooker should both be dressed in biblical costumes: simple long-sleeved, dark-colored robes tied at the waist with a length of cord, sandals, and rectangular pieces of fabric for headpieces. If males are playing the parts, tie a length of cord around their heads to secure the material. If females are performing, let the cloth drape loosely around their faces.

PROPS: A "crown of thorns" is the only necessary prop. Undecorated grapevine wreaths are readily available at craft and hobby stores and work well for this purpose. Props other than the crown of thorns may be used if desired, but should not be allowed to divert attention from the actors.

STAGING: A bare stage is fine. A backdrop depicting biblical-era buildings may be added if desired. Set a stool Center Stage for the Crown Maker. He sits on it, fashioning the crown throughout the drama, while the Onlooker stands off to one side, listening.

LIGHTING: If available, a spotlight helps to focus attention on the character speaking and emphasizes his or her words and actions.

1 **NARRATOR:** (*Off-stage*) The circlet fashioned by Roman
2 soldiers which was forced down on Jesus' head was part
3 of their derisive treatment after Pilate had sentenced
4 Jesus to death. Officially, Jesus was guilty of treason or
5 rebellion, having claimed to be a king. This act of the
6 soldiers was what might have been accorded anyone
7 caught similarly in the grip of Roman law.¹

8 **CROWN MAKER:** So they finally got that Jesus on some
9 charges that will stick. I've been hearing about him for a
10 long time. It seems like each time he finally did something
11 that they could arrest him for, he got out of it one way or
12 another. I remember hearing how he freed the woman
13 who was caught in the act of adultery. They say that he
14 just seemed to write something in the dirt in front of him,
15 then asked someone in the crowd to throw the first stone,
16 provided that the stone thrower was without sin. Well,
17 they tell me no one could claim to be sinless, so they all
18 went away, and the woman was free. I sure didn't like to
19 hear that! She was wrong, and she should have been
20 punished! Another time, when he healed a blind man, he
21 actually told the man that he was the Son of Man, the
22 Messiah, come from God. The nerve of him, claiming such
23 a thing. We all would have just laughed at such a statement
24 as surely coming from a hopeless lunatic, but he actually
25 did heal the man, and, from what I've been told, healed a
26 lot more besides. That's not the work of a crazy man, that's
27 the work of a man possessed of evil spirits. That's the work
28 of a man who must die!

29 I don't mind that they asked me to make this crown
30 of thorns. Maybe this will be the final act that will convince
31 the people, those crazy people who have followed him,
32 that they have followed a fool, a troublemaker, a would-be
33 king who is no king at all. I want to be right up front when
34

35 ¹*Interpreter's Dictionary, Volume 1*

1 the soldiers put this crown on his head before they lead
 2 him off to Golgotha. I want to be the first to salute this
 3 “King of the Jews.” Boy, will I salute him — with every
 4 rotten vegetable I can find. (*CROWN MAKER continues*
 5 *working on his crown as ONLOOKER speaks.*)

6 **ONLOOKER:** I see somebody making a crown for my Lord.
 7 I know that he thinks he is making a crown to mock Jesus,
 8 to expose him to ridicule by this vicious crowd that has
 9 gathered. I wish I could tell him, “Go ahead, make that
 10 crown, put all the thorns in it that you can find. It can’t
 11 hurt my Lord any more than the sight of all those who
 12 cheered him when he entered Jerusalem and now cheer
 13 for his death.” How he must feel. He had such high hopes
 14 when he came here. I know that he was fulfilling the old
 15 prophecies from Scripture. He himself told us that he was
 16 of the line of David, and what greater king have we had
 17 than David himself? Oh yes, I too wish that he would have
 18 come with a large army, and I think that he could have
 19 raised one. We’re so sick of these overbearing Romans
 20 and the traitors in our midst who rule in their name. But
 21 who am I to question so great a man as Jesus? He came,
 22 instead, on a donkey, the sign of a peace-loving person.
 23 Maybe he was right. Would the shedding of many more
 24 lives really do any good? Would Jewish lives, maybe my
 25 own and those of my friends and family, given up to the
 26 power and brutality of Rome, solve anything? I guess that
 27 Jesus thought not, or else he would have stormed the city
 28 and killed every Roman within it.

29 I don’t see any way to stop what Pilate has set in
 30 motion. It would be senseless to try. And you know, Jesus
 31 seemed to want things to go just the way they have gone
 32 so far. I heard him telling some of his followers — his
 33 disciples — that this is what his Father in Heaven had
 34 planned for him to do. What father would want his son to
 35 die? But then, what father could give his son the wonderful

1 powers that Jesus had — to teach, to heal, to comfort and
 2 to inspire hundreds and thousands of people? It's beyond
 3 my imagination. I get headaches just trying to figure all
 4 these things out.

5 I do know this: Jesus is somebody very special. Jesus
 6 surely is sent from God to do something for his people —
 7 maybe people everywhere — that no one has ever done
 8 before. I wish him well. I wish I could tell him that I believe
 9 in him and all that he's done. I wish I could tell the crown
 10 maker that he is right. Jesus is a king, and though that
 11 crown isn't the gold one that it should be, it is right that
 12 Jesus should be crowned king, of all of our people, of all
 13 people everywhere. Hail Jesus! You are truly the king of
 14 life! *(A pause, then soberly to CROWN MAKER)*

15 I've been watching you over there as you weave those
 16 vines to make a crown. At first I thought it was just a small
 17 wreath that you were making, but then I realized what
 18 you really were making. Those soldiers are using you,
 19 using you to make fun of the greatest person who has ever
 20 lived. Now he must die because people like you and me
 21 fell away from him in his time of greatest need. Well, go
 22 ahead, make that crown. I tell you, instead of lowering
 23 Jesus to our sinful level, that terrible crown will raise him
 24 to heights of glory that neither you nor I could even
 25 imagine. Go ahead, do your best, because that is what
 26 Jesus deserves: the best from each one of us. Go ahead,
 27 weave your vines, make that crown, but give the wearer
 28 honor and glory instead of the derision and hatred that
 29 your Roman friends wish to give him. *(He walks Off-stage.)*

30 CROWN MAKER: Why did that troublemaker have to come
 31 over here? I saw him watching me, standing over there
 32 by that building. I wonder if he is one of those disciples?
 33 Well, if he is, he had better watch out, or he'll get the same
 34 thing that his master is going to get — a long, slow, painful
 35 death, with plenty of time to be sorry for acting the way

1 that he did.

2 But you know, that man might be onto something. I'm
3 not really sure that Jesus was, or is, all that bad. If I was
4 blind, I would have welcomed his healing touch too. I hear
5 that he didn't even charge anything like most of our so-
6 called healers would have done. I also remember how
7 Jesus healed that man on the Sabbath when his friends
8 carried him to the house where Jesus was visiting. They
9 let him down on a pallet through a hole in the roof. What
10 friends that man had. They believed that Jesus could help
11 their friend, and he did. He healed that stranger totally,
12 and on a Sabbath, too!

13 What's happening to me? I took on this task to ridicule
14 Jesus and to please those Romans who have taken over
15 my homeland, set their laws over us, and keep us in
16 bondage. What a fool I have been! That man is right —
17 Jesus is truly a king. He is giving his life freely for us and
18 our sins. Oh, I wish that I had never agreed to make this
19 crown. I know, I'll tell them that I can't make it. *(With more*
20 *force)* No! I'll tell them I won't make it! I'll tell them they
21 are wrong, that they are killing the hope of all mankind.
22 Yes, I'll even tell them that they are killing the Son of God!
23 *(Looking about in fear)* Oho. Here they come. It's too late to
24 run. They might beat me if I refuse now. Oh, why did I
25 ever get into this mess?

26 Well, I'll try to make this crown as comfortable as
27 possible, and maybe I can even make it look like a true
28 crown. Oh Jesus, please forgive me, for I know now that
29 you are the best — the finest! Somehow, Jesus, when they
30 put this crown on your head, I pray that the world will
31 truly see, truly believe, the King of Glory sent from God.
32 Forgive me, Jesus, an unworthy sinner.

33 NARRATOR: As Scripture tells us, the crown of thorns was
34 thrust upon the head of our Lord. It was then, as it still is
35 today, the symbol that tells all of us who believe that almost

1 **2,000 years ago, something wonderful happened. A man**
2 **came down from heaven and willingly gave his life so**
3 **sinner such as you and I might have eternal life. He truly**
4 **was the Son of God, and King of all the people of God.**
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The Sign Maker

Production Notes

CAST: Sign Maker, Priest of the Temple
(*Two adult males*)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26,
Luke 23:38, John 19:19

SYNOPSIS: A reluctant sign maker is asked to make a sign which says that Jesus is King of the Jews. The Priest who asks him to do the job thinks Jesus' claim that he is King is outrageous. He believes the sign will convey to all the ridiculousness of the claim. But the Sign Maker vows to do his best to make the sign beautiful because he has heard Jesus preach and believes he is the promised Messiah.

COSTUMES: The Sign Maker should be dressed in a biblical dark-colored robe tied at the waist, sandals, and cloth headpiece tied around his head — “working-class” garb. The Priest of the Temple should look significantly richer and more prestigious. Although Scripture does not specifically tell us what the priests wore when off duty, a light-colored robe seems appropriate. A tunic might be layered over this, along with a tasseled scarf around the shoulders for a prayer shawl. The cloth headpiece may be anchored with a skull cap.

PROPS: A pot with some paint overruns on the outside with a brush or two sticking out of it, and a piece of weathered wood for the sign.

STAGING: Stage is bare except for a table Center Stage containing the above props. The Sign Maker stands at the table as he works on the sign throughout the drama. The Priest stands off to one side, faces the Sign Maker, and freezes throughout the Sign Maker's two monologs.

LIGHTING: A spotlight, if available, should shine on each character as he speaks.

SIGN MAKER: I don't like doing this at all. I guess I should feel honored that I have been chosen, especially when the chief priest of the temple said that I and I alone should be the maker of this special sign. I am good, you know. I have made signs for the temple, some of them very ornate and beautiful. I have made signs for the Romans themselves, for their various buildings, and even for some of their military units. Not only have I made the signs, but I have received much praise for the excellent workmanship that I put into each sign. Sign making is a very exacting profession. You must put some of yourself into each sign you make, or it will be like some cheap flat plate. It will be useful, but there will be no life, no extra message hiding within its letters and symbols. My signs tell all who see them that they are something special. They announce or point out, and they do it in such a way that people are actually happy to see my signs.

Of course, as any craftsman must do, I use my talents in other ways. I have decorated some of the very precious pieces of furniture in the temple and in the homes of some of our prominent people. I have even dabbled in decorating some pieces of jewelry worn by some of the city's most beautiful women.

Yes, I am good at what I do. (*SIGN MAKER continues his work while the PRIEST speaks.*)

PRIEST: This man rambles on and on! You would think that he is somebody special. Well, of course, he is not. He is a craftsman — no more, and, I guess, no less. The chief priest sent me to him to make this sign so the whole city of Jerusalem, and our Roman protectors as well, can see the outrageous claim that this Jesus of Nazareth has made. Yes, of Nazareth — that insignificant, unimportant little town stuck out in the middle of nowhere. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? I doubt it, and if it could, it certainly wouldn't be this rabble-rouser. He has disgraced

his family, his own father, from the line of David. How shameful they must feel. Yes, this sign, "King of the Jews," shall be inscribed in three different languages so that all who are here in Jerusalem for the Passover, can read and understand it. This sign will show how demented, how very wrong, this man is.

Do you know that Pilate, the Roman governor, actually wanted to free Jesus? We, the chief priest and I, suspected that he might try such a foolish thing, so we hired scum from the streets to shout him down and demand his death. When Pilate offered the crowd Barabbas or Jesus, we were ready for him and demanded that Jesus die on the cross. Barabbas was a known criminal, but we can take care of him at another time. Why is that sign maker taking so long? (*PRIEST turns to SIGN MAKER and freezes.*)

SIGN MAKER: Yes, I know the priest is impatient. It will soon be time for Jesus to be put on the cross where he must stay until he is dead. Yes, I could make this sign a lot faster than I am doing now, but I have another motive. You see, I heard Jesus preach in the temple. I saw him heal a number of people. I saw him walking the streets and talking quietly with great confidence and love to all kinds of people. I watched him outside the governor's palace, even when the soldiers were beating him. You know, I was almost ready to stand up and vouch for him and declare that he was a good man who should not die. If only someone else would've stood up first, I really believe that I would've been strong enough to testify for Jesus. If only someone would've been strong enough to be the first to speak against the terrible plot that the priests had planned against Jesus. If only someone else —. But nobody stood up. Nobody cared enough about this fine man to go against the power of the temple, and you can't expect one old sign maker to make a difference if there is no one else.

That's why I'm taking so long. Perhaps I can make

1 **this sign so beautiful, so meaningful, that, instead of a sign**
2 **of derision, it will be a true testimony to the greatness and**
3 **goodness of Jesus the Christ. Yes, I said the Christ, the**
4 **Messiah that we have been waiting for all of these many**
5 **years. Perhaps the God who he claims as his father will**
6 **take him from the cross and will not permit him to die. I**
7 **don't know. But if that happens, then the sign that I have**
8 **made, the beautiful sign that I have crafted so well, will**
9 **announce to all the world that this man, this Jesus, is**
10 **exactly who he said he is — The King of the Jews. Long**
11 **live the King.**

The Vinegar Man

Production Notes

CAST: Vinegar Man, Roman Soldier
(*Two adult males*)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Psalm 69:21, Mark 15:36

SYNOPSIS: This is a slow-paced reading. Each man feels some irritation: one for his place in society, the other because he is not happy with the task he has been given — to assist in the execution of a man who is not a criminal. The Vinegar Man has aspirations for a better life, while the Roman Soldier feels that he is locked into a position from which he cannot escape. Therefore, though he has no real dislike for his servant, he speaks to him harshly and loudly, transferring, perhaps, his anger to someone who cannot fight back. The Vinegar Man reacts nonverbally to his words.

COSTUMES: The Vinegar Man should wear the traditional biblical garb: dark-colored robe tied at the waist, sandals, and cloth headpiece tied around his head. His appearance should be plain and “working class.” The Roman Soldier should wear a rust-colored, knee-length tunic, sandals, and a helmet. (You may use a football helmet spray-painted bronze.) A cardboard or toy sword may be carried and a bronze painted cardboard breastplate may be added if desired.

PROPS: Two jugs, a large vat and stick for mixing, and a spear with a sponge on the end.

STAGING: A bare stage is fine. A neutral or dark background is preferred. A backdrop depicting three crosses at a distance would be appropriate if desired. The Vinegar Man is first On-stage. He stands Center Stage, stirring and speaking. (A small, plain table may hold the jugs and spear.) The Roman Soldier then enters and speaks. With the command “Let’s get going,” they begin to move toward Off-stage. At the end, the Roman Soldier is gone and the Vinegar Man pauses to speak his last lines.

LIGHTING: Spotlights, if available, should be used to highlight each individual as he speaks.



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