

The Diadem Crown

Val Brinkerhoff 2/2/2020

The word “diadem is a variant translation of the word *nazir*, meaning “crowned”. It is tied to an uncut, full grapevine. In *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature* we read, “Whilst the vine again, laden with fruit, is called *Nazarite*, or more probably *Nazir*, i.e., the *crowned* (Lev. 25:5;11); because in its *uncut* state, when its **head is covered** with grapes and foliage, it is a much adorned with a *diadem* as the head of the *Nazarite* with the abundant hair, just as we call the foliage of a tree its crown” (*The Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, Kitto & Alexander eds., vol. 3, p. 293).

The heavenly diadem in scripture signals *royal* patriarchal priesthood authority, that based on *bloodline*, whereas the regular metal earthly crown signals traditional kingship alone. According to Nelson’s Student Bible Dictionary, “rulers of the Ancient Near East did not wear *rigid gold crowns* but *cloth turbans* wound around the head and decorated in turn with cloth diadems studded with gems.” In the New Testament garlands or wreaths are a type of crown. They were awarded to some for faithful service, becoming a crown-like symbol of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), while a Diadem always symbolized royal [bloodline-based] authority.” (See Youngblood, Bruce and Harrison, Nelson’s Student Bible Dictionary, Thomas Nelson, Inc.)

According to Phelps, “**The author of Revelation uses the image of diadems to expose illegitimate rulers of the temporal realm and affirm Christ’s royalty over all of creation, including but not limited to the temporal realm.** Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, of all time, of all peoples. Any ruler who wears the diadem only does so at the permission of God and is accountable to God for his or her actions in that role” (see Jamie Phelps, *The Diadem: An Examination of its use in Revelation*, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas). **Illegitimacy** is expressed in Revelation 12 and 13 in connection with Satan or the dragon (and his earthly leaders) who wear 7 crowns. In Revelation 19, however, Christ wears “many diadems”. He is the **legitimate** heir of the Father and rides a white horse with a sword tied to words of great power in His mouth. He pronounces judgment with them upon the wicked. He will reign over a Kingdom of righteousness, peace, justice, and love in the Millennial day.

The diadem and the crown in the Bible are often translated incorrectly into the same word, “crown.” The word “diadem” is found in only four Bible verses; Isaiah 28:5; 62:3; Ezekiel 21:26-27; and Zechariah 9:16. Later in Ezekiel chapter 37, we read of the future consolidation of Judah and Joseph into one unified *Kingdom of Israel* (see verses 16-19, 22, 24-26), led by a last days Davidic king (see D&C 77:9 & 14). A fifth “diadem” should be found in Revelation 19:2, in the many “diadems” (rather than “crowns”) Christ will wear at his Second Coming.

In Isaiah 62:3 both the words “**crown**” and “**diadem**” are found, suggesting a distinction between them. In Revelation chapters 12 and 13, the usurper Satan wears a “**crown**.” The translation for “crown” in Revelation 19:2, however, should be translated “diadem,” as there Christ is the true, rightful, *royal* king, heir of the Father. Only he wears the sign of *royal* priesthood authority based on bloodline, the diadem, including one on earthed granted similar power (also in the bloodline of God). Such has *royal* heavenly lineage with its *purity*. These two attributes symbolized in the diadem (purity or righteousness *and* God’s royal family bloodline), express real authority, rather than the traditional state-based, lesser power of earthly rulers expressed in the metal crown.

Embedded in the diadem’s fabric are precious jewels, themselves often called diadems (Zechariah 9:16). The LORD sometimes refers to righteous servants as “mine” or “my jewels” (Malachi 3:17; D&C 60:4). A single jewel placed over the forehead, wrapped around the head with a chain, may also be called a “diadem”. The High Priest who represented the Great High Priest Christ in the ancient Tabernacle and Temple wore the sacred name YHWH on his forehead when he was officiating there. The rider on the white horse in the book of Revelation – Christ – wears “many” diadems. According to Barker, “the High Priest wore seven...The rider also has a name ‘written’ which no one knows but himself (Rev. 19:12). This could have been the Name worn...on his diadem (Ex. 28:36), known only to himself because none but he ever spoke the Name aloud. It is more likely, however, to have been the most secret Name ‘*hyb sr hyb*’, **I am that I am**’, which the Lord revealed to Moses at the burning bush” (Ex. 3:14).

The LORD Jesus used this same name at His arrest in Gethsemane, when all fell backward to the ground, not able to stand in the LORD’s holy presence (John 18:6). What is the meaning of “**I am that I am**”? One Jewish source

claims it has an eternal quality. “He was”, “He is”, and “He will be” (Chumash Rashi, The Tanach, Mesorah Heritage Foundation Publication, 1996). Barker believes it “means, ‘I call into being what may be’, or ‘I create’. The simple form of the Name found elsewhere, usually rendered Yahweh or Jehovah, would then mean not ‘He Who Is’ but ‘He Who Causes To Be, **He Who Creates**’...The song of the living creatures would then be praising not the One who always exists but **he One who crated and continues to create**, which is the theme of the second song: ‘Thou didst create all things and by thy will they existed and were created.’”

Barker adds, the name-title of God on the forehead “is obscured in the canonical texts, but is quite clear in Philo who says the high priest wore a golden plate showing a name that only the purified may speak, and ‘that Name has four letters’; and in the *Letter of Aristeas* which reads ‘On the front of the hallowed diadem...in holy letters on a leaf of gold (the high priest) wears the Name of God’” (see Philo *Moses* II.114; *Abraham* 103; *Aristeas* 93). A literal reading of the third commandment (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) suggests that it applied originally to the high priest: ‘You shall not bear the Name of the LORD your God for evil purposes...’The description of the high priest Simon coming out of ‘the house of the veil’ is a theophany” (Eccles. 50:5-21).

Related thoughts are expressed in the Testament of Levi (8:2-10), where we read, “And I saw seven men in white clothing, who were saying to me, ‘Arise, put on the vestments of the priesthood, the crown of righteousness, the oracle of understanding, the robe of truth, the breastplate of faith, the miter for the head, and the apron for prophetic power.’ Each carried one of these and put them on me and said, ‘From now on be a priest, you and all your posterity.’ The first anointed me with holy oil and gave me a staff. The second washed me with pure water, fed me by hand with bread and holy wine, and put on me a holy and glorious vestment. The third put on me something made of linen, like an ephod. The fourth placed...around me a girdle which was like purple. The fifth gave me a branch of rich olive wood. The sixth placed a **wreath** on my head. The seventh placed the priestly **diadem** on me and filled my hands with incense, in order that I might serve as priest for the Lord God” (see Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, T & T Clark, LTD, pps. 125-26; 306-07).

Again, according to Phelps, “In Revelation, the diadems function to expose and judge **illegitimate** royal authority and finally to affirm legitimate royalty. In Rev. 12 and Rev. 13, the focus is on the **illegitimate royalty** of this world. We read of **the dragon having seven diadems** [in some translations] on its heads [ruling over the temporal world for seven time periods, see 2 Corinthians 4:4]. Chapter 19, on the other hand, shows what **legitimate royalty** is in the rider on the white horse...The fullness of meaning of the diadems in Revelation is finally expressed in chapter 19. In this chapter, a rider on a white horse is seen. The rider has *many* diadems on this head and a *name* that no one knows but he himself. He has a *sword* coming forth from his *mouth* and a *robe* dipped in *blood*.” It is Christ. “The only legitimate royalty is a divine being...the only one who may bestow and withdraw kingdoms [as throughout the book of Daniel]...In verse 9, the dragon is expressly identified as the ancient snake...“the great dragon...Satan, the cosmic adversary of both God and the world”.

He adds, “It is most transparent that the beast represents the Roman Empire. Commentators agree that the beast represents either the Roman state or the Roman emperor who himself represents the Empire. The imagery of this passage has its roots in Judaism as well . . . (Job 3:8; 40:15; 41:1; Ps 74:14; 104:26; 2 Esd. 6:49, 510 and other texts, 1 En. 60:7-11; 4 Ezra 6:47-52) mention the leviathan (the female beast of the sea) and or the behemoth (the male beast of the desert). These were created on the fifth day with the other animals and symbolize **chaos** [powers of Satan]; humankind was created on the sixth day to rule over such beasts. This Leviathan-Behemoth myth is the source of the imagery of chapter 13, but the storyline is drawn from the myth of the eschatological adversary. **The beast has seven heads**, and in Rev 17:9, we are told that **the seven heads are seven kings**. These “kings” are actually Roman emperors. **It is appropriate that the heads do not wear the diadems**. Aune correctly states that Roman emperors never wore the diadem. Therefore, the diadems in Rev. 13 demonstrate **illegitimacy** on two fronts: 1) the kings recognize the hollow nature of their diadem and 2) the emperor illegitimately bestows the royal symbol on whomever he wishes, usurping the role of God.”

In Isaiah 28 (where “diadem” is translated correctly) we learn that in the last days of great wickedness and pride among *Ephraim* (the drunkard), and their apostasy from truth, the watchmen (leaders) will be blind, ignorant, dumb, greedy and asleep; “they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, everyone for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch **wine**, and we will fill ourselves with **strong drink**; and to morrow

shall be as this day, and much more abundant” (Isaiah 56:10-12).

Christ the Lord, in the coming day of judgment, wearing his diadem (symbol of his royal *bloodline*-based authority) will be exalted (Isa. 2:11-12). Isaiah 63:1-6 has comparable meaning stating that Christ is righteous and mighty to save, **his garments stained crimson**. “Wherefore art thou **red** in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the **winefat**? I have trodden the **winepress** alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in my fury; and their **blood** *shall be sprinkled* upon my garments, and I will *stain* all my raiment.”

Phelps concludes, “The biblical perspective is clear that God [the LORD Jesus] is the legitimate LORD of all. God is the lord of the temporal realm, the lord of heaven and earth, the lord of all lords. God alone is sovereign and to God alone do the images of [real] royalty, particularly the diadem, belong. The diadem was a symbol of royal authority in the Roman world that has its origins in Persia. **The author of Revelation uses the image of diadems to expose illegitimate rulers of the temporal realm and affirm Christ’s royalty over all of creation, including but not limited to the temporal realm.** Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, of all time, of all peoples. Any ruler who wears the diadem only does so at the permission of God and is accountable to God for his or her actions in that role” (see Jamie Phelps, *The Diadem: An Examination of its use in Revelation*, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas. See also the crown, mitre, and holy anointing oil of Ex. 29:6; 34:30; Lev. 8:9; 21:12; 2 Sam. 1:10; 2 Kings 11:12; Zech. 9:16).

According to Mark 15:17, Roman soldiers at the hall or Praetorium near Pilate’s palace, placed a crown of thorns on the Savior (and a purple robe). There they smote him “with a reed,” and spit upon him, kneeling in mockery before him. He may have worn it while on the cross, the title above it, according to John, stating, “Jesus of Nazareth, the **King** of the Jews” (John 19:19).

See also Numbers 6.