

THE TRILINGUAL INSCRIPTION

Text: John 19:19-22

INTRO: This passage in its context pictures a King on a cross. He had no crown except of thorns, no scepter except a reed, no palace, no finery, no possessions. Let us look a little further into this matter.

I. THE COMING & DEATH OF JESUS HAD BEEN FORETOLD FOR CENTURIES. Christ's death was a shock to His friends & a stumbling block to His adversaries--but it was not a surprise to Jesus nor to His heavenly Father.

A. God frequently used His enemies to accomplish His purposes. READ HABAKKUK 1:5-6, 13.

B. Although God called as prophets men whose lives were in harmony with the truth they would proclaim, He did, in connection with the death of Jesus, use the ungodly despicable high priest Caiaphas to prophesy, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, & not that the whole nation should perish" (JN 11:50).

C. Likewise, God used the enemies of righteousness to bring about the sacrificial death of Jesus.

READ ACTS 2:22-23, 36; 3:13-18

D. It is also significant that Pilate wrote what he wrote about Jesus--in 3 languages--& refused to relent. "What I have written..."

II. THE TRILINGUAL INSCRIPTION: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

A. Hebrew. The language of O.T. Scripture. The language of the Jewish elite, the priests, the scribes & the rabbis. The language of Moses & the prophets, of David & Solomon & all the kings of Judah & Israel. Wherever the OT Scriptures are read & discussed, by the grace of God, may all who read come to know JESUS OF

NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

B. Greek. The language of culture & commerce, of art & science. The language of philosophers, orators & poets of Athens & Sparta & Corinth. The common language of the vast majority of the people throughout the world in the 1st century AD.

1. About 250 years before the birth of Jesus, the Heb. Scriptures had been translated into Greek & had become reading material for many Gentiles as well as for Jews who grew up in predominately Gentile neighborhoods & who did not have the privilege of attending rabbinical schools & learning the ancient Hebrew language.

2. This Greek was the lang. in which all the N.T. narratives & epistles would be written within the next 50 years or so after the death of Christ. Throughout the 1st century world & wherever the N.T. Scriptures are read & discussed, may all, by the grace of God, come to know JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

B. Latin. The official lang. of the Roman govt. The language of power & conquest, of civil law, of the Caesars. Wherever Rome's influence is spread & its conquests are considered, wherever its power is recognized & its Emperors are emphasized, by the grace of God, may all come to know JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

III. THE MEANING OF THE CROSS CONTEMPLATED.

A. Christianity is not a cult of relic hunters or location worshipers. It is not a religion of meaningless symbols and good luck charms. The old rugged cross must never give way to a plastic cross or a silver trinket. It must always picture extreme sacrifice and the ultimate, Divine love.

B. For a moment, let us pause & listen to the testimony of some who were there when Jesus was crucified.

1. Pilate, the Roman governor. It had fallen his lot to interrogate thieves, murderers, insurrectionists, etc. For 3 years or so, he had observed the Jews with their many traditions & rituals, such as that required in Deut 21:6-8. Having examined the charges against Jesus, note Pilate's words & actions. READ MATTHEW 27:22-24.

2. The Roman centurion. Most likely he had officiated at numerous crucifixions before. If Pilate had interrogated various robbers, murderers & insurrectionists, this man executed them. He had watched them beg for mercy. He had heard them curse God & man. But never before had he executed a prisoner like Jesus "who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet 2:23).

READ MATTHEW 27:50-54

3. The penitent robber. This man & his companion in crime, at first reviled Jesus, but as the day wore on, as Jesus suffered the supreme penalty of sin without complaint, as He spoke words of love & compassion, one of the criminals was moved to repentance. READ LUKE 23:39-43.

4. The dying petition of the Son of God. Henry Dosker, in ISBE describes crucifixion: "The punishment was meted out for such crimes as treason, desertion in the face of the enemy, robbery, piracy, assassination, sedition, etc.... Among the Romans crucifixion was preceded

by scourging, undoubtedly to hasten impending death. The victim then bore his own cross, or at least the upright beam, to the place of execution... A tablet on which the feet rested or on which the body was partly supported, seems to have been a part of the cross to keep the wounds from tearing thru the transfixed members. The suffering of death by crucifixion was intense, esp. in hot climates. Severe local inflammation, coupled with an insignificant bleeding of the jagged wounds produced traumatic fever, which was aggravated by the exposure to the heat of the sun, the strained position of the body & insufferable thirst. The wounds swelled about the rough nails & the torn & lacerated tendons & nerves caused excruciating agony. The arteries of the head & stomach were surcharged with blood & a terrific throbbing headache ensued... The length of this agony was wholly determined by the constitution of the victim."

But as Jesus hang suspended between heaven & earth, as His executioners gambled for His clothing, as the crowds mocked & jeered, as His enemies rejoiced that now they would finally be rid of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). No wonder the thief repented. No wonder the Centurion confessed!

CONCLUSION: Today, the description that was nailed to Jesus' cross has been translated into hundreds of languages & preached in every nation under heaven. The apostle John was an eye witness of the things he wrote about. "And he who has seen has testified, & his testimony is true; & he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe." (JN 18:35). Do you believe what the Centurion believed? Would you renounce your sins as the penitent robber, confess your faith as the Roman Centurion & submit to the baptism

that Jesus commanded in Mark 16:16? Would you give your heart to JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS? If not, why not? If so, why not now?

Exton, PA, May 13, 1990

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, April 19, 1992

La Porte, TX, May 7, 1992 (meeting)

WVNN Radio, Athens, AL, May 19, 1996

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, August 20, 2000

Fairfield, PA, August 27, 2000

Highway 29, Liberty Hill, TX, May 17, 2002 (meeting)