

## THE INSCRIPTION ON OUR LORD'S CROSS

Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D, Ph.D.

P. O. Box 130220 The Woodlands, TX 77393-0220

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was,  
JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.: (John 19:19)

These words were written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew (vs 20). In New Testament Greek,<sup>1</sup> Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews reads:

ⲓⲥⲏⲟⲩ ⲉⲛ ⲛⲁⲗⲱⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲛ ⲛⲁⲥⲓⲗⲉⲩⲟⲩ ⲧⲱ ⲛ ⲓⲛⲟⲩⲁⲓⲱⲛ.<sup>2</sup>

The Greek definite article ⲉⲛ ("the")<sup>3</sup> precedes **basileu;** (king) in all four gospel accounts. Therefore, the Hebrew should also display the definite article.

Still, it cannot be overstressed that Pilate is not translating from Greek to Hebrew or even to Latin. He is simply "writing" – thus the inscription is neither required to follow a strict word-for-word rendering nor grammatical rules of translation. As the sign has not been preserved to our day, we do not know the precise Hebrew wording which, unlike English, reads from right to left. Nevertheless, this author sets forth the compelling probability that Pilate wrote the Hebrew as shown below:

Jews the of	king the even	Nazareth of	Jesus
.<ydwwhy <sup>h</sup>	Elmw	yrxnh	uwVy
H	W	H	Y

If we consider all four gospel readings and place a *waw* (w, English = "and", "even", or "now") before the third word (Elm = melek = king), the entire accusation in Hebrew would have thus read: "This is Jesus of Nazareth *even* the king of the Jews" (Yehshua HaNatseri vMelech HaYehudim). Now in Hebrew, Jehovah, the principle name of God, is written **hwhy** (English = **YHWH**, called the tetragrammaton). Reading the above John 19:19 passage from right to left and noting the first letter in each word (displayed in red), we find the acrostic **hwhy**!<sup>4</sup> No small wonder the Jewish chief priests protested so vehemently for Pilate to remove "The King of the Jews" (John 19:21). By so doing, the full force of the inscription – that Jesus is YHWH come in the flesh – would be removed.

Earlier, these same Jewish leaders had offended and even threatened Pilate when, having at least thrice declared Messiah Jesus innocent of all charges, he sought to release Christ (John 19:12-13). Pilate's superscription was his revenge, and he refused to relent: "what I have written I have written" (John 19:22). Wittingly or not, Pilate testified to the truth, and the acrostic could not have gone unnoticed by the Jewish leadership. Accordingly, God overruled and had the truth regarding the person of His son proclaimed – Zechariah 9:9 was thus fulfilled.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy **King** cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

<sup>1</sup> The Greek of the New Testament is the language which was commonly used in the Greek-speaking world from the time of Alexander the Great (c.330 BC) to about AD 500. It is called *koine* or common Greek in distinction from the classical Greek of the world of letters. God's written revelation of His Son was thus given in the language of the people, not in that of the scholar. All that follows represents original research by the author.

<sup>2</sup> F.H.A. Scrivener's *Textus Receptus* (1881).

<sup>3</sup> Pronounced "hah" due to the rough breathing symbol that resembles a small "e" above the omicron.

<sup>4</sup> Words 1, 2, and 4 are incontrovertible. Only the form of the third word, "king", is at issue. The Hebrew word EIM (*melek*) sometimes stands alone and is translated "king" or "the king". However, it is often rendered EIMh (pronounced hahmelek, h = "the") to indicate the presence of the definite article or the prepositional form EIMI (lahmelek). The word "king" first appears in Genesis 14:8, and EIMw ("and the king of") is one of the forms recorded in this verse. Numerous examples of variant spellings may be found in 1 Ki.1. In Mat. 25:40 "and the king" is written as EIMhw in the Hebrew New Testament translation. Note that it also begins with the w (a "waw", pronounced "vav") – the third letter in YHWH (to which English vowels were supposedly added for pronunciation purposes to form the word "JeHoVaH" – the Hebrew "Y" is pronounced like the English "J" and the "W" like our "V").

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Oh Israel, repent!