

John 19:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

Analysis

This title then read many of the Jews (τοῦτον οὖν τὸν τίτλον πολλοὶ ἀνέγνωσαν τῶν Ἰουδαίων/touton oun ton titlon polloi anegnōsan tōn Ioudaiōn)—the cross stood near a major road during Passover, when Jerusalem swelled with pilgrims. Thousands saw the proclamation. **The place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city** emphasizes maximum visibility—this was no obscure execution.

It was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin (ἦν γεγραμμένον Ἑβραϊστί, Ῥωμαϊστί, Ἑλληνιστί/ēn gegrammenon Hebraisti, Rhōmaisti, Hellēnisti)—the three great languages of the ancient world. Hebrew (or Aramaic), the language of religion and God's covenant people. Greek, the language of philosophy and culture. Latin, the language of law and empire. The gospel would go forth in all three (Acts 2). Christ's kingship is proclaimed to Jew and Gentile, religious and secular, East and West. The cross is not provincial but cosmic; the King rules all nations.

Historical Context

Multilingual inscriptions were common in cosmopolitan Jerusalem, which hosted Jews from across the Roman Empire and beyond. Hebrew/Aramaic for locals, Greek for the educated and Hellenized Jews, Latin for Roman officials and soldiers. Passover brought Jews from every nation (Acts 2:5-11), many of whom would

witness the crucifixion and later hear resurrection testimony. God orchestrated maximum witness.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the trilingual inscription reveal about the universal scope of Christ's kingship?
2. How does the public, visible nature of the crucifixion refute later claims that Jesus didn't actually die?
3. In what ways is the gospel message for 'all peoples, tribes, and tongues' foreshadowed here?

Interlinear Text

τοῦτον	οὖν	τὸν	τίτλον	πολλοὶ	ἀνέγνωσαν	τῶν		
This	then	G3588	title	many	read	G3588		
G5126	G3767		G5102	G4183	G314			
Ἰουδαίων	ὅτι	ἐγγὺς	ἦν	τῆς	πόλεως	ὁ	τόπος	ὅπου
of the Jews	for	nigh	it was	G3588	to the city	G3588	the place	where
G2453	G3754	G1451	G2258		G4172		G5117	G3699
ἐσταυρώθη	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς·	καὶ	ἦν	γεγραμμένον	Ἑβραϊστί		
was crucified	G3588	Jesus	and	it was	written	in Hebrew		
G4717		G2424	G2532	G2258	G1125	G1447		
Ἑλληνιστί	Ῥωμαϊστί							
and Greek	and Latin							
G1676	G4515							

