

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 327

Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21

Verses: John 19:19-22

Topic: The Sign Over Our Lives

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John 19:19-22 MKJV And Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. (20) Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. (21) Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write, the king of the Jews, but that he said, I am king of the Jews. (22) Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

You may have seen the letters INRI on the top of crosses. The initials, I.N.R.I., are from the Latin phrase, "Iesvs Nazarens Rex Ivdæorum," (The Latin "I" and "V" is the English "J" and "U" respectively) which means, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of Jews." This was the phrase Pilate penned and displayed over Jesus on the cross.

The sign was actually written in three languages – Hebrew, Greek and Latin the three main languages of the region, symbolizing the Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures respectively. They were also “trade languages” understood by a wide range of people.

But what was the significance of the sign? Some commentaries say that it was like a “charge sheet” and that crucified criminals had the crimes for which they were being committed hung over them. But no crime was hung over Jesus! Instead there was just a statement of His royalty. This not so indirectly pointed out the perfidy of the Jewish authorities. Thus the sign accused not Jesus – but the Jews.

This accusation was not lost on the Jewish authorities who seem to have formed a delegation to Pilate with an objection. “Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write, the king of the Jews, but that he said, I am king of the Jews.” Pilate stood his ground and answered: “What I have written I have written.”

Pilate seems to have believed in the innocence of Jesus and in His claim to be the King of the Jews. Whether or not Pilate believed His claim to be the Son of God is unclear, but after Jesus' death a Roman centurion did. The Romans seemed to have grasped who Jesus was, while the Jews rejected Him. Perhaps that is why the headquarters of the Church inevitably moved from Jerusalem to Rome.

Signs are important. What would you want as a sign over your life? What would you want your headstone to say? For me I wish it to be something like: “A missionary who loved the Lord, spoke and wrote the truth and greatly extended the Kingdom of God.”

If you think about this exercise I hope you do not come up with phrases such as: “he owned a huge flat-screen TV” or “His house was the largest in town.” As Jesus said, our lives are more than our possessions.

Luke 12:15 MKJV And He said to them, Watch and keep yourselves from covetousness. For a man's life is not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Luke 14:33 MKJV So then, everyone of you who does not forsake all his possessions, he cannot be My disciple.

We tend to walk around with invisible signs over us – our attitude, our posture and the way we relate communicate a clear message. We can almost see people's personal signs saying: “I am powerful” or ‘Sexy girl” or “Don't mess with me”. And over time we become expert at reading these invisible signs that other people are displaying. But rarely do we understand our own sign that we show the world.

What is the basic attitude and disposition of your inner being? Does your invisible personal sign, that you carry around every day say “Jesus lives here!” or does it say something else like “I am rich and important.”?

At the end of the day it is who we are, and what we have contributed to others that counts. That is our legacy. That is what we will be remembered for. The sign over Jesus' life said that He was a King, that His was a life lived royally and well and convincingly.

The sign exercise is a useful one to help you work out what you are really living for – and if that is worthwhile, and if it needs to be changed. What sign are you carrying now? What do you want it to be? How do you want to be remembered when you die?

Now we don't live for a human sign or a headstone – we live for God. It is how God sums up our life that counts. If we want His approval we must first become Christians, then live life in love in accordance with Christ's commandments. The God-pleasing life is not necessarily a religious life, but it is always an obedient life and a holy and set-apart life.

Back to the sign on the cross - the Jews wanted it changed. They wanted to re-label Jesus. This re-labeling of Jesus is a constant theme of the cults. They say Jesus was a “guru” or “just a prophet” or “a man of His times” and countless other things but God says “I have written what I have written.” The Bible tells us who Jesus really is – God's beloved Son in whom He is well-pleased.

INRI summed up how Pilate saw Jesus – as a political entity, as Jesus from the town of Nazareth who was King of the Jews; a person with a place and a role. Pilate did not see beyond these externals for that something else is needed – the eye of faith.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 MKJV (16) So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know *Him so*. (17) So that if any one *is* in Christ, *that one is* a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

We are new creatures, unrecognizable to the world, but recognized in the Spirit. We know no one by the external life – name, place, appearance role and possession – but only as they are in the Spirit – and Paul says that applied even to Christ Himself. This is perhaps why there is no physical description of Jesus in the Scriptures. In the end it will be the sign of the Spirit, or the mark of the Beast, the fact that we are redeemed new creatures, is the only sign that matters.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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