

read : "Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews" (Jn. 19: 19). The chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: "Do not write '*The King of the Jews*,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered: "What I have written, I have written" (Jn. 19: 21-22). And this "Titulus" indicated the motive of the condemnation but also the explicit affirmation of Jesus in response to Pilate's question: "Are you the King of the Jews?" (Jn. 18: 33) , after having explained, though, that "My kingdom does not belong to this world(...) my kingdom is not here" (Jn. 18: 33,36). So Pilate said to him: "**Then you are a king?**" Jesus answered, "**You say it, I am a king.**" (Jn. 18: 37a).

The regality of Jesus is eschatological, universal, divine, meek and humble... Pilate, even though he did not understand all of this, is convinced of the total innocence of Jesus and consequently, Pilate tried to release him; but the Jews cried out: "If you release him you are not a Friend of Caesar (Jn. 19: 12). And Pilate, having yet again -- interrogated Jesus, sat down on the judge's bench (Jn. 19: 13), and presenting Jesus, said to the Jews: "**Behold, your king!**" They cried out: "*Take him away, take him away! Crucify Him!*" The chief priests answered: "*We have no king but Caesar.*" Then he handed him over to them to be crucified (Jn. 19: 14b-16).

The "Titulus" with the reason of the condemnation is mentioned in the three synoptic Gospels and in John, yet only this last one has also the epithet "Nazorean." This "title" of John has all of the historical characteristics, and not only in the light of the plaque conserved in the basilica of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem in Rome...

The denomination "king of the Jews" is used 18 times in the New Testament and it is always and only referred to Jesus. However it is not given to him by his fellow Jews, rather by the Romans: by Pilate and his soldiers...

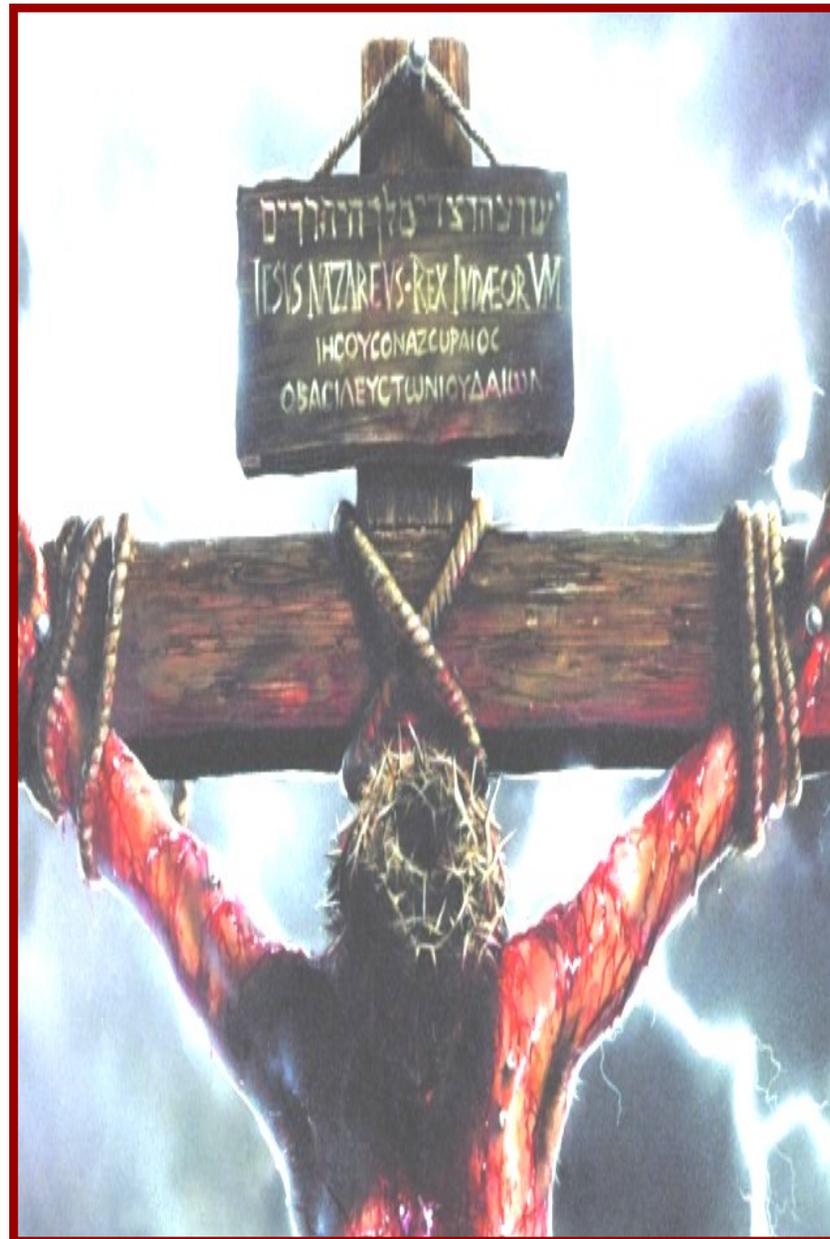
The title of the cross "**Jesus the Nazorite/Nazorean, King of the Jews**" was determinate for the burial of Jesus as three of his renowned friends wanted it: Joseph of Arimathea; Nicodemus who brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes (Jn. 19: 39), and John the evangelist, a priestly descendant. The royal aspect of the burial of Jesus is a Jewish custom meant only for a king...as noted in the funeral rites of Asa king of Judah (cf. Chr 16: 14), grand-nephew of Solomon and king from 909 to 870B.C.... As John specifies the body of Jesus was put in pure, light, linen clothes...this type of linen that Jesus was buried in was pure linen, priestly and royal, and used only for a king.

The origins of the Church has great certitude in this: Christ is King! And his "Titulus" is venerated in Jerusalem on Good Friday already in the IV century, as the pious pilgrim Egeria (382-384) narrates. St Ambrose, during a funeral discourse for the Emperor Teodisio (395), recalled how queen Helen recognized the cross of Jesus... and adored the king and not the wood.

He who taught us to ask our Father "Your kingdom come" (Mt. 6: 10) is our King, meek and humble of heart. And the spirit of Christ always invites us to seek "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt. 6: 33) with the simple trust of beloved children (cf. Mt. 18: 3).

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"R" AS IN REX (KING OF THE JEWS)

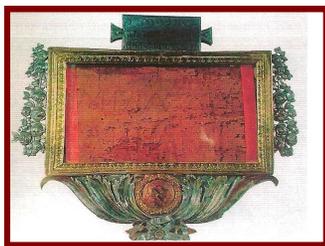


"R" AS IN REX (KING OF THE JEWS)

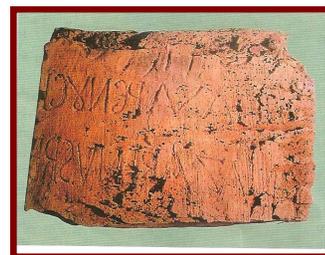
by: Sr. Maria Elisabetta Patrizi

When they crucified Jesus a "Title", or a wooden plaque, was nailed to the cross with the inscription I.N.R.I. (cf. Jn. 19: 19-20). These are the Latin initials of <Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum> (=Jesus the Nazorean, King of the Jews).

In Rome, in the basilica of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem, there is in its custody a silver case, with the front side of crystal, that contains the "Titulus crucis". The case dates back to 1492 (see picture at right) but the relic is very ancient and it was found in Jerusalem, in the IV century, by Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, together with the wood of the cross of Jesus.



The "Titulus crucis" is a walnut wooden plaque measuring about cm 25,5 in width and cm 14,3 in height. There are three written lines: one in Latin, one in Greek and one in Hebrew with the name NAZARENUS. On April 21, 1995 some scientific photographs were taken of this famous "Titulus" (see picture at right).



What was the purpose of this "Titulus"? It is indicated the reason for the death sentence of Jesus, emitted by Pontius Pilate. Or rather, it contains the *accusation* presented by the leaders of the Jews: <Then the whole assembly of them [=the chief priests and scribes, (cf. Lk. 22: 66)] arose and brought him before Pilate. They brought charges against him saying, "We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Messiah, a king"> (Lk. 23: 1-2), that is "the Anointed one, the consecrated, king".

The calumny concerning the tribute to Caesar was already preannounced in Lk. 20: 20-26 where it is said that the scribes and chief priests, wanting to find a reason to condemn Jesus, <sent agents pretending to be righteous who were to trap him in speech, in order to hand him over to the authority and power of the governor> (ivi, 20: 20) and they asked him if it were licit, or not, to pay the taxes to Caesar. But Jesus <knowing their hypocrisy> (Mk. 12: 15) showed them the coin that had the image and inscription of Caesar and therefore He said to them: "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (ivi. 17). And He indicated, like this, the different order of duties towards Caesar and towards God.

Nevertheless, returning to the accusations presented to Pilate against the Nazorean, it is said that Jesus "declares himself king". Therefore -- in good faith or bad faith -- **the messianic regality of Christ is presented to Pilate under a political aspect** and, consequently, as an attack to the Roman sovereignty (cf. Acts 17: 7). And **it is for this accusation that Jesus will be condemned** (Lk. 23: 30).

Having heard the accusations, Pilate questions Jesus: "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "you say so..." however He moves away from the *political sense* that the Roman governor gives to this title, according to the accusations presented by the Sanhedrin. Pilate therefore, recognizes **the innocence of Jesus** (as in Lk. 23: 14 and 22) and he states explicitly: "*I find this man not guilty* [or "that is not worthy of condemnation"]. But they were adamant and said: "He is inciting the people with his teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began to here" (Lk. 23: 5).

Having heard that Jesus was Galilean hence under the authority of Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great and Tetrarch of Galilee from 4 B.C. until 39 A.D.), Pilate sent the Nazorean to him, "who was in Jerusalem at that time" (Lk. 23: 7), for the pilgrimage of the Passover. Seeing Him, first: "Herod was very glad" (Lk. 23: 8) because he had heard of Jesus "and he hoped to see him perform some sign" (Lk. 23: 8) and posed many questions to Him. But Jesus "gave him no answer" (Lk. 23: 9). Hence Herod "treated him contemptuously and mocked him, and after clothing him in resplendent garb, he sent him back to Pilate" (Lk. 23: 11). Pilate, therefore, summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and said to them, "You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt. I have conducted my investigation in your presence and **have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him**, nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. **So no capital crime has been committed by him**. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him" (Lk. 23: 13-16). But they asked for the release of Barabbas and yelled "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (Lk. 23: 21). For the third time Pilate "still wishing to release Jesus" (Lk. 23: 20), asks them: "What evil has this man done?" (Lk. 23: 22). Since they continued to ask that He be crucified "and their voices prevailed" The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and **he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished** (Lk. 23: 23b-25). In this way Pilate gives in to the double request of the Sanhedrin: to free Barabbas and to crucify Jesus, together with "two others, both criminals" (Lk. 23: 32). Jesus was conducted to "the place of the Skull" where they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." (...) The people stood by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said: "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him (...) they called out: "If you are the **King of the Jews**, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read: "**This is the King of the Jews**" (Lk. 23: 33-38). And numerous manuscripts add that the writing of the "Titulus" was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek (and this is the succession, beginning from the top, of the languages on the plaque in the basilica of the Holy Cross in Rome). In Jn. 19: 20 it is precisely stated that Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It