Several of my recent posts have elicted comments from multiple participants (same comment, asked in a variety of ways). One of them had to do with the question of the language that Jesus would have spoken with Pontius Pilate during his trial. A number of people have asked “why not Greek”? The logic behind this question/solution is that Pilate as an educated Roman would have been fluent in Greek; and Jesus, living in “Galilee of the Gentiles,” where he probably engaged in a small business (carpentry) would have had to communicate with the non-Jews in his midst, and so probably could speak Greek as well. Moreover, he grew up in Nazareth not far from the urbane city of Sepphoris, and would have acquired Greek language and culture there.

That is a common view among many students of the Bible. And so what’s wrong with it?

As with most interesting questions, this one requires virtually an entire book to answer, so I will give only the short version, which is this: it is true that Pilate almost certainly could speak Greek, and almost certainly as true that Jesus could not.

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