

QUESTIONS:

If Jesus could not speak Latin, he must have communicated with the Romans in Aramaic. Was it common for Romans, at least of a certain class, to speak Aramaic? If not, how could Jesus have communicated with, for example, Pontius Pilate? Perhaps through a translator?

Also, are there any sources I can consult regarding my question on the crucifixion? Wikipedia does not address this issue and you yourself have stated that you believe it was a small public ceremony which coincides with what I was taught. So I would appreciate any assistance you can render in this respect.

RESPONSE:

OK, two quick questions, and two quick answers.

You're right, Jesus could certainly not speak Latin — unless you base your views of Jesus on Mel Gibson's [The Passion of the Christ](#); the entire movie is filmed in Aramaic, until we get to the trial before Pilate, where Jesus shifts into completely fluent Latin. What a scream. In any event, it's clear why the Gospel according to Mel wants Jesus to be able to speak Latin. Mel belongs to an ultra-conservative sect of Roman Catholicism that rejects the decisions of Vatican II in the 1960s which included, among other things, the decision that mass should be spoken in the vernacular languages (that is, the language that the worshipers could speak and understand) instead of only in the traditional Latin. In this sect's view, Latin is the sacred language and so should be retained. And so *of course* Jesus could speak it fluently!

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