Jewish Roots (Part Two) – Jesus or Yeshua?

Andrew Selley 15 December 2025



Continuing on our journey as we explore some of the errors made by the Jewish roots movement, I want to take a look at another claim that they make – that we should call God by his Hebrew name. One of the fastest ways to discern whether a person has been influenced by the Jewish Roots movement is to listen to how they speak about God. People who have been influenced by this doctrine call Jesus 'Yeshua', 'Yehoshua' or a similar variation.

Jewish Roots: A Recap of the Greek Influence on Jews

As we look at this, let's briefly recap the first part of our Jewish Roots series. We looked at the fact that both culture and language in Israel were massively influenced by Greece when Alexander the Great rose to power, so that Greek had become the 'table language' of Israel. In the 3rd century BC, the Hebrew text was translated into Greek (called the Septuagint) because of the wide spread use of Greek within Palestine. Greek culture had so influenced the Jewish world that many could no longer understand Hebrew.

The area where Jesus grew up was known as "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matthew 4:15), with many Jewish parents naming their children in the Greek language rather than in Hebrew. The apostles Andrew and Philip were from this area and had Greek names with no Hebrew equivalents.

It is interesting to see how the Hebrew scribes translated the name Jesus (Joshua, Yehoshua or Yeshua) in the Septuagint as they translated the original Old Testament Hebrew text into Greek. The Jewish scribes had no problem translating the Hebrew names to Greek and 'Jesus' (which is the same as 'Joshua' in Hebrew) was translated as "□□□□/s" ('Iesous' is the English transliteration, which is pronounced 'yay-soos').

Yeshua or Jesus?

Those influenced by the Jewish Roots philosophy teach emphatically that we should call Jesus by His Hebrew name – 'Yeshua' or 'Yehoshua mashiach' ('mashiach' means 'the anointed' and is translated as 'Christos' in the Greek Septuagint). It is very important to note that in the translation of the Septuagint, the Hebrews did not use the Hebrew names, they chose rather to use their Greek equivalents!

From this we learn that the Jews had no problem translating names into Greek, and because Greek had become so commonplace, it is likely that Jesus was known by a Greek version of His name.

It is very telling to see what the apostles who walked with Jesus called Him. Instead of calling Jesus by His Hebrew name, as they penned the New Testament, they wrote His name as 'Iesous'. This reveals that the Holy Spirit had no problem calling Jesus by His Greek name. The fact that those who knew Him personally called Him 'Iesous' points strongly to the fact that this was the name He went by (more than this, we do not know). It is possible that His parents used a traditional Hebrew spelling or variation, but it is equally possible that they used the Greek. Whichever one it was, for our study, it makes little difference. The reality of it is that God used the name 'Iesous' when He inspired the apostles to write the holy text, as did the Jewish scribes who translated the Septuagint.

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This same pattern was followed by all the early church fathers who wrote about Jesus. None of them used 'Yeshua'. In their writings we find the Greek word 'Iesous' being used. Polycarp, the disciple of John (+-100 AD), Ignatius (110 AD), the Didache (50 AD) and Clement (95 AD, who Paul the apostle refers to in Philippians 4:3), all wrote in Greek and use the Greek name 'Iesous" to refer to Jesus. It is notable that some of these writings were dated to the actual times of the early apostles and very soon after Christ's death!

The only other variation of Jesus' name that we find in early writings was the Greek 'nomination

sacra', which was the shortened version of Iesous – 'IE'. This was a way of ascribing special sanctity to His name.

When the Bible was translated into English, the original spelling of His name was 'Iesus' (1611 KJV), which sounded like the Greek pronunciation used in the original text. Later, the English language evolved and any names starting with 'I' were replaced with a 'J', which is how we arrived at the modern spelling, 'Jesus'.

> ...but to use some strange variation of His name that is not common in our language only promotes sectarianism, division, pride and confusion.

Thus we learn that Jesus was known from the earliest of times, both in the Scriptures and by those who knew Him, as Iesous or Jesus. Those who claim we must use the Hebrew roots version of His name to properly address Him have used faulty reasoning, which often seems to appeal more to vanity than fact.

Those passionately promoting the Hebrew roots doctrines should take note of what Paul writes to Titus, 'Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These things are useless and a waste of time.' (Titus 3:9)

God is not concerned with whether we speak to Him using a specific version of His name! 'He knows who are His' (2 Timothy 2:9) and, if we believe that the Son of God died on a cross for our sins, we can be assured that He knows this and accepts us. Whether we call Him Yeshua, Jesus, Jesu or Iesous makes little difference to God, but to use some strange variation of His name that is not common in our language only promotes sectarianism, division, pride and confusion. For those of us who speak English, common sense says we should call Him 'Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God'.

Read the 1st Article in this Series: The 'Jewish Roots' Movement and Its Mistakes

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