

Is the Name 'Jesus' Really Related to the Name 'Zeus'?

There are a lot of ridiculous myths that have become folk legends via the Internet, but the idea that the name *Jesus* is related to the Greek god Zeus is one of the most ridiculous myths of all. It is high time that we put it to rest! In short, you might as well argue that *Tiger Woods* is the name of a tiger-infested jungle in India. It is that absurd, based on serious linguistic ignorance.

And while we're putting some myths to rest, here's another one that needs to bite the dust: namely, the myth that the original Hebrew-Aramaic name of Jesus was Yahshua. In reality, there is no such name in the Hebrew language, and those of us who deny that Yahshua was His name are not part of some secret conspiracy to suppress the divine name. The truth is, His name was Yeshua—not Yahshua, which, to repeat, is a fabricated, non-existent name—and we don't glorify the Lord or help His people by manufacturing false and worthless claims.

Worse still, some believers even divide over this, claiming that if we call on the name *Jesus*, we are invoking the name of a pagan god (that is sick, to be blunt), or arguing that if we don't say *Yahshua*, we are dishonoring the Lord (which is patently ridiculous, to put it lightly).

So, what are the facts?

The original Hebrew-Aramaic name of Jesus is Yeshua, which is short for Yehoshua (Joshua), just as Sammy is short for Samuel. (By the way, there is no such name as Yahushua, supposedly the original pronunciation for Joshua in Hebrew—again, not true!—and God's name was never pronounced *Yahua*. Throw those myths in the trash bin as well.)

The name *Yeshua* occurs 27 times in the Hebrew Scriptures (or

Old Testament), primarily referring to the high priest after the Babylonian exile, called both Yehoshua (see Zechariah 3:3) and, more frequently, Yeshua (see Ezra 3:2). So, Yeshua's name was not unusual; in fact, as many as five different men had that name in the Old Testament, and it was a very common name in the first century of this era. Also, Syriac-Aramaic transcriptions of the name from the first centuries of this era confirm the pronunciation of *Yeshua* rather than the make-believe *Yahshua*.

About 200 years before the time of Jesus, when Greek-speaking Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the translation was called the Septuagint), they transcribed the Hebrew *Yeshua* with the Greek name *Iesou(s)* (pronounced *yeysoos*), which is ultimately how we got the English name *Jesus*. (There was no "sh" sound in Greek, so Hebrew "sh" became Greek "s.")

There's nothing mysterious here, and this is just a matter of names in one language undergoing changes when they switch into another language, like Michael in English compared to Miguel in Spanish compared to Mikhael in Russian. There is no conspiracy and no cover-up.

Where, then, did the name *Yahshua* come from? Someone made it up!

My educated guess is that some zealous but linguistically ignorant people thought that *Yahweh's* name must have been a more overt part of our Savior's name, hence *Yahshua* rather than *Yeshua*—but again, there is no support of any kind for this theory.

What about the alleged connection between the name *Jesus* and the god *Zeus*? This is one of the more bizarre claims that have ever been made, going back in part to the Sacred Name cult.

According to the late A.B. Traina, in his *Holy Name Bible*, "The name of the Son, *Yahshua*, has been substituted by *Jesus*,

Jesus, and Ea-Zeus (Healing Zeus).” According to the Institute for Scripture Research, the leading ancient Greek dictionaries connect the name Jesus with pagan healing deities, while another bogus website claims that, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “the name *Iesus* (Jesus) is a combination of 2 mythical deities, IEU and SUS (ZEUS, a Greek god).”

All this, again, is complete nonsense, without a stitch of truth behind it. In point of fact, the major ancient Greek lexicons (all of which I own) say no such thing, nor does the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (which I also own). Either the people writing these articles simply fabricated their citations or else they misunderstood what they were reading.

The fact is, anyone with a sound knowledge of Greek would know that there is zero connection between the names *Jesus* and *Zeus* in Greek, as someone once said, “Jesus is as much related to Zeus as Moses is to mice.”

Unfortunately, some popular teachers continue to espouse the Jesus-Zeus connection, as well as insist on the Yahshua nonsense, and many believers follow the pseudo-scholarship in these fringe, “new revelation” teachings. Not only, though, are these teachings and practices filled with error, but they do not profit in the least, and every legitimate dictionary and lexicon and ancient manuscript in the world is against them.

So, to every English-speaking believer, I say: Do not be ashamed to use the name Jesus! That is the proper way to say His name in English—just as Michael is the correct English way to say the Hebrew name *Mi-kha-el* and Moses is the correct English way to say the Hebrew name *Mo-sheh*. Pray in Jesus’ name, worship in Jesus’ name and witness in Jesus’ name.

And for those who want to relate to our Messiah’s Jewishness, then refer to Him by His original name, Yeshua—not Yahshua and

not Yahushua—remembering that the power of the name is not in its pronunciation but in the person to whom it refers, our Lord and Redeemer and King. (For more details, see my book *60 Questions Christians Ask About Jewish Beliefs and Practices*.)

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