

10 'Jewish Facts' About the New Testament

As a new believer in Yeshua (Jesus), I assumed I was no longer Jewish—that believing in this Jewish man had nothing in common with Jewishness. However after reading the New Testament, I was shocked to find out that it was a Jewish book, telling a Jewish story in Israel about Jewish people. Check out these 10 facts:

1. Jesus' actual name is Yeshua. Yeshua comes from the Hebrew noun Yeshu-á, which means salvation. When Joseph was visited by the Angel, he was told that he must give the child the name Yeshua, because He would be Yeshu-á for His people! (Matt. 1:21) You miss this powerful prophetic wordplay in Greek and English.

2. His mother's name was not Mary or even Maria. She was not Catholic! Miriam is the same name as the sister of Moses. It is a Jewish name, and that was her name. She was an Israelite who lived long before the Vatican even existed.

3. John was not a Baptist. No disrespect to my Baptist friends, but John was the last and greatest of the Hebrew prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel. He prophesied the coming of the Jewish Messiah. He too was an Israelite calling the Jewish people to get ready for the appearance of the Lamb of God.

4. Baptism is not unique to the New Testament. Jews, believe it or not, used water immersion for centuries before John began to baptize his Jewish followers. One of the reasons they did not resist was because it was familiar to their culture. Next to the Temple, archaeologists have discovered nearly 50 immersion tanks (Mikvot) that were for those coming to be ritually cleansed before making their sacrifice at the Temple.

5. Peter was not the first Pope! Peter, a Jew, was only the leader of the first Jewish believers for a few years. He turned over the reigns to Jacob (we will talk about him in a minute) the brother of Yeshua and began to travel, sharing the message of Salvation through Yeshua. There is zero evidence that Peter was the Bishop of Rome or that he passed down such a mantle to anyone else. He was a Jewish fisherman who became one of the greatest communicators of Yeshua's message of Salvation. He never stopped living as a Jew, and certainly never referred to himself as Catholic. Oh, and the Bible states very clearly that Peter had a mother-in-law, which would lead me to believe he had a wife, and for some strange reason, Catholic priests (including the Pope) are forbidden to wed.

6. James is not the name of the fellow who wrote the Book of James or who led the first Jewish believers in Acts 15. James would be a great name for a butler, or chauffeur or even a king...but not a Jew in the first century. His name was Jacob! The Latin for James and Jacob are very close and because of a linguistic confusion, James became the English for Ya'akov (Jacob) in the New Covenant.

7. Yeshua died on Passover, rose from the dead on the Jewish Feast of Firstfruits and the Holy Spirit was poured out on Jerusalem on the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot). These are three of the most significant days in history, and God caused each one of them to happen on the three most significant days to Jews during the spring of 30CE. It is as if God was saying, *"Hey, don't forget that this started with the Jews in Jerusalem!"* And still, the Church sadly forgot.

8. Paul never changed his name. The Bible merely mentions the fact that Saul was also called Paul. (Acts 13:9) Like most Jews, he had a name that was common to the people where he lived (Roman Empire) and a Hebrew name. The idea that he got rid of his Jewish name is unbiblical and frankly ignorant. I too was given an English name when I born, Ron, and a Hebrew one, Chaim.

9. The entire New Testament was written by Jews. There is some controversy whether or not Luke was Jewish (I have heard strong arguments for both views), but every other writer was Jewish.

10. Communion was instituted at a Passover Seder. Yeshua picked up the Afikomen, a special piece of matzah (unleavened bread) used during the Passover Seder and he lifted the third cup of four that are blessed during the Passover meal, the Cup of Redemption, and asked that his Jewish disciples continue this Jewish tradition.

10. **BONUS:** All of the original followers of Yeshua were Jewish. And once Gentiles began to believe in Him, there were many that felt that in order for non-Jews to believe in the *Jewish Messiah*, they had to convert to Judaism first. In the end (Acts 15), it was decided that they didn't need to. But never did it enter the mind of the Jewish followers of Yeshua that they were no longer Jewish!

Note from the Author: In just over a few days, this has become the most shared blog I have ever written. Along with that, have come a few misunderstandings, so let me be clear: Jews and Gentiles are one in the Messiah! My goal in pointing out the Jewish roots is not to celebrate *Jewish superiority*—God forbid—but to equip my Gentile brothers and sisters to share the Gospel with Jewish people in its truthful Jewish context. Jewish people have suffered persecution at its highest level from people claiming to be Christians. Couple that with the fact that they have been told by many church fathers that they are cursed and cut off from God because of the death of Yeshua. Forced baptisms, expulsions and even murder in His name have been carried out against His people. All this has served to solidify in the Jewish mind that there is nothing Jewish about believing in Yeshua. My goal in exploring the Jewish roots of the faith, is not to look down on others, but to help Jewish people see that faith in Yeshua is “from the Jews.” (Jn. 4:22) God has given the Gentiles grace to reach

Israel, as Shaul said, *“Again I ask: Did [Israel] stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.”*

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