

“Why Isn’t Jesus Called Joshua?”

I was born of Jewish parents, but never confirmed in the Jewish faith. I was baptized at a Billy Graham rally in 1952.

I have questioned why writings about Jesus in the first century have not used his correct name (“Joshua” in English). He would have been known as “Joshua ben Joseph.” He was a teacher (Rabbi) who taught a reformed Judaism, later to be called Christianity. He is believed to be the Messiah (Christ in Greek).

I believe that the omission of these facts in most writings about him have influenced many minds in the wrong direction, such as anti Jewish sentiments.

What say you?

As you probably know, first century accounts of Jesus were written in Greek using the term Ἰησοῦς [*Iesous*] which in fact does translate back to the Hebrew name Joshua meaning Yahweh is salvation. We get the English name Jesus from the Latin translation of the Greek manuscripts by Jerome in the early 5th century. The typical Jewish naming convention Jesus (Joshua) son of Joseph is used in Luke 4:22 and in John, but the Greek-speaking gentiles preferred titles with theological implications and moved quickly towards Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus. Since Jesus and Joseph were common names in the first century, early Christians sought to differentiate their Jesus by using Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus, son of David, and of course Jesus, Son of God.

As to whether or not this contributed to anti-Jewish sentiments is difficult to say. Anti-Semitism, like most social phenomena, is probably the result of a combination of causes. However I admit that if more people understood and appreciated the Jewishness of Jesus it might serve to ameliorate hostility towards Jews.

Sincerely,

Don Closson

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