

Greek – The language of the New Testament

The Jewish Roots movement is attempting to convince Christians that the entire New Testament was written in Hebrew. However, when studying the books of the New Testament, the majority are clearly written in Greek.

Greek was the world language of the Roman Empire. All commerce and conversation between countries was conducted in Greek. John 19:20 gives evidence to this: *“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. {19:20} This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.”*

In John alone, there are multiple clear statements, as detailed below, which occur where John had to explain that Passover was one of the Jewish feasts: *“And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh”* {Jn6:4). Passover is the primary Jewish feast; no Jew can deny knowledge of the Passover. Why did John then have to explain it as if to a foreigner?

Similarly consider John 19:17 *“And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:”* Why did John then have to state that Golgotha was a Hebrew name, if he was writing in Hebrew?

The following books as marked in green are easily shown to have been presented in Greek to their recipients: -

<i>New Testament</i>
<i>Matthew ... 559</i>
<i>Mark ... 579</i>
<i>Luke ... 591</i>
<i>John ... 611</i>
<i>Acts ... 627</i>
<i>Romans ... 647</i>
<i>1 Corinthians ... 655</i>
<i>2 Corinthians ... 663</i>
<i>Galatians ... 669</i>
<i>Ephesians ... 673</i>
<i>Philippians ... 677</i>
<i>Colossians ... 679</i>
<i>1 Thessalonians ... 681</i>
<i>2 Thessalonians ... 683</i>
<i>1 Timothy ... 685</i>
<i>2 Timothy ... 687</i>
<i>Titus ... 689</i>
<i>Philemon ... 691</i>
<i>Hebrews ... 693</i>
<i>James ... 699</i>
<i>1 Peter ... 701</i>
<i>2 Peter ... 703</i>
<i>1 John ... 705</i>
<i>2 John ... 707</i>
<i>3 John ... 709</i>
<i>Jude ... 711</i>
<i>Revelation</i>

Internal Evidence - Gospels:

The gospels of Luke and John have clear internal evidence that they were not written in Hebrew. For example, in John 7:2: “Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand.” Would you ever use such language when speaking to a fellow countryman? Clearly not. No Jew would need to explain to another Jew that Tabernacles was a Jewish feast!

Similarly, John 11:55: “And the Jews’ passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.” No Jew would need to explain to another Jew that passover was a Jewish feast, centred in Jerusalem, and that they needed prior purification!

Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction: “And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh” {Jn6:4}. Why would anyone need to explain to a fellow Jew that the Passover is a feast of the Jews? Would one Jew ever say such a thing to another one?

Absolutely not. Clearly John’s gospel was written to gentiles, in another language, explaining that Passover was one of the Jewish feasts.

In Luke we see that the entire gospel is dedicated to a Greek friend of Luke, Theophilus. Luke himself had a Greek father, and the name ‘Lucas’ is a Greek name. (Luke being the English version of his name).

Internal Evidence - Epistles:

Peter and Paul addressed their epistles to Gentiles, not Jews. They wrote their epistles to foreign cities and regions, for example in 1 Pet 1: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.”. Peter is clearly addressing gentiles who were foreigners and strangers, and: “in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God” (1 Pet 2:10); These verses clearly do not apply to a few local Jews there, but to saved Gentiles in these regions.

Similarly, Paul addresses the Ephesians who were: “in time past gentiles in the flesh” (Eph 2:11). They were “.... aliens and strangers of Israel...”(v12) but “...now fellow-citizens with the saints.”(v19).

Internal Evidence - Revelation:

If John’s intent was to write revelation in Hebrew, why would John make a translation as follows for the benefit of Greek speaking Christians: {9:11} *And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.* The best explanation for the translation is that John is informing his Greek recipients of the Hebrew name of this angel, i.e. he is saying;” Here is a name you’ll understand: Apollyon” (Could be Apollo in English). Also, why did John explain Armageddon as if to a foreigner:

{16:16} *And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

Note also that Revelation was written to Greek speaking churches: Ephesus, Smyrna (the current Izmir), Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea. These were all cities located on the Grecian side of Turkey, close to Athens but hundreds, if not thousands of kilometres from Jerusalem.

John's Location on Patmos



Gentile Locations:

To who were the Epistles written? To the:

- Romans: Church in Rome, located in Italy
- Corinthians: Church in Corinth, located in Greece
- Thessalonians: Church in Thessaloniki, located in Greece
- Philippians: Church in Philippi, located in Greece
- Ephesians: Church in Ephesus, located in Turkey, facing Greece
- Galatians: Church in Galatia, located in Italy
- Colossians: Church in Colossi, located in Turkey, on the Grecian side of Turkey.

Greek Speaking Churches



If we imagine a modern-day scenario: Let's say that we were Danish speaking Christians. Denmark is a small country much like Israel is a small country in world terms. Would we be writing letters to other Christians in Russia, Hong Kong, Panama and Africa in Danish? Of course not. We'd use a 'world language' like English.

Greek Individuals:

Titus and Philemon were Greek individuals who most likely never had set foot in Israel. Would Paul really have written to these people in another language than Greek? How logical is it that those letters were written in Hebrew?

- 1-3 John: 3 John written to Gaius & Diotrephes, - who were Greeks.
- Other Greeks mentioned in the letters are Demetrius, Onesimus, Archippus, Apphia, Lydia and a number of others.
- Luke & Acts: Written to Theophilus – to a Greek individual with a Greek name.

*Luke 1:3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, **most excellent Theophilus**, that thou might know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.*

*Acts 1:1: "The former treatise have I made, **O Theophilus**, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,"*

It is Hebrews, James and Matthew which were written to the Jews, thus have a Hebrew audience. Mark and Jude have unknown recipients.

Hence only 5 out of the 27 NT Books were possibly in Aramaic or Hebrew, but 81% was in Greek.

Further internal evidence:

Why did these authors have to explain the use of Hebrew as if to a foreigner? Why did John have to state that Golgotha, Gabbatha and Bethesda were Hebrew names, if he was writing in Hebrew?

- *John 5:2- Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.*
- *John 19:13- When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.*
- *Acts 21:40 "And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying, {22:1} Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. {22:2} (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)"*
- *Acts 26:14 "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."*

John and Revelation were clearly written in Greek. The Hebrew roots movement is wrong, seeking to cast doubt on whether we have the original Words of Jesus on the Word.

The implications:

The name of Jesus

*Philippians 2:9 "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: {2:10} That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; {2:11} And that every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ** is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

There is currently much obsession over the new name of Jesus in modern Hebrew, Yeshua. Note, however, that this name is not found connected to the Christ, the Messiah, anywhere in the New or Old testament scriptures.

The name of Jesus is higher than any other name, there is no substitute for the name of Jesus. It is the only name 'whereby we must be saved.' (Acts 4:12). It seems inappropriate to suggest that Jesus is not our Saviour's name, but that a new name such as Yeshua is. As shown above, John used Jesus' Greek name in his gospel, so did Paul in his epistles. Who are we then, to suggest that John, Paul and Peter were wrong in writing Jesus' name in Greek? (Ἰησοῦς, which is Iesous or Iesus in our current alphabet).

Most Hebrews spoke Aramaic, and in 30 A.D., the international language of the time was Greek. The Romans knew Greek, and the Hebrews knew Greek. Two gospels were written in Greek, the Epistles were written in Greek, and Jesus' name therein appeared in the Greek as Ἰησοῦς.

Pronunciation is a different matter, and in no way a different version of the name of Jesus. The main pronunciation difference is regarding the letter 'J'. In European languages one may have a 'hard' J like in English, a soft J as in German and a guttural 'gh' like in Spanish. The "J" was written as 'I' in Greek (Iesous or Iesus).

Are we really expected to believe that all Christianity was wrong over the last 1900 years, that Greek, Spanish, French and English-speaking Christians should now change Jesus' name to a different, supposed unproven Hebrew one? Are we attempting to sound more spiritual using the Hebrew name? It does seem preposterous to do so, and an unthinking regurgitation of someone else's misguided views.

We would also be well advised to research the origins of modern Hebrew. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, and the Roman removal of the then troublesome Jews out of Israel in subsequent decades, Hebrew became a dead language. It was not used publicly for 1700 years, until revived in the early 1800's by the new Zionist movement. How likely is it that any Hebrew NT manuscripts would have survived in this climate, either amongst Jews who were hostile to the gospel, or under a few persecuted believing Jews expelled from synagogue life? You decide.

Research also the likelihood of 'Hebrew' NT handwritten manuscripts surviving the ages, if only a handful of Julius Ceasar's, Cicero's, Homer, etc handwritten manuscripts have survived. These ancient manuscripts were freely circulated at the time, and available at most schools and academies. Compared to their poor survival rate, what chance would a Hebrew NT manuscript have? (ref Britannica Article on the Hebrew language: "Spoken in ancient times in Palestine, Hebrew was supplanted by the western dialect of Aramaic beginning about the 3rd century BC; the language continued to be used as a liturgical and literary language, however (i.e. not spoken). It was revived as a spoken language in the 19th and 20th centuries and is the official language of Israel.")

Read <http://www.hopefulmartyr.com/4-0-knowing-enemy-satans-strategy-end-time-christians/> and <http://www.hopefulmartyr.com/appendix-d-bible-version-confusion/> for a more likely description of the spread of the true Greek NT manuscripts throughout the world in the early centuries.