

JESUS SPOKE ARAMAIC

The Reasons Why, & Why It Matters

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EWAN MACLEOD

Foreward by Raymond Aaron, New York Times Best Selling Author

Jesus Spoke ARAMAIC

The Reasons Why, and
Why It Matters

By Ewan MacLeod, B.Sc. Hons, M.Sc.

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JesusSpokeAramaic.com

JesusSpokeAramaicBook.com

BibleManuscriptSociety.com

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Acknowledgements

THE PHRASE “standing on the shoulders of giants” is especially true when it comes to my path in learning Aramaic, and I would like to acknowledge the work of the many others who walked this path long before I came on board.

My first real encounter with the idea that Jesus spoke Aramaic and the Aramaic New Testament was through Raphael Lataster's book *Was The New Testament REALLY Written in Greek?* That was a real eye-opener, and its amazing evidence, painstakingly gathered, truly shocked me.

As well as reading a good number of Aramaic grammars, I learned Aramaic primarily through Janet Magiera's excellent module in BibleWorks – the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament database. That allowed me to go through every word and every verse of the Aramaic New Testament, and that was what kick-started my own studies. I contributed several Aramaic modules to BibleWorks during those formative years.

Andrew Gabriel Roth's excellent books also helped me immensely. *Ruach Qadim* is a classic, as well as his excellent AENT (*Aramaic English New Testament*).

Similarly, Rev. David Bauscher's many books have only added to my own understanding of what Aramaic has to offer.

But in the writing of *this* book, I would especially like to thank Raymond Aaron, the New York Times Best Selling Author, for giving me the opportunity to learn how real books are written. Although I had already self-published many of my own books which are available on JesusSpokeAramaic.com, his sage advice and mentoring were instrumental.

Similarly, I would like to thank Vishal Morjaria, who is my Personal Book Architect. Without the help and advice given by him, the journey would have been much more difficult.

I would also like to thank my wife Elisabeth, as well as my sons Jacob and Nathan, for their patience and understanding while I worked on this book and moved forward my vision for Aramaic to become more mainstream in Biblical studies.

May we all seek to serve our Heavenly Father to the very best of our individual abilities, to show forth fruits meet for repentance, and to develop the talents we have been given.

Foreword

EWAN MACLEOD's book *Jesus Spoke Aramaic – The Reasons Why, And Why It Matters* is intended as a companion to his ground-breaking website, JesusSpokeAramaic.com. Although Ewan had already created a fascinating series of articles, Workbooks, DVDs and video lessons on the subject of Aramaic in Old and New Testament times and had already established himself as an authority on Aramaic prior to writing this book, this is nevertheless his first printed book to be published on the subject.

I accepted Ewan onto my 10-10-10 Program, intended to help aspiring authors gain credibility learning how to write and publish their ideas into a book of their own. The result, hopefully the first of many books that Ewan will write, is the book that you are holding now.

Jesus Spoke Aramaic – The Reasons Why, And Why It Matters systematically leads you through the evidence, chapter by chapter, proving that Jesus spoke Aramaic and why Aramaic is the cultural background of both the New Testament and the culture of Judaism out of which the New Testament arose. And yet, as the book points out, so few today are aware of that incredibly rich heritage that provides the backdrop to both Christianity and Judaism, the two great religions that together have shaped the Western world.

Chapter by chapter, the book very powerfully demonstrates to you the evidence not just that Jesus spoke Aramaic, but that Aramaic provides the background to much of Bible history. Archaeology and history together prove that Aramaic was the background of the New Testament; encyclopedias also demonstrate that this fact is a mainstream view; Josephus emphatically repeats that Aramaic is “the language of our country” and, if we read it carefully, the New Testament also says the same thing.

And yet, as the book points out, despite that Aramaic background, so few today place any respect or emphasis on Aramaic at all. The book shows you that this will all change – the Aramaic Revolution has already started, and is on its way. You, too, can become part of it!

And so, I commend this book to you. It is a book which is badly needed in Bible studies, as so many people abandon their Biblical heritage. May you read it for yourself, agree with its conclusions, and help to make Aramaic a more central part of the Bible believer's life.

Raymond Aaron

New York Times Best Selling Author

Jesus Spoke ARAMAIC

IN THIS BOOK, we will examine the question of whether Jesus spoke Aramaic. We will establish beyond reasonable doubt that Aramaic, rather than Hebrew or Greek, was the language that Jesus, and those around him, *normally* spoke. In other words, Aramaic was the everyday spoken language that Jesus and the disciples would have used when preaching, healing and speaking to ordinary people in the Land of Israel in the 1st century A.D.

For whatever reason, this subject seems to be very divisive, with people having very strong opinions on the subject. For those who already believe that Jesus spoke Aramaic, you will find the evidence presented to be so clear and so conclusive, that you will wonder why anyone would believe differently.

However, for those who may be coming to this book with a different view, we urge you to patiently read through the chapters one by one. If you believe differently, such as that Jesus spoke Greek, you will find yourself staring upwards at an enormous mountain of evidence – a mountain which you will not be able to climb. I myself learned Greek and studied New Testament Greek grammar for years, firmly believing that Jesus spoke Greek. By the end of the book, you may find yourself at the point where I once was many years ago – about to make a paradigm shift – to shift from believing one view, to believing the opposite view. Those paradigm shifts are difficult, but once you make them, you will move to a much greater understanding of the Word of God.

Let us summarise what we will cover in this book. If at the mouth of two or three witnesses the facts of a case can be established under the Law of Moses, in this book we will look at five independent lines of evidence that demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that Jesus spoke Aramaic. We will find, by looking at encyclopedias, that Jesus

spoke Aramaic is entirely a mainstream consensus. Similarly, we will see that Josephus, the classic historian of Jesus' day, also says that Aramaic was the normal spoken language of the time. History and archaeology also agree with that view. Even the New Testament *itself* confirms this view. *The conclusion must be that Jesus spoke Aramaic.*

But affirming the positive is not enough. We must also reject the negative. And so we examine the other views – that Jesus (normally) spoke Hebrew, and the view that Jesus spoke Greek. You may be startled to read the chapter on whether Jesus spoke Greek.

But then we conclude by asking why it matters. We will find that, not only *does* it matter, but it is highly pivotal to an understanding of the New Testament. If Jesus spoke Aramaic, then it is to Aramaic that we must look if we want to truly understand the culture and background of the New Testament. Instead, many seek to understand the New Testament in anything *other* than an Aramaic culture – by studying classic Latin and Greek philosophical ideas, or by imposing modern humanistic and other views, and by reading translations instead.

Finally, we will see that an Aramaic revolution is coming. It can't be stopped. We will explain why, and show you that Bible believers everywhere should encourage it and embrace it rather than denying it.

And remember, if you want to know more about these fascinating subjects, be sure to visit my main website, JesusSpokeAramaic.com, to find out more.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS Say Jesus Spoke Aramaic

TO ESTABLISH that Jesus spoke Aramaic, let us first examine what is written in mainstream, independent, encyclopedias. This is a good starting point. As we shall see, the belief that Jesus spoke Aramaic is very much a mainstream view.

Now, encyclopedias may not always be correct, and they are sometimes revised over time as new evidence comes to light or as new scholars revise previously held opinions.

Nevertheless, Solomon the wise in the Book of Proverbs tells us that “in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” Solomon also tells us in Proverbs that, “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Similarly, to establish the truth of a matter, there is a saying in the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 19:15; “One witness shall not rise up against a man... at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

This is picked up by Jesus himself:

Matthew 18:16; “But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

In other words, if the testimony of two or three credible and independent witnesses agree, that is sufficient to establish the facts of a matter.

Let us apply this approach to determine whether Jesus spoke

Aramaic. Let us go to credible, authoritative and independent encyclopedias over the years to read what they say about the normal, everyday language that Jesus spoke, remembering that he was a Jew living in Israel in the 1st century A.D.

Thus, if at least two or three *reliable, mainstream* encyclopedias all tell us the same thing, that Jesus did indeed speak Aramaic, that should settle the matter. But we will do better than that. **We will quote from no less than four encyclopedias which demonstrate clearly that Jesus spoke ARAMAIC.**

We shall examine encyclopedias from various backgrounds, both religious and secular.

Let us start with **Wikipedia**, a well-respected crowd-sourced modern online encyclopedia. In Wikipedia, there is an entire article on the “Language of Jesus”, which is worth reading in its entirety. However, let us quote some of that article:

“It is generally agreed that Jesus and his disciples primarily spoke Aramaic, the common language of Judea in the first century A.D., most likely a Galilean dialect distinguished from that of Jerusalem. The towns of Nazareth and Capernaum in Galilee, where Jesus spent most of his time, were Aramaic-speaking communities.”

Wikipedia’s research is good enough for me. But let’s go on to examine other sources.

The New Advent Encyclopedia, which is an online Catholic encyclopedia, has numerous references all throughout to the fact that Jesus spoke Aramaic. Like Wikipedia, it confirms that Aramaic was the commonly spoken language in the 1st century in Judea. Although this is a Catholic encyclopedia and therefore biased towards the Catholic Church, on neutral issues it is nevertheless well researched. The articles have copious references with the reasoning behind their conclusions.

Let us look at a few examples:

“It is obvious that our Lord, who spoke an Aramaic dialect, gave to some of his disciples an Aramaic title.”

“This verbal agreement in the Greek Gospels is all the more surprising, as Jesus spoke in Aramaic.”

“Still, considering the fact that Aramaic was the language commonly spoken in Palestine at that time, we must conclude that Our Blessed Lady’s secret was originally written in Aramaic, though it must have been translated into Greek before St. Luke utilized it.”

“Papias says that Matthew wrote the Logia in the Hebrew language; St. Irenæus and Eusebius maintain that he wrote his gospel for the Hebrews in their national language, and the same assertion is found in several writers. Matthew would, therefore, seem to have written in modernized Hebrew, the language then used by the scribes for teaching. **But, in the time of Christ, the national language of the Jews was Aramaic**, and when, in the New Testament, there is mention of the Hebrew language (*Hebrais dialektos*), it is Aramaic that is implied. Hence, the aforesaid writers may allude to the Aramaic and not to the Hebrew. Besides, as they assert, the Apostle Matthew wrote his Gospel to help popular teaching. To be understood by his readers who spoke Aramaic, he would have had to reproduce the original catechesis in this language, and it cannot be imagined why, or for whom, he should have taken the trouble to write it in Hebrew, when it would have had to be translated thence into Aramaic for use in religious services. Moreover, Eusebius (Church History III.24.6) tells us that the Gospel of Matthew was a reproduction of his preaching, and this we know, was in Aramaic. An investigation of the Semitic idioms observed in the Gospel does not permit us to conclude as to whether the original was in Hebrew or Aramaic, as the two languages are so closely related... However, we believe the second hypothesis to be the more probable, viz., that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Aramaic.”

There are many, many similar quotations throughout the New Advent Encyclopedia to show that Jesus and the disciples spoke Aramaic as their usual everyday language.

Note also that Mel Gibson’s blockbuster film, *The Passion of the Christ* was made famous partly for the fact that the actors spoke Aramaic for added authenticity. That Jesus spoke Aramaic is therefore the widely accepted, mainstream, view.

But let us go on, to read the testimony of the **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)**, a standard in Biblical studies that is readily available.

“See ARAMAIC LANGUAGE for proof that Jesus spoke that language

as the vernacular of the people of Palestine.”

“Aramaic became the principal tongue throughout extensive regions. After the return from the Captivity, it displaced Hebrew as the spoken language of the Jews in Palestine.”

The Encyclopedia Britannica, similarly, adds its testimony that Jesus spoke Aramaic, and that Aramaic was the commonly spoken language in Israel at the time that the New Testament was written. It says:

“Aramaic dialects survived into Roman times, however, particularly in Palestine and Syria. Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as the language of the Jews as early as the 6th century B.C... Among the Jews, Aramaic was used by the common people, while Hebrew remained the language of religion and government and of the upper class. Jesus and the Apostles are believed to have spoken Aramaic, and Aramaic-language translations (Targums) of the Old Testament circulated.”

We have now examined no less than *four* mainstream encyclopedias from different backgrounds which were written independently over different decades. If at the mouth of *two* or *three* witnesses a testimony can be established according to the Bible, then *already* there should be no doubt that Jesus spoke Aramaic as his normal, everyday language – along with the disciples, and all the people he preached to.

Now, the testimony of many more encyclopedias *could* be added. But anyone wishing to *disprove* that Jesus spoke Aramaic would first have to undermine the integrity and scholarship of *all* the above encyclopedias, and many others besides that *could* be added.

Instead, however, let us conclude this chapter with one simple conclusion:

Encyclopedias *prove* that Jesus spoke Aramaic. It is a mainstream view.

JOSEPHUS Says Jesus Spoke Aramaic

FROM a Biblical perspective, Josephus is the most important historian living in Israel in the 1st century A.D. His classic works, *The Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Wars of the Jews*, have been used by both adult Bible believers and Sunday school scholars for generations. If anyone ought to know what language Jesus spoke, it was Josephus.

Josephus was a Jew, who lived around A.D. 37-100. He lived in Israel shortly after the death of Jesus, and he was an eye-witness to many of the events described in the New Testament, including the disciples of Jesus preaching the gospel in Israel and throughout the whole world.

You can get free access to an entire video lesson about Josephus, entitled *What Does Josephus Say*, by following the link below:
<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/History-of-Aramaic/Josephus>

Here is how Wikipedia describes Josephus:

"[His] works provide valuable insight into first century Judaism and the background of early Christianity"

"[His works] provide crucial information about the First Jewish-Roman war and also represent important literary source material for understanding the context of the Dead Sea Scrolls and late [Second] Temple Judaism."

Josephus was born to a father of priestly descent, and to a mother who claimed royal ancestry. He was well educated, and was a scholar as well as a historian. Josephus was therefore the most important and well-known historian in Roman Judea – or Israel in

the 1st century, as we would call it today. He carefully recorded the painful events around the destruction of the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70 and the subsequent ransacking of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, followed by the siege of Masada.

Thus, if anyone is qualified to speak about this time, it was Josephus. He was a Jew. He knew his people. He knew the country. And because he was a scholar and a historian, he knew the language of his country better than anyone else.

So what exactly does Josephus say about the normal, everyday language spoken by Jews in the 1st century in Israel? Surely the answer to this question must be critical to an understanding of the culture in which the New Testament was born, and the culture and context in which it must be understood.

The documents which we have preserved of Josephus *today*, were written hundreds of years ago in Greek. In fact, William Whiston's classic translation of 1732, from the Greek edition of Josephus, was a classic book in Victorian times and is still, even today, the version of Josephus' works that most people will be familiar with.

But we would have to go to Josephus himself, rather than a later Greek copy, to discover what language Josephus himself constantly refers to as "the language of our country". When we read Josephus, we find that *Aramaic* was the language Josephus is referring to. *Aramaic* is what Josephus refers to as "the language of our country". Josephus uses the expression so often that it is almost a catch-phrase.

By "the language of our country" (Israel), Josephus meant the language that people generally spoke in Israel, that is, *their* language, not the language of the current foreign occupiers (the Romans), nor the Hellenistic invaders who had shortly beforehand wreaked havoc under the hand of Antiochus Epiphanes, leading to the Maccabean Revolt in which Jews revolted against the imposition of Greek customs and the Greek language.

Rather, by "the language of our country", Josephus meant the language spoken in Roman Judea, or 1st century Israel. And that language was *Aramaic*.

In his voluminous books, Josephus is at pains to point out that he originally wrote in *Aramaic*, and only *later* did he translate his

extensive writings into the Greek language.

So let us open up the pages of Josephus' classic writings, and examine for ourselves the evidence presented by Josephus, or Joseph ben Matityahu, a Jew, a scholar, and the classic historian of Roman Judea.

In his book *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus writes:

1:3 "I have proposed to myself, for the sake of such as live under the government of the Romans, to translate those books into the Greek tongue, **which I formerly composed in the language of our country.**"

Thus, Josephus says that his works were *originally* written in Aramaic, "the language of our country", of Roman Judea or Israel, and that he *later* translated those works into Greek for a wider audience. This clearly means that Greek was *not* the language of Israel!

Josephus' books were not *originally* written in Greek since, as discussed in the chapter *But Wasn't The New Testament Written in GREEK?!*, Josephus tells us that he was *unfamiliar with the Greek language*. He didn't know Greek, and he couldn't pronounce it properly. The later translation into Greek was only necessary because the Romans carried out a wholesale destruction of all Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts in the destruction of A.D. 70 and Josephus wanted his histories to go to a wider audience.

Josephus also draws a distinction between his histories and those of other Jews, all of which were written in Aramaic, and other histories of Judaism which Greeks had (by this time) attempted:

1:17 "Many Jews before me have composed the histories of our ancestors very exactly; as have some of the Greeks done it also, and have translated our histories into their own tongue, and have not much mistaken the truth in their histories."

In *Against Apion*, another of Josephus' works, Josephus explains that his work was also translated into Greek:

1:1 "My books of the *Antiquities of the Jews* ... Those Antiquities contain the history of five thousand years, and are taken out of our sacred books; but are translated by me into the Greek tongue."

In translating into Greek, Josephus testifies that he originally wrote

in a language other than Greek – *Aramaic*, in other words.

Now, you might think that when Josephus repeatedly talks about “our own language” or “our own tongue” or “the language of our country”, he means *Hebrew* rather than *Aramaic*. Let’s examine whether that is, in fact, the case.

In his extensive writings, Josephus is very precise in identifying when he means *Hebrew*, or the Hebrew language, as opposed to *Aramaic*, which he consistently refers to as “the language of our country”. In fact, Josephus frequently makes the distinction between *Aramaic*, which is what he originally wrote in, and Hebrew. When he means *Hebrew*, Josephus explicitly says so, in contrast to *Aramaic*.

Here are a few examples from *The Antiquities of the Jews* to illustrate this point:

“and call it the *Sabbath*; which word denotes rest *in the Hebrew tongue*.”

“This man was called *Adam*, which *in the Hebrew tongue* signifies one that is Red.”

“Now a woman is called *in the Hebrew tongue* *Isha*.”

“He also commanded him to be called *Israel*, which *in the Hebrew tongue* signifies one that struggled with the divine angel.”

“Now the former of those names, *Gershom*, *in the Hebrew tongue*, signifies that he was in a strange land;”

“*Adonibezek*, which name denotes the Lord of Bezek, for *Adoni*, *in the Hebrew tongue*, signifies Lord.”

“*Deborah*, a certain prophetess among them, (whose name *in the Hebrew tongue* signifies a Bee,)”

“Now *Barak*, *in the Hebrew tongue*, signifies *Lightning*.”

“Now *Naomi* signifies *in the Hebrew tongue* happiness, and *Mara*, sorrow.”

“to a certain city called *Mizpeh*, which, *in the Hebrew tongue*, signifies a watch tower;”

“Now *Nabal*, *in the Hebrew tongue*, signifies *folly*.”

In the above examples, Josephus makes reference to certain words being in *Hebrew*, because these are all examples of words which are different to the equivalent word in *Aramaic*.

Josephus, writing in *Aramaic*, gives the *Hebrew* word, but then has to explain what the word means to his Aramaic readers. If he had been writing in Hebrew in the first place, a translation would obviously not have been necessary! This proves that Josephus must have written in *Aramaic* rather than Hebrew.

And so, when Josephus means Hebrew, he uses the phrase “the Hebrew tongue”. By contrast, when he means Aramaic, he says the “language of our country” or “our own language” or similar phrase. Here are some further examples:

“He also placed a partition around the temple, which *in our tongue* we call *Gison*, but it is called *Thrigeos* by the Greeks”

“although I have so long accustomed myself to speak *our own tongue*, that **I cannot pronounce Greek.**”

“to translate those books into the Greek tongue, which I formerly composed *in the language of our country.*”

Thus, Josephus repeatedly refers to Aramaic as “the language of our own country”, “our own language” or “our own tongue”, as opposed to “the Hebrew tongue” or “the Greek tongue”.

Aramaic, therefore is the language which Josephus says is spoken throughout Israel, in the 1st century A.D. It was not Hebrew, nor was it Greek.

In fact, not only does Josephus use the phrase “our own language” to refer to Aramaic, but the New Testament *itself* uses this very phrase!

In the book of Acts, for instance, we read:

Acts 1:19; “And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called *in their proper [own] tongue*, *Aceldama*, that is to say, *The field of blood.*”

Here, after the death of Judas, the inhabitants of Jerusalem call the field where he died, *Aceldama*. They call it *Aceldama* “in their proper tongue”, in other words, *in their own tongue*, that is, in the language in which the people of Jerusalem spoke.

And so, if we can identify which language *Aceldama* is in, we can identify the language that Josephus refers to as “the language of our country” and “our own tongue”. Josephus uses the same phrase,

“our own tongue”, as the New Testament uses.

So, in which language is *Aceldama*? This phrase is made up from the Aramaic *hakele* meaning *field*, and *dama* meaning *the blood*. (The KJV is translated from Greek, and Greek has no letter *h*, and so *hakele* becomes *acel* or *akel*).

But, critically, *Aceldama* cannot be Hebrew. It can *only* be Aramaic. In Hebrew, the word for *field* is not *hakele* – it is *sadeh*. In Hebrew, the equivalent phrase would be *sadeh hadam*. Thus, *Aceldama* uniquely and precisely identifies “our own tongue”, the phrase used by both Josephus and the New Testament, as *Aramaic*, rather than Hebrew.

Aramaic was, therefore, the language generally spoken in 1st century Israel, by Jews in Roman Judea. Both Josephus and the New Testament are in harmony. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” (Deuteronomy 19:15)

We have seen, then, that Aramaic was the language of Josephus, the language of the New Testament, the language of Israel and Jerusalem, and therefore the language spoken by Jesus and the disciples.

Aramaic should therefore command our respect. Aramaic should command our love. It is the Holy Language of the New Testament, just as Hebrew is the Holy Language of the Old Testament. If we love the Scriptures, we will love Aramaic, for the Scriptures were given (in part) in Aramaic.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Says

Jesus Spoke Aramaic

WE HAVE already seen that encyclopedias say Jesus Spoke Aramaic. And we have seen that Josephus, the foremost historian living at the time of Jesus and the preaching of his disciples, also says that Jesus Spoke Aramaic.

Let us now examine the New Testament itself. If we read the New Testament carefully, we will see that it actually tells us that it is translating, or interpreting, from an Aramaic original.

Consider the number of times, for example, that the phrase “which being interpreted” or “which being translated” is used in the New Testament:

Matthew 1:23; “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name *Emmanuel*, *which being interpreted is, God with us.*”

Mark 5:41; “And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, *Talitha cumi*; which is, being interpreted, *Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.*”

Mark 15:22; “And they bring him unto the place *Golgotha*, *which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.*”

Mark 15:34; “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* *which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*”

John 1:38; “Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto

them, What seek ye? They said unto him, *Rabbi*, (which is to say, *being interpreted, Master*,) where dwellest thou?"

John 1:41; "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the *Messias*, *which is, being interpreted*, the Christ."

John 1:42; "And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called *Cephas*, *which is by interpretation, A stone*."

John 9:7; "And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of *Siloam*, (*which is by interpretation, Sent*.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

Acts 4:36; "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed *Barnabas*, (*which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation*,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus."

Acts 9:36; "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named *Tabitha*, *which by interpretation is called Dorcas*: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did."

Acts 13:8; "But *Elymas* the sorcerer (*for so is his name by interpretation*) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."

In Matthew 1:23, the name *Emmanuel* is a Hebrew word, and it therefore has to be *interpreted*, or *translated* because it means *God with us*.

But in the other cases from the above list, we have an *Aramaic* word or phrase, which has to be interpreted, or translated, into *Greek*.

In other words, the Greek New Testament is actually telling us that it was translated from an Aramaic original. You might have read those words and verses many, many times before, but until now you might not have understood the true significance of the phrase *which, being interpreted*.

This *alone* proves that the preaching of Jesus and his disciples was in Aramaic. Over and over again, we find the use of Aramaic words, Aramaic phrases, and Aramaic idioms. We are even told explicitly that the New Testament is being translated, or interpreted, from an Aramaic original.

In fact, entire books have been written on this very subject. The book *The Aramaic Origins of the Fourth Gospel* by Charles Burney, for

example, demonstrates conclusively that John's Gospel came from an Aramaic original. And if time and space permitted, that same argument could be made for all the other books of the New Testament.

For further discussion on this topic, many video lessons are available under the History & Background series of lessons on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website. Go to:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/History-of-Aramaic>

While some lessons are free, lots more lessons are available to subscribers.

With that background then, let us look more closely through the pages of the New Testament. We will find ample evidence that Aramaic was the predominant spoken language at the time.

First, we come to the famous words of Jesus on the cross:

Matthew 27:46; "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"

The New Testament is at pains to record the exact words spoken by Jesus in his last few dying hours. But although Jesus is clearly quoting from Psalm 22, the Hebrew of Psalm 22 is not *exactly* being quoted. The Hebrew word for *abandon* is *azav*, so the expression in the Hebrew of Psalm 22 is *azavtani*. But here, Jesus says *sabachthani*. This is from the Aramaic verb *sabach* which is used over and over again in the Aramaic New Testament. It is a very common Aramaic word, meaning *to leave, forsake, or abandon*. It is approximately equivalent to the Hebrew verb *azav*, although the Aramaic verb does have other nuances of meaning which are not present in the Hebrew. This is clear evidence that, on the cross, Jesus spoke Aramaic.

It should also be noted that the pronunciation of *Eli*, meaning *my God*, is interesting because it varies in different Gospels. In Mark, it is recorded differently, as *Eloi, Eloi*. Why the difference? In Aramaic, *my God* is *alahi*, but as this is being transliterated into Greek, and Greek has no letter for *h*, there is a problem in how to write (or transliterate) it into Greek. Dropping the *h*, or aspirate, entirely, leads to *Eli*. Trying to represent that the *h* or aspirate is at least present, leads to *eloi*. But again, this emphasises that, on the cross, Jesus was certainly speaking Aramaic. The evidence could not be clearer.

Let us look at another well-known passage:

Mark 5:41; “And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, *Talitha cumi*; which is, being interpreted, *Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.*”

Now, *talitha* is an extremely common Aramaic word for *girl*. Over and over again, the Aramaic New Testament uses the Aramaic word for *boy* (*talya*) and *girl* (*talitha*). They are the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew *yeled* (*boy*) and *yalda* (*girl*). *Kumi* means *arise* when addressing a female, and is the same in Hebrew or Aramaic. But again, by using such a common and obvious Aramaic word, it is obvious, again, that Jesus spoke Aramaic. *The Greek New Testament is at pains to point out that Jesus spoke Aramaic. His Aramaic words are literally being transliterated from Aramaic into Greek, so that there can be no doubt.*

Another example is:

Mark 7:34; “And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” which is “be opened”.

As we demonstrate in the lessons on *Learning Aramaic for Beginners* at JesusSpokeAramaic.com, this is either a passive of the Aramaic verb *to open*, hence the translation, *be opened*, or the Aphel (causative) verb, that is, *be opened* as an imperative. Note that both of these forms are characteristically Aramaic – the way that passive verbs are conjugated in Hebrew (the Niphal) and causative (Hiphil) is completely different in Aramaic.

Let us look at another well-known example, quoting from the King James Bible:

1Cor. 16:22; “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema Maranatha*”.

The word *Maranatha*, short and sweet though it is, is a fascinating triple word-play in Aramaic. In Aramaic, and specifically the Syriac dialect of Aramaic, with only slight pauses to break up the words, it can mean either:

- ◆ *Maran atha*, our Lord *comes*, or our Lord *is coming*.
- ◆ *Mara natha*, our Lord *will come*.
- ◆ *Mara na atha*, Lord, *please come!*

Either way, this incredible single word is characteristically Aramaic. It cannot be Hebrew. It is a beautiful and amazing play on words,

and it is easy to see how the word would become popular, being so rich in related meanings.

Let us look at other examples of Aramaic phrases in the New Testament which are definitely Aramaic, and cannot be Hebrew.

After Judas betrays Jesus, he realizes the enormity of what he has done, and (as the Scriptures spoke beforehand) he kills himself. The place where he dies is called *Aceldama*:

Acts 1:19; "And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called **in their proper [own] tongue, Aceldama**, that is to say, The field of blood."

This verse says that *Aceldama*, is the name of the field, "in their own [or proper] language", i.e. in the language that the people of Jerusalem spoke. As we saw in the previous chapter, this phrase is *uniquely* Aramaic – not Hebrew, nor Greek.

Thus, this verse *proves* that the people of Jerusalem spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew. The debate is settled. End of argument. The Scriptures have spoken. To disagree would be to "kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5), the pricks being the words of Scripture themselves, the goads or nails fastened by the masters of assemblies (Ecclesiastes 12:11).

But if we continue our search in the New Testament, we find many more Aramaic words and expressions. It is as though these words have been left there on purpose, to prove (for once and all) that Aramaic is the original language of the New Testament.

A further example is the word *Raca* in Matthew's gospel:

Matthew 5:22; "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

It is sometimes said that *Raca* is related to the Hebrew word *Rek*, meaning *empty*, and there may well be a play on words in both the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, but the form of the word *Raca* indicates that it is Aramaic. In Aramaic, it is from the verb *to spit*, meaning that spitting on someone as a sign of contempt was a practise which could bring you in danger of the judgement.

A further example is the word *Mammon* in the Gospels:

Matthew 6:24; “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Mammon is an Aramaic loan-word which became adopted into medieval Hebrew, and hence into modern Hebrew to mean *finance*. However, the original Aramaic word meant *money*, or *wealth*. Thus, you cannot worship (serve) both God and money.

A further example is the word *Rabboni*:

John 20:16; “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”

While this does sound like the Hebrew word *Rabbi*, the Hebrew equivalent is *Rav* (not the English word *Rabbi*), while the form *Rabboni* is characteristically Aramaic. Thus, once again, we have an indication in the pages of the New Testament that the ordinary people spoke Aramaic, rather than Hebrew.

As well as the Aramaic words throughout the text of the New Testament which we have just looked at, that Aramaic was the common language of the time is demonstrated by the widespread choice of Aramaic names for people in the New Testament.

An obvious example is when Jesus calls Peter *Cephas*, which is from the Aramaic *Keyfa*, meaning *Rock* or *Stone*. Again, this is an Aramaic word, with no Hebrew cognate equivalent. The Hebrew words are either *even* (*stone*) or *tsur* (*rock*).

And it is well-known that the Aramaic word for *son* is *bar*, as in *bar-mitzvah*. The Hebrew equivalent is *ben*, as in Ben Zion or Ben Gurion.

And so, demonstrating once again that Aramaic was the common language of the people in New Testament times, we have a whole host of peoples’ names which are Aramaic, all starting with *bar* meaning *son*. Examples include:

- ◆ *Bar abbas*, the name of the robber released instead of Jesus. His name (ironically!) means “the son of the father”.
- ◆ *Bartholemew*, or *Bar Tulmai* in Aramaic.
- ◆ Simon *bar* Jonah, for Peter.

- ◆ *Bartimaeus*, as in the blind beggar Bartimaeus.
- ◆ *Barnabas*, meaning *the son of consolation* in Aramaic.
- ◆ *Bar-Jesus*, the name of the false prophet, a Jew, the sorcerer in Acts 13:6.

Of course, many more examples could have been given, but these should suffice to show that Aramaic was in extensive use, with Aramaic names being very common.

As well as the names of *people*, there are many *place* names which are clearly Aramaic, rather than Greek or Hebrew. Examples include:

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.”

In this verse, the term Hebrew here refers to the *Hebrew (Judean) dialect of Aramaic*, as demonstrated by the form of the word *Gabbatha*, which is easily identifiable as Aramaic. The ending *-atha* is a very common characteristic ending for feminine nouns in Aramaic.

For more information about Aramaic grammar such as that described above, see the many video lessons available under the *Learning Aramaic for Beginners* series on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website. Go to:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons>

This group of lessons is only available to subscribers.

Another example is:

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:”

Again, here, we see the common feminine *-tha* ending to the Aramaic word *Golgotha*.

A final example is:

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.”

The place name *Bethesda* is again a classic Aramaic form.

Although many more examples could be given, these examples should be sufficient to demonstrate that Aramaic is the authentic cultural context into which the New Testament was written.

In the New Testament itself, we therefore have explicit and obvious

evidence that Jesus spoke Aramaic, that Aramaic was the language commonly spoken by everyone around Jesus, and that Aramaic was (by their own admission) the native language of the people of Jerusalem. People around Jesus were named in Aramaic. Place names were in Aramaic. The Greek New Testament itself often *explicitly states* that it is translating from Aramaic.

Once we get back to the Aramaic origins of the New Testament, we get back to true and authentic Biblical roots. We engraft ourselves back into the root-stock of the Holy Scriptures, and we re-gain our moorings, anchoring our faith directly to the inspired Word of God – rather than being adrift at sea, not knowing who to believe or what to think.

Get back to the Aramaic, and we get back to the language in which God chose to reveal His Word in the New Testament.

If Hebrew is the Holy Language, Aramaic is the second Holy Language. We ignore it at our peril.

HISTORY Says Jesus Spoke Aramaic

PREVIOUSLY, we read that encyclopedias say that Jesus spoke Aramaic. We saw that Josephus, the primary historian of the time, also says that Jesus spoke Aramaic. Aramaic was the “language of our country” and “our own language”. The New Testament *itself* says that Jesus spoke Aramaic. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, *archaeology* demonstrates that Jesus spoke Aramaic.

But now let us look at the *historical* background to the New Testament. We shall see that history demands that Jesus spoke Aramaic. It was the cultural context into which the New Testament was born.

You can get free access to an entire video lesson about Aramaic being the language of Jesus, entitled *Aramaic – The Language of Jesus*, by following the link below:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/History-of-Aramaic/Aramaic-Jesus>

Let us begin by looking at the opening chapter of the New Testament – Matthew chapter 1. We are told that:

Matthew 1:17; “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.”

There were fourteen generations from David unto “the carrying away into Babylon”, and fourteen generations from “the carrying away into Babylon” unto Jesus.

The “carrying away unto Babylon”, therefore, is a pivotal point in the history of Israel – important enough to be mentioned *twice* in the opening chapter of the New Testament.

What is “the carrying away unto Babylon”? This event is the Babylonian exile, or the Babylonian captivity, which happened around 586 B.C. when the Temple was destroyed. It is when Nebuchadnezzar, the king featuring in the book of Daniel, conquers Jerusalem and takes captive large numbers of Jews. He transported them from the Land of Israel to Babylon. Jeremiah the prophet told the people that this would happen, and he warns them that the LORD will *not* defend Jerusalem this time. He tells them to submit to the king of Babylon, and not to fight him. Jeremiah was a faithful prophet. It was God's will that the people were deported to Babylon.

Prior to the captivity in Babylon, the Jews spoke Hebrew. Hebrew was the national language of Israel. It was what the Jews spoke. It was their Holy Language. It was what the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, was written in.

But the Babylonians spoke *Aramaic*. Their dialect of Aramaic is sometimes referred to as Chaldean, or Chaldee – as in Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham came from. But *Chaldee* is really nothing more than Aramaic. They are one and the same language. The portions of the Old Testament which were written in Babylon, including many chapters from Daniel and Ezra, were written in Aramaic, the national language of Babylon.

In Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham came from, they also spoke Aramaic. In fact, both the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires – vast swathes of land for millennia – spoke Aramaic. Aramaic was the common uniting language of everyone across the Middle East for literally thousands of years.

And so, when the Jews were exiled from the Land of Israel to Babylon, they were encouraged, or forced, to speak Aramaic instead of Hebrew. It is important to understand that Hebrew and Aramaic are similar. They are both Semitic languages, and work in a similar way. They share much in common in terms of grammar, they sound similar, they have exactly the same alphabet, and much of the vocabulary is exactly the same.

Therefore, for the Jews in Israel, the shift to Aramaic was not difficult. In fact, the Talmud, in Pesachim 87b, tells us that, after the destruction of the First Temple, the LORD specifically chose to exile the Jews into Babylon because of how similar the Aramaic language was to Hebrew, to make the exile easier. It was not a culture shock.

Once the Jews were exiled into Babylon, therefore, their national language went through a fundamental shift from Hebrew to Aramaic. Hebrew was still used and still spoken, but as the years turned into decades, and the decades into centuries, Hebrew became used less and less.

After the Babylonian exile, just seventy years later, the Jews had become so familiar with Aramaic (rather than Hebrew), that Ezra the scribe has to *translate* the Law of Moses to the people. He reads it to them in *Hebrew*, but then has to explain it in *Aramaic*, to make sure they understood what was being said. These events are described in Nehemiah chapter 8.

In fact, this event is what gave rise to the *Aramaic Targums*. The Targums, or Translations, are the 'official' Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, which the Jews made several centuries before Jesus. The Targums became so important that in the Talmud there is a tradition that:

“Rabbi Huna ben Yehudah says in the name of Rabbi Ammi: 'A man should always complete his Torah portions together with the congregation, reading the Hebrew [text] twice and the [Aramaic] Targum once.'”

After the Babylonian exile, therefore, there was a fundamental shift in the national language of the Jews. Before the exile, the Jews spoke Hebrew, and all the nations in the Middle East around them spoke Aramaic. After the exile, the Jews tried to cling to Hebrew, but they were by this time more familiar with Aramaic.

By the time of Jesus, therefore, Aramaic really had become the national language spoken by the Jews in the Land of Israel, exactly as Josephus says. Not only was that the case, but at the time of Jesus the Jews were already using the Aramaic Targums ('translations') alongside the Hebrew text. In other words, they were already more

familiar with Aramaic than with Hebrew. The Gemara, the Aramaic commentary on the Mishnah which together form the Talmud, was compiled in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D., although it was based on earlier oral traditions. Jewish prayers and other writings at this time were also written in Aramaic. Many of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating to around this time, were written in Aramaic.

At the time of Jesus, therefore, history tells us that Aramaic was very much in everyday use as the normal, everyday language used by Jews in Israel.

It is important to understand that the Holy Bible – both Old and New Testaments – is really a tale of two languages. Hebrew for the Jews, and Aramaic for the Gentiles – the nations surrounding Israel.

In the Old Testament, Israel used Hebrew. It was their national language, their Holy Language. But in the Old Testament, the nations and empires surrounding Israel used Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of nearly everyone else. The portions of the Old Testament which were addressed to the Gentiles, in Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezra, were written in Aramaic.

And by the time of the New Testament, Aramaic was still the normal spoken language of the nations surrounding Israel, as well as Israel itself. If Hebrew is the Holy Language of the Jews, Aramaic must therefore be the Holy Language of the Gentiles. It was the language of Jesus, and of the Aramaic New Testament. Apart from Hebrew, no language other than Aramaic has been in such long, continual use for so long. Aramaic was a spoken language in the days of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob); it was spoken throughout the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires; it was used at the time of the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus; it remained in use right through the following centuries until the Crusades, and even after the Crusades it remained in use. In fact, Aramaic is still spoken in villages throughout the Middle East today.

It is therefore very fitting for the New Testament to have been delivered in Aramaic. It is the language of the Gentiles. And the New Testament expands the hope of salvation to the Gentiles, grafting them into the good olive tree of Israel.

Moving on from New Testament times, Aramaic has remained in constant use even down to the present day.

For centuries after Jesus, Aramaic remained in use. As the centuries rolled by, Arabic started to become more widely known and spoken. By the time of the Moslem conquests from A.D. 600 onwards, Arabic steadily gained in importance, and was the language of the Koran and Islam.

But still, during these times, Aramaic remained both a spoken and a written language. Eventually the Crusades took place, from around A.D. 1095, and they lasted several hundred years. When the Crusaders met the inhabitants of the Middle East, a combination of Arabic and Aramaic was spoken. Many of the classic histories of the Crusades were written in Aramaic, such as the voluminous writings of Gregory Bar Hebraeus in the 13th century.

We see, therefore, just how long and important a history Aramaic has. Throughout all of Bible history and beyond, Aramaic has been the language of the nations surrounding Israel.

Just as the history of the Jews is intertwined with the surrounding nations, so too Aramaic and Hebrew have grown up together, like vines whose branches intertwine. They are like a bride and a bridegroom, each individuals, yet incomplete without the other. Together, they form the complete Old and New Testaments.

When we take into account the wider picture of Biblical studies, and include the Aramaic Targums, the Aramaic Old Testament and the Aramaic New Testament, Aramaic takes on an even more conspicuous and important role.

For those who love the LORD and care about His Word, it is therefore imperative that we understand Aramaic. It is essential that we understand the importance of Aramaic and just how badly neglected it is in the study of the Bible today. Aramaic needs to regain its former place at the heart of Bible studies.

You need Aramaic. And Aramaic needs you.

Be sure to go to the website for this book:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaicBook.com>

If you enter your email address, we will send you links to your Four Free Bonuses which are available to everyone who has purchased the book.

If you prefer to listen to the book instead of reading it, then a Companion DVD is available which provides MP3 Audio narrations of every chapter of this book, as well as an accompanying video, and other related material.

ARCHAEOLOGY Says Jesus Spoke Aramaic

IN THE previous chapter, we demonstrated that history says Jesus spoke Aramaic. For many important reasons, we saw that Aramaic was the normal, everyday language used by Jews in Israel around the time of Jesus. In this chapter, we will see that archaeology *also* provides evidence of this.

Through the combination of history and archaeology, we see a pattern emerging of the widespread use of Aramaic in everyday use around the time of the New Testament – not just in Israel, but across the Middle East generally.

We should not be at all surprised, therefore, to find that so many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written in Aramaic. In a story that is now famous, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves near Qumran in the 1940s and 1950s. These ancient manuscripts were found in pottery jars, preserved intact in the dry heat of the desert, undisturbed for almost two thousand years.

Whereas the initial discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls were from the caves near Qumran, since then many other similar discoveries have taken place across Israel, to build up a much more comprehensive picture of the life and culture of these important times, around the time of Jesus.

These further discoveries occur in caves all around the Dead Sea area and the Judean desert in Israel. Photographs and discussion around these discoveries were published by the Oxford University Press as the Discoveries in the Judean Desert (or DJD). They stretched to an almost complete 40 volume series, showing just how comprehensive

the collection of parchments and manuscripts were.

Other similar archaeological remains have also taken place, such as the discoveries at Nahal Hever, or Wadi al-Khabat in Arabic. The site contains two caves, *The Cave of Letters* and *The Cave of Horrors* in which 24 human skeletons were found. These provide archaeological evidence of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were first discovered, the State of Israel (formed in 1948) did not yet exist, and the manuscript fragments came into the hands of academics associated with the Catholic Church, where they remained for the remainder of the 20th century, generally with no access to anyone else outside of the elite group of academics who kept tight restrictions on access to the scrolls. It is only in very recent times, with the help of Israel and certain notable scholars, that access to the Dead Sea Scrolls has finally been available to others.

More recently, archaeologists such as Professor Norman Golb have published comprehensive, well-researched and well-argued theories for the origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For example, in his excellent book *Who Wrote The Dead Sea Scrolls? The Search For The Secret Of Qumran*, Golb argues that given the large numbers of scrolls, and the many different sites in which they have now been found, and the different handwriting, and given what we know of other historical events happening at the time (such as the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the Bar Kokhba Revolt in A.D. 135), it is better to understand the Dead Sea Scrolls as manuscripts belonging to different groups, largely independently, stored in caves by different groups of people at different times, to prevent them from being destroyed in the destruction of both A.D. 70 and A.D. 135, rather than by one single group, the Essenes, as the Jesuits of the Catholic Church proposed.

However, in the context of Aramaic, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide a very valuable insight into the various languages spoken and used during this important time. That is, the scrolls date from the first few centuries B.C., right through to the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and some to the later Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Obviously, Hebrew features heavily in the languages used in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is not surprising, given that the preservation

of the Hebrew Scriptures themselves (that is, the Old Testament) was a fundamental goal for hiding the scrolls in the first place, given the imminent destruction of the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70, and the later (possibly even more destructive and decisive) loss of life at the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Hebrew texts, including extensive copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, make up about 80% of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Being religious Jewish believers, this again should not really be a surprise. They would want to encourage the use of Hebrew as a religious language, amongst these religious Jews.

Scrolls written in Aramaic make up almost the remaining 20% of the overall Dead Sea Scrolls. This again demonstrates the importance of Aramaic in everyday use, as both a spoken and written language, as we have seen throughout the previous chapters.

By contrast, the Greek uncial script, with Greek manuscripts and papyrus, represents less than 3% of the overall Dead Sea Scrolls – and the use of Greek Uncial script dates those particular manuscripts to between the 3rd and 8th centuries A.D., well outside the time period in which the New Testament was given.

Nabatean, a dialect of Aramaic which was used by the Nabataeans (an ancient Arab people of the Negev, East bank of the Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula), is also represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

But the very small numbers of Greek scrolls found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the fact that those date to many centuries *after* the New Testament was written, must surely bring at end to the argument that Greek was the normal spoken language of Jews in Israel in New Testament times. Since so few Greek scrolls were found, and *none* dating to the 1st century, it demonstrates that Greek was either not commonly spoken amongst Jews, or nothing written in Greek was worth preserving. That, incidentally, brings an end to the belief that the Greek Septuagint or LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was commonly used amongst Jews in the 1st century. The Jews, instead, continued to use the Hebrew Bible, with the Aramaic Targums being used alongside the Hebrew.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have fascinated and intrigued people for decades, mainly due to the academic scandals involved in their publication (or lack of publication). But when the dust settles and

the arguments come to an end, the main points to be taken away from the Dead Sea Scrolls, from that very large number of hidden scrolls and manuscripts found all throughout the Judean Desert (not just at Qumran), are as follows:

- ➔ Overwhelmingly, the Dead Sea Scrolls relate to Jewish religious texts, to the Jewish people, in the land of Israel.
- ➔ The Dead Sea Scrolls are most likely to relate to different Jewish groups, and were hidden by different people at different times, for different reasons, but mostly as a result of trying to preserve what could be preserved, as the Roman destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the later destruction of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, became more and more inevitable.
- ➔ The majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in Hebrew, because preserving the Hebrew Bible was of prime importance.
- ➔ Both Hebrew and Aramaic are heavily represented in the non-Biblical scrolls, indicating the importance of both these languages in the lives of religious Jews in New Testament times.
- ➔ The very small number of Greek scrolls, and the comparative lateness of those scrolls, shows that Greek was just not a language that was heavily used by mainstream, religious Jews at this time.

However, following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the next event of major significance was the Bar Kokhba Revolt. This took place under the Emperor Hadrian – the same Hadrian who, early in his reign, built Hadrian's Wall in Britain, that massive stone defensive wall which broadly separates Scotland from England. Hadrian's Wall marked the farthest northern extent of the Roman Empire. Aramaic inscriptions, incidentally, have been found on Hadrian's Wall, indicating just how widely Aramaic was written and spoken in Roman times.

Under Emperor Hadrian, the Jews once again rebelled against Roman rule. That tragic event led to what is known as the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, from A.D. 132-136, in the middle of Emperor

Hadrian's reign. While the Jews inflicted heavy casualties on the Roman armies, the result, tragically, was the total annihilation of the Jewish forces at the hand of the Romans. Alongside massive Roman military casualties, some 580,000 Jews were killed, along with the destruction of 50 fortified towns and 985 villages being razed to the ground. By comparison, Josephus says that 1.2 million Jews were killed in the uprising of A.D. 70. The numbers, once again, are staggering.

The blow was so severe that Jews were permanently banished from Jerusalem, never to return in significant numbers until the latter days, when in 1948, the Jewish people declared the State of Israel. In 1967, following the Six Day War, Jerusalem would once again be in the hands of Israel, in preparation for the coming of their Messiah.

Whereas in the destruction of A.D. 70, the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, in A.D. 135, the Romans went one stage further. Jerusalem, the Holy City, was utterly and completely destroyed. It was razed to the ground, ploughed over like a field, and the Romans re-built a completely new Roman city on its ploughed ruins. That new city was known as *Aelia Capitolina*. It was the New Jerusalem. It was dedicated to the gods of Rome, rather than the God of Israel.

To underline the continued importance of Hebrew and Aramaic during this time, we find both languages being used. In the Wikipedia article on "The Language of Jesus", we read:

"According to Dead Sea Scrolls archaeologist, Yigael Yadin, Aramaic was the spoken language of Jews until Simon Bar Kokhba tried to revive Hebrew and make it as the official language of Jews during the Bar Kokhba revolt (A.D. 132-135). Yadin noticed the shift from Aramaic to Hebrew during the time of Bar Kokhba revolt. In his book *Bar Kokhba: The rediscovery of the legendary hero of the last Jewish Revolt Against Imperial Rome*, Yigael Yadin notes, "It is interesting that the earlier documents are written in Aramaic while the later ones are in Hebrew. Possibly the change was made by a special decree of Bar-Kokhba who wanted to restore Hebrew as the official language of the state" (page 181)."

Thus, the fact that there is a documented "resurgence" or "revival" of Hebrew at this time, or an attempt to "get back" to Hebrew, only serves to emphasize the point that Aramaic, at this time, was the

normal, everyday, language spoken by Jews in Israel. The existence of the New Testament in Aramaic (the Aramaic New Testament) should therefore not come as a surprise.

Yet again, we see the importance of both Hebrew and Aramaic, those two related languages that have grown intertwined together throughout the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

The Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Aramaic. Hebrew and Aramaic, together, have both been the languages in which God chose to reveal His Word.

May we honour both languages, and seek to study the Words of the Most High God.

But Didn't Jesus Speak HEBREW?

WE HAVE, in this book, presented a wealth of evidence to show the dominance of Aramaic amongst mainstream Jews, in Palestine, in the 1st century A.D., as well as the continuing dominance of Aramaic long after that. Aramaic, then, is the cultural context into which the New Testament was given.

However, there is a very vigorous “Hebrew roots” movement, which seeks to show that Hebrew was the dominant language amongst Jews in Israel in the 1st century A.D., that Hebrew was the normal spoken language amongst Jews, and that, if the New Testament was written in a language other than Greek, it would have been Hebrew.

Let us carefully investigate these issues further. The title of this book is *Jesus Spoke Aramaic – The Reasons Why, and Why It Matters*, and that may lead some readers to wrongly assume that Jews in general, and Jesus in particular, *only* spoke Aramaic, and did *not* speak Hebrew.

But Hebrew is, and will always be, the special “Holy Language” of Judaism. As the language of the Hebrew Scriptures, it has a special place in the heart of Jews. Hebrew is the national language of Israel today. It has always been the sacred language. It is therefore natural to believe that Hebrew has always been foremost in the hearts and minds of Jews for all time. Could there have been a time (in the 1st century, in Israel) when Jews spoke Aramaic more widely than they spoke Hebrew?

Let's answer the question by asking another question. Outside of the land of Israel, around the world, how many Jews use Hebrew as their normal, everyday spoken language? How many Jews speak

Hebrew, the Holy Language, so fluently that they can hold a sustained conversation in it, and converse freely in it?

The answer, unfortunately, is that while the majority of Jews claim to hold Hebrew as a special place in their heart, the reality is that very few actually learn Hebrew well enough to read the Scriptures easily, and cannot hold a sustained conversation in Hebrew. The majority of Jews have assimilated, they have learned the language of the countries they live in, and while they *aspire* to learn Hebrew and may know a fair number of Hebrew words and phrases, learning Hebrew fluently remains an aspiration.

And if that is true for Jews today, it was also true for Jews in Israel in New Testament times. They learned Aramaic after the Babylonian exile. In fact, the Talmud, in Pesachim 87b, specifically states that the Jews were exiled to Babylon *because* the Aramaic language was close to Hebrew, and it made the assimilation process easier for the Jews.

After the Babylonian exile, Aramaic started to supplant Hebrew as the dominant language of Jews in Israel – in other words, as the *normal, everyday language* they would use to hold conversations, conduct general business, and generally discuss secular subjects.

By the time of the 1st century, therefore, Hebrew was no longer the *dominant* language. That does not mean that Jews *only* spoke Aramaic, or that Hebrew was no longer spoken.

In fact, there is plenty of evidence to show that Hebrew was still alive and well, still actually spoken as a living language, at this time. This was the case especially amongst religious Jews. Hebrew did not die out as a spoken language.

For instance, consider the passage in the New Testament when Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah:

Luke 4:16-21; “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are

bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

Since Jesus was reading from the Torah scroll in Hebrew, it is entirely likely that this whole incident was spoken in Hebrew.

We can also look at the Dead Sea Scrolls. Obviously the *Biblical* scrolls were in Hebrew because they were copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, but (for example) the Community Scroll was also written in Hebrew, suggesting that Hebrew was the language the community used for normal conversation. But as this was a religious community, it would not be surprising for them to want to use Hebrew (the Holy Language) in distinction to Aramaic, which was the everyday secular language.

Likewise, the Mishnah was written in Hebrew, albeit not quite the same Hebrew as Biblical Hebrew. The Gemara, the extensive commentary on the Mishnah was, however, written in Aramaic. Together, they form the Talmud.

Thus, when debating whether Hebrew or Aramaic was the spoken language in Israel when the New Testament was written, many people try to make the case for *either* Hebrew, *or* Aramaic, as though it was a stark, black-and-white choice of one or the other, as though one was correct and the other wrong.

Instead, both Hebrew and Aramaic were certainly spoken at the time, in different proportions by different people, for different reasons. While Hebrew was still spoken, and religious Jews such as the communities around the Dead Sea especially would want to cling on to Hebrew, the fact of the matter is that Aramaic had long supplanted Hebrew as the normal, everyday language that the majority of the population used for everyday conversation.

The importance of Hebrew should never be forgotten. Hebrew was, and will always remain, the Holy Language. Amongst religious Jews, such as Jesus, Hebrew no doubt held a very special place. It was the language of the Hebrew Old Testament. How could it be anything less than important?

But in the effort not to forget Hebrew, neither should Aramaic be

forgotten. This is what is meant by the statement in the Palestinian Talmud:

“My Son, let not the Aramaic be lightly esteemed by you as the Holy One, blessed be He, has seen fit to give it voice in the Torah and the Prophets and the Writings.” (Palestinian Talmud, Sotah 7:2)

Hebrew is the Holy Language, but Aramaic, too, has a place. Hebrew and Aramaic have grown up, together, inter-twined down through the centuries. If Hebrew is the language of the Jews, then Aramaic is the language of the Gentiles, making it a very appropriate language for the New Testament to be revealed in.

To understand the balance between Hebrew and Aramaic, let us ask some simple questions, and provide some simple answers...

- ◆ Is Hebrew important? Yes, of course, it is the Holy Language.
- ◆ Had Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language in New Testament times? No, definitely not.
- ◆ Was Hebrew, at the time, an actual SPOKEN language, as opposed to a liturgical language, one used only to recite the Hebrew Scriptures? Yes, the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Mishnah shows that Hebrew was still a living, spoken, language.
- ◆ Was Hebrew the ONLY language that was spoken by Jews? No.
- ◆ As a religious Jew, would Jesus have spoken Hebrew? Yes, of course.
- ◆ As a religious Jew, would Jesus ONLY have spoken Hebrew? No, he would have had to know Aramaic to read the Aramaic portions of Daniel and Ezra, and to converse with the Aramaic-speaking people around him. He gave Simon bar Jonah an Aramaic name (*Keyfa*, or *Cephas*) so he must have spoken Aramaic!
- ◆ As a religious Jew, would Jesus have PREFERRED to speak Hebrew? That is entirely possible.
- ◆ Was there an effort amongst religious Jews to “get back” to Hebrew? Yes, Jews knew that Aramaic was becoming

dominant and that people were starting to lose their knowledge of Hebrew, so yes, many wanted to fight this process. The fact that they *were trying to fight it*, is the proof that it was happening.

Hopefully this chapter helps to put the importance of Hebrew into context. Those in the Hebrew Roots movement, or who advocate Hebrew primacy over Aramaic primacy, should not forget the importance of Aramaic, and the long cultural connection between the Holy Scriptures, Jews, and the surrounding nations. Aramaic is the glue that binds everything together. It is the background to the New Testament, and we ignore it at our peril.

A video is available to accompany this book, and to further explore some of the ideas presented here. You can find further details by going to the website for this book:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaicBook.com>

Enter your email address, and we will send you links to your Four Free Bonuses.

But Wasn't The New Testament Written in GREEK?!

IF YOU have been reading through this book sequentially, chapter by chapter, you might be slightly confused at this point. In each chapter, we have seen conclusive evidence that *Aramaic* was the normal, everyday, spoken language of Jesus himself, of everyone around Jesus, of the preaching of Jesus, of the people of Jerusalem, and of Jews in Israel during the 1st century A.D. We have seen this evidence for ourselves from a range of common encyclopedias, from the historian Josephus, from history, from archaeology, and even from the New Testament itself.

You can get free access to an entire video lesson discussing whether Jews spoke Greek, entitled *Did Jews speak Greek?*, by following the link below:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/History-of-Aramaic/Jews-Greek>

If Aramaic was the language spoken by the Jews in Israel two thousand years ago, and if Aramaic was the cultural background of the New Testament, the obvious question springs to mind – why was the New Testament written in Greek?

In general, the translations of the New Testament which we use today are all from the *Greek* New Testament. The Wycliffe translation dating to around 1382 was from *Latin* – the Latin Vulgate – but William Tyndale in 1525 translated his New Testament from the *Greek*, not from Latin. And nearly all translations of the New Testament from Tyndale onwards are from the *Greek* New Testament.

If Jesus spoke Aramaic, then why is the New Testament written in

Greek?

Since most people have heard of the Greek New Testament, most people assume that Greek must have been the language that Jesus and the disciples spoke. Many people are therefore resistant to the idea that Jesus spoke Aramaic.

Is it possible that Jesus spoke Greek too, and that is why the New Testament is in Greek?

In order to answer that question, we need to look a little more closely at the culture and background into which the New Testament was given. We need to understand that the books of the New Testament were written by Jews in Israel in the 1st century A.D. and subsequently adopted by the early believers. As we have already seen, the culture and language of those early believers was Aramaic.

However, because the Greek New Testament has become so familiar and dominant in the West, many assume that Jesus must have spoken Greek, and that Greek must have been the *lingua franca*, or common language, of the Middle East, following Alexander the Great's spectacular conquests.

Many New Testament Greek grammars, for instance, will state or imply that Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Middle East, or that Jesus spoke Greek, and thus the New Testament was written in Greek. But that is a circular argument. We could equally assume that Jesus spoke Latin, because we have a Latin New Testament (the Latin Vulgate). Or that Jesus spoke English, because we have the New Testament in English. Or that Jesus spoke Spanish, because we have the New Testament in Spanish. Or that Jesus spoke any language in which we have the New Testament.

Instead, to understand whether Jesus *really did* speak Greek, and whether Greek *really was* the normal spoken language amongst Jews in Israel in the 1st century, we have to take a step back, and examine the context of when and where the New Testament was written. How did people in general (and Jews in particular) at the time feel about Greek, and would they have spoken it?

We have to remember that the Middle East, in the 1st century A.D., was made up of many different peoples, languages and nations. There were Jews and non-Jews. And amongst Jews, there were many

different groups which are well known and well-documented. They include the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, secular Jews, and other lesser-known groups such as the Essenes.

Unfortunately for the Jews, the Romans ruled in Palestine. The Roman Emperors are well-known from history, including the excesses of despots such as Nero and Domitian, who relentlessly persecuted Christians. Titus and Vespasian are well-known from history as the destroyers of the Temple in A.D. 70.

Now, the Romans had their own language – Latin. They used Latin for official duties, and Latin was the language used by the Romans to write their histories, including those of Julius Caesar, Pliny, Livy, Tacitus and Suetonius, and the various histories which they wrote.

It therefore seems highly unlikely that Jews in Israel, or anyone else in Israel, would have needed *Greek* to conduct business with the ruling *Romans*, since they used *Latin*.

Amongst Jews, therefore, what was the feeling towards Greek? Was it a language that they learned, respected, and used for everyday conversation? Some basic historical research will answer this question for us.

The answer will be a shock to many. We find that Jews, especially those in Israel, *not only generally did not speak Greek* – but they actively *didn't* speak it. They avoided it. They hated it. It was the language of the enemy. It was the language of the despised Antiochus Epiphanes who, during the Maccabean Revolt between 167-160 B.C., had tried to impose Greek customs and the Greek language on the Jews in Israel. *Consequently, Jews in Israel hated Greek. It was probably the last language on earth they would want to speak.*

To understand the complex cultural background of 1st century Israel better, we first need to understand that not all Jews were the same. Just as today we have Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Orthodox Jews, Reform Jews, and so on, so too in Palestine in the 1st century A.D. there was a mixture of Jews. There were religious Jews and secular Jews. There were Zealots. There were Essenes. There were Pharisees. There were Sadducees. There were scribes, and other groups. They were not all the same.

And during the Maccabean Revolt, Greek language and culture were

imposed on Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes. Jews were forcibly persecuted. Eventually the Jews rebelled and, against impossible odds, won the victory against the mighty Greek army. But in the process, many Jews died and were forced to succumb to Greek culture, Greek wisdom and the Greek language.

We therefore find that, at the time of the New Testament, some Jews *had* succumbed to Greek learning and had allowed pagan Greek philosophy such as wisdom, devils, false ideas of heaven and hell, and so on, to enter Judaism. These Jews had started to Hellenize Judaism and absorb ideas from the Greek pagan culture around them, and mainstream Judaism despised them for it.

They are known from history as Hellenized Jews, or in the New Testament as the Grecian Jews. We read about them in the book of Acts:

Acts 6:1; “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.”

The Hellenizing influence amongst Jews at the time was significant enough that Wikipedia has a whole article about it.

Let us quote from Wikipedia, from the article on “Hellenistic Judaism”:

“Hellenistic Judaism was a form of Judaism in the ancient world that combined Jewish religious tradition with elements of Greek culture. Until the fall of the Roman Empire and the Muslim conquests of the Eastern Mediterranean, the main centers of Hellenistic Judaism were Alexandria (Egypt) and Antioch (Northern Syria—now Turkey), the two main Greek urban settlements of the Middle East and North Africa area, both founded at the end of the 4th century B.C. in the wake of the conquests of Alexander the Great. Hellenistic Judaism also existed in Jerusalem during the Second Temple Period, where there was conflict between Hellenizers and traditionalists (sometimes called Judaizers).”

It is easy to see from this and the New Testament passages that significant antagonism existed between mainstream Jews and these Grecian, or Hellenized, Jews. They didn't like each other. Mainstream Jews felt that the Grecian, Hellenized Jews, were

corrupting Judaism, polluting it with their false ideas and pagan culture. Faithful Jews, after all, had fought against the Greeks in the earlier Maccabean Revolt.

There was therefore intense anti-Greek feeling amongst traditional, religious Jews. To understand the nature and intensity of these feelings, let us consider a statement from the Babylonian Talmud:

"At that time it was declared that cursed be he who raised swine and cursed be he who taught his sons Greek." (Babylonian Talmud, Tract Baba Kama (The First Gate), Chapter 7)

In other words, religious Jews believed that learning Greek was something that should be cursed. It was to be avoided. It was frowned upon and disapproved of. Greek was the language of the enemy. It represented everything that religious and nationalistic Jews had fought for less than two centuries earlier, at the time of the Maccabean Revolt.

In fact, the Talmud contains other statements that illustrate how mainstream Jews had turned against the Greek language and Greek culture, following the shocking events of the Maccabean Revolt.

For instance, the Talmud in Soferim 1:7-8, says that the day in which the Torah was translated into Greek, "was as difficult for the Jewish people as the day when the Golden Calf was made." In other words, it was a day for national mourning and repentance. It was a disaster.

Also in the Talmud, it says that on the eighth day of the Hebrew month Tebet the Law was written in Greek in the days of king Ptolemy. But it says that, as a result, "And for three days darkness covered the world." (Gaonic additions to Megillat Ta'anit, 13).

These statements demonstrate just how strongly mainstream, religious, Jews felt about Greek. To them, Greek was the language of the enemy, the language and culture of everything that was corrupting Judaism. That is why the book of Acts shows that there was a conflict between mainstream Jews and those "Grecian Jews".

Into this culture, then, we find that Jews in Palestine, in Israel, were actually very anti-Greek. Josephus, the famous Jewish historian at the time from whom we quoted earlier, contains many statements that demonstrate these facts.

For instance, let us examine *The Antiquities of the Jews*. Josephus says:

1:7 “but because this work surrounded a great deal... in process of time, as usually happens to such as undertake great things, I grew weary and went on slowly, it being a large subject, and *a difficult thing to translate our history into a foreign, and to us unaccustomed, language.*”

[All quotes from Josephus have been taken from William Whiston’s translation].

Here, Josephus clearly states that Greek (into which he was translating his history from its original Aramaic) was, to Jews, *a foreign language that they were unaccustomed to*. In fact, the whole idea of translating his monumental work into Greek was, to him, a very arduous and daunting task, one which would take many years and which would progress only slowly, and which would be wearisome and tiring to him.

But Josephus continues:

1:129 “for such names are pronounced here after the manner of the Greeks, to please my readers; *for our own country language does not so pronounce them*”

Again, Josephus emphasises that neither he, nor his countrymen, actually speak Greek. He is translating names purely for the benefit of his Greek readers. He is at pains to point out that Jews emphatically do not pronounce names according to the way that Greeks do. Greek was, to Josephus, a foreign language – one that he had to make an effort to learn.

But Josephus continues:

20:262 “And I am so bold as to say, now I have so completely perfected the work I proposed to myself to do, that no other person, whether he were a Jew or foreigner, had he ever so great an inclination to it, could so accurately deliver these accounts to the Greeks as is done in these books.”

Josephus, rightly or wrongly, says that he is the only person (Jew or foreigner), who was able to competently translate his history into Greek so accurately. This illustrates clearly, just how few people, Jew or Gentile, in Roman Judea, knew Greek well enough to attempt a translation.

But was Josephus correct in saying that he was the only one who could attempt a task as great and burdensome as translating his work into Greek? Let him answer the question for us:

20:263 *“For those of my own nation freely acknowledge that I far exceed them in the learning belonging to Jews: I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understand the elements of the Greek language, although I have so long accustomed myself to speak our own tongue, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness.”*

Coming from a noble birth, with a priestly father and a mother descended from royalty, we have seen that Josephus was educated, intelligent and already an acknowledged scholar. Yet even with that background, *Josephus admits that he struggled to learn the Greek language, he admits that he does not speak Greek well, and that he had to go to great pains to learn it.* This was because Aramaic was Josephus' mother tongue and he has spoken Aramaic all his life. With that Aramaic background, Josephus admits that he can hardly even pronounce Greek properly.

All those who, as adults, have struggled to learn a foreign language will know exactly what Josephus means! Learning the grammar and vocabulary of a foreign language is a difficult task in any century, and 1st century Roman Judea was no different. Josephus proves that Greek was a foreign language to the Jews, one which they did not speak and were not familiar with.

But as we read more of Josephus' testimony, we discover that there was another reason why Josephus struggled to learn Greek:

20:264 *“for our nation does not encourage those who learn the languages of many nations,”*

Just as the Talmud states, Josephus says that Jews actually *discouraged* learning the languages of the nations around them. This was because Jews had learned from painful, bitter, history, that the nations around them only caused problems and only led them away from the one true God. Jews did not want assimilation. The Maccabean Revolt was still fresh in their minds, when Greek language and culture were forced upon them by Antiochus Epiphanes, when the Temple was desecrated, and Jews were forced to eat swine's flesh and worship statues of Zeus. Ever since the

Maccabean victory, Jews largely rejected Greek philosophy and the Greek language, and discouraged the speaking of Greek, keeping the Maccabean Revolt and subsequent victory at the front of their minds.

Despite being a renowned scholar, Josephus had to obtain help in learning the Greek language:

1:50 “Afterward I got leisure at Rome; and when all my materials were prepared for that work, I made use of some persons to assist me in learning the Greek tongue.”

Thus, once Josephus was determined to translate his works into Greek, he could not at that time even speak Greek. Having (and needing) a certain amount of leisure time, he had to go to Rome to obtain assistance in learning Greek, before he could begin the onerous task of translation. A lengthy journey to Rome was necessary because Greek was not spoken locally.

Why did Josephus have to go to Rome? Was Greek not spoken in Alexandria, in Egypt? Was the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Torah, not made in Alexandria? Was there nobody with a proficiency in Greek living in Egypt at that time who could have assisted Josephus in learning Greek, and thus avoid a journey to Rome?

Well, Josephus continues:

1:73 “I shall begin with the writings of the Egyptians... But Manetho was a man who was by birth an Egyptian, *yet had he made himself master of the Greek learning*, as is very evident: for he wrote the history of his own country in the Greek tongue.”

Not only was Greek not spoken in *Israel*, but this testimony tells us that Greek was not spoken in *Egypt* either. Thus, Manetho is an Egyptian, yet he (like Josephus) bucks the trend and decides to learn Greek for a wider audience. Greek, therefore, was clearly not the *lingua franca*, or common language, of Egypt, or Israel, or indeed anywhere else in the Middle East.

We also have to remember the cultural context into which the New Testament was written. Jesus, of course, was a religious Jew *par excellence*. He was the Messiah, and he came to fulfil the Law. He was in the line of David, and he would have been king – if the

Maccabean dynasty had not been ended by Herod and the Romans. As religious Jews, Jesus and the disciples, of all the Jews in Israel at that time, would have been the most unlikely of all to have spoken Greek.

And if *they* did not speak Greek, if *they* would have avoided it, how could the Gospels and the other New Testament writings have been first written in Greek, and only *later* translated into Aramaic? That would be a cultural anomaly.

Does it not make more cultural sense, as religious Jews in 1st century Palestine, that the Gospels and the other New Testament writings were first written in what Josephus calls “our language”, “our own tongue” and “the language of our country”, and *then* (later) translated into Greek for a wider audience, just as the Hebrew Old Testament was later translated into Greek for a wider audience, as well as those of Josephus himself and of Manetho?

Indeed, when we look at early historians, we find that this is explicitly the case. One of the most celebrated early Church historians was Eusebius who wrote the classic *Ecclesiastical History*.

Eusebius gives the account of the disciple Thomas who converted king Abgar of Edessa, then went as far East as India in A.D. 52 to become the Patron Saint of Christianity in India. He took the Gospel in Aramaic with him, and Aramaic remains in the liturgy to this day.

As late as the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D., therefore, Eusebius explicitly states the earlier writings he refers to, going back to the time of Jesus, were written in Aramaic – the *Syriac* dialect of Aramaic.

Eusebius records that the Gospels were first written in the Syriac dialect of Aramaic, and preserved by the Hebrews (i.e. by the Jewish converts, rather than by Greeks or other nations):

4Euseb. 22:8; “And he wrote of many other matters, which we have in part already mentioned, introducing the accounts in their appropriate places. And from the Syriac [Aramaic] Gospel according to the Hebrews he quotes some passages in the Hebrew tongue, showing that he was a convert from the Hebrews, and he mentions other matters as taken from the unwritten tradition of the Jews.”

This, then, is clear evidence, as Eusebius states, that the Gospels were first written in the Syriac dialect of Aramaic. It should therefore

come as no surprise to hear that the New Testament was first written in Aramaic, and *later* translated into other languages as appropriate.

Aramaic, then, was the language of Jesus and the disciples, and in which the New Testament was first written and divinely preserved. The evidence is that it was *later* translated into Greek and other languages, including Coptic and Latin. Eusebius records that this order, *first* Aramaic and *then* Greek, was the order for other faithful writings at the time:

4Euseb. 30:1; “In the same reign, as heresies were abounding in the region between the rivers, a certain Bardesanes, a most able man and a most skillful disputant in the Syriac [Aramaic] tongue, having composed dialogues against Marcion’s followers and against certain others who were authors of various opinions, committed them to writing in his own language, together with many other works. His pupils, of whom he had very many (for he was a powerful defender of the faith), *translated these productions from the Syriac [Aramaic] into Greek.*”

From Syriac, that all-important dialect of Aramaic, ecclesiastical writings at the time (including the New Testament) were subsequently translated first into Greek, then from Greek to other languages such as Latin. But it all started with Aramaic! And that Aramaic is preserved down to the present day in the Aramaic New Testament!

Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* contains other indications that the books of the New Testament were first written in Aramaic and later translated into other languages such as Greek:

3Euseb. 38:2 “Wherefore it has seemed reasonable to reckon it with the other writings of the apostle. *For as Paul had written to the Hebrews in his native tongue [Aramaic], some say that the evangelist Luke, others that this Clement himself, translated the epistle.*”

Thus, from all the evidence so far, it should be clear that “the native tongue” of Paul, a Jew from Tarsus, an Israelite indeed, was Aramaic. Therefore, Eusebius is saying that Paul’s extensive writings in the New Testament were first written in Aramaic and then translated.

But Eusebius goes on to say:

6Euseb. 14:2 “He says that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the work of

Paul, and that it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language; but that Luke translated it carefully and published it for the Greeks, and hence the same style of expression is found in this epistle and in the Acts.”

Although Eusebius says “the Hebrew *language*”, it means the Hebrew *dialect* [of the native language], that is, the Aramaic dialect used by the Hebrew people, the Jews, in Israel. The Greek word used by Eusebius in this passage is not the word *glossa*, or *language*, but *fono*, or *sound*, i.e. the *sound*, or *pronunciation*, used by the Hebrew people, the Jews, in Israel.

Similarly, let us look at another quotation from Eusebius:

3Euseb. 39:16 “These things are related by Papias concerning Mark. But concerning Matthew he writes as follows: “So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able.”

Again, the word Eusebius uses for Hebrew “language” here is not *language*, but rather the Greek word *dialecta*, i.e. it is the *dialect* of Aramaic spoken by the Hebrews, the Jews, to distinguish it from the Aramaic spoken by the surrounding nations, both far and wide.

Eusebius confirms this in other places:

6Euseb. 25:4 “Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism, and published in the Hebrew language.”

Again, if we examine the Greek word used by Eusebius in this passage, he uses the word “Hebrew *arrangement*” for “Hebrew *language*”. He is saying that the New Testament is being recorded according to how Jews locally, write and preserve it, in their own language. And, as we have seen from both Josephus and the New Testament itself, that local language was *Aramaic*.

In other words, just as Josephus was at pains to point out, everything in Israel was spoken “in the language of their own country”, that is, in the dialect of Aramaic spoken in Israel.

This is why studying the words of the Aramaic New Testament is so

important. As far as we can best determine, it contains the *local* preaching and words of the Lord Jesus himself, and the disciples, as near as they were to the words and phrases originally used.

It is surely wonderful and exciting to have this same preaching available to us today! May we learn and study from the Aramaic New Testament and the other available Aramaic writings! They are as close as we can possibly get to the very words of the Lord Jesus himself.

In summary, we need to understand the culture and context of the New Testament. Just because the Greek New Testament has become entrenched in the West today, and just because there were pockets of Greek-speaking Jews in major cities such as Alexandria and possibly Antioch, we should not make the assumption that the New Testament was *first* recorded in Greek. History records that Greek came later. Jews, in Palestine, in the 1st century A.D., spoke *Aramaic* as their normal, everyday language.

And therefore, Jesus the Messiah, as a religious Jew and not a Grecian Jew, in Palestine, in the 1st century A.D., spoke Aramaic.

But Greek? No. Aramaic came first, and Greek later. That is not an assumption, a mere theory. Historians like Eusebius explicitly tell us it happened that way. And that has major implications – because, as we shall shortly see, the New Testament is available in Aramaic, as well as Greek. The Aramaic New Testament has been preserved faithfully down through almost 2000 years of history, yet few today are even aware of that fact.

Read on to find out more.

Introducing... The ARAMAIC New Testament

IN THE previous chapter we saw that, despite the familiarity that most people in the West have with the Greek New Testament, Greek is in fact a most unlikely language for the New Testament to have been written in.

You can get free access to an entire series of video lessons discussing the Aramaic New Testament by following the link below:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/Aramaic-Peshitta-New-Testament>

Some lessons are only available to subscribers.

We have demonstrated that Aramaic was the normal, everyday language in which Jews in Roman Palestine spoke, in the 1st century A.D. Jesus and the disciples must therefore have preached in Aramaic in order to reach the ordinary people. In fact, there is ample evidence that the Gospels were first written in Aramaic. Entire books have been written on the subject.

Greek, by contrast, was regarded as a foreign language, with which Jews were not accustomed. Josephus has to go as far as Rome to learn the Greek language, and he attests that even after years of learning it, he still cannot even pronounce Greek properly. After the Maccabean Revolt, Jews rebelled against the imposition of Greek customs and the Greek language in their beloved Holy Land. Jews today celebrate Hanukkah to commemorate the victory. The Talmud even states that those who taught Greek to others were to be cursed, and that darkness covered the Land when the Torah was translated into Greek.

Given the importance of Aramaic then, and given the dependence that the Jews had on Aramaic, would we not expect to find that the

New Testament was written in Aramaic, rather than Greek?

Indeed, *this is exactly what we do find*. Although many in the West are completely unaware of it, a version of the New Testament, written in Aramaic, has been faithfully preserved down through time for the past two thousand years. A version of the New Testament in Greek also exists, and that is the version of the New Testament which most people in the West are familiar with. But even the Greek is a relatively new discovery – until the 1500s, the only Bible that most people were aware of was the Latin Vulgate. Wycliffe, and previous translations, were made from the *Latin*. It was only from Tyndale onwards that the *Greek* New Testament was used.

So let us take a closer look at the Aramaic New Testament. It is often referred to as the *Peshitta*, the *Syriac Peshitta*, or just the *Syriac*. So let's start at the very beginning, which is always a good place to start.

When most people think of the New Testament, they usually think of a copy in their local modern language (English, Spanish, French, German, or whatever). Most people will know that the New Testament was not originally written in these modern languages, but was translated (or so we are told) from Greek, and Koine (or Common) Greek in particular. Koine Greek is different from Classical Greek. Classical Greek is an earlier form of Greek which the Greek classics, such as Plato and Socrates, were written in.

So what, then, is the *Aramaic* New Testament? Obviously, this is a version of the New Testament written in Aramaic (rather than Greek).

Now, if you dig a little deeper, you will find several interesting things about the Aramaic New Testament. Prior to the 1880s (or about the time of Westcott and Hort), the following facts were universally accepted, in the West, about Aramaic and the Aramaic New Testament:

- ✓ It was accepted that Aramaic was the commonly spoken language in Israel, by Jews, in the 1st century A.D., and therefore Aramaic was the language normally spoken by Jesus, the disciples, and Jews in general.
- ✓ Since it was accepted that Jesus and the disciples spoke Aramaic, as did Jews generally in the 1st century A.D., it was

understood that the Aramaic New Testament must therefore be as close as it is possible to get to the original words spoken by Jesus himself, and as close as possible to the original autographs of Scripture.

- ✓ It was universally believed that the Aramaic New Testament dated to as early as the 1st or 2nd centuries A.D., and was therefore just as old as the earliest Greek manuscript fragments.
- ✓ It was understood that the Aramaic New Testament was essentially free from all the myriad of variations that are found in manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. Many of the variations in the multitude of Greek texts are very significant, often doctrinally important. By contrast, variations of significance are almost entirely missing in the Aramaic New Testament, and the Aramaic text is almost identical across many centuries and entire continents.
- ✓ It was known that the Aramaic New Testament contained many idioms, puns and plays on words – all of which are idiomatic and completely natural in Aramaic.

A summary of the evidence for the above views can be found in the detailed Appendix of the 1852 *Murdock Translation of the Aramaic Peshitta*, which is available for free to subscribers to the Jesus Spoke Aramaic website. (See JesusSpokeAramaic.com for further details).

Even though Murdock believed that the Aramaic New Testament was a translation from the Greek, he pays the Aramaic New Testament many amazing and surprising compliments such as those above. He says it is hard to believe that the Aramaic New Testament is a mere translation. The *Introduction to the Norton Translation of the Aramaic Peshitta*, another classic translation dating to the 1800s, also contains a lot of additional evidence for the above views.

In fact, if you read through books and commentaries prior to Westcott and Hort in about the 1880s, you will find very frequent references to the Aramaic New Testament. In the West, it was an extremely well-respected early Aramaic witness of the text of the New Testament, and was routinely used to resolve problems in the Greek New Testament text, and to shed further light on passage after passage.

But that was how the Aramaic New Testament was regarded *in the West*. With Christianity in the *East*, however (meaning churches East of Constantinople, covering countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, even as far as India and beyond), it was an *entirely* different matter. It turns out that basically all Eastern Christian churches, across all countries and continents, and down through the centuries, *universally hail the Aramaic New Testament as the original written form of the New Testament, the actual inspired Word of God, and thus not a translation from the Greek at all. They have handed that tradition down from generation to generation, from the very days of the Blessed apostles themselves. They have always believed it. And they have never used the Greek New Testament at all – they have **always** used the Aramaic New Testament in their liturgy.*

Eastern Christian churches believe, and have historical records showing, that the books of the Aramaic New Testament were handed down to them by the very apostles themselves. They have always believed that the Aramaic New Testament is the original inspired Word of God. They have never believed anything different. They have simply never used the various Greek texts.

It is only in these past few decades (a recent phenomenon) and in the West (Europe, Britain, America, and so on), that the idea of the original New Testament being in Aramaic is controversial. But it turns out that there is an immense body of evidence for this view. In the lessons at JesusSpokeAramaic.com, we go through the evidence and the facts in a whole series of video lessons, step by step.

So which view is correct? Is the Aramaic New Testament merely a translation from the Greek, albeit an exceptionally ancient, reliable and authentic translation, or is it the original text from which the Greek was translated?

For many people, the idea that there exists a version of the New Testament written in Aramaic will be completely new. But please thoroughly go through all the evidence presented at JesusSpokeAramaic.com and decide for yourself.

If you don't currently know much about the Aramaic New Testament, or if you didn't know that a version of the New Testament written in Aramaic exists, then the ideas presented in this book will be new and challenging for you.

However, once you understand what the Aramaic New Testament is, once you start to read it for yourself, once you see the astonishing beauty it contains, once you understand just how many problems in the Greek text it helps to explain or shed new light on, you will find that your faith is immensely strengthened.

Rather than being a challenge to your faith, an understanding of the Aramaic New Testament will provide a huge boost to your faith. You will find that worrying and troubling variations in the Greek texts disappear, in passage after passage. You will find that criticisms of the New Testament based on problems in the Greek texts disappear altogether. Suddenly obscure passages of the New Testament will make sense. Verses will take on exciting new meanings. There will be a depth, originality and vibrancy to the New Testament that you just will never see in a Greek text or an English translation. Related passages in the Hebrew Old Testament become clearer and more obvious.

The Aramaic New Testament is much closer to the traditional KJV text than the huge number of variants in the Greek texts. Your faith will increase when you understand just how internally consistent the Aramaic New Testament is, how essentially all manuscripts across all countries and across whole centuries, all agree with each other. The Aramaic New Testament has all the hallmarks of being divinely preserved down through time, kept unchanged from all the doctrinal battles that raged in the Greek world, preserved from textual interference by those same doctrinal battles.

And so, far from being a challenge to your faith, the Aramaic New Testament should strengthen the feeble knees, embolden the heart and soul of all students of God's Word, and prepare this generation for the time when Israel's Messiah will come to save his people and judge those nations who stand against the LORD's Anointed and who have touched the apple of his eye.

Just as the Old Testament contains *both* Hebrew *and* Aramaic, the New Testament has been divinely preserved in Aramaic down through the centuries. Together, Hebrew and Aramaic were the vehicles by which the LORD has revealed His Word to the Jews (Hebrew) and the Gentiles (Aramaic).

Greek, by contrast, is the language of the apostasy and the enemies

of the Jews. Greeks polluted the Holy Temple at Jerusalem, introduced Greek philosophy to Judaism, and the Maccabees waged war against their evil influence. Jews will never accept a Greek New Testament that calls upon Theos, Deus, or Zeus by another name. They will bow the knee only to the One True God. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." Christians should accept nothing less.

The Aramaic New Testament, therefore, is of paramount importance. Not only did Jesus speak Aramaic, but there is a version of the New Testament which preserves his very words, and those of the blessed apostles themselves as they went forth into the whole world and preached the Gospel message.

And yet that message, the Aramaic New Testament, despite it being the Word of God, has been abandoned, forgotten, left to gather dust in museums and ancient libraries, while the Christian world turns to everything other than the Aramaic – to English in a growing number of modern translations, to Greek before that, and to Latin before that.

May we restore the Aramaic New Testament to its former glory, to the honor it so richly deserves, as the pearl of great price which a man would give everything for, and prize above all else.

Why not buy a copy of the Aramaic New Testament in English?
Murdock's Translation of the Aramaic New Testament is available from:
<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/Bibles/Murdock-Translation>

Jesus Spoke Aramaic – Why It Matters

IN THE previous chapters, we have seen overwhelming evidence that Jesus spoke Aramaic. Mainstream encyclopedias say it, and indeed contain entire articles about the subject. History and archaeology both confirm it. Josephus, the classic historian at the time of Jesus and the preaching of his disciples, also confirms emphatically that Aramaic was “the language of our country” and “our own tongue”. And the New Testament itself also says it, and indeed explicitly states in many places that it was translated from Aramaic.

With the importance of Aramaic therefore, with it being the language in which Jesus and the disciples would have carried out their preaching, with the parables of Jesus being preached in Aramaic, with Aramaic being such an important language for the background to the New Testament, does it not follow that Aramaic should be entirely mainstream – that we should be looking to Aramaic for the correct cultural orientation, as the correct authentic backdrop, to Christianity and the New Testament?

Instead, however, we find exactly the opposite.

There is very little awareness of what Aramaic has to offer amongst Christians at all.

Aramaic is attested as the language that Jesus and the disciples spoke by all competent authorities on the subject. Yet despite this, Aramaic is massively under-represented at all levels of Christian learning.

Most pastors will at least have a solid awareness of Old Testament

Hebrew and New Testament Greek, and may well have done some study on those Biblical languages, probably as part of a seminary or college. But it is rare indeed to meet a pastor, priest, vicar or minister with any real knowledge of Aramaic at all.

Whereas classes, courses and seminars on Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek are regularly run at seminaries, colleges and universities across the Christian world, Aramaic is left behind. There are almost no courses for people to turn to.

If we go into a Christian bookshop, or the library of a college or seminary, a whole range of books on Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek will not be difficult to find – covering grammars, lexicons, dictionaries, study guides, word studies, vocabulary helps, and so on. Yet when we look for equivalent books on Biblical Aramaic – we are unlikely to find anything at all.

Bible Societies – those societies formed after the Reformation which were founded to promote and defend the Holy Scriptures – have all completely abandoned the Aramaic New Testament. The Aramaic New Testament is entirely out of print, and has been for decades, by the British and Foreign Bible Society, the American Bible Society, the Bible Society in Turkey, despite editions being available formerly. Other Bible Societies, such as the Trinitarian Bible Society, simply do not produce Aramaic New Testaments.

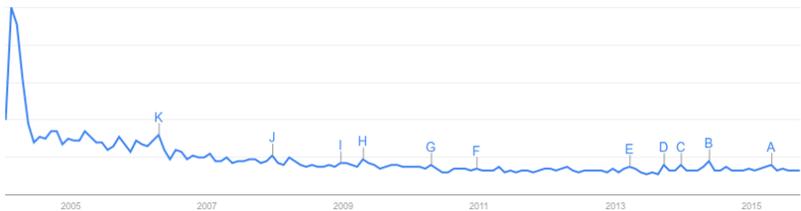
Individual Christians exhibit the same trend. While most will at least have heard of Aramaic, that is likely to be as far as it goes. Most will never have studied the Aramaic language or found out more, and fewer still will even be aware that there is a version of the New Testament written in Aramaic (the Aramaic New Testament) with a chain of authenticity going back two thousand years, an extremely strong provenance of manuscripts going back at least as far as the oldest possible Greek New Testament manuscripts – to at least as far back as the 5th century A.D.

We therefore see a complete lack of emphasis on Biblical Aramaic – on what Aramaic has to offer for Bible study – absolutely everywhere we look. Aramaic is marginalised, side-lined and under-emphasised everywhere, from the grass-roots level right up to the highest levels of seminaries and colleges, and all throughout the academic world.

Why is this?

It is definitely **not** because of a lack of interest in Aramaic. In fact, quite the opposite. People are *intrigued* by Aramaic and what it has to offer. On the news, we frequently hear of Aramaic-speaking Christians in Syria being persecuted by ISIS and having to flee their homes, their villages being burnt down, their traditions lost. Aramaic is in the news surprisingly often.

Indeed, if we use Google Insights for Search to look at interest in Aramaic over the past decade, we find the graph shown below:



The data series goes back only to 2004.

If we look at the above graph, we see that there was a huge spike of interest in Aramaic in 2004. The spike is so large that it eclipses everything else – and that is relative to other search terms.

The spike in 2004 is most likely to be as a result of the release that year of Mel Gibson's blockbuster movie *The Passion of The Christ*. The movie was one of the highest grossing movies of all time, bringing in in excess of \$600 million during its release. It won a remarkable number of accolades and nominations for awards. It caused a number of documentaries and websites to be created to examine its impact and its dramatic effects on the lives of so many people.

The Passion of The Christ was filmed with the actors, including Jesus and the disciples, speaking in Aramaic for added authenticity. It caused a surge of interest in Aramaic. People hungered to know more. They longed to find out what Aramaic was all about.

But with Aramaic being *so* marginalised and *so* under-represented at every level of the Christian world, people had no way to satisfy their hunger and thirst to know more about the Aramaic language and what it has to offer.

This is why it matters so much that Jesus spoke Aramaic. Aramaic is the language of Jesus. It is the language of the disciples. It was the language in which the Christian message was first given, and first heard. People are hungry to know more. Yet there are so few resources for people to turn to.

That is the main reason why I created the website JesusSpokeAramaic.com. I wanted to show people what Aramaic has to offer, and give people a source of information. I wanted to put together a series of video lessons, DVDs, Workbooks, books and Bibles so that people could hear the Aramaic message and learn the language, or at least find out what it has to offer.

This is incredibly important. Bible believers everywhere *need* to get back to the Bible. They *need* to get back to the authentic and original roots of the Bible, including the New Testament. Aramaic is the key to making that happen.

But to make matters worse, not only do Bible believers mostly ignore Aramaic – despite the huge groundswell of interest in it – but Bible believers mostly ignore the Aramaic New Testament.

Indeed, if there is so little interest in Aramaic itself, there is even less interest in, and knowledge of, the Aramaic New Testament.

Aramaic is so marginalised that many are unaware that a version of the New Testament – going back two thousand years to the very preaching of Jesus and the disciples – is available. But not just available – the Aramaic New Testament has been preserved faithfully for centuries down to the present day, intact despite wars, persecutions, schisms, splits, and so on.

It is a tragedy. God has provided His Word in the original Aramaic in which it was preached. Yet Bible believers mostly ignore it, are unaware of it, and hardly even know it exists.

We honor God when we study His Word. We dishonor God when we ignore His Word.

Why don't more Bible believers use the Aramaic New Testament, or at least find out what it has to offer?

Why use translations at all, when you can have God's Word – the very words themselves – come alive to you, and speak to you

directly, without the veil of a translation getting in the way?

Let's spend a few minutes discussing the importance of Aramaic and the Aramaic New Testament in particular.

The Aramaic New Testament is all of these things, and more besides:

- The Aramaic New Testament is as close as you can get to the actual words spoken by Jesus and his disciples since, as we have seen, they spoke predominantly in Aramaic.
- The Aramaic New Testament is as close as you can get to the original Aramaic and Semitic idioms that underpin the Greek New Testament, and therefore nearly all the modern translations we use today.
- Time and again, the Aramaic New Testament explains the many thousands of variant readings in the Greek New Testament.
- The Aramaic New Testament explains a multitude of difficult, obscure, problematic, or conflicting words in the Greek New Testament.
- The Aramaic New Testament comfortably and logically explains passages that are commonly attacked by Bible critics, because those conflicts just do not occur in the Aramaic New Testament. Most, if not all, of the problems that enemies of the Bible bring up to criticize it, can be explained by looking at the Aramaic New Testament.
- The Aramaic New Testament contains a whole bunch of features that are entirely missing in all translations including the Greek, such as poetry, puns, rhymes, plays on words, idioms, and similar features.
- The Aramaic New Testament means that you do not need to use the names of pagan deities in worship and Bible study, such as the names of Greek gods (Theos = Deus = Zeus!) and Kurios.
- The Aramaic New Testament is the only New Testament universally recognized by the Church of the East, and therefore essential for a complete understanding of Bible history. Ignoring the Aramaic New Testament is therefore

like trying to breathe with only one lung.

If nothing else, the Aramaic New Testament is all of those things, and more.

In the East – that is, in the many churches with ancient origins which stretch all the way from Turkey to India and beyond – the prevailing view is that the Aramaic New Testament was what was handed down to them by the blessed apostles themselves. It is the inspired Word of God itself.

Bible believers all the way from Turkey to India and beyond conduct their liturgies in Aramaic and have done so since their churches were founded. Those believers have only ever known the Aramaic New Testament. The Aramaic New Testament is all their liturgies have *ever* known. They have simply never adopted Greek New Testament manuscripts. In fact, some early translations of the Bible such as the Armenian Bible, were made *only* from the Aramaic New Testament because the translators could not find any Greek New Testament manuscripts in their country. Even the Arabic Bible, dating to around A.D. 800-1000, has its origins mostly in the Aramaic New Testament.

For those who care to investigate, the evidence overwhelmingly points to the Aramaic New Testament as being the original text in which the New Testament was given. At an early stage, Greek translations were made, and probably revised over time. This explains the preponderance of variations in the Greek New Testament, and the astonishing and noteworthy lack of them in the original Aramaic.

Just as Bible students go back to the Greek for clarity on their English translations, so too we should go back to the original Aramaic for clarity on the Greek – not to mention modern English translations. Time and again, the Aramaic New Testament clarifies the Greek and English texts. The Aramaic New Testament explains differences and textual variants. The Aramaic New Testament sheds light on the Semitic idioms used in the New Testament. Aramaic breathes life into Bible study like no other source.

If you believe the message of the New Testament, ignoring the Aramaic New Testament means that you are floating adrift at sea. You have lost your moorings. Your faith will be battered by lower textual criticism, higher textual criticism, Bible skeptics, humanists,

atheists, pagan philosophies, modern thinking, and much more. The Aramaic New Testament is your anchor. The Aramaic New Testament will correctly stabilize your faith and re-root your beliefs back to the Semitic origins of the New Testament. The Aramaic New Testament will breathe new life into familiar passages, explain quirks and other obscure passages, and will withstand all the poison that Bible skeptics and critics can throw at it.

Read the Aramaic New Testament in the original Aramaic, and you will see an original beauty leap off the page that translations just do not have. It's like the difference between seeing a photograph of a loved one, and meeting them face to face.

Start learning Aramaic today, and put the Aramaic New Testament at the center of your Bible faith. Reconnect your heart and mind to the Holy Scriptures, breathed by the Living God, and forming the words of the Aramaic New Testament. A translation is just not the same, whether it be in Greek, Latin, English, or any other language.

Many will be unable to divorce themselves from the popular view that the New Testament was originally written in Greek. I was once like that. I dismissed out of hand any claims that the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic. But one day I started to look into the evidence for myself. And it scared me how much that evidence started to mount up. Slowly, the barriers came down, and I started to see that the Aramaic New Testament had to be the original text, and the Greek a translation from it. Far from rocking my faith, and much to my surprise, my faith was enormously boosted and strengthened. When reading the Aramaic New Testament, it was like reading the Holy Scriptures without a veil, coming face to face with the words of the Holy Spirit, not seeing through a glass darkly or through the words of a translation.

Read the Aramaic New Testament, dear Bible believer. Let yourself be guided by the Father, and you will see the words of the Living God, the pearl of great price. The wonders of the Aramaic New Testament await you. Open its pages and read.

A close examination reveals what churches of the East have known all along – that the Aramaic New Testament is the inspired Word of the LORD, delivered by the hands of the apostles themselves. The Aramaic New Testament has been preserved intact down through

the centuries, just as the Bible says it would be.

No wonder so many people today are turning back to Aramaic as a more original and authentic basis for Christianity, and to the Aramaic New Testament as the inspired Word of God.

The importance of Aramaic and the Aramaic New Testament can hardly be over-estimated. Aramaic is the original source of the New Testament. It needs to be understood and studied. You can now go back to the original life-giving fountain of life itself, rather than drink from a muddy brook that has been poisoned over centuries by systematic translation and re-translation, massaging of the text, and doctrinal manipulation of the text down through the centuries in endless theological disputes, creeds and catechisms.

Hebrew to the Jews and Aramaic to the Gentiles – the two languages in which the LORD chose to reveal his message to mankind. It is the most supreme irony of all, that Hebrew and Aramaic are the two languages least studied by Bible students today, because the Greek Septuagint and Greek New Testament have been elevated above all other texts, in pursuit of the elusive 'original' Bible text.

But the original Bible text has been there all along – the Hebrew Old Testament and the Aramaic New Testament. Preserved without corruption, with hardly a change despite centuries of painstaking copying, and across whole continents, down through empire after empire, until the time when the Messiah shall come, and the books are opened, and the dead are raised, and the nations are judged, and the Kingdom of God is established on earth.

Studying Aramaic and the Aramaic background to the Holy Bible brings us back to a deeper, richer and more authentic understanding of God's Word. We owe it to ourselves to understand Aramaic. Jesus spoke Aramaic, and we, too, should take the time to understand this wonderful language.

Aramaic is an exciting journey into the world of Jesus, of Roman Judea, of the history of Israel, and of the New Testament. Make sure you visit JesusSpokeAramaic.com to help you understand and appreciate the wonderful world of Aramaic and what it can offer you. *Maranatha*. Our Lord is coming!

Why Doesn't EVERYONE Know This?

WE SAW in the previous chapter just how under-represented Aramaic is in mainstream Bible studies and in Christianity in particular. Consider the following points:

- Few Christian bookshops have any Aramaic books or resources available for purchase, because few are published.
- Publishers only rarely publish books in connection with Aramaic, because Aramaic is not mainstream.
- At seminaries, colleges and universities, courses in Aramaic are only very rarely available. Courses are plentiful on just about anything else *other* than Aramaic.
- Few pastors, priests, vicars or ministers knew any Aramaic at all, despite it being the language of Jesus and the disciples.
- The Aramaic New Testament *is* available. Despite it being an ancient, reliable, authentic and respected version of the New Testament known in the West for centuries, and despite it *still being used* in the liturgy in Churches of the East for the past two thousand years – hardly anyone in the West uses it, or is even aware of its existence.
- Bible Societies – those sworn to protect and uphold the Bible and preserve it in this evil and adulterous generation – have all but abandoned the Aramaic New Testament, and no longer publish it or offer it for sale.

It is a very sad state of affairs. How did this come about? What happened?

In this chapter, we will take a look at what has happened to lead us into a state of affairs where Aramaic is so neglected, so abandoned, so under used, despite its being the very language of the Lord Jesus himself, the language of the disciples, the language in which the Gospel message was first given, and the language of the oldest and most reliable version of the New Testament – the Aramaic New Testament.

Let us (metaphorically) step into our time machines and catch up on events over the past two thousand years that relate to the transmission of the New Testament.

We shall begin with Jesus. He was a Jew, living in Israel (Roman Palestine) in the 1st century A.D. It was not long before his birth that the Jews had fought the forces of Antiochus Epiphanes and the might of the Greek army during the Maccabean Revolt, at which time the Greeks had forcibly tried to impose Greek customs and the Greek language on Jews in Israel, and to become one people. The Jews rebelled, giving rise to the celebration of Hanukkah in which the Temple in Jerusalem was cleansed and re-dedicated.

While inevitably pockets of Greek speakers arose, the Jews rejected Greek and stuck with their own traditions – reading Hebrew in the synagogues, the Torah scrolls in Hebrew, but everyday conversation generally being in Aramaic.

And so Jesus spoke Aramaic. So did the disciples. So did the common people. The cultural background was one of Aramaic, as we have seen.

And it was natural, therefore, that the preaching of Jesus was in Aramaic. As the disciples went forth into the whole world to preach after the death of Jesus, that preaching was in Aramaic. Aramaic was the common uniting factor across the whole Middle East, and so it was the natural language in which to preach the Gospel.

Jewish believers were amongst the first converts, and Aramaic was in common use amongst Jewish communities. For example, the Elephantine Papyri – letters written to and from the community at Elephantine in Egypt – were mostly in Aramaic. Many of the Dead

Sea Scrolls were written in Aramaic. The Gemara – the commentary on the Mishnah which together make the Talmud – was also written in Aramaic. Jews make use of Aramaic in prayers and other writings, such as the Zohar.

It was entirely natural that Aramaic, therefore, was used as the language to record the Gospels, Acts and all the other writings of the New Testament. It was the unifying language that Jews in Israel, everyone across the Middle East, and Jewish communities scattered abroad had in common.

And the Aramaic New Testament was taken far and wide very quickly, as the disciples fulfilled the commission to preach the Gospel to the whole world. Everywhere the disciples went, they took the Aramaic New Testament with them. Shortly after the death of Jesus, the Gospel was taken to Edessa in Syria, where king Abgar converted to Christianity, along with his entire kingdom. He received the Gospel in Aramaic, and from there the Aramaic New Testament spread into Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

We are familiar with Paul's missionary journeys into Turkey and Europe from the book of Acts, but what is generally not known is how far *East* the Gospel went. *As early as A.D. 52, the Gospel had already been taken as far East as India by the disciple Thomas.* In fact, Thomas is the founder of Christianity in India. Those churches have largely only ever had the New Testament in Aramaic, and still use Aramaic in their liturgy to this day. Many in the West are completely unaware of how far, and how quickly, the Gospel spread East.

Meanwhile, in Israel, in the Holy Land, Jews and Christians alike were about to be heavily persecuted and their writings burnt and destroyed.

A series of despotic emperors who hated both Jews and Christians arose. Nero would soon come to power, that insane emperor who is famous for fiddling while Rome burnt, and setting Christians alight in the gardens of his palace, and many other cruel persecutions. Then there is Caligula, another despot who was hardly any better. Domitian, again, was the despotic emperor who also persecuted Jews and Christians, banishing John the elder to Patmos where he would write the book of Revelation, delivered to him by the Lord Jesus in a series of visions.

Under these persecutions, Jews and Christians alike were killed, and their books burnt – including copies of the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament in Hebrew) and the Christian Scriptures (the New Testament in Aramaic). But both these Holy Writings had, by this time, 'escaped' the clutches of the Roman Empire and had already spread far and wide.

As the events of A.D. 70 unfolded, in which the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and Jews later banished from Jerusalem, the Romans began a campaign of destruction against Jews and Christians alike. Starting from Galilee, the Romans began a war of destruction against the Jews. Josephus, in his famous history *The Wars of The Jews*, provides the details. As the Romans worked their way south, yeshivas (religious schools) were burnt to the ground, books destroyed, the Holy Writings burnt whether they were in Hebrew or Aramaic, and men, women and children killed.

The Romans destroyed everything pertaining to the Bible that they could find. Eventually the Temple in Jerusalem itself was destroyed in A.D. 70, followed by Massada in A.D. 73, followed by a potentially even greater destruction during the Bar Kokhba Revolt in A.D. 135, at which time Jews were permanently banned from Jerusalem. Under the emperor Hadrian, Jerusalem itself was ploughed as a field, thus fulfilling Micah's prophecy.

And so – at this early stage – we have two outcomes, in terms of the transmission of the New Testament in Aramaic. In Israel itself, the Roman destruction of everything connected with Jews and Christians, including Holy Writings in both Hebrew and Aramaic, was likely to be so complete, so fanatic and so destructive, that it would be a miracle to find anything surviving from this period in Israel itself. But outside of Israel, and especially going East (outside the Roman Empire) it was a different story. The Aramaic New Testament was alive and well, it flourished, and communities of Bible believers sprang up everywhere, using the Aramaic New Testament as the basis of their faith – just as they continue to do to this day.

Meanwhile, probably very early on, the preaching and teaching of Jesus and the disciples, initially preserved in Aramaic because that was the language they spoke, was translated into other languages. Most notably, those Holy Writings were translated to Greek. This

follows the familiar pattern that we see again and again. The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, was translated into Greek for a wider audience. Josephus says that he attempted to learn Greek so that his extensive histories, first written in Aramaic, could be translated into Greek for a wider audience. Josephus' Aramaic originals were probably destroyed by the Romans, alongside everything else written in Hebrew and Aramaic. And Manetho, that Egyptian historian mentioned by Josephus, also wrote in Aramaic and his writings were later translated into Greek.

And so the pattern, well attested by historians, is for histories at the time to be first written in Aramaic, and then translated into Greek for a wider audience. The same pattern most likely happened in the case of the Aramaic New Testament, being shortly afterwards translated into Greek. The website JesusSpokeAramaic.com provides extensive evidence for this. As we systematically look at the differences between the Aramaic and Greek New Testaments, we are forced to come to the conclusion that the Aramaic came first, followed by the Greek.

The Greek New Testament simply never gained ground in Israel nor East of Israel. East of Israel, they only ever had the Aramaic New Testament. It was all they knew.

But, over time, as the Gospel message spread into Europe, the Greek New Testament became more common. It spread faster. It became popular, just as English translations today have become popular.

And shortly after the Greek New Testament, as the Roman Catholic Church gained in power and influence, the Greek New Testament itself gave way to Latin translations. The most famous Latin translation of all is the Latin Vulgate, translated from the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament by Jerome in the 4th century A.D.

The Latin Vulgate became the standard of the Roman Catholic Church. It was the only Bible people had heard of, the only Bible people would know of. This lasted all the way from Jerome, right through to the Reformation. Even the Wycliffe Bible of 1382, the first translation into English, was made from the Latin Vulgate. The domination of the Roman Catholic Church meant that the Latin Vulgate was the only Bible it was really possible to translate from.

But as the centuries rolled by, the Protestant Reformation happened in the West. Scholars such as William Tyndale emerged. While they still translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew, they knew that the Latin Vulgate was not the original. They knew the Latin of the New Testament had been translated from the Greek, and so they wanted access to the Greek New Testament to see whether, or rather what, errors had crept into the Latin Vulgate either as a result of Jerome himself, or later alterations by the Roman Catholic Church.

Thus, the Tyndale translation of 1525 was the first English translation which was translated from the *Greek*, rather than the *Latin*, New Testament. Ever since then, the West has been enchanted by the idea that we must get back to the original Greek if we want to understand the New Testament better. The Greek, after all, was what the Latin Vulgate was translated from. By getting back to the Greek we can, in one stroke, remove one thousand years of translation and interpretation by the Roman Catholic Church, and get back (ideally) to what Jerome translated from.

Thus, in this simple way, Latin and Greek have utterly dominated Western thinking for the past 1500 years. Latin was the language of academics and scholars all the way throughout the Middle Ages. Even until the 1800s, many scholarly books were written in Latin. The introduction to BHS, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, for instance, was written in Latin.

Latin and Greek, together, are the scholarly languages of the English-speaking world. Latin and Greek were the primary sources out of which English arose. They are the foundations of the English language. For literally centuries in the West, Latin and Greek formed the basis of a classical academic education. If you wanted to appear educated, you had to learn Latin and Greek. You had to study the classics. Latin and Greek were studied in public schools until relatively recently, before giving way to more liberal subjects such as art, drama and media studies.

It is entirely natural, therefore, for the West to have a bias towards Latin, and especially Greek. The prevailing belief in the West is that the New Testament was translated from Greek. And it was – Tyndale's translations, and nearly all subsequent translations, have come from the Greek New Testament, rather than the Latin New Testament.

But if we examine the evidence, if we compare verses word by word, we are forced to come to the conclusion that the Greek New Testament has, in turn, come from the Aramaic New Testament. The Aramaic New Testament is even older, even more authentic, and even more reliable. It has an impeccable heritage, unrivalled by any other tradition. And since Jesus spoke Aramaic as well as his disciples, the Aramaic New Testament records the very words of Jesus himself, as far as it will ever be possible to determine.

And so, to answer the question, does it matter? Does it matter that Jesus spoke Aramaic, and that there is an Aramaic New Testament?

Yes, it matters very much. It is revolutionary. Because it means that we can go back to the first century itself, to Jesus himself, to the very words that he spoke.

We can get *beyond* the English translations that we use today. We can get *beyond* the Latin translation – the Latin Vulgate that stood as the only Bible the Western world had access to for more than 1500 years. We can get *beyond* the Greek New Testament from which the Latin Vulgate was translated. And we can get *back* to the Aramaic that the Lord Jesus himself would have used.

It is an exciting discovery. It is a revolutionary discovery. It will be life-changing for many. It will re-ignite your faith. It will breathe life into your Bible study. It will energise your belief in the Holy Scriptures. *Yes, of course it matters!*

As Jesus says in John's gospel:

John 6:63; "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

If we want to have life, we need to read the Spirit-Word of Life itself. And what better version to base our life and our faith on, than the *Aramaic* New Testament?

It is to the Aramaic New Testament that we must look, therefore, if we want to find the earliest, original, and most authentic form of the New Testament text. That is what the external evidence suggests.

But when we come to examine the Aramaic New Testament *itself*, and systematically compare it with the Greek New Testament, that is when things get really exciting. Over and over again, the internal

evidence demonstrates that the Aramaic New Testament is the original, from which the Greek New Testament was later translated.

At JesusSpokeAramaic.com, we provide several series of video lessons which can take you through this evidence, lesson by lesson and topic by topic. Workbooks and DVDs are also available.

Jesus spoke Aramaic, and so should you.

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The Coming Aramaic REVOLUTION

WE HAVE seen that Aramaic is the cultural background of the New Testament. Aramaic is the language that the Jews used in the 1st century A.D. History and archaeology together attest to the importance of Aramaic. It was the language of Israel – “our own language”, as Josephus describes it. It was the language used by Judaism for a wide variety of Holy Writings – Aramaic prayers, the Talmud, the Zohar, and much more. Aramaic was the language that Jesus and his disciples preached in. It is to Aramaic, therefore, that we must turn if we wish to understand and appreciate the culture into which the New Testament writings were given.

But to make it even more exciting, we have seen that there is a version of the New Testament written in Aramaic. Many people in the West are not even aware of it, yet the Aramaic New Testament has stood unchanged for two thousand years. It dates right back to the 1st century A.D., as early as it is possible to get. It has been preserved intact, down through the centuries, across countries and continents, across peoples unrelated to each other – all believing it to be the inspired Word of God, handed down to them by the blessed apostles themselves.

But as if all that was not enough, the Aramaic New Testament is alive and well in the form of hundreds of original hand-written manuscripts, in national libraries around the world. Lest anyone should argue that the Aramaic New Testament which we have today may somehow be different to the ancient version preserved for centuries, the Aramaic New Testament has dated copies going back

to at least the 5th century A.D. Miraculously, copies of the Aramaic New Testament have been preserved intact, in excellent condition, and going back at least as far back in time as the very oldest of the Greek New Testament manuscripts – just as ancient as the controversial Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.

Over the coming months and years, these Aramaic New Testaments – literally hundreds of them exist – will be brought to light for all the world to see. It will be a profound experience, at least as historically important as the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls or the discovery of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.

And the world, especially the Western world, will learn more about the treasures of the Aramaic New Testament and what it has to offer. Aramaic is the world into which the New Testament was born, and it deserves to be understood better, and to become a mainstream part of Biblical studies, and New Testament studies in particular.

So what is “The Coming Aramaic Revolution”?

At present, as we have seen in the chapter *Why Doesn't EVERYONE Know This?*, Aramaic is massively under-represented in all levels of Bible studies, from the grass-roots level (ordinary Christians) right through to the top levels of academia, with all manner of seminaries, churches and colleges in between.

Yet Aramaic is an almost untapped source of Bible knowledge. It is like a fountain of life that nobody in the West drinks from. It is a rich cultural heritage that is largely ignored. It is as if the words of Jesus have been abandoned, forgotten, despised, cast aside, and trodden underfoot.

With the riches of Aramaic and what it has to offer, that situation is unsustainable. And when a situation *can't* be sustained, it *won't* be sustained.

It is like the thick walls of a dam, holding back the floodwaters, when the dam starts to break. At first it is only a small trickle of water as cracks start to appear in the dam. Soon other trickles of water start to appear. Then more trickles. Then some of the trickles of water start to grow. And other trickles appear and they start to grow.

Before long, unexpectedly, without any warning, the dam starts to

break. The weight of water is too much for it. The walls are swept away and the floodwaters break forth.

Much the same is about to happen in the world of New Testament studies. Christians are starting to wake up to Aramaic and what it offers. At first there is a trickle of evidence, a lone voice in the wilderness. Then another trickle and another voice. Like a flock of birds all flying in formation in one direction, slowly one bird changes direction, then another, then another, until the entire flock swoops down and flies somewhere else.

There is a tsunami of evidence behind the Aramaic New Testament. It has absolutely impeccable credentials. It offers everything a Bible believer could ever want. That tsunami of evidence is about to break into the Christian world, into the New Testament world, and the walls of unbelief will be swept away.

That is what the coming Aramaic Revolution is about. It is when people wake up to what Aramaic has to offer. A few at first, then a few more, until soon Aramaic will become mainstream. That will be a revolution worthy of the name. It is a shift in consciousness that needs to happen, and happen it will.

The Aramaic Revolution has already started. The first shots have been fired. The tsunami is coming. The weight of evidence is on its way.

The Aramaic New Testament will regain its former place, as it did in the 1st century A.D., as the original, authentic, New Testament which proceeded forth from Jesus and the blessed apostles themselves.

You, too, can be part of the Aramaic Revolution. Tell everyone about Aramaic. Like the man who found treasure in a field and sold everything he had to buy that field and obtain the treasure, tell others about the Aramaic New Testament. Like the pearl of great price, investigate for yourself what Aramaic has to offer.

When you study Aramaic and learn about the Aramaic New Testament, you will find that your heart has come home.

Your life will change more than you can possibly imagine.

The Aramaic Revolution is on its way. You can't stop it. Open your heart and embrace it with open arms. It is the LORD's will for His

Holy Word to be read by all.

Yeah, LORD, let Thy will be done.

If you want to find out more about Aramaic, be sure to visit the website:

<http://JesusSpokeAramaic.com>

No matter what your level of interest is – from the curious to the advanced – this website is the best place to start your journey into Aramaic and what it offers.

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THANK YOU for buying this book! To express my gratitude for reading this book, I would like to give you, entirely free of charge, four bonuses that will help you to explore Aramaic, the Aramaic New Testament, and what they have to offer.

To find out what is on offer, go to the website:

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Enter your email address to sign up for the free bonuses, and you will be sent a series of emails telling you how to download and obtain the bonuses. The bonuses are my free gift to you as a “thank you” for buying this book!

Here is what you will get for signing up:

- ✓ A link to a special video that tells you more about this book, the story of Aramaic, and what Aramaic offers to Bible believers.
- ✓ Free MP3 recordings of every chapter of this book narrated, so that you can listen to the book spoken to you in your leisure time.
- ✓ Links to allow you to watch a number of video lessons that explore aspects of this book further. Some of these videos are normally only available to paid subscribers of the website JesusSpokeAramaic.com – but you can watch them free, without subscribing.
- ✓ A free PDF download of the entire book, allowing you to read it on your computer, iPad, phone and so on.

Visit JesusSpokeAramaic.com

IF YOU want to know more about Aramaic and why you should learn it, and if you want to discover the Aramaic Bible and learn why Aramaic is revolutionizing and transforming the study of the Old and New Testaments, then be sure to visit **JesusSpokeAramaic.com**.

Go to the website and discover all the amazing reasons why YOU should subscribe to Jesus Spoke Aramaic TODAY!

Aramaic was the language of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, and is Judaism's second Holy Language, alongside Hebrew. The Aramaic language became dominant amongst Jews after the Babylonian exile, and was spoken by Jesus and the disciples. By learning the Aramaic language and studying the Aramaic Bible, you will get back to more authentic and original roots of both the Old and New Testaments.

Let **Jesus Spoke Aramaic** be your guide as you navigate the fascinating world of the Aramaic language, the Aramaic Bible, and better understand the Holy Scriptures.

“My Son, let not the Aramaic be lightly esteemed by you as the Holy One, blessed be He, has seen fit to give it voice in the Torah and the Prophets and the Writings”

(Palestinian Talmud, Sotah 7:2)

As a subscriber to Jesus Spoke Aramaic, you will benefit from:

- ✔ Unrestricted access to all of our lessons and resources about the Aramaic Old and New Testaments, which are growing all the time.
- ✔ Fascinating audio-visual lessons on the Aramaic Bible, giving you an exciting, fun and vibrant way to learn about the Aramaic language down through the centuries.

- ✔ Amazing lessons on the History & Background of the Aramaic language, to help you understand the significance and importance of the Aramaic Old and New Testaments.
- ✔ Step-by-step videos lessons that literally walk you through every letter of the Aramaic alphabet in the Ashuri, Estrangela and Serta scripts, showing you how to write each letter in turn, and how to pronounce it.
- ✔ Lessons on the Aramaic Bible suitable for all stages from beginner, intermediate to advanced Aramaic studies.
- ✔ Discover the amazing puns, plays on words and poetry of the Aramaic New Testament, and find out why the Aramaic New Testament resolves many problems, variant readings and inconsistencies in the Greek New Testament.
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- ✔ Participate in our polls and online quizzes, to test your growing understanding of the Aramaic language and the Aramaic Bible.
- ✔ Exclusive Bonus material about Aramaic and the Bible, including several full-color PDF Hebrew Old Testaments, our special Partner Offers, and our unique collection of Rare and Out-of-Print Aramaic books – providing you with all the tools, grammars, lexicons and dictionaries you will ever need to study Aramaic!

“Did you know that Aramaic is still spoken by communities throughout the Middle East and the diaspora today?”

As well as offering literally hundreds of step-by-step video lessons, be sure to visit the Jesus Spoke Aramaic website to see what else we offer. We have:

- ▶ A whole range of video lessons on DVD to accompany the

online lessons.

- ▶ Aramaic Study Guides.
- ▶ Aramaic Workbooks, which accompany the DVDs and video lessons, or work stand-alone for individual study at home or in groups.
- ▶ Books about Aramaic.
- ▶ Audio books on CD.
- ▶ Exclusive Aramaic and Hebrew Bibles, available nowhere else.

Jesus Spoke Aramaic will further your knowledge of the Aramaic language and the Aramaic Bible through our exciting video lessons, and help you get back to true, original and authentic Aramaic Biblical roots.

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May God bless you as you study His Inspired Word.

Ewan MacLeod, B.Sc. Hons, M.Sc.

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EWAN MACLEOD, B.Sc.Hons, M.Sc.

Ewan is an experienced Bible student who has studied the Holy Scriptures intensely since being baptised about 25 years ago, taking a special interest in the original languages of Scripture (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) as well as old Bibles and Bible Manuscripts. Ewan is an authority on Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as an author, international Bible speaker, a Bible collector and a Bible historian. He believes that through studying His Word in its original languages, we draw closer to God Himself. Ewan's calling is to restore people's faith in the Holy Scriptures, and to bring Aramaic to the world...

"I recommend that Christians read Ewan's book and find out what Aramaic offers. This book is an excellent introduction to the subject. It shows the importance of Aramaic and the Aramaic background to the Bible. Aramaic is so important, yet so few people know about it."

-Tim Johnson, **Legacy Worldwide, Atlanta, USA**

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