The Given Name of our Messiah
The Controversy over "Yeshua" vs. "Yahshua"

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Tim Hegg

Recently a lengthy email was forwarded to me in which the author of the email was giving numerous reasons why the name "Yeshua" (יֵשׁוּעַ) was a deliberately "shortened" form of the original "Yahshua" (supposedly יָהְשֻׁעַ) by those who wanted to remove any reference to Yah (יָה) in the name of Yeshua. Note one of the opening statements in the email:

> We see above that the full "sentence name" is יהושע notice the name contains the name of YAH יהו followed by the Hebrew שע word SHUA "salvation" i.e. YAHSHUA. The "shortened" form Yeshua ישוע "no longer expresses Yahuah's name clearly, it is passive voice putting the emphasis on "shua" and means "he saves".

It's obvious that the author of this email does not know biblical Hebrew. First, the Name "Yah" is spelled everywhere in the Tanach as יָה or יָּה, but never יְהוּ with the letter *vav* as the final letter of the Name and without a vowel. In that regard, there is only one letter of the Hebrew *alephbet* which can appear within a word without an accompanying vowel, and that letter is *Aleph* (א) not *vav* (ו). Wherever the letter *vav* (ו) is found, it must either have an accompanying vowel (if the *vav* is acting as a consonant) or be "pointed" with a diacritic in order to mark it as a vowel, i.e., either *shuruq* (וּ) or *cholem-vav* (וֹ).

Moreover, when the theophoric Name יָה (*Yah*) is part of a personal name, the second letter (ה) always has *cholem-vav* (וֹ) as its vowel. Note that in the Tanach there are only two proper nouns which incorporate the divine Name יָה as part of the name.

- יְהוֹשׁוּעַ / יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, *YeHôShûa'* / *YeHôShua'*. These are two different ways of spelling the proper noun "Joshua," since biblical Hebrew uses either the *qibbutz* or the *shuruq* to represent the "u" vowel in his name.
- The proper noun *Jehoshabeath* (2Chron 22:11), יְהוֹשַׁבְעַת, *YeHôShaBe'āT*, is likewise spelled with the ה having the *cholem-vav* vowel.

There is also a form of the verb יָשַׁע, *YāSha'*, "to rescue, save" which might appear to include the divine Name יָה (*Yāh*) but actually does not. Twice the verb יָשַׁע appears in the 3rd masc. singular hifil imperfect in the form יְהוֹשִׁיעַ, *YᵉHôShîa'*, "he saves," i.e., "He causes someone to be saved" (1Sam 17:47; Ps 116:6). Fabry considers this spelling in Ps 116:6 to be "an aramaism" and that of 1Sam 17:47 as "unexplained" or a "corrupt text."[1] But more than likely, the spelling with the added ה is simply a fully-written form (see the MP note on 1Sam 17:47, ב ומל, "twice, *and malē'*" meaning "found twice, *plene* = fully written").

Second, the name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) is not "a passive voice" verbal form. Even the author of the email quoted above translates it as an active form, "he saves." A passive voice would yield "he is saved" or "he was saved" or "he will be saved."

Apparently, it is being taught that the name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) is a truncated or shortened form of "YAHSHUA," a "name" that never appears in the Tanach. Perhaps those who are teaching this are saying that Yeshua is a shortened form of "Joshua," i.e., יְהוֹשֻׁעַ *YeHôShua'*. In reality, there are four different spellings of the name "Joshua" in the Tanach:

1. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, *YᵉHôShua'* – the שׁ having the vowel *qibbutz* (found 194x)
2. יְהוֹשׁוּעַ, *YᵉHôShûa'* – the שׁ having the vowel *shuruq* (found 2x)
3. יהוֹשֻׁעַ, *YHôShua'* – in which the initial letter *yod* is without *sheva*. This occurs only when the conjunction ו or a preposition is attached to the word, in which case the prefixed particle combines with the *yod* to form the long vowel *chiriq-yod*. Examples are: וִיהוֹשֻׁעַ *VîHôShua'* (17x); לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ, *LîHôShua'* (4x); and בִּיהוֹשֻׁעַ, *BîHôShua'* (1x)
4. יֵשׁוּעַ, *YēShûa'* – It may surprise people to know that the name "Joshua" is one time spelled יֵשׁוּעַ, *YēShûa'*, i.e., "Yeshua" in the Tanach. This is in Neh 8:17 where the Hebrew text has יֵשׁוּעַ בִּן־נוּן (*YēShûa' bin Nûn*), "Joshua the son of Nun." As

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1   יֶשַׁע in TDOT, 6.447.

Foerster notes:

> Joshua the son of Nun is יְהוֹשֻׁעַ in Ex., Nu., Dt., Jos., Ju., 1 K. 16:34, 1 Ch. 7:27 and the Heb. of Sir. 46:1, but יֵשׁוּעַ in Neh. 8:17. The high-priest Joshua, the son of Josedech, who returned with Zerubbabel from exile, is always called יְהוֹשֻׁעַ in Hag. and Zech. and always יֵשׁוּעַ in Ezr. and Neh. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ is the name of two men in 1 S. 6:14, 18; 2 K. 23:8, while 2 Ch. 31:15 calls a Levite under Hezekiah יֵשׁוּעַ, and this form of the name is also found in post-exilic priestly and Levitical families and in the references to their return from exile under Zerubbabel and Joshua. The full form thus prevails up to c. 500, and after that (up to 1 Ch. 7:27 and Sir. 46:1) the shorter.[2]

We see, then, that this shortened form of the more full name *YeHôShua'* is the result of a shift of pronunciation which occurred following the return of the exiles from Babylon. It was not theologically motivated nor the work of the much later emerging Christian Church but was the natural result of how the Hebrew language evolved during and following the Babylonian exile in terms of various accents and shifts in the pronunciation of vowels. This shift in pronunciation is likewise witnessed by the Lxx which was translated from the Hebrew text beginning in the 3rd Century BCE, for everywhere the name "Joshua" (*YeHôShua' / YeHôShûa'*) is found in the Tanach, it is transliterated into the Greek as Ἰησοῦς, *Yēsous*, with its inflected forms as Ἰησοῦ, genitive;[3] Ἰησοῖ, dative (only in Ex, Deut, and Josh) or Ἰησοῦ (elsewhere); Ἰησοῦν, accusative; Ἰησοῦ, vocative. This corroborates the findings of Foerster (in *TDNT*) that after the return of the exiles, the pronunciation of the name "Joshua," was regularly pronounced as *Yeshua*.[4] Had the Lxx translators wanted to transliterate the more ancient pronunciation *YeHôShua'* (with internal long-"o" vowel), theoretically they could have written it as Ἰησωσοῦ (*Yē-ō-sou*) with the letter *omega* to represent the long "o" sound of the *cholem-vav.*

Moreover, it is obvious why the Greek Lxx transliterated the Hebrew name *YeHôShua' / YeHôShûa* as they did, in its post-exilic pronunciation as "Yeshua." For in the Greek alphabet, there is no letter that has the sound of the Hebrew letter י (*yod*, equivalent to our English letter "y") and no letter that has the sound of the Hebrew letter ה (*hey*, equivalent to our English letter "h"). The only time that Greek has the spirantize "h" sound (as in the "h" of the English word "hat") is if a word begins with an initial vowel and has the "rough breathing" diacritical marking on that initial vowel. For example, note the name Ἄννα, where the initial *alpha* has the rough breathing mark, giving the pronunciation of the name as "Hanna" (Lk 2:36). Since the Hebrew name *YeHôShua* has the spirantized "h" sound in the middle of the word, there was no way for the Greek to transliterate this phenomenon since the rough breathing diacritic giving the "h" sound can only be on the first letter of a word when that letter is a vowel, not a consonant.

Moreover, there is no letter combination in Greek that has the sound of the Hebrew letter שׁ (*sheen*), equivalent to our consonant-blend "sh" in English. With these limitations, the best the Greek could approximate the Hebrew *Yēshua* was to use the diphthong ἰη (*iota-eita*) to form the "y" sound (ee-ay), and then to use the σ (*sigma*), which is equivalent to English "s," to approximate the "sh" sound, and finally the diphthong ου (*omega-upsilon*) to give the "oo" sound of the Hebrew vowel *shuruq* or *qibbutz*. Finally, since Greek is an inflected language, meaning that nouns receive different endings to identify their gender as well as their function within the clause or sentence, the final "a" vowel in the name "Yeshua" would have been confusing since most proper nouns ending in α (*alpha*) are feminine in gender, and thus a *sigma* was added to the diphthong ου (ou), yielding Ἰησοῦς (*Yēsous*) to form the nominative masculine proper noun.

There are those who are teaching that the final letters of the Greek name Ἰησοῦς, *Yēsous,* i.e., σοῦς (*sous*), were used in order to give honor to the pagan god "Zeus." For example, some one who goes by the name Rav Sha'ul writes:

> The next point I want to make concerning the name Jesus is that the name of the Messiah is a sentence name to convey the idea "Yahuah is salvation". The Greek translators failed this test. Instead of translating the "intent" of the name using the Latin word for salvation, they translated (or attempted to translate) each character and lost the intent all together. The reality is they used "sous' to give glory to Zeus as was their common practice in naming people and places [in] the Greek and Roman culture.[5]

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2 Foester, Ἰησοῦς in *TDNT*, 3.284.
3 One time written ἰησοῦς as genitive, 2Chron 31:15.
4 Foerster, Ἰησοῦς in *TDNT*, 3.285.
5 A quote from Rav Sha'ul, *The Yahushaic Covenant* Volume 1, copied from http://www.sabbathcovenant.com/newdoctrine/jesus_not_true.htm on 2/28/2019.

This very statement and the information it purports, is often heard among those who believe the name "Yeshua" was formulated in order to deny the deity of Yeshua, i.e., to remove the divine name יָהּ (Yah) from the name of our Messiah. But not only is this idea entirely unfounded, it likewise gives evidence that the author and those who may follow this line of argumentation have no working knowledge of the Greek language.

As noted above, the Greek language is inflected, meaning words receive different prefixes, infixes, and suffixes depending on whether the word is a verb or a noun, and how it functions within a sentence. Important for our topic is the obvious fact that a noun ending in the diphthong ου (ou) is generally understood as being a masculine noun in the genitive case. This is why the *sigma* (ς) was added as the final letter to the name Ἰησοῦ (*Yēsou*) yielding Ἰησοῦς (*Yēsous*), so that it could be properly inflected to correspond to its use in a given sentence. It was impossible to leave the name as Ἰησοῦ (*Yēsou*) because this is the common genitive form. The *sigma* was added in order to conform the transliterated name to proper Greek grammar, Ἰησοῦς (*Yēsous*) being the nominative form from which the other inflected forms (genitive, accusative, dative, vocative) would be declined. And Greek scholars and grammarians affirm this.

> The Lxx retained the later form יֵשׁוּעַ, and made it declinable by adding a nominative ς.[6]

> We must not omit mention of the "Mixed Declension," which arose because of its convenience, especially for foreign names. The stem ends in a long vowel or diphthong, which receives –ς for nom. and –ν for acc., remaining unchanged in voc., gen. and dat. sing. Ἰησοῦς is the most conspicuous of many NT exx.[7]

Thus, to suggest that the Greek transliteration of the name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) in the form Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsous*) was intentionally altered from *Yēsou* to *Yēsous* in order to include σοῦς (*sous*) in honor of the pagan deity "Zeus" shows an ignorance of the manner in which Koine Greek functions, and is a complete fabrication lacking any historical or grammatical foundation.

One only needs to look at how the Lxx translates the proper noun "Joshua" and see how the Septuagint translators rendered this name long before the emerging of the Christian Church in the late 1st Century CE and following. In fact, the Lxx transliterates the Hebrew name "Joshua" (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, *Yᵉhôshua'*) as Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsous*) 169 times and never by any other spelling or transliteration. Given the long history of the Greek transliteration for the name "*Yᵉhôshua'*" in the Lxx, it is clear why the three times we find the name "Joshua" in the Apostolic Scriptures it is spelled the same way, Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsous*). This is additional confirmation that the Hebrew name *Yᵉhôshua'* meaning "Yah saves" or "Yah brings salvation" was pronounced "Yeshua" in the post-exilic era (after 500 BCE) and thus transliterated into Greek as "*Iēsous*."

the son of **Joshua**, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, (Lk 3:29)	Luke 3:29 τοῦ Ἰησοῦ [genitive] τοῦ Ἐλιέζερ τοῦ Ἰωρὶμ τοῦ Μαθθὰτ τοῦ Λευὶ (Lk 3:29)
And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with **Joshua** upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David. (Acts 7:45)	ἣν καὶ εἰσήγαγον διαδεξάμενοι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν μετὰ Ἰησοῦ [genitive] ἐν τῇ κατασχέσει τῶν ἐθνῶν, ὧν ἐξῶσεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ προσώπου τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν ἕως τῶν ἡμερῶν Δαυίδ, (Acts 7:45)
For if **Joshua** had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. (Heb 4:8)	Heb. 4:8 εἰ γὰρ αὐτοὺς Ἰησοῦς [nominative] κατέπαυσεν, οὐκ ἂν περὶ ἄλλης ἐλάλει μετὰ ταῦτα ἡμέρας. (Heb 4:8)

Those who, against all sound reason and data, insist that the name "Yeshua" unwittingly preserves honor to the pagan deity Zeus likewise teach that this was "common practice in naming people and places [in] the Greek and Roman culture."[8] But this statement has no basis whatsoever in history nor in the realm of established linguistics.

The first important fact to realize is that just because a cluster of consonants and vowels "sound like" another word

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6 Foerster, " Ἰησοῦς," *TDNT*, 3.284.
7 Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 4 vols. (T & T Clark, 1908), 1.49.
8 See the quote on p. 2 above.

does not indicate that the "sound-alike" cluster of letters is derived from or has a connection to the word or name that shares a similar "sound." Just because the final syllable of the Greek name Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsous*), i.e., *sous*, resembles the English pronunciation of "Zeus" means nothing. This is because it is well known from a basic linguistic perspective that words which sound alike do not necessary have any etymological connection. Consider the English words "real" and "reel" as an obvious example. They have exactly the same "sound" but do not share a common origin or meaning.

But more importantly is this: the pronunciation "Zoos" is an English pronunciation but not the way the name was pronounced in ancient Greece. The Greek of the Graeco-Roman times pronounced the name Zeus as "zee-oos," the two vowels *epsilon* and *upsilon* being each pronounced and not blended as our English "oo". So not only is it wrong to think "sound-alike" clusters of letters indicate a common origin, in the case of *Iēsous* compared with *Zeus*, there is no "sound alike" except in the modern English pronunciation of the name Zeus.

And secondly, even a more obvious reason why the claim that *Iēsous* contains a reference to Zeus is absolutely wrong is the fact that when names were compounded with reference to the pagan god Zeus, the name used was Δῐο, *Dio* not ζευς (*zeus*). According to the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, the theophoric names based upon the god Zeus, used the Greek root *Dio*. Thus, Dio-genes, Dio-geneia, Dio-dotos, Dio-doros, Dio-philos, Dio-kles, Dio-kleia etc.[9] Names that were compounded with reference to Zeus did not utilize the name "Zeus" but rather "Dio," which means "sprung from Zeus or the gods" and "godlike."[10]

This is corroborated by the two times we find a reference to the pagan deity Zeus in the Apostolic Scriptures, i.e., Acts 14:12–13.

> And they began calling Barnabas, <u>Zeus</u>, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of <u>Zeus</u>, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. (Acts 14:12–13)

Note carefully the Greek text which stands behind the English translation, where the Greek word translated "Zeus" is underlined below, and is the Greek name <u>Δία</u> (*Dia*) in the accusative case, and Διὸς (*Dios*) in the nominative case, once again proving that Zeus was regularly referred to as *Dios*, the name imbedded in personal or proper nouns in honor of the pagan deity.

> ἐκάλουν τε τὸν Βαρναβᾶν <u>Δία</u> [*Dia*], τὸν δὲ Παῦλον Ἑρμῆν, ἐπειδὴ αὐτὸς ἦν ὁ ἡγούμενος τοῦ λόγου. ὅ τε ἱερεὺς τοῦ <u>Διὸς</u> [*Dios*] τοῦ ὄντος πρὸ τῆς πόλεως ταύρους καὶ στέμματα ἐπὶ τοὺς πυλῶνας ἐνέγκας σὺν τοῖς ὄχλοις ἤθελεν θύειν. (Acts 14:12–13)

Therefore, those who believe and teach that it was the "common practice in naming people and places [in] the Greek and Roman culture" to imbed "*sous*" into the name in order to honor the pagan god Zeus, are entirely mistaken and believing something that so-called teachers have fabricated from their own imaginative minds.

Along the same lines, the fact that "Rav Sha'ul's" website has the following statement also makes it clear that he is leading people astray by his failure to do honest research:

> As a matter of fact, the name 'Jesus' did not even exist in the English language 400 years ago—as evidenced by the fact that it was not recorded in the original 1611 King James Bible.

The reality is that there is not one letter "J" in the entire 1611 King James Bible and thus all names now spelled with a "J" were spelled with an "I" when the 1611 KJV was printed. For example, "John" is spelled "Iohn," "James" is spelled "Iames," and "Jonah" is spelled "Ionah." This is also true with common English words spelled with "J". For example, the word "justified" as in Rom 5:1 is spelled "iustified." The reason is obvious and well known: the letter "J" did not enter the English language as a universally accepted letter until some time around 1635, well after the 1611 KJV was printed. But, of course, the name "Iesus" is found 941 times in the 1611 KJV! So once again this argument against the name "Yeshua"

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9   For the online reference to the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, produced by Oxford University, see http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/names/meaning.html.

10 Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1940), p. 432.

and the Greek *Iēsous* is entirely without substance.

   Finally, "Rav Sha'ul," in his attempts to persuade people of his self-made teaching, presents his argument as though based upon numbers of scholarly works. But if one consults the works he marshals to verify his claims, it becomes immediately obvious that he has either misunderstood the source he quotes, or has taken only a snippet of the article and not reckoned with the full context. For example, "Rav Sha'ul" quotes the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*[11] from the entry "Ἰησοῦς" (*Iēsous*) as follows:[12]

------------------------------------- **copied from the website: http://www.sabbathcovenant.com** -------------------------------

As a matter of fact, the name 'Jesus' did not even exist in the English language 400 years ago—as evidenced by the fact that it was not recorded in the original 1611 King James Bible. But let's dissect that name anyway as that has come to be the accepted name of the Messiah today we need to address it.

Notice above the last underlined sentence admits that the shortened form Yehshua no longer expresses the "intent" of the name that "Yahuah is Salvation". Yeshua means "he saves" and the emphasis is on salvation instead of the saviour Yahuah. We see above that the full "sentence name" is יהושע notice the name contains the name of YAH יהו followed by the Hebrew שע word SHUA "salvation" i.e. YAHSHUA. The "shortened" form Yeshua ישוע "no longer expresses Yahuah's name clearly, it is passive voice putting the emphasis on "shua" and means "he saves".

The Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament, Kittel and Bromiley, Volume 3, page 290 gives us clear insight into the pagan origins of the name "Jesus"....

   But the "quote" from *TDNT* is far from complete and is mis-interpreted. The extracted snippet from p. 289 of the article is not completely accurate. In the final section of the quote (the image above), some of the words are changed when compared to what is actually written in *TDNT* itself. "Rav Sha'ul" has put some of his own words in the "quote." Here is what *TDNT* actually has:

The full form יְהוֹשֻׁעַ is a sentence name,[36] in which the subject comes first and represents a from of the divine name יהוה, and in which the verb is a subsidiary form of the verb ישע which is also found in names like אֱלִישׁוּעַ אֲבִישׁוּעַ and מַלְכִּישׁוּעַ, and which means "to help." Philo's explanation, <u>while not wholly accurate</u>, recognises the two parts (Mut. Nom., 121) : Ἰησοῦς σωτηρία κυρίου. More exact is the interpretation in a pap. of the 3rd to 4th cent. A.D. : Ἰησοῦς Ἰω σωτηρία.[37] The Rabbis, too, were aware of the two parts of the name, Nu. r., 16 on 13:2 (Str.-B., I, 64) : הושע is called יהושע (Nu. 13:6), i.e., י is added, because in view of the wickedness of the spies Moses said: יה יושיעך מן הדור הזה : The י thus indicates the tetragrammaton (or its abbreviation יה). The shortened form יֵשׁוּעַ no longer expresses

11 Gerhard Kittel, ed. *TDNT*, 10 vols. (Eerdmans, 1965), p. 289.

the theophoric element clearly, directing attention simply to the verb יש׳, cf., Sir. 46:1 with reference to Joshua: ὃς ἐγένετο κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ μέγας ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ. [who became great according to his name regarding salvation of his chosen ones.] (English translation added: not actually in the text of *TDNT*)

Compare the underlined words to the "quote" in "Rav Sha'ul's" website and note that he conveniently left out the fact that Foerster does not agree with Philo's explanation. Further, he inserts "Yahweh's Name" where the actual text of *TDNT* has "the theophoric element."

Moreover, "Rav Sha'ul" also quotes from p. 290 of the *TDNT* article (itself a quote from another author, H. Lamer), indicating that the Greek "Jesu" is a masculine form of Ἰασώ, (*Iasō*) the goddess of salvation. But what "Rav Sha'ul" fails to let the reader know is that following the quote from Lamer, Foerster discounts this conclusion. So "Ra Sha'ul" leaves the reader thinking that the author of the *TDNT* article on Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsous*) agrees with Lamer which is just the opposite of what Foerster actually writes. Here's Foerster's response, the part "Rav Sha'ul" hides from his readers.

> But assimilation to Gk. mythology in the Greek forms of Jewish names leads us into Hellenised Jewish circles. i.e., into circles which approximate culturally, socially and religiously to Hellenism, and which do not participate in the early Christian mission. In any case, the formation of Ἰησοῦς for יֵשׁוּעַ is centuries older than the Christian period. Early Christianity simply adopts the current Gk. form of the Hebrew name יֵשׁוּעַ. It does this quite naturally and with no deliberate policy of choosing related and intelligible Gk. names after the manner of small Hellenising groups.[13]

This is just one example of how "Rav Sha'ul" tries to make his argument solid by quoting from scholarly sources and selecting only snippets that appear to support his conclusions and hiding the parts that obviously discount his position. This is not only unscholarly but it is deceptive.

Conclusion

The name given to our Messiah was "Yeshua" in accordance with the divine word given to Yoseph.

> "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name *Iēsous* [Yeshua], for He will save His people from their sins."
> τέξεται δὲ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν· αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν.

Note the emphatic use of the pronoun in the Greek (underlined above). "You shall call His name Yeshua, for He Himself with save His people from their sins." The Name Yeshua means "He will save" and this in itself shows that Yeshua is one with YHVH, and that He Himself will save sinners, for He and the Father are one (John 10:30).

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13 Foester, "Ἰησοῦς" in *TDNT*, p. 290.