

When studying the Bible, we find that three primary languages were used in its composition: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

- Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the sacred language of the Israelites.
- A few sections—especially in the books of Ezra and Daniel—were written in Aramaic (Ezra 4:8–6:18; Daniel 2:4–7:28).
- The New Testament was originally written in Greek, the common international language of the time, though it contains occasional Aramaic expressions.

This shows that while Aramaic is present in the Bible, it plays a supporting rather than dominant role.

The Origin and Spread of Aramaic

Aramaic originated with the Arameans, an ancient Semitic people. Their language spread widely and became a lingua franca (common language) across much of the ancient Near East, including what is now Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey.

Aramaic became especially dominant during the time of the Assyrian and Persian empires (cf. 2 Kings 18:26; Ezra 4:7). It was adopted in governmental and everyday use across many regions.

By the first century A.D., Aramaic was the spoken language of most Jews in Galilee and Judea, including Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. Hebrew remained the language of Scripture and synagogue worship, but Aramaic was the heart language of the people.

Did Jesus Speak Aramaic?

Yes—Jesus spoke Aramaic as His primary language. He likely also understood Hebrew (for religious purposes, such as reading the Torah—Luke 4:16–20) and perhaps Greek (useful for interaction with Roman authorities and Gentiles).

This is affirmed by the New Testament, where several Aramaic phrases are preserved and quoted directly:

- Mark 5:41 : “He took her by the hand and said to her, *‘Talitha koum!’* (which means ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’).”
- Mark 7:34: “He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, *‘Ephphatha!’* (which means ‘Be opened!’).”
- Mark 15:34: “And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’* (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)”

Other notable Aramaic or Hebrew-Aramaic words include:

- “Hosanna” (Matthew 21:9) – Meaning “save now” or “save, we pray.”
- “Abba” (Mark 14:36) – A deeply personal term for father, showing Jesus’ intimate relationship with God.

Why Did Jesus Use Aramaic?

It’s important to note that the power was not in the language, but in the Spirit-filled life of Jesus.

Jesus used Aramaic in some specific moments, not because it was more spiritual than Hebrew or Greek, but because He lived in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

John 5:19: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing...”

This means that when Jesus healed, taught, or prayed, He wasn’t following a fixed formula—He was following the Spirit. Sometimes this involved using Aramaic, other times touching people, or using mud, or speaking a word.

His methods varied, but His dependence on the Holy Spirit never changed.

Romans 8:14: “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”

Likewise, as believers today, we are called not to imitate the methods, but to follow the Spirit who led Jesus. Whether we pray with understanding, with songs, with tears, or in tongues—what matters is being led by God’s Spirit.

This teaches us an important principle: God does not work through formulas but through relationship.

Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty.

Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit, and so should we. When we allow ourselves to be filled and led by the Spirit, He will move

through us in different ways—each according to His perfect will.

1 Corinthians 12:11: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Yes, Jesus spoke Aramaic, and some of His most powerful words were spoken in that language. But the true power was not in the Aramaic itself—it was in His perfect union with the Holy Spirit.

As followers of Christ, we are called to live the same way: led, filled, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, not tied to rituals or formulas, but open to the living God.

Galatians 5:25: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

May the Lord bless you as you seek to walk by the Spirit—just as Jesus did.

What Is Aramaic, and Did Jesus Speak It?

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