

“Who Is The True Jew?”

Romans 2:17-29

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Teaching Aim: To realize physical birth into a certain ethnic or religious group is no reason for boasting, everyone is responsible for his or her own sin before a Holy God and find themselves in desperate need for Jesus to be their Savior. To recognize *“the true Jew”* is not one who is merely born into a Jewish family and circumcised outwardly in the flesh; the true Jew is one who is *“circumcised in the heart”* by the Holy Spirit and receives Jesus as his or her Messiah.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Depending on one’s heritage for salvation (Rom. 2:17-20)

1. In **verse 17**, Paul begins by addressing the Jewish claim of special privilege merely because of their national heritage and possession of God’s law. Is God under obligation to bless someone simply because he or she is born into a particular family, and that family possesses a copy of the Scriptures? How does this illustration relate to many Christian families today? Should people expect religious privilege when they have no genuine love for God or His Word?
2. According to **verse 18**, what special information did the Roman Jews possess that other Romans did not? Jewish rabbis claim there are 613 laws in the Hebrew Scriptures. It’s one thing to know the Word of God but quite another to live it. Why do you think it was so difficult for the Jews (or anyone else for that matter) to keep the entire law? (See **Jam. 2:10; Rom. 3:23**) What should the law of God be for believers today? (See **Psa. 119:105**) What did D.L. Moody mean when he said, *“Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather?”*
3. According to **verses 19 & 20**, how did the Jews feel about their possession of Sacred Scripture? How did the Roman Jews look upon those who did not have the law (**vs. 20**)? As a Christian believer, how do you look upon unbelievers in your community today? How should the Christian look at unbelievers? (See **Rom. 10:14-17**)

Part II: Having possession of the Law, but not living by its principles (Rom. 2:21-24)

1. Starting with **verse 21**, Paul began using a series of questions to challenge his readers. What two challenges did Paul make to His readers in **verse 21**? How do these challenges relate to the modern Christian? What is the number one charge that we hear against Christians today? Why? What are some ways Christians steal from others and may not even realize it?
2. What is “*adultery*” (**vs. 22**)? (See Dictionary) Is it possible to commit adultery with someone without ever touching him or her? If so, how? (See **Matt. 5:27-28**) In light of the teachings of Jesus in “*the Sermon on the Mount*,” have you ever been guilty of committing adultery, or perhaps even murdering someone in your heart? (See **Matt. 5:21-30**)
3. We don’t normally worship idols made of wood and stone these days. What are some “*modern idols*” that we find Americans placing above their relationship with God (**vs. 22**)? Have you ever been guilty of doing this in your own life? What is your greatest struggle spiritually?
4. Do people still rob temples today (**vs. 22**)? If so, how? Studies reveal that only 4% of Christians tithe. If this statistic holds true, that means that 96% don’t. Why do you think more Christians don’t give sacrificially to the work of the Lord? According to **Rom. 2:22**, are these Christians robbing God? (See **Mal. 3:8-10; 2 Cor. 9:7**)
5. Although the Jews in Rome boasted about their possession of the law, they were not living according to its standards (**vs. 23**). How do you think this affected the people to whom they demanded must follow the law? Did this make the Jews look like hypocrites? What can we learn about the law from the following verses: **Rom. 3:19-21; Gal. 3:24**?

6. What happened to the name of God because of these “*supposedly*” religious people who were disobeying God’s law (**vs. 24**)? What does the word “*blasphemy*” mean? (See Dictionary) Has there ever been a time in your life where you’ve blasphemed God? Have you ever used the Lord’s name in vain by using it in place of a swear word? What makes this such a serious offense? What should we do if we recall sinning this way in the past? (See **1 John 1:9**) In **verse 24**, Paul quotes **Isa. 52:5**. What is the background to **Isaiah 52:5** and how does it relate to **verse 24**? (See Commentaries)

7. Have you ever asked someone why they don’t go to church only to find out that they were turned off by the words or actions of a so-called Christian? What are some ways that the behavior of church goers can negatively affect the perception people have toward Christ and His church today?

Part III: The circumcision God desires is circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 2:25-29)

1. What makes “*circumcision*” so important to the Jewish people? (See **Gen. 17:10-14**) What does circumcision symbolize for the Jew? Does circumcision have the same meaning for Christians today as it does for the Jews? According to **verse 25**, when is the physical act of circumcision profitable? When is it not? (See **Jam. 2:10**)

2. How did Jesus sum up “*the righteous requirements of the law*” (**vs. 26**)? (See **Matt. 22:36-40**) Which group of people are often referred to as “*the uncircumcised*?” Towards what group of people did the Jews use the term “*uncircumcised*” in a derogatory way? Why? Is it possible for the Gentiles who have never heard the law of God, to live by some of its principles? If so, how? (See **Rom. 2:14-15**)

3. In what way will the “*physically uncircumcised*” judge the Jews (**vs. 27**)? According to **verse 27**, what advantage did the Jews have over the Gentiles? What is the meaning of the word “*transgression*” (**vs. 27b**)? (See Dictionary) How can our sin cross the line today?

4. What startling announcement did Paul make in **verse 28**? Why would this announcement rock the Jewish community? Are Paul's teachings here consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament? (See **Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:25-27**) "*Circumcision of the heart, in the Spirit*" is a reference to "*regeneration*," meaning the act of being "*born-again*." Why is regeneration so important to the Jews and Gentiles alike? (See **John 3:3-8; 1 Pet. 1:21-23**) Will simply obeying the law of God save anyone? (See **Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:10-12**) According to the Bible, who is our only hope for salvation? (See **John 3:16; Acts 4:12; 16:31**)
5. Paul uses a brilliant play on words in the last part of **verse 29**. The word "*Jew*" comes from the name "*Judah*." Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and is the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Judah is also the designation for the two southern tribes (Judah & Benjamin) which survived after the fall of the ten northern tribes to Assyria in 722 B.C. The name "*Judah*" became synonymous with "*Israel*" and means "*praise*." Eventually the two southern tribes fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. because of their continued disobedience. Those who returned from the Babylonian captivity 70 years later began to be referred to as "*Jews*." The "*true Jew*" is not one who is merely circumcised outwardly in the flesh, but one who is "*circumcised in the heart by the Holy Spirit*." The true Jew is more concerned with receiving praise from God than receiving praise from men. The Gentile Christians do not replace the nation of "*Israel*" in God's economy, they are blessed in addition to. (See **Rom. 11:15-24**) How does **verse 29** apply to Christians today?
6. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your spiritual walk with Christ? What are some practical steps that you can do to improve your spiritual walk today?

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- Our genealogy and national heritage are important, but neither will save us from our sin.
- The possession of a Bible is a good thing, but just owning a Bible is not enough to get anyone to heaven.
- Each person must repent of their sin and personally receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- Once a Christian, it is easy to fall into the trap of being a hypocrite, when we do, it hurts the name of God and causes others to have a negative view of Christ and His Church.
- Physical circumcision is of value, but only so long as the individual keeps the whole Law. (See **Jam. 2:10**)
- The kind of circumcision God requires is "*circumcision of the heart*" by the Holy Spirit.
- Regeneration (or new birth) is a prerequisite for getting into heaven. (See **John 3:3,5**)
- Regeneration is a gift from God to the believer bringing praise and glory to His Name.

