

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THE TRUE JEW IS ...

For the true Jew is not the man who is simply a Jew outwardly, and true circumcision is not that which is outward and bodily. But the true Jew is one inwardly, and true circumcision is heart-circumcision--not literal, but spiritual; and such people receive praise not from men, but from God. (Romans 2.28-29 WNT)

What follows is a bit dated since this light came to me well over a year ago. What follows explains how I came to see who the true Jew is; better late than never.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul defines God's meaning of the word *Jew*, and in doing so, he also does away with an age-old definition of a Jew, one which is, without doubt, accepted by a majority of Christians in our day. Simply, many see a Jew as one who is a blood descendant of Jacob, regardless of whether that one believes in Jesus Christ or rejects Him. However, it matters not how man defines a Jew but how God, through Scripture, defines one. As if to make the point, God chose one who himself was a natural Jew to give the spiritual meaning of a Jew.

I must confess that for many years, I have held that a Jew is one who is a blood descendant of Jacob, regardless of one's belief. I even held that the state of Israel that is often at the center of world controversy in the Middle East was destined to be the head of all the nations on earth simply because they have a blood right to attain to such a status, regardless of their rejection of the true Messiah. After all, as so many others believe in this day, I thought that as this eon ends, their eyes would be opened to see Jesus as Messiah, and they would be reestablished as a theocratic nation to head up all the nations because they are blood descendants of Jacob. For a time, I was influenced by some who teach what could be called ultra-dispensationalism, which sees most of Scripture, except for Paul's epistles, as applicable only to the natural Jew. I even wrote a lengthy series on the subject. This influence came through ones I affectionately call the concordant brethren. Through them, I received greater clarity on the reconciliation of all, which I continue to see as the truth.

However, as I studied and wrote along this line, I began to have some doubts and began asking myself: **Is God working on two different lines; one that pertains to the natural Jew, and the other that pertains to what we call the church, made up of those called out from among the nations and a remnant of Jews?** Is the so-called church destined to leave this earth in the rapture, and is the nation of Israel that we see on the land of Palestine today destined to remain on the earth to head up all the nations? Is there going to be an earthly temple and a revitalized Jerusalem in the Middle East that will be the center of the earth and God's government? Are the so-called Christians of our day and the so-called Jews of our day going to rule with Christ as two separate groups? These and many more questions began to flood my mind, and I grew increasingly more uncomfortable with what I had written on the subject. My questions grew to a crying out before the Lord, beseeching Him to reveal His truth and to correct any error of mine. The day came when I had to repent for what I had written on the subject as I began to see with spiritual eyes that there is only one line along which God is working, and it is a spiritual line, not a physical one.

The Holy Spirit began to answer my pleas as I began to see that there is only one line. Wondering if there were others that could help in this matter, I began searching for answers through what others had written. I discovered a brother who challenges much conventional thinking. As I read his material I too was challenged. Some say that he is a bit rough around the edges; nevertheless, I greatly appreciated

his heart for seeking truth. However, at first, I was not totally convinced. Interestingly, the day came when I received an email from a brother I had never met. He had read what I had written on resurrection and mentioned wanting to have some fellowship over the subject, so I sent him my phone number, and he called me shortly thereafter. As we concluded our conversation, he suggested that I read what another brother had written on the subject. I had read some of his material already but had not spent much time with it, so I began in earnest to see what this brother had to say. As I did, I soon realized that I was being given a third witness that there is one line. This is when I began to repent and look at Scripture with more clarity.

Well, this is sort of a long way of getting to the subject at hand, but it is important to me to clear the air and to lay down a new stake, so to speak. Seeking the truth is not always easy, and we can hit pot holes along the way that send us off in wrong directions. But if we set our hearts on knowing the truth that sets us free, the Lord is faithful to lead us, even if He allows side eddies to come in. I believe that through our failures we grow in the Lord and, in them, He humbles us so that we are patient and gracious with others. By the way, I am still growing and learning.

Now, returning to the matter of the spiritual definition of a Jew, Paul was in the best position to know. After all, we could say that it takes a Jew to know a Jew, and Paul was one who knew the physical side or the flesh of the matter, as well as the spiritual side.

To the natural Jew, the flesh was of great value, as evidenced by the outward sign of circumcision. In other words, to them, the circumcised flesh made one a Jew. Even foreigners who were not blood descendants of Jacob could become a Jew if they took the sign of circumcision. It is true that this rite was given to Abraham by the Lord, but it was meant to symbolize a spiritual truth. What the Lord is after is a circumcised heart.

When he declared, **“For the true Jew is not the man who is simply a Jew outwardly, and true circumcision is not that which is outward and bodily,”** Paul was simply repeating a truth revealed in Hebrew Scripture. To the sons of Israel who were given the sign of circumcision, the Lord declared: **“So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer”** (Deuteronomy 10.16 NASB). **“Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live”** (Deuteronomy 30.6 NASB). And to Judah, He exhorted: **“Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and remove the foreskins of your heart, men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem...”** (Jeremiah 4.4 NASB).

There was really no excuse for the natural sons of Israel to get sidetracked with the outward form of circumcision, for the Lord clearly explained what He was after. He was and still is after a heart that has been sensitized to His love and which, in turn, loves, obeys, and trusts Him with a whole heart. This is life! Ones who do not have a circumcised heart for the Lord, even though they may have all the outward signs of piety and religion, do not have life. Instead, they are rejecting the One who is life, and all they can expect is the outer darkness.

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God (Romans 2.29). As did the Jew in Paul’s day, the Jew in our day still looks upon the outward as a sign of acceptance by God. They look to men for praise, that is, acceptance, because of the outward form of things. Many Christians today praise the Jews of the state of Israel simply because they are called Jews according to the flesh. Their status as a Jew is by the letter, not by the heart, for most Jews in Israel today still reject Yahshua (Jesus) as Messiah. But Paul puts all such thoughts to rest. A Jew is an inward matter; it is a heart matter, and it is by the spirit of God.

Then who is a Jew in this day? If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, having received the spirit of God as an earnest of the promise of a glorified body in the future, then you are a Jew. The ecclesia of God is made of true, spiritual Jews.