

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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Apparent Jew vs. True Jew

Throughout my writings, I refer to the Jew in a variety of ways, such as the Jew according to the flesh, or the apparent Jew, or the true Jew. Paul gives us the clearest definition of a Jew as presented in the following verses taken from different translations.

(28) For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. (29) No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people. (Romans 2:28-29 NLT)

(28) For not that which is apparent is the Jew, nor yet that which is apparent in flesh is circumcision; (29) but that which is hidden is the Jew, and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose applause is not of men, but of God. (Romans 2:28-29 CV)

(28) For a person is not a Jew because of his appearance, nor is circumcision something external and physical. (29) No, a person is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by a written law. That person's praise will come from God, not from people. (Romans 2:28-29 ISV)

According to Paul, **apparent Jews** are ones by outward appearance only; that is, they claim to have the law, physical circumcision, and a Jewish heritage (blood). Apparent Jews generally believe they will receive praise from God due to their flesh, and a righteousness derived from their outward adherence to the Law, not on the basis of faith in Christ (Philippians 3:9). They are **Jews according to the flesh**. Jesus often spoke critically of the hypocrisy of those who practiced their own righteousness before men, seeking praise and honor from men, not from God.

(6:1) "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." ... (23:13) "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." (Matthew 6:1; 23:13 NASB)

It is clear that the apparent Jew will not inherit the Kingdom of God in the eon to come.

By contrast, **true Jews** are ones who have hearts that have been (and are being) changed or circumcised by the Spirit of God. They receive the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-22). God will praise them, for they are justified by faith as a gift by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24), not by the flesh or the works of the flesh. Today, those who fit this description are the true Christians; they are the true Jews. This is God's definition of a true Jew, not man's. Paul was simply stating a fact that the Lord spoke to the prophets.

Moses was one of the greatest prophets of God (Deuteronomy 34:10), and he not only told the sons of Israel to circumcise their own hearts but also that the Lord Himself would do it.

(10:16) "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer." ... (30:6) "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 10:16; 30:6 NASB)

On what basis would this have been done in that day? On the same basis that it is done today; by faith! The problem began when the sons of Israel stood at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Law. Instead of listening directly to the Lord, they feared for their lives and told Moses to go up before the Lord and leave them out of it. They wanted no part of what Moses was about to do. Instead, they turned from the Lord and worshipped a golden calf. This was their greatest mistake, for if they had listened and not feared for their own lives, the Lord would have written His Law on their hearts, and they would have derived their righteousness on the basis of faith. Spiritually speaking, their hearts would have been circumcised. Unfortunately for them, they failed the test, so God gave them the Law on tablets of stone and not on hearts of flesh.

This would have been their Pentecost. The Spirit of God would have taken up residence in them, and they would have learned to obey and follow the Lord. Instead, they had to follow the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21) throughout their 40-year journey in the wilderness.

Later, Jeremiah simply repeated the same thing to the Judahites that were under the judgment of God and about to be led captive by the Babylonians: **"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and remove the foreskins of your heart, men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem"** (Jeremiah 4:4 NASB). The antidote was to return to the Lord and circumcise themselves to Him.

Let us be abundantly clear that, under the **New Covenant**, all who believe on Jesus, the Son of God, have access to God the Father, the very God of Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob-Israel, Joseph, Caleb, Joshua, and David, to name a few. Jesus said: **"No one comes to the Father but through Me"** (John 14:6). These men were of one genealogical bloodline; however, their distinguishing characteristic was faith and trust in Jesus Christ. In reference to the sons of Israel, Paul wrote that they drank **from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ** (1 Corinthians 10:4). In those days, Christ was known as Yahweh. In our day, He is known as *Yahshua* (*Yeshua*).

The Lord [Yah/Yahweh] is my strength, and He has become My salvation [Yahshua]; this is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will extol Him (Exodus 15:2 NASB).

Yahweh of the Old Testament came to earth incarnated as *Yahshua* of the New Testament. The Hebrew word for *salvation* is *Yahshua*, which is the Hebrew name for *Jesus*, for **He will save His people from their sins** (Matthew 1:21). Thus, the song of Moses and the sons of Israel prophetically spoke of Yahweh becoming my *Yahshua*. Isaiah adds further proof.

(2) "Behold, God is my salvation [Yahshua], I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation [Yahshua]. (3) Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation [Yahshua]." (Isaiah 12:2-3 NASB)

Jesus confirmed that He is *Yahshua* of the Old Testament when He cried out on the last day, the great day of Tabernacles: **"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water [i.e., springs of salvation]'"** (John 7:38 NASB).

The point is this: The whole of the Bible is about faith in Christ our Rock and Salvation. It really has not changed. The ancient men of faith may not have called upon Him by the name of Jesus; nevertheless, they believed on Him and trusted Him and joined their hearts with the same unconditional covenant He made with Abram who **believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness** (Genesis 15:6-21; Galatians 3:6). The New Covenant is unconditional!

Consequently, true Jews are ones who have access to God the Father through Jesus His Son. In a sense, it has always been this way, so that those who reject *Jesus-Yahshua* reject God the Father as well. In the sight of God, being true Jews (ones inwardly) is a spiritual matter of the heart, not of man's blood. They could be called **spiritual Jews**.

As for the *apparent* Jews (ones outwardly): **So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief** (Hebrews 3:19). They need to enter into the New Covenant with Christ Jesus.