

The New Jew

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We all know that the Jews were God's chosen people through whom the Messiah would come. Jews are Hebrews, which is a term used for the descendants of Abraham. The term "Jew" was a slang term given the Hebrews which first appeared sometime during the exile. It was a shortened and slurred form of "Judean." Messiah came through the Jews, of the line of David, of the tribe of Judah, born of the virgin Mary, while Caesar Augustus was reigning and Quirinius was governor of Syria. Of that there is no doubt.

The Messiah established a new Kingdom, the Church. Since the Jews were a special chosen people, how does the Jew relate to this new Kingdom of the Messiah? Wasn't the promise to Abraham concerning his descendants an eternal promise? It most certainly was. But it was always for those who had the FAITH of Abraham. Just having the FLESH of Abraham meant very little.

The New Testament has some very interesting things to say concerning the New Testament Jew. Jesus made it very clear that the Hebrew nation of Israel would no longer be the Kingdom of God. Listen to Jesus as He speaks to the Jewish leaders, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it."¹ Or again, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"² The special status the Jews had as God's nation was coming to an end. But there is more to be learned in the New Testament than just this.

Paul begins to clarify things when he writes his letter to the Romans. He says,

"For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 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."³

It is not what is on the outside that makes a person a Jew. It is what is inside. In other words, it is not the flesh of Abraham that makes you his descendant, it is having the faith of Abraham that does. It does not matter what your genealogy is. A Jew is anyone who has the faith of Abraham. What kind of faith did Abraham have? The kind of faith that was obedient in all things. When God called Him out of his homeland, Ur, and told him to go to a strange land, Abraham simply complied. When God told him that he would have a son even though he was an old man, he believed. After the son was born and was becoming a young man, the pride of his father's eye, and God said to sacrifice that one and only son, he didn't ask why, he simply made the proper preparations and was ready to obey. The writer of Hebrews tells us this amazing tidbit of information:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE

* All Scripture is from the NASB

¹ Matthew 21:43

² Matthew 23:37, 38

³ Romans 2:25-29

CALLED.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.⁴

Abraham had the kind of faith that when God told him to sacrifice his own son he believed that God would raise him back to life again. He believed God when God said that through Isaac the promise would be fulfilled. Abraham had an amazing faith, yet it’s the kind of faith God desires out of each one of His people.

Paul wrote some more about the New Testament Jews. In Galatians he states:

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.”⁵

There is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile. If a person is in Christ he is a descendant of Abraham. A descendant of faith according to the promise that God made with Abraham. Once again we see the New Testament Jew is NOT according to the flesh. The New Testament Jew is the Christian. Hear the Apostle Paul once again when he writes: “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: ‘THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.’ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. For this is the word of promise: ‘AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.’”⁶ Just because a person was born with an Israelite pedigree does not make him a descendant of Abraham!

In fact, the entire theme of the letter to the Romans is that there is not a special fleshly people. God shows no distinction. Consider these verses out of Romans and notice Paul’s emphasis on words like “each,” “everyone,” and “all.”:

- 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to **everyone** who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- 2:6 who WILL RENDER TO **EACH PERSON** ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:
- 2:9-11 There will be tribulation and distress for **every soul** of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is **no partiality** with God.
- 3:9-12 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are **all** under sin; as it is written, ‘THERE IS **NONE** RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS **NONE** WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS **NONE** WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; **ALL** HAVE TURNED ASIDE, **TOGETHER** THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS **NONE** WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS **NOT EVEN ONE.**”
- 3:23 for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to **all** men, because **all** sinned—
- 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us **all**, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
- 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to **everyone** who believes.
- 10:12, 13 For there is **no distinction** between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for **all** who call on Him; for “**WHOEVER** WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

⁴ Hebrews 11:17-19

⁵ Galatians 3:26-29

⁶ Romans 9:6-8

14:11 For it is written, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, **EVERY** KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND **EVERY** TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”

An Old Testament Jew had the sign of circumcision. Christians too have something similar, only better.

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”⁷

Christians have a circumcision that, though it does not remove the foreskin, it instead removes sin. It is not performed by hands, but instead occurs at baptism, when, by faith, a person surrenders his will to the will of God. God works in baptism to remove our sin and set us apart as His very own.

Who is the new Jew? It is anyone, regardless of genealogy, who has faith in God to live according to His will by following after His only begotten Son Jesus the Christ.⁸

Many people still claim to be Jews physically descended from Abraham. That claim is meaningless. It is not by flesh we are saved, it is through faith. God no longer makes a distinction between Jew and Gentile. We are saved by grace, not race – by faith, not flesh. No matter what a person’s background or genealogy, God, through faith, makes us one, the Body of Christ. May we all stand united and be God’s people, the New Jews.

⁷ Colossians 2:9-12

⁸ Other passages to consider: Romans 4:1-18; 8:14-17; 11:16-31; Galatians 6:14-18; Philippians 3:2-4; et al.