



Who Is a Jew?

By Pastor F.M. Riley

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"Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God..."
(1 Corinthians 10:32)

Introduction

Folks, the above Scripture text makes it quite plain that even during this present dispensation Jews are still Jews, Gentiles are still Gentiles, and the church of God is a new body [*Ephesians 2:11-18*] made up of believing Jews and Gentiles who have repented of their sins and received Christ as their personal Savior.

Now let's explore the question.....

Who is a Jew?

I am quite familiar with the history of Israel. I have been studying their history from a Biblical and a historical perspective for 53 years.

I know that God called Abraham to be the founding father of a new race of people who would be known as "Hebrews." The first time the word "Hebrew" occurs in God's Word is in *Genesis 14:13* where Abraham is referred to as "**Abram the Hebrew.**" At that point in time Abraham was the first and only Hebrew. As such he became the father of the whole Hebrew nation. Therefore, the technical proper name of the race that descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob is "**Hebrews.**" This name is used when referring to this race of people (or individual members of it) 33 times in the Old Testament and 14 times in the New Testament.

However, such is not the name the Hebrews are commonly called by today. Why not?

In *Deuteronomy 28:37*, over 400 years before the Hebrews were divided into two separate kingdoms, the Word of God predicted, "**And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.**" A similar statement is made 5 more times in the Old Testament. See *1 Kings 9:7*, *2 Chronicles 7:20*, *Job 17:6*, *30:9*, and *Psalms 44:14*. Notice that the passage in *Deuteronomy 28:37* is speaking to and about all the people in Israel. The prediction was not limited to, nor did it single out, just one tribe.

The Origin of the word "Jew"

I am well aware that the word "*Jew*" was adapted from Judah, the 4th son of Leah, whose descendants became the dominant tribe in the southern kingdom. But the word

"Jew" in the Bible is not limited to only those members of the tribe of Judah or to those who came out of the southern Kingdom of Judah. To attempt to impose such a limitation on the use of the word "Jew" violates Scripture, history, and reality. The Lord in ***Deuteronomy 28:37*** told all twelve tribes that if they disobeyed Him, they [*all of them*] would become "***a byword, among all nations.***" And so it came to pass even before the Old Testament was completed. Take a good concordance and look at the many passages in the Old Testament where the word "Jew" occurs. Look at how the word is used and to whom it is applied. It is quite obvious that the word "Jew" is not limited only to Judah or those who lived in or were dispersed from the southern kingdom. Today, every descendant of the twelve tribes are called "Jews" [***a byword***] in exact fulfillment of ***Deuteronomy 28:37***.

Therefore, I make no apology to anyone for using the words "Israel" and "Jews" synonymously in my writings. The two words are synonymous! They speak of one and the same people, and the Word of God verifies this truth over and over. A Jew is an Israelite, and an Israelite is a Jew. Period! And whether one refers to them as Jews or Israelites, they are all still "Hebrews."

Their Regathering

I most certainly do believe and teach that the Lord is presently regathering the Jews back to the Holy Land, just as He repeatedly said that He would in His Word. He is regathering all twelve tribes. Jews are living in Jerusalem today who have returned from over 70 different nations of the world. But an even greater regathering is going to take place during the coming Tribulation, to the extent that there will not be a Jew left in any Gentile land on earth. Every single member of the Hebrew race [Jews] will be brought back to the land of Israel. I have always believed and taught this truth, and have many times defended it against the Scripture perverting Preterists [*replacement theology*] and others of like mind who choose to deny it. The return of the Jews to the Holy Land at the end of this age is a Biblically established truth, and a present reality, and it will stand whether some believe it or not.

Another Error Exposed

While we are looking at this subject, "*Who is a Jew,*" I want to expose a false teaching held by many today.

A popular theory today, especially among the Preterists, is that when a person is saved they become a "spiritual Jew" or "spiritual Israelite." Hogwash! This silly claim is primarily based on a complete ignoring of the context in the first three chapters of ***Romans***. Those who teach this theory lift ***Romans 2:28-29*** right out of its context, and wrongly apply the truth stated in that passage to Gentile believers. Such mishandling of God's Word is a classic example of how to wrongly "divide the Word of truth."

If people would carefully study the Scriptures, it can be easily seen that from **Romans 1:1** through **2:16** the inspired Apostle was speaking to and about the Gentiles. Then from **2:17** through **3:8** he spoke to and about the Jews. Then in **3:9** the Apostles conclusion is that ***"both Jews and Gentiles.....are all under sin."*** Now isn't that easy to see?

Therefore **Romans 2:28-29**, in context, is pointing out that a Jew by nature [*natural birth*] is not accepted by God as one of His chosen people [**John 3:1-7**]. The Lord, even when it comes to the Jewish people, is very selective. The Lord has chosen as His own special people, only those Jews who are, or prospectively will be, ***"inwardly"*** transformed by ***"circumcision of the heart"*** [**Deuteronomy 10:15-16; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:29**] through ***"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts 20:21.***

Folks, a Jew is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by flesh. All the rest are Gentiles, like it or not. When a Gentile receives Christ then they become a saved Gentile. Period! Being saved does not transform a Gentile into a Jew, anymore than sleeping in a barn would transform one into a cow. And when a Jew by nature receives Christ as Savior they become a saved Jew. Period!

The **Romans 2:28-29** passage then has nothing to do with the Gentiles. It applies only to those who are Jews. The passage does not teach that a repentant Gentile believer becomes a "spiritual Jew" [*or Israelite*]. Such a false teaching is nothing less than ***"replacement theology"*** and should be rejected and repudiated by every true believer.

May God add His blessings to this study is my prayer.

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