

THE TRUE JEW

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29 (KJV))

What happens to you physically does not change your true identity. If your son is burned so badly that you cannot recognize his face, he is still your son. You can have multiple amputations, plastic surgery, and a wide variety of other surgical procedures without changing who you are.

Similarly, what you do does not necessarily reveal your true identity. Isaiah spoke of those who killed an ox as if they were slaying a man, or sacrificed a lamb as if they were cutting off a dog's neck (Is. 66:3). It is possible to draw near to God with your lips while your heart is far from Him.

Jesus explained that a man is like a tree in that he is known by the fruit he produces. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit and vice versa (Matt. 12:33). So a good man is not corrupted by eating with unwashed hands, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, etc.

Paul used these truths to remind the Romans that conversion to Christ involves far more than a mere physical ritual. The high priests, Annas and Caiaphas had been circumcised but were among the most corrupt people on earth. The true Jew has a new heart. His change is so radical that he is like a new creation. That's why the conversion experience is symbolized by baptism which vividly portrays the death and burial of our old man and the resurrection of the new (Rom. 6:1 - 8).

The analogy of death and new life is used many times in the Bible to describe the conversion experience. In Rom. 7:1 - 13, for example, Paul explains that unconverted people are “married to the law”. Since the law doesn't die, the only way out of this marriage is for us to die. Nothing could be more clear - converts to Christ are “dead to the law” so we can be married to Jesus Who specializes in raising the dead (Rom. 7:4).

Paul described his own conversion with these words: **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)**

Jesus also described the conversion experience as being “born again” (Jn. 3:1 - 13). Nicodemus had a physical body because his earthly father had planted a physical seed in the womb of his earthly mother. When Nicodemus claimed not to understand this Jesus reminded him: **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”** (Jn. 3:6). Every seed reproduces after its own kind (Gen. 1:11). The only way you can get spiritual life is from a spiritual seed! Thus there are two Adams (I Cor. 15:45 - 49). The first Adam produced a physical family, and the last Adam produced a spiritual family. Those born of the flesh have the DNA (or image) of their earthly father. Those born of the Spirit had the DNA (or image) of their heavenly Father. Since physical life is corruptible, it cannot enjoy an eternal inheritance. That's why we must be “born again”!

Paul had never been to Rome, but he longed to impart unto them something “spiritual” (Rom. 1:11). Consequently, his letter soars above the works of the flesh. He knew that merely stopping the Romans from the physical sins would only be like hanging apples on a thorn bush. We wrestle not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). There is no physical cure for a spiritual problem. So the true Jew, or true follower of God, is one who has been transformed from within by the Spirit of God. Therefore, our praise is directed, not to men, but to God Himself (Rom. 2:29). **“Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17) .**