

God's Good News About Righteousness

An Inductive Study of the Book of Romans

by James T. Bartsch, WordExplain.com

Study 4, The Condemnation of Jewish People

Romans 2:17 - 3:8

- A. INTRODUCTION: The Writer, the Readers, and the Good News (Romans 1:1-17). (Study 1)
- B. **CONDEMNATION:** The Unveiling of God's Wrath against Man's Unrighteousness **1:18 - 3:20**
 - 1. The Condemnation of Gentiles 1:18-32. (The term Gentiles refers to non Jewish people in the world.) (Study 2)
 - 2. The Condemnation of Moralists 2:1-16 (Moralists are those who stand in judgment on others.) (Study 3)
 - 3. **The Condemnation of Jewish People 2:17 - 3:8.** (Study 4)
 - a. **The high position of the Jewish people. 2:17-20.**
 - 1) Paul lists five privileges the Jewish people have. (2:17-18).
 - a) Upon what do they rely?
 - b) In whom do they boast?
 - c) What do they know?
 - d) Of what do they approve?
 - e) In what are they instructed?
 - 2) Next, Paul lists five ways in which the Jewish people serve as priests to other ethnic and national groups, leading them closer to God. (2:19-20).
 - a) To whom are they a guide?
 - b) What do they provide to those who are in darkness?
 - c) Whom are they able to correct?
 - d) Whom are they able to teach?
 - e) The Law to which they hold embodies what?

b. The hypocrisy of the Jewish people. 2:21-24. Paul lists five hypocritical actions. Items 1-3 and 5 involve actions contradicting speech. Item 4 involves an action contradicting an attitude. What are the hypocrisies? (Hints and / or Scripture cross references are given.)

- 1) (2:21a. Influence. See Matt. 23:3):
- 2) (2:21b. Violation of 8th Commandment. See Amos 8:5; Mal. 3:8-9):
- 3) (2:22a. Violation of 7th Commandment. See Matt. 5:28, 32; 19:9):
- 4) (2:22b. See Deut. 7:25; Acts 19:37):
- 5) (2:23-24. Resulting in negative Gentile reaction. See Ezek. 36:17-20):

c. The warning to the Jewish people. 2:25-29.

- 1) **Regarding the value of circumcision.** Many Jewish people regarded the rite of circumcision (see Genesis 17) as a guarantee of God's acceptance. Were they correct in their assessment? (2:25-27).
 - a) Under what circumstance is circumcision of value? (2:25).
 - b) What happens to a circumcised Jew who transgresses the Law?
 - c) What happens to the uncircumcised Gentile who keeps the Law? (2:26).
 - d) What role will the uncircumcised, Law-keeping Gentile have in relation to the circumcised, Law-breaking Jewish person? (2:27).
- 2) **Regarding the value of Jewish heritage.** Many Jewish people regarded their physical descent from Abraham as a lock on God's favor. Were they accurate in their belief? (2:28-29).
 - a) What is being Jewish NOT? (2:28).
 - b) What IS it that constitutes being Jewish? (2:29).
 - c) What kind of circumcision does God look for?

d. The questioned worth of Jewishness. (3:1-8). What can be concluded about Jewish people? The obvious conclusion is that the Jewish people stand condemned before God. Though they have had a high position, too often they have acted with hypocrisy, and the Gentiles have blasphemed God's name because of their actions. Circumcision without obedience is worthless, and real Jewishness is internal, not external. As badly as the Jewish people have failed, it is fair to ask, "Is it worth anything to be Jewish?" In the following paragraph, Paul pretends to be a debater who asks tough questions in three areas – questions which Paul wants to answer...

- 1) The questioned worth of national identity. (3:1-2).
 - a) What two questions does Paul raise? (3:1).
 - i The first question.
 - ii The second question.
 - b) What is the greatest benefit of Jewishness? (3:2).
- 2) The questioned worth of national promises. (3:3-4).
 - a) What serious question does Paul raise about Jewish unbelief? (3:3).
 - b) How does Paul sternly answer his own question? (3:4; see also Psalm 51:4).
- 3) The questioned justice of God's wrath against Israel. (3:5-8).
 - a) Paul raises another serious question. "If Israel's unrighteousness highlight's God's righteousness, is God unfair for judging the unrighteousness?" (3:5).
 - b) How does he answer his own question? (3:6).
 - c) Paul raises a final question in this section, "If my lie enhances God's glorious truthfulness, why am I judged a sinner?" (3:7).
 - d) What is another way of asking this same question? (3:8a). (Some were actually accusing Paul of coming to this conclusion.)

- e) What verdict does Paul make about the people who make this conclusion? (3:8b).
- 4) Paul has already concluded that Jewish people stand condemned before God. (2:24-28). Though there is great value in being Jewish (3:1-2), and though Jewish unbelief, unrighteousness, and dishonesty highlight God's faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity, God is still fair in judging sinners (3:3-8).
- 4. You as a person who is studying Paul's letter to the Romans have already discovered from this letter that non-Jewish people (Gentiles) stand condemned before God (1:18-32); that Moralists, who judge others, themselves stand judged (2:1-16); and that Jewish people, who inevitably turn out to be hypocritical, have been judged (2:17 - 3:8). You may be asking, "Where does that leave me? I can't be all that bad, can I?" That question will be answered in Study 5. Read on and prepare yourself for the answer. It may not be what you want to hear!

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Prepared by James T. Bartsch

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Email Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com