

THE "JEW" IS CONDEMNED BY THE LAW? ROMANS 2 CONTINUES

17 But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God, **18** and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, **19** and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, **20** a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, **21** you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? **22** You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?⁹ **23** You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? **24** For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written. [Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22]

25 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. **26** So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? **27** 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? **28** For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. **29** 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.

Nota Bene—"Hebrew." Usually an ethnic term in the Bible, it was normally used by non-Israelites in a disparaging sense (cf., Genesis 39:17). Outside Scripture, people known as the *Habiru/Apiru* (probably related to Hebrew) are referred to as a property-less, homeless, dependent, immigrant (foreign) social class rather than as a specific ethnic group. Negative descriptions of them are given in the *Amarna* letters (clay tablets found in Egypt).

17 Why are the descendants of Hebrews called "Jews?" Why did they boast being a "Jew?" Difference from being an "Israelite?"

17-20 God's People Are Supposed to:

1. _____ upon the Law
2. Boast in _____ (Why not what we know? Do?)
3. Know _____ will (Why?)
4. _____ that which is essential
5. _____ the blind; be a _____ to those in darkness
6. Teach the _____
7. Be the _____ of knowledge & the truth having the Law

21-24 What is the responsibility incurred from all the above attributes? Which do we have the biggest challenge? Why?

22 Where do we rob temples? See the footnote below.

24 What do God's people do to cause unbelievers to blaspheme (βλασφημέω, **987** "to slander, hence to speak lightly or profanely of sacred things") the authority and reputation ("the name of") of God?

25-29 What is the value of circumcision to followers of the Law? Transgressors of the Law?

29 Who is the Jew?

1. _____ constructed.
2. Circumcised _____.
3. Motivated by the _____, not by the letter.
4. Praise is sought from _____, not _____.

⁹According to historians, some Jews of the Dispersion actually made a self-righteous business venture of looting pagan temples and selling for profit the idols, or the precious metals of which they were made. This was a direct violation of Deuteronomy 7:25: "You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God."

Not only was this a violation of Hebrew Scripture law, it was also a violation of Roman law. Josephus and Philo both say that *hierosuleo*, robbery of temples, was a crime on a par with treason and murder in the Roman world, punishable by death. There was also a Roman law against stealing sacred books and monies from the Jewish Temple, promulgated by Caesar Augustus. But since Romans 2:22 refers to temples in the plural, and has "abhor idols" as the antithesis, it is highly doubtful Paul is asking Jews if they rob their own Temple. The notion, however, that we would rob pagan temples, when even Roman law protected them against the robbery of their own Temple, would only add to our hypocrisy in the eyes of Gentiles.

Paul uses *hierosuleo* in Romans 2:22 because robbing pagan temples was one of the more blatant contemporary examples of Jewish hypocrisy, and would be a cause of blasphemy of the name of Jehovah among the Gentiles (2:24).