

The Claim that We are to Go “To the Jew First” to Understand the Bible

This reference is to a phrase Paul used three times: **to the Jew first and also to the Greek**. The Judaizers (Christian teachers who promote the need to know something about rabbinic Judaism in order to better understand the Bible) claim that we are being directed to get our interpretation of the Bible from the Jews first. If we don't, we will not understand it correctly. Here are the three verses where that phrase occurs:

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 (Romans 1:16).

Paul is telling us how the Gospel spread historically. God first presented it to the Jews, and when they rejected it, He presented it to the Gentiles. There is nothing here which says we should prioritize the Jews in presenting the Gospel, and certainly nothing which says we should go to them to understand the biblical text.

There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek (Romans 2:9).

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. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law (Romans 2:10-12).

Paul is telling us about the judgment of God. The point being, we are all without excuse. But the Jews received the revelation of God before the Greeks, so judgment came to them first. The Jews were given the Law, and they disobeyed it. They sinned under the Law, so they were judged by the Law. But the Greeks (and all Gentiles) have the law of God written on their hearts in the form of a conscience. Therefore, they are also judged. So judgment comes to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

But, as you can clearly see, this has nothing to do with going to the Jews for an understanding of the text of Scripture. They were the first to receive the Law and the first to receive the Gospel, so they are the first to be judged by God.

For more information see study book **Do Not Be Called Rabbi** on Relational Concepts web page:

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