



November 22, 2024

Circumcision and the New Covenant

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

I am slowly recovering from shoulder surgery and reconstruction and again thank you all for your continued prayers during this process.

Two Sabbaths ago (11/8) we ended our discussion with this statement "Physical circumcision was *symbolic* of a more important and meaningful event." Let's continue this discussion...

The sign of circumcision relating to the covenant with Abraham and to the Old Covenant was symbolic of a change and commitment that is even more profound and significant.

The apostle Paul refers to this several times. "*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*" (Romans 2:28-29)

Physical circumcision demonstrated a willing submission by the individual to the terms of the covenant. Under the New Covenant the believer undergoes a meaningful ritual - baptism. The one being baptized undergoes a ritual death of the old person and rises up from the baptismal watery grave as a new person, then followed by the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul links circumcision *of the heart* and baptism. "*In whom you had a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; Having been put to death with him in baptism, by which you came to life again with him, through faith in the working of God, who made him come back from the dead.*" (Colossians 2:11-12) Paul gets to what is really important concerning physical circumcision. "*Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.*" (1 Corinthians 7:19)

Circumcision of the heart is a concept not just found and expounded upon in the Greek Scriptures. It also is referred to in the Hebrew Scriptures. "*And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.*" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 16)

Deuteronomy 30 refers to the future regathering of the tribes of Israel and a time of blessing and deliverance from their enemies. The concept of circumcision of the heart is again touched upon. "*And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.*" (v.6) *This is the time when a New Covenant will be made "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" and the LORD will put His "law in their minds, and write it on their hearts.*" (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

Accompanying the basic laws and commandments that were given in the Sinai (or old covenant), were *temporary* rituals and instructions that were applicable to a carnal, physical nation, and were part of a structure that administrated and coordinated these instructions.

Notice, the apostle Paul refers to various rituals and ordinances that took place at the Temple that was still standing in his day, but he points to a time when they would no longer be needed. *"It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience-- concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation."* (Hebrews 9:9-10)

Jeremiah records an interesting statement made by the LORD. *"For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices."* (Jeremiah 7:22) The details of the sacrifices and cleansing rituals are not described in the initial instructions Moses received recorded in Exodus 20-23. They were added later when Moses again ascended the sacred mountain.

King David had to confront his egregious sins concerning Bathsheba and Uriah. He realized what was important regarding what the LORD desired of him. *"For you do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-These, O God, You will not despise."* (Psalm 51:16-17) Even the instructions about wearing tassels or fringes on one's garment were added later because of the consequences of breaking the Sabbath. (Numbers 15:32-38) The tassels with the blue thread were to remind the people of God's commandments and the need to observe them. (vv. 39-40) However, under the New Covenant, God's Holy Spirit is sent to remind and enhance the learning of the disciples, *and transcends those physical details.* (John 14:26; 1 John 2:27) Those physical details are no longer required by Our Father and His Son as New Covenant disciples.

When the specific instructions were stated to be brought to the Gentile believers, there was also a telling comment. *"For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."* (Acts 15:21) This tells us that the Gentiles were already assembling on the Sabbath and will continue to do so and will hear the

Pentateuch read. The early disciples assembled at times with the Jews at the synagogue until someone stirred things up and the Jews forced them to part company. (Acts 17:1-13) The Scriptures, (the Word of God), were read when instruction was given to the disciples in the Sabbath services. (2 Timothy 3:16) The apostle Paul instructed his disciple and young elder Timothy, "*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*" (2 Timothy 4:2) Those who read their own preconceived ideas into the Acts 15 decision as a rejection of the Ten Commandments and other important laws make a serious error in judgment. The New Covenant is also critically important to understand when it comes to Old Covenant rituals and physical things associated with it.

I hope what is written in these Friday evening letters with further study will help you to be stronger in the Word of God and your relationship with Him. We'll be having messages on the Sabbath related to this topic in the coming weeks and months ahead.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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