



Circumcision

Circumcision was a sign and a seal. The true significance of circumcision was not in its perpetuation, but in its institution. First, circumcision was a sign that salvation had already taken place - Abraham was already saved. Then it was a seal. A seal indicates the validity of the thing to which it is attached - salvation. The seal has no intrinsic value as it is just wax with an imprint. Rom. 4:11-12.

“and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.” (Romans 4:11-12, NASB)

Circumcision was a seal attached to something valuable. The seal is no good without the substance. The substance is salvation. Abraham's circumcision was the seal, just as water baptism is the seal today. When Paul wrote this, the religious Jews had ignored the substance and had taken the seal and tried to make it intrinsically valuable. They contended that salvation was by circumcision, a ritual.

Circumcision was to Abraham what ritual (water) baptism is to us in the Church Age, in that water baptism indicates that we have already been saved by faith alone in the work of Jesus Christ alone.

The circumcision of the Jewish child on the 8th day from birth was a ritual that the parents used to teach their children. The ritual anticipated that the child would, in the future, accept the Messiah by faith, to be their Savior. This ritual also indicated faith-rest on the part of the parents as they anticipated that their child would be saved, in the future and enjoy the unconditional covenants promised to Abraham and his seed.

Abraham was saved by faith long before he was circumcised. Because Abraham was saved in status quo of uncircumcision, it makes him the father (pattern) of all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. Since circumcision does not save, then salvation is not a Jewish monopoly in the Old Testament.

Those who followed the pattern of Abraham (faith) were saved and God's perfect righteousness (+R) was imputed to them whether Jew or Gentile. This excludes the Mosaic Law as a way of salvation, because the Mosaic Law was given only to the Jews.

Circumcision's Spiritual Significance

First Concept: The initial act of circumcision in the human race involved Abraham. Gen. 17:8-9.

“I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.” (Genesis 17:8-9, NASB)

This initial act of circumcision is identified with possessing the land of Canaan by Abraham's seed. Abraham separated himself unto the Lord and the Lord's promise. Circumcision in its initial activity was the seal of faith in God's promise, indicating that Abraham believed God's Word. Gen. 17:10-11.

“This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.” (Genesis 17:10-11, NASB)



Second Concept: Circumcision of Abraham was a sign of imputed righteousness. It is the sign that one has believed and is cleansed by the blood and has been credited to their account God's very own perfect righteousness (+R). Rom. 4:11.

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Third Concept: Circumcision is a picture of Retroactive Positional Truth, identification with Christ in His death. Col. 2:11-12.

“and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12, NASB)

There can be no victory in the Christian experience apart from victory over the old sin nature. One phase of this victory is application of Retroactive Positional Truth to experience. Rom. 6:1-13.

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” (Romans 6:1-13, NASB)

Fourth Concept: Circumcision was a sign of regeneration. Circumcision was to the one who was born again in Israel what water baptism is to the one who is born again in the Church Age. There was one exception. The 8th day circumcision was a dedication on the part of the parents (no decision by the child) that they would declare the message of the Christology of the Mosaic Law to their children. They anticipated by faith that their children would become believers.

Fifth Concept: Circumcision is a picture of confession of sin. This is the principle of the circumcision at Gilgal. Confession of sin is necessary for Christian service. Joshua 5:6-9.

“For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from



you.” So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.” (Joshua 5:6-9, NASB)

Jericho fell because the children of Israel were in fellowship and were operating in God’s grace provision. God did the doing, but God’s grace must flow through a cleansed channel - because of confession of sin. Joshua 5:13-15.

“Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?” He said, “No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?” The captain of the LORD’S host said to Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.” (Joshua 5:13-15, NASB)

There could be no victory over Jericho until there was victory over carnality. Circumcision denotes separation from the flesh. Today, this is accomplished by use of 1 John 1:9, self-judgment.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, NASB)