

# The Biblical Understanding of Circumcision

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I've received some letters from concerned fathers as to whether or not they should circumcise their newborn sons. In this article, we will explore what circumcision is, why it was done in Scripture, and what duties Christians may or may not have today.

First, let's go to Genesis 17, where the Lord God first talks to Abraham about circumcision:

*And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly... And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. -Genesis 17:1-8*

Whether some Christians may realize it or not, this part is important to understand the purpose of circumcision among the Jews. Though Christians are very familiar with the term "covenant," most are unfamiliar with its definition:

**covenant (n): a mutual consent or agreement of two or more persons, to do or to forbear some act or thing; a contract**

(See 'covenant', *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster, 1828, retrieved May 9, 2016 [webstersdictionary1828.com])

A covenant is a contractual agreement between two persons, so between the Lord God and Abraham a verbal agreement was made with both parties providing something. Abraham's part was to walk in perfection, meaning his job was to make all efforts to be righteous in his deeds, and in exchange, the Lord God will make him fruitful, meaning He will make Abraham's children blossom into an entire nation of people.

Although there was a verbal agreement, there were also signs of that agreement which both parties would need to keep. The Lord God's sign was that he would give Abraham's children the land of Canaan (i.e. Israel) for an everlasting possession, and in return, Abraham was given specific instruction for his sign:

*And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. -Genesis 17:9-11*

**token (n): a sign; something intended to represent or indicate another thing or an event**

(See 'token', *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster, 1828, retrieved May 9, 2016 [webstersdictionary1828.com])

Abraham's sign was to circumcise his children:

**circumcise (v): to cut off the prepuce or foreskin of males**

(See 'circumcise', *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster, 1828, retrieved May 9, 2016 [webstersdictionary1828.com])

This was to be done *ONLY* with males, and there is nothing in the Bible that justifies the female circumcision that's a hot topic in the media right now concerning the barbaric practices of Muslims and African tribes. I won't be covering any information on female circumcision in this teaching because we have already done that in our article on the pagan Muslim religion.

(Read "[Muslim Woman's Life of Fear](#)" here at creationliberty.com for more details.)

The Lord God then instructs Abraham that the circumcision was to be done on the eight day after birth:

*And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. -Genesis 17:12*

The eighth day is a very specific timing, and even though Abraham may not have understood why, he followed the Lord God's instructions. Today, we might have some understanding as to why the eighth day is so important, and it has to do with blot clotting.

In 1943, Danish scientist Henrik Dam (along with Edward Doisy) discovered what we commonly known today as "Vitamin K," which is a vital substance that controls the binding of calcium in bones and tissues to coagulate blood. (i.e. It helps forms scabs to heal tissue and prevent further bleeding.) Along with another substance called prothrombin, your body can seal off bleeding and restore tissue. Vitamin K does not get produced in a baby's intestinal tract until the 5th-7th day of his/her life, which means the first day that would be safe to circumcise would be the eight day, and in addition to that:

*"It appears that **an eight day old baby has more available prothrombin than on any other day of its life.**"*  
-Birmingham Medical and Dental Schools, *Queen's Medical Magazine*, Vol. 64, 1973, [University of California]

The substances needed for blood clotting are over double their normal amounts in an eight-day-old baby:

*"[P]rothrombin skyrockets on the eighth day to a level even better than normal -- **110 percent...** We should commend the many hundreds of workers who labored at great expense over a number of years to discover that the safest day to perform circumcision is the eighth. Yet, **as we congratulate medical science for this recent finding, we can almost hear the leaves of the Bible rustling.** They would like to remind us that **four thousand years ago, when God initiated circumcision with Abraham...** Abraham did not pick the eighth day after many centuries of trial-and-error experiments. Neither he nor any of his company from the ancient city of Ur in the Chaldees ever had been circumcised. **It was a day picked by the Creator of vitamin K.**"*

-S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*, 1968, p. 21

In fact, in 1964, the *Journal of the American Dental Association* was reporting on natal teeth, which are small beginnings of teeth in the gum line that sometimes forms in babies at (or before) birth. These natal teeth are sometimes surgically removed since they can cause injury to the baby's tongue during teething, or injury to the mother's breast while nursing, but statistics indicate they only occur in .03-.05% of babies. The journal specifically instructs dentists that they should not extract a natal tooth "**until about eight days after birth of the infant**" because of the blood clotting issue.

(See *Journal of the American Dental Association*, Vol. 68, 1964, [University of California]; For natal teeth statistics, see U.S. National Library of Medicine, "Natal Teeth," retrieved May 12, 2016, [nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003268.htm])

However, this simply concerns babies, and only babies that were born of Jewish descent. Adult men can also be circumcised, but with no risk to a lack of blood clotting because they have the needed vitamins to sustain them through the process.

*And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. -Genesis 17:12-13*

In that day, any servant that worked in a household was considered to be a follower of that household's religious beliefs, and so those servants were considered in part to be Jewish people. However, most importantly, they were living in the land given to the children of Abraham by God's covenant, so the men servants needed to be circumcised as a sign of that agreement. Any Hebrew man that did not have the circumcision was to be exiled from Israel.

*And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant. -Genesis 17:14*

A man who didn't get circumcised had no right to live in Israel because that was part of the agreement the Lord God gave to Israel, and this is important to note because this will help us understand that Christians today have no need, nor obligation, to be physically circumcised. Physical circumcision is, as we read in Scripture earlier, a sign/token of an agreement to God's covenant specifically for the children of Abraham, and it was also a sign of their sanctification from the world.

There is a circumcision of the *NEW* covenant, but it is not the same as the old covenant. In order to understand that, we need to understand why the physical circumcision has no effect in the new covenant:

*For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. -Romans 2:25*

There is no circumcision that profits unless they keep the whole of the law. Circumcision means nothing if there is no righteousness.

*Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? -Romans 2:26*

One that keeps the whole of the law would be considered circumcised, even if he was never physically circumcised. Circumcision was a hidden sign; it's not like the Jews pulled out their circumcised member to prove to people they were circumcised. Circumcision was proven by the way one lived his life.

*And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? -Romans 2:27*

Uncircumcision is natural, meaning, the way the Lord God created it, and this is referring to those who are uncircumcised. If the uncircumcised lives righteously, he has taken the mote out of his own eye to see clearly the speck in his brother's (Mat 7:5), and thus he can judge the unrighteousness of the physically circumcised.

*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: -Romans 2:28*

The Gentile has none of the physical signs or appearance of a Jew...

*But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. -Romans 2:29*

It is important to understand that circumcision is a sign of sanctification. The children of Abraham were to be a sanctified people, and the Lord God gave them a hidden physical sign that they were to be sanctified, but it is better to live a sanctified life than to have a symbol of sanctification, especially if the man with the symbol is a hypocrite living in unrighteousness.

*Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. -Jeremiah 4:4*

The circumcision was an outward sign of what was supposed to be done inwardly in the hearts of the Jews, but they turned to the wicked practices of the world instead. There is still circumcision in the new covenant, but not physical circumcision:

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ... In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ... And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; -Colossians 2:8-14*

The Lord Jesus Christ took our spirits, being dead in the sin of flesh and uncircumcised, and quickened us (i.e. brought us to life), circumcising our souls and hearts without the need for a physical circumcision. The physical circumcision was nailed to the cross, which is why the disciples, when they heard converted Pharisees were teaching that men need to follow the Jewish circumcision, came together to rebuke that doctrine.

*But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. -Acts 15:5-6*

What Peter says here, I hope every reader will go over slowly to consider the words carefully:

*And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? -Acts 15:7-10*

Remember that Peter was a Jew too, and the Jews were unable to bear the burden of the law. So Christ fulfilled that which the Jews could not fulfill, and so the circumcision, among many old covenant practices, is no longer necessary.

A man being uncircumcised in the flesh can be circumcised in his spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no need whatsoever to be circumcised in the flesh. Also, those who have been circumcised in the flesh can be circumcised in the spirit, and his circumcision does not offend the Lord God. It doesn't matter whether a man is circumcised or uncircumcised, so long as they repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

*But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. -1 Corinthians 7:17-19*

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. -Galatians 5:1-6*

Please don't misunderstand, this is not saying that if you are a Christian man that has been circumcised, you are automatically charged with keeping the whole of the law, but Paul is referring to people, like those in the Hebrew-roots cult we see today, who teach that circumcision is a requirement, or at least that it ought to be done.

The following anonymous author (using an alias), a part of the Hebrew-roots cult, in a blog post he wrote glorying over a man who got circumcised at 30, says:

***"As for Paul, Did he say to never get circumcised? Or did he point out over and over again that it was not to be done according to the directives of men? The same is done today with preachers who GLORY over the number of people they can get in their water baptistries. The same was done in Paul's day. Read Carefully! Galatians 6:13 "For neither they (RELIGIOUS LEADERS) themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have YOU circumcised, that they may GLORY in your flesh."***

-NEW2TORAH, "Circumcised at 30!" *New 2 Torah*, Apr 11, 2013, retrieved May 11, 2016, [new2torah.com/2013/04/circumcised-at-30]

First, I would point out where he is correct, specifically in reproving the new-age church buildings for glorying over the number of baptisms they've done, which is a point of pride in their works. There's nothing wrong with talking about baptisms, but often the modern-day church buildings have habits of making trophies out of people.

With that said, let's look closely at his error. He asked if Paul ever said people should not get circumcised, and then quoted Gal 6, but we just read the previous chapter, Gal 5, in which Paul (by inspiration of the Lord Jesus Christ) wrote "***if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing***" because you would become "*a debtor to do the whole of the law*" being "*entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*"

We also just read from 1Co 7 where Paul said "*Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.*" Is this too hard to understand? Or is it that this anonymous author doesn't study his Scripture as much as he claims? What men like him will try to say is that some are called *INTO* *circumcision* or uncircumcision, which is not at all what Paul was saying. He's saying they are called "in circumcision," meaning that they were already circumcised when they were called by God, and so they don't need to alter it, but also those who are uncircumcised ought not to circumcise.

If this anonymous author would continue reading Galatians 6, he might learn something about Biblical doctrine:

*As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain [i.e. urge or put pressure on] you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. -Galatians 6:12*

This means these men profess Christ, but they don't want to be persecuted by the Jews, so they try to keep one foot on both sides of the fence. The Lord Jesus Christ is disgusted by those who don't pick a side and stand on it ([Rev 3:16](#)). So the context here is the people in the churches trying to teach that Christians should be circumcised, which was wrong.

*For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. -Galatians 6:13-14*

We ought not to boast of our works, or glory in others as if they are cattle. The only thing which we ought to glory in is the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood that has washed away our sins.

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. -Galatians 6:15*

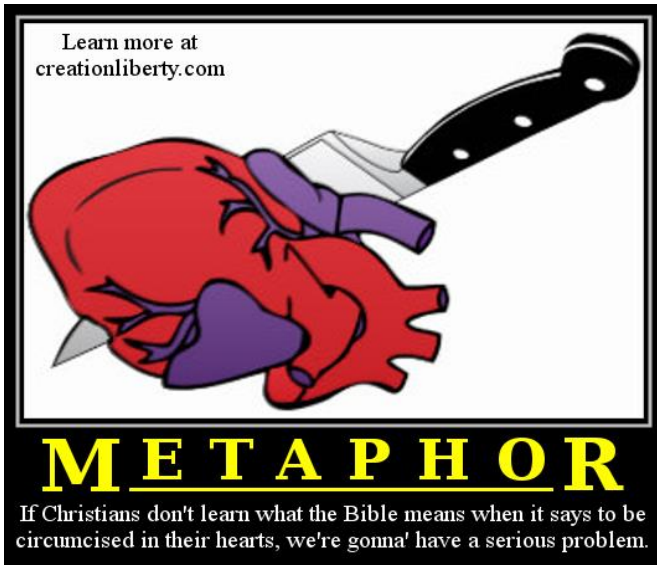
Once again, we see that circumcision is not something that Christians ought to be doing or concerning themselves with at all because it means nothing in the new covenant. Now that Christ has fulfilled the old covenant on the cross, circumcision or uncircumcision mean nothing, and those of us who acknowledge that, live by that, and teach that, are blessed and given peace in the liberty of Christ.

*And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. -Galatians 6:16*

It's also interesting that the anonymous author asks if Paul pointed this out "*over and over again,*" meaning that if God tells him something once, it's not good enough for him. The anonymous author, in order to be satisfied, would likely need to see it say many times over, and even then would not accept it because he has a presupposition that takes him away from the liberty in Christ and puts him in the bondage of the law he loves first and foremost. Paul, and other apostles, did point this out repeatedly, but not only can the anonymous author not see it (because he's blinded), but those in the Hebrew-roots cult could typically care less if we showed it to them.

The action of physical circumcision was for the old covenant between Abraham and his children, but even in the old covenant, as in the new covenant, circumcision is a representation of sanctification of the heart; to love the Lord God with all thine heart and thy soul:

*Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. -Deuteronomy 10:15-16*



*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*  
-Deuteronomy 30:6

And the circumcision/sanctification of the heart to love and serve the Lord God fulfills the law:

*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*  
-Matthew 22:36-38

If you want to be circumcised in the new covenant, love, honor, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, soul, and mind, and teach your children to do the same.

## Questions & Concerns

**QUESTION:** *Do you teach that baptism replaces circumcision?*

No; I believe it is error to teach that baptism replaces circumcision, and I do not make that argument. As we read earlier, Scripture tells us that practices like physical circumcision of the old covenant are nailed to the cross, and that baptism is an outward sign of our being born-again by the redeeming power of His blood, which is **a different sign for a different covenant**.

**QUESTION:** *Should uncircumcised people participate in the Passover feast?*

If a Christian is asking this question, I have a better question: Why not leave the Jewish Passover feast behind and move forward in Christ? I would highly suggest reading our article on that subject. (Read "[Should Christians Observe Jewish Passover?](#)" here at creationliberty.com for more details.)

If an uncircumcised Christian gets kicked out of a Jewish Passover tradition, praise God for that! We Christians who rightly divide the Word of Truth, and study to show ourselves approved unto God ([2Ti 2:15](#)), know that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Passover, and that the observance of it is no longer necessary because it has already been fulfilled in Him.

**QUESTION:** *Since the Bible says that the circumcised are Abraham's seed and possess the promises of God, shouldn't Christians be circumcised?*

No. First, let's look at Gal 3:

*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* -Galatians 3:26-29

In some sense, I suppose you could think of it like adopted children, but the point is that we are made heirs to the promises given to Abraham through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem some people have is with the "everlasting" promise:

*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. -Genesis 17:7*

The covenant was made with the Jews, but I'm not Jewish. However, people in the Hebrew-roots cult believe that Gentiles need to do all the old covenant traditions of the Jews in order to receive the promises of God, and that's not true.

Question: Do all children that receive an inheritance have the same requirements for that inheritance? Not necessarily. There are many instances in which a deceased parent leaves instructions of conditions the children have to meet in order to receive an inheritance, and those instructions are not always equal. One child may have more expectations put on them than another child, and since in the Song of Solomon, both the old covenant Jews and the new covenant church are labeled as the older and younger sisters in the family ([Sng 8:8](#)), it starts to make sense when looking at it from God's perspective instead of our own.

The promises of the everlasting covenant are not exclusive to the Jews. The Lord God can give His promised blessings to anyone He chooses, but that doesn't automatically mean the same requirements are placed on each child, which is why Paul pointed out that if we are Christ's, then we are heirs to the promise, circumcised in our hearts, without the need of circumcision of the flesh.

As a side note, the Jews no longer need to practice those traditions either, since the Lord Jesus Christ has fulfilled them. Just as Paul said "*there is neither Jew nor Greek*" in Christ, those who repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved and be heirs to the promise.