

Doctrine of Circumcision

1. God established the ritual of male circumcision with Abraham as a sign of the covenant.
 - *Genesis 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*
2. Circumcision was to take place on the eighth day after birth.
 - *Acts 7:8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.*
3. Abraham was to circumcise: his own children, descendants, any purchased slaves, and any proselytes.
4. The uncircumcised were to be considered as being "cut off" from the covenant of spiritual blessings.
5. Provisions were made for all who wanted to be part of a covenant relationship with God in that the poor and those outside the racial distinctive could be included. However, God had to be met according to His terms and His terms included: blood-suffering-humility-a sacrifice of self.
6. In the Old Testament the circumcision of the body was symbolic of the need for a special circumcision of the heart. The image is that the heart has become surrounded with the disease called sin. As a surgeon must cut away fatty tissue or unnatural growth so the heart must be spiritually circumcised. In particular greed must be cut away idolatry must be cut away anger must be cut away hatred must be cut away.
 - *Deuteronomy 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.*
 - *Deuteronomy 30:6 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.*
7. The physical tool used to circumcise the body is a sharp knife. The spiritual tool used to circumcise the heart is the *Word of God*.
 - *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

8. While human responsibility is involved (Jer. 4:4) the spiritual circumcising of the heart requires a Divine ability. God must circumcise the heart (Deut. 30:6).
 - *Jeremiah 4:4 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.*
9. When the Lord circumcises the heart of His elect people there will flow a natural love for God and new spiritual life.
 - *Deuteronomy 30:6 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.*
10. God never intended for man to forget that the physical act of circumcision was only a ritual to represent the spiritual circumcision of the heart.
11. The obedience of Abraham (Gen. 17:11), Moses (Exodus 4:25), and Joshua (Joshua 5:2,4) to perform the bloody ritual of physical circumcision, reflected a spiritual heart of obedience, love, and devotion.
12. With the passing of time, people paid less attention to the spiritual dimensions of the act of circumcision and gloried only in the physical mark which led Paul to argue against placing confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:1-9).
 - *Philippians 3:1-9 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*
13. In John 7:22 Jesus argued from the act of physical circumcision that it was right to perform miracles on the Sabbath. The point the Lord made was simple and powerful. If the Law allowed the cutting of the flesh on the Sabbath to symbolize the keeping of the covenant and minister to the soul, why should anyone become angry when someone was healed or made whole on the Sabbath?

- *John 7:22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man.*

14. With the resurrection of Christ the ceremonial ritual of circumcision could be abolished and emphasis focused exclusively upon the circumcision of the heart.

15. Not everyone understood the transition that had taken place from the physical to the spiritual.

- *Acts 15:5 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.*

16. Even the apostle Paul found the transition difficult to implement.

- *Acts 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.*

17. As time passed as Paul ministered more and more to the Gentiles, as the apostle understood the gospel more clearly, circumcision of the flesh gave way to the true spiritual circumcision of the heart whereby Paul affirmed that the church consists of those who are of the true circumcision.

- *Philippians 3:3 We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*