

## DOCTRINE OF CIRCUMCISION

### I. Vocabulary.

#### A. Hebrew vocabulary.

1. mul, 36X, to cut off or remove. The majority of the times this word is used refers to the act of circumcision.
2. mulah, 1X, the rite or act of circumcision. Ex 4:26
3. 'ar lah, 16X, foreskin of the male phallus.
4. 'arel, 34X, having the foreskin intact, uncircumcised.

#### B. Greek vocabulary.

1. peritemno, 17X, to cut around, to circumcise.
2. peritome, 36X, the act or rite of circumcision, those who have been circumcised, the state of having been circumcised.
3. akrobestia, 20X, used of the foreskin, one who has the foreskin intact, uncircumcised. a Gentile.
4. 1X, having the foreskin, uncircumcised.

### II. Definition.

Circumcision is the act by which the excess skin around the male phallus, called the foreskin, is removed by being cut completely off.

### III. Origin.

- A. While some suggest that circumcision was practiced before YHWH instituted it in Genesis 17, there is no proof.
- B. They offer several explanations as to why various groups have practiced this act, including:
  1. Cleanliness or hygienic reasons.
  2. Tribal marking.
  3. A rite of passage around the time of puberty.
  4. Vicarious human sacrifice.
  5. Religious distortion.
- C. The fact is that while some of these hypotheses may be related to the various causes surrounding the practice of circumcision, there is no compelling reason to reject the account of its origin in Genesis.
- D. Circumcision was established by God as the overt sign of the Abrahamic covenant.
- E. Jesus Christ acknowledged that it originated with the ancestors of Moses. Jn. 7:22

#### IV. Scope.

- A. The initial act of circumcision was performed by all the males in the household of Abraham who were older than eight days. Gen. 17:26-27
- B. Each male infant born after this event was to be circumcised on the eighth day of life. Gen. 17:12
- C. This applied to everyone born to Abraham, or born in his household, or acquired by him. Gen. 17:12
- D. Circumcision was the sign that they fell under the umbrella of the Abrahamic covenant. Gen. 17:10-11
- E. This practice was to be observed by all of the physical descendants of Abraham for perpetuity. Gen. 17:9,13
- F. Circumcision was to be observed by the Jews to remind them of their spiritual heritage and position "in Abraham."
- G. It was also to remind them that they were to emulate Abraham in terms of his adjustment to God.

#### V. The necessity of circumcision for Abraham and his descendants.

- A. It was strictly commanded by God as a perpetual observance. Gen. 17:9-13
- B. It was a prerequisite for observing the Passover. Ex. 12:48
- C. It was necessary to be circumcised in order to be fully accepted into the community of the Jews. Gen. 34:14-15
- D. Joshua was commanded to perform this ritual before entering Canaan. Josh. 5:2
- E. It will be necessary in the Millennium. Ezk. 44:9
- F. Failure to fulfill this ritual brought Divine discipline.
  - 1. Excommunication or even death. Gen. 17:14
  - 2. On the negligent parents. Ex. 4:25-26
  - 3. Separation from the covenant promises. Gen. 17:14

#### VI. Misconceptions.

- A. Many misconceptions have arisen in regard to this practice, which may be dispelled by careful study of the WOG.
- B. The most usual distortion of any ritual is confusing the ritual with the reality it is intended to portray.
- C. Circumcision was designed to portray one's association with Abraham, and be a reminder that one was to follow in the footsteps of his father, Abraham. Rom. 4:11-12
- D. Circumcision is a means of salvation. Rom. 4:9-10
  - 1. SAJG is not attained through works. Rom. 4:1-2; Eph. 2:8-9
  - 2. Abraham was already a believer at the time he was circumcised. Gen. 15:6
- E. Circumcision guaranteed one would participate in the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.
  - 1. All the men of Abraham's family, especially Ishmael, were

circumcised and Ishmael was rejected under the terms of the covenant. Gen. 17:19, 21:9-12

2. Women were never circumcised and they participated in the blessings. Gen. 21:1ff

F. Physical descent from Abraham and compliance with circumcision makes one acceptable to God.

1. The notion that if one was in Abraham made them acceptable to God is refuted by Jesus. Jn. 8:37ff

2. Paul states that circumcision in itself is not enough to commend one to God. Rom. 2:17,25

3. The Exodus generation was both physically descended from Abraham and circumcised, yet rejected by God. Josh. 5:5; Ps. 95:10-11

## VII. Symbolism.

A. The ritual of circumcision is used to illustrate several real truths in the Word of God.

B. It is used to portray retroactive positional truth and the positional separation from the STA by virtue of our position in Christ. Col. 2:11-13

1. The uncircumcised state represents the unbeliever under the complete domination of the STA. vs 13

2. Upon faith in Christ, God enters the believer into union with Christ. vs 10-11

3. Into the flesh of Jesus Christ the STA and its attendant production were imputed and judged. Rom. 6:6

4. Upon being entered into union with Christ, positionally the STA was "cut off", and as a result we are no longer to be under its domination. Col. 2:11; Rom. 6:6

5. We have been set free from the slavery to the STA and are exhorted to make our position in Christ true in our daily experience. Rom. 5:11-13

C. Circumcision is also used to portray the experiential setting aside of the STA.

1. It is commanded on various occasions. Deut. 10:16; Jere. 4:4

2. The uncircumcised heart represents the believer under STA domination and arrogance. Lev. 26:41

3. Living under the STA destines the believer for DD. Jere. 4:4

D. Uncircumcised is used in regard to the following:

1. As a derogatory term for those who were spiritually unclean. Jud. 14:3; ISam. 17:26

2. Those outside the commonwealth of Israel and so separated from the blessing of God. Eph. 2:11-12

3. Uncircumcised of heart represents negative volition toward

the truth. Jere. 9:25-26; Acts 7:51

4. Uncircumcised ears represents STA domination to the point that one will not listen to the truth. Jere. 6:10; Acts 7:51

#### VIII. Circumcision and the Church Age.

- A. Although circumcision became a rallying point of legalists in the early Church, physical circumcision has no significance in the CA.
  1. The advocates of this position were mainly Jewish. Acts 15:1, Phil. 3:2-3
  2. These were generally legalistic believers. Acts. 15:5
  3. They, like their fathers before them, confused ritual with reality.
  4. They are referred to as the false circumcision. Phil. 3:2
  5. They fell into the category of circumcised, yet uncircumcised. Jere. 9:25; Rom. 2:25
- B. The true circumcision is inner and not external. Rom. 2:28-29
  1. The mutilation of the body is of no value in the CWL. Col. 2:23
  2. The real issue is the STA, and the true circumcision places no confidence in the flesh. Rom. 7:18; Phil. 3:3
- C. Believers are commanded not to pursue circumcision, since it is of no benefit. ICor. 7:17-19; Gal. 5:6
- D. In Christ, whether you are circumcised or not is no issue. Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:11

#### IX. Conclusions.

- A. Circumcision is merely a sign or ritual which was commanded to Abraham and his descendants.
- B. The outward sign was to remind the Jew of the realities of the three adjustments which Abraham made, and to follow in the steps of his ancestor. Rom. 4:11-12
- C. For the CA believer it is no issue, and never commanded.
- D. The true issues of positional and experiential victory over the STA are not achieved by fleshly activity. ICor. 7:19
- E. The enforcement of this sign is tantamount to a heathen mutilation of the body. Phil. 3:2-3

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is

nothing, but what matters is the keeping  
of the commandments of God."  
I Corinthians 7:19