

Doctrinal Studies

Circumcision

1. SCRIPTURES TO STUDY: Col. 2:11; Gen. 17:10–14; John 7:22; Acts 7:8; I Cor. 7:18; Gal. 2:3; 5:2, 3; Rom. 3:30; 4:11; Gal. 2:9; 5:11; Gen. 12:1–4; 16:16; 17:1–14.
2. Circumcision is a surgical procedure involving the cutting away of the foreskin of the male organ. It is practiced as a ritual and also for hygienic purposes. The word “circumcision” is from two Latin words, *circum* meaning “around,” and *cise* meaning “to cut.” The Greek word is exactly equivalent: *peritome* (περιτομή)—*peri* means “around,” and *tome* means “to cut.”
3. Circumcision was established as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant—Genesis 17:10–14. In this passage the ritual with both its physical and spiritual significance occurred. In the physical aspect something unnecessary was removed, and in the spiritual aspect something unnecessary was removed.
 - The ritual in Gen. 17:10–14 was to set apart the Jewish nation of Israel as a part of God’s plan. Abraham was circumcised many years after his salvation. With the establishment of the Abrahamic covenant we see the rite of circumcision performed for the first time—Rom. 4:11.
 - *Literal* circumcision represented to the Jews their responsibility before the lord to disseminate the Word of God. Moses failed to have his youngest son circumcised and almost died the sin unto death—Ex. 4:24–26. No Jew could partake of the Passover without having been circumcised—Ex. 12:48. Jews came under discipline for not having circumcision in the *soul* (salvation by faith alone through Christ alone) to go along with their literal circumcision—Jer. 6:10; 9:25, 26. Ritual without reality is meaningless!
4. In the Age of Israel the spiritual significance of circumcision pictured a relationship with God, while the physical significance pictured a dedication of the man to the woman of his life. This was in stark contrast to the phallic cult that was prominent in Canaan at that time—Lev. 12:2, 3; doctrine of heathenism. Circumcision was a sign of separation unto God through His Word.
5. The ritual of circumcision has no *spiritual* significance in the Church Age—I Cor. 7:18, 19; Gal. 5:2, 3. “*Neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision.*”
6. The false issue of circumcision became a rallying point for false teachers and Judaizers in the early days of the Church—Acts 15:1–11; Gal. 6:12, 13.
7. Circumcision was originally used to distinguish Jews racially and nationally from other peoples—Gal. 2:8; Col. 4:11; Eph. 2:11, and Titus 1:10.

8. Circumcision was used to illustrate *retroactive positional sanctification*—Col. 2:11. On the Cross Jesus Christ died for *sin*. He did *not* die for any system promoted by Satan. On the Cross Jesus *rejected* satanic thinking and human good. Anything man tries to do to help God in His salvation work *mutilates* Gods grace—man’s efforts are *rejected*!

So then, God’s grace eliminates the works, energies, and talents of man *either* to secure man’s salvation, *or* to honor and glorify the Lord after salvation. Both salvation *and* the dynamics of the Christian life are gifts of God’s *grace*!

9. All rituals prescribed in the Bible require man to *do* something. But all spiritual realities presented in the Word require *God alone* to accomplish them, and specifically *reject* man’s efforts. Ritual, therefore, is *ahuman commemoration* of the reality of *divine accomplishment*. Performing ritual without the matching spiritual reality in the life indicates *malnutrition of the soul*!—Eph. 2:11, 12; Tit. 1:10.
10. Circumcision is used to picture a backslidden Christian in such passages as Jer. 6:10; 9:25, 26; Ezek. 44:7 and Acts 7:51.
11. Circumcision is used to illustrate the condition of the mind that comprehends the Grace of God—Jer. 4:4; Deut. 10:16. “*Circumcise the foreskin of your mind and heart; be no longer stubborn and hardened.*”
12. Circumcision is used to depict Christian growth—Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28, 29; Phil. 3:3.