

CIRCUMCISION

By Greg Lundstedt

A faithful study of the Scriptures sheds light on what physical circumcision was:

- Simply put physical circumcision is the cutting away of the foreskin of the male sex organ.
- Although circumcision was required by the Law, **Genesis 17 reveals circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham.** It is important to remember circumcision was the **sign of God's everlasting covenant with Abraham**, which was **based on faith** and this covenant **was salvific.**
- It was **not the sign of the Mosaic covenant, which was a works covenant and was never meant to save anyone, but was meant to reveal sin** (Rom 3:20, ch. 7).

I believe the Scriptures are clear that **the outward symbol of circumcision was always meant to represent an inward heart change.** Look at what Paul shares to the Romans as he illustrates who the true Jew is compared to the outward hypocrite.

*28 For he is not a Jew who is **one outwardly**; neither is circumcision that which is outward in **the flesh.** 29 But he is a Jew who is **one inwardly**; and circumcision is that which is **of the heart**, (see vs 15) **by the Spirit**, (see 2 Cor. 3) **not by the letter**; and his praise is **not from men, but from God.** (Romans 2:28-29)*

In Romans 2, we need to be careful that we do not go past what Paul was trying to explain in this passage. If we do we will woefully misinterpret this passage and make the church replace Israel. If we look at the passage closely, we see Paul is in context simply making a case that **Jews too are under sin (3:9).** **In proving this case, he points out that the true Jew is one that has had an inward heart change.**

Now the principle applies to all of us who are in Abraham by faith and not by race. As we see in Colossians it is Christ who does the circumcising, taking away sin, giving us an inward heart change when we believe.

Notice the **same spiritual reality, the need for the cleansing of the heart**, spoken of in **Romans 2 is threaded throughout the Old Testament.** Just look at **Deuteronomy 10:14**,

*14 Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. 15 Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. 16 **Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more.** (Deuteronomy 10:14-15)*

Listen to Jeremiah 4:3,

*3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns. 4 **Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart,** Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My wrath go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds. **And Who is it that does the heart circumcision?** (Jeremiah 4:3-4)*

Deuteronomy 30:6,

*Moreover the LORD your God will **circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live." (Deuteronomy 30:6) **God made it clear in the Old Testament, the hardness around the heart, the sin that corrupted and deceived needed to be cut away - circumcised.***

In **Colossians 2:11**, we see the same principle revealed in the Old Testament explained in light of the cross: **11 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.** (Colossians 2:11)

What does Paul mean by the phrase the removal of the body of the flesh? Now remember what he just said, "in Him you were also circumcised with a **circumcision made without hands...**" This is not a physical act. **It is a spiritual act.**

It is a spiritual act in which by faith in Christ, we are forgiven of all our sins, because of what Jesus did on the cross:

*¹¹ 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; ¹² 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. ¹³ And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions**, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and **He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.***
(Colossians 2:11-14)

So then physical circumcision was the sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham. It was an external action that always symbolized an internal heart change ultimately provided for by faith in Christ. Has your heart been circumcised through faith in Christ?