

Biblical Circumcision, Physical By Pastor Harry

Synopsis

In the OT, circumcision is seen as an outward sign of membership of Israel, the people of God.

The significance of circumcision in God's covenant with Abraham

[Ge 17:10–14](#)

Genesis 17:10–14 (NASB95) — **10** “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. **11** “And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. **12** “And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. **13** “A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. **14** “But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

See also [Ac 7:8](#)

Acts 7:8 (NASB95) — **8** “And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

Circumcision is also for Abraham's descendants

[Ge 17:7](#)

Genesis 17:7 (NASB95) — **7** “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

Circumcision as a sign of national identity

Dinah's brothers and the Shechemites:

[Ge 34:8–9](#); [Ge 34:14–17](#)

Genesis 34:8–9 (NASB95) — **8** But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. **9** “Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves.

Genesis 34:14–17 (NASB95) — **14** They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. **15** “Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, **16** then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. **17** “But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go.”

[Ex 4:24–26](#); [Jos 5:4–8](#)

Exodus 4:24–26 (NASB95) — **24** Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. **25** Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and threw it at Moses’ feet, and she said, “You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me.” **26** So He let him alone. At that time she said, “You are a bridegroom of blood”— because of the circumcision.

Joshua 5:4–8 (NASB95) — **4** This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. **5** For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. **6** For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. **7** Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. **8** Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.

Circumcision is integrated into the Mosaic law

[Le 12:3](#); [Jn 7:22](#) It was later sometimes forgotten that circumcision predated the Mosaic law.

Leviticus 12:3 (NASB95) — **3** ‘On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

John 7:22 (NASB95) — **22** “For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.

Circumcision as an important Passover restriction

[Ex 12:44](#); [Ex 12:48–49](#); [Jdg 14:3](#) Some of Israel’s neighbors practiced circumcision, but not the Philistines.

Exodus 12:44 (NASB95) — 44 but every man’s slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it.

Exodus 12:48–49 (NASB95) — 48 “But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. **49** “The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you.”

Judges 14:3 (NASB95) — 3 Then his father and his mother said to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she looks good to me.”

Circumcision was not necessarily a sign of consecration to God

[Je 9:25–26](#)

Jeremiah 9:25–26 (NASB95) — 25 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised— **26** Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart.”

NT accounts of circumcision practiced in obedience to the law

[Lk 1:59](#) John; [Lk 2:21](#) Jesus Christ; [Jn 7:23](#) Circumcision was permitted on the Sabbath; [Php 3:5](#) Paul refers to his own circumcision; [Ac 16:3](#) Timothy

Luke 1:59 (NASB95) — 59 And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.

Luke 2:21 (NASB95) — 21 And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

John 7:23 (NASB95) — 23 “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?”

Philippians 3:5 (NASB95) — 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

Acts 16:3 (NASB95) — 3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

The subject of circumcision debated by the first Christians

[Ac 10:45](#); [Ac 11:2](#); [Ac 15:5](#); [Ga 2:3](#) That Titus, a Greek, was not required to be circumcised illustrates the change in the attitude of the church concerning the relevance of the law to Gentile believers; [Eph 2:11](#); [Col 3:11](#); [Tt 1:10](#)

Acts 10:45 (NASB95) — 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

Acts 11:2 (NASB95) — 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

Acts 15:5 (NASB95) — 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

Galatians 2:3 (NASB95) — 3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Ephesians 2:11 (NASB95) — 11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—

Colossians 3:11 (NASB95) — 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Titus 1:10 (NASB95) — 10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,