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Circumcision: The Eternal Sign – Part 2

Deuteronomy 6:25

And if we are careful to obey all this law before the YHVH our God, as He has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.”

Notice that it doesn't say it will be our “salvation”, but rather our righteousness.

As we have stated in the first part of this teaching, we want to make it clear from the start that we do not believe circumcision is a requirement for salvation. However, we do believe that obedience to the Word should be the desire of us all. The question in play on this topic is if obedience includes that of circumcision.

We hope by the end of this teaching that we will have offered some assistance in helping one make that decision for themselves along with clarifying our stance on this topic. There is no doubt that there are some scriptures that appear to bring confusion on this topic. But we must remember that God is not the author of confusion.

Before we dig into some hard verses to understand please consider these words of Yeshua regarding circumcision.

John 7:22-23

²² Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath.

²³ Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?

Even though circumcision was first given through the patriarchs, notice Yeshua mentions that circumcision can be done on the Sabbath *so that* the law of Moses may not be broken.

Thus circumcision is established in the law as instruction to be followed. Knowing that it was given in the Torah by Moses, let us now consider Matthew 23.

Matthew 23:1-3

¹ Then Jesus (Yeshua) said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³ So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

So what’s the conclusion here? Obey Moses. The Torah. What’s in the Torah? Circumcision.

Many are quick to show that the Torah instructs the circumcision that was to be done, was to newborns on the 8th day. And this is true. However, this does not negate the issue of adults needing to be circumcised as well. Remember, as noted in the first teaching, those under Joshua were to be circumcised before entering the land. Why? Because they as believers were not circumcised on the 8th day.

They could have easily debated that they were past the 8th day implying this didn’t apply to them. However, as noted in the first teaching, that command was given to the parents. The child himself had no control over that. This example in Joshua clearly demonstrates that if one has not have been circumcised on the 8th day, they **STILL** need to be circumcised.

And here we are today with verses given by Paul that seems to say just the opposite.

We know what the Word says, but let us look at some of these verses that seemingly contradict the word and see what we come up with.

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

¹⁷ Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

¹⁸ Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.

¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts.

²⁰ Each one should remain in the situation, which he was in when God called him.

²¹ Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you — although if you can gain your freedom, do so.

²² For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave.

²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

²⁴ Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

Verse 23 truly sets the context of what Paul is saying here.

1 Corinthians 7:23

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

Think about it for a minute. How does ANYONE become a slave of men by getting circumcised? This happens **IF** you get circumcised according to someone’s teachings and traditions instead of it being out of obedience and in growth to the Father.

As mentioned before, Paul opposed any teaching of circumcision that said it was a requirement **FOR**

salvation. This was the very debate in Acts 15. The circumcision party said that the new converts **HAD** to be circumcised immediately for salvation.

As we covered in the first teaching, this was proven wrong by the Jerusalem council. And this is what is being covered here again by Paul in 1 Corinthians. Let's break down some of these verses and see what we come up with.

1 Corinthians 7:17

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

First let's note that there is no Greek for the word "I" in the last sentence of this verse. Compared to this verse here in.

1 Corinthians 3:6

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

The word for "I" here is ego. ἐγώ= ego. Meaning "I" in singular and "we" in its plural form.

Why is this important to note? Though it is the norm to interpret certain phrases with the personal injection of "I" into them, it is not necessarily the case for every phrase. Meaning, since the word "ego" is not mentioned here, or any other word implying that this arrangement or rule is given straight from Paul, it is very possible that Paul is reiterating that which was determined from the Jerusalem Council instead of it coming straight from him alone. However, even if one wants to say that this phrase needs to be interpreted with the personal injection of "I" on Paul's account, we know that he is doing so with the knowledge of the council's decision backing him up.

And what was that decision? Besides the four instructions of things to avoid, it's that the new believers should grow every week as they learn from Torah on the Sabbaths. Meaning what? Grow from where you are at in life. What ever situation you are in, grow. Thus the beginning of verse 17

1 Corinthians 7:17

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him...

Now verse 18

1 Corinthians 7:18

Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.

The later part of the verse says ...*Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.*

Why does he say this? Because circumcision does not save you. Thus, his comment in the next verse

1 Corinthians 7:19

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what

counts.

The act of circumcision in itself is nothing. However, the act of obedience is a different story. Thus don't get circumcised unless it is a conscious act of obedience to the Father.

But it's the first part of verse 18 that is the most difficult to understand.

1 Corinthians 7:18

Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised.

How can one become uncircumcised? You can't. However, the word for uncircumcised here in the first part of verse 18 is not the same as the one used in the second part.

“...He should not become **uncircumcised**. Was a man **uncircumcised** when he was called? ...”

These are actually two different Greek words for “uncircumcised”.

Here is the second ... ἀκροβυστία = akrobustia. It carries only one meaning.... “Uncircumcised”.

The Greek word, for the first one here, is a word that carries other meanings. We could not find this word anywhere else in the scriptures. It's meaning consists of “to draw in” or “to bring upon”.

It is believed, *by some*, that circumcision back then did not completely remove all of the foreskin. Thus, if someone wanted to become “uncircumcised” they would then begin a process to stretch the remaining foreskin and thus “Bring it upon” as it was before. And this does indeed make sense.

But there is no evidence, in the Scriptures, that say any foreskin was to be left. Again, it makes sense. But we are concerned that this might just be trying to force an answer simply ... just to have an answer.

We don't necessarily disagree with it, but we are still curious. Simply because it seems strange that the Father would want something “half done” if you will. It just seems in this case it would be “all” or “nothing”. Know what I mean?

When I think of a circumcised heart, I think of the old as being completely gone. Likewise, to me, it only makes sense that the same would apply physically as well.

And we also understand that there is a debate that the circumcisions of today are not correct. But we're not sure if there is enough evidence to **TRULY** prove which way is correct, biblically that is. But with this in mind, what would be another option that would give a possible solution to this seemingly difficult verse?

Let's apply one of the other meanings to this word and see if it makes any sense.

1 Corinthians 7:18

Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become **DRAWN IN**.

But how can this make any sense? Actually, it does IN EVERY WAY. *“He should not become drawn in”*

Into what though? ...

Answer ...The mentality that circumcision is a requirement for salvation. The very argument that Paul has been debating with the circumcision group all these years. How easy it could have been for one who was already circumcised to simply agree with the circumcision party in saying that it was necessary for salvation. Thus validating him as one in their party.

And so, Paul could be saying “Don’t be drawn into this belief just because you are already circumcised”. And then he addresses those who are not circumcised in the next part of the verse to not get circumcised. In order ... to keep *them* from falling prey to the circumcision party as well.

Let’s read verse 18 and 19 together...

1 Corinthians 7:18-19

¹⁸ Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised (or drawn in). Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.

¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. **Keeping God’s commands is what counts.**

“Keeping God’s commands is what counts.”

This is the focus of Paul here. What’s the other option? Being circumcised **FOR** salvation. And Paul addressed both perspectives of men, whether circumcised already or not, to avoid this mentality.

Again, we know that circumcision is a command, but it should be done out of a willing obedience and not out of a fearful obligation. We realize that there may be some who differ with us on this understanding of verse 18. But we do believe it offers a possible solution to what has been confusing for many over the years. And what has appeared as a possible forced interpretation. Again, verse 23 truly sets the context of what Paul is saying here.

1 Corinthians 7:23

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

It’s all about making oneself a slave to men. Either of these two interpretations given for verse 18 would have had men placing themselves under the teaching of the circumcision party. Thus, enslaving them to those beliefs.

Whether if they would have stretched the foreskin in order to be circumcised under the authority of the circumcision party OR would have simply left their circumcision as it was and was drawn into the belief that it was a requirement for their salvation, ... Either way they would spread this belief to others. Either way they would have been submitting to the circumcision party. And **THIS** is what Paul was trying to avoid.

For if one is drawn into this belief, their flesh may be circumcised but their hearts... are not. They would find themselves being just like those referenced in the Book of Maccabees as discussed in part one of this teaching.

A big debate that has come in the Body of Messiah lately is that of celebrating Passover.

Can one who is not circumcised celebrate the Passover with those who are circumcised? Let's consider this for a moment.

Exodus 12:48

“An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the YHWH’s Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it.

Well, this seems to be pretty clear-cut. So then, did Timothy, before he was circumcised, observe Passover with local believers who were circumcised? No. Otherwise they would have been breaking that which was given through Moses. That which Yeshua said we are to obey in Matthew chapter 23.

There is really no reason for them to NOT obey that which was given by Moses.

Were there believers who were a part of the body of Messiah who were not circumcised? Yes. No doubt. But this did not bypass the instruction, as given through Moses, on how the Passover was to be observed. Passover was something serious and it was not to be observed lightly.

Some would say “What about Titus? He wasn’t circumcised right away either.” And ... he didn’t partake in Passover either. Or else, he would have been breaking God’s law.

However, let’s face it. Things were different back then compared to today. During the years that the New Testament was being written, they had the temple. Yet, today, we cannot truly observe Passover as we have no temple. Whatever we do for Passover, it’s truly just a memorial.

The directions are pretty clear.

Deuteronomy 16:5-6

⁵ You must not sacrifice the Passover in **any town** the YHWH your God gives you
⁶ except in the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt.

So we cannot sacrifice the Passover in any town but only in the place for the dwelling of his name. The place of the temple shows where He has placed his name. It is the temple where we are to appear before the Lord.

Let’s go 10 verses farther down...

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

¹⁶ Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed:
¹⁷ Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

We have no temple, thus no place where He has set His name, no place where we can appear before

him.

Some may quickly say “We know that Jerusalem is the place where he has set His name and that is the City of the Lord.” To which... we agree. But we still have no temple to appear before him. So even if you lived in the city of Jerusalem, how can you appear before Him? You can't. ...Not Biblically as directed in the Torah anyway.

So knowing that we are physically unable to observe the Passover as described in the Scriptures, much like those who were in exile to Babylon, does it matter if one is circumcised, or not, to partake in the meal with fellow believers?

This is where the debate gets heated for many. It does seem, that if we can't follow the Feast as described in the Torah, like those who were in exile to Babylon, that it shouldn't make any difference.

At this moment in time, we can only give you what our heart believes one can do. If a male is not circumcised, he should not be prohibited from participating in the Passover celebration. “Why?” is the big question. This is why. Simply because it was the Passover Lamb they were unable to eat, this is what was forbidden. Let's read it again.

Exodus 12:48

“An alien living among you who wants to celebrate YHVH's Passover, must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it.

Not having a temple obviously prevents us from appearing before the Lord. As biblically directed that is. And not having this prevents us from truly having a Passover meal. So how can one be prohibited from eating something that no one is currently able to biblically participate in. Anything that is unable to be obeyed because of no temple or priesthood, we simply memorialize until the Lord returns and enables us to fully obey again. This includes eating the Passover lamb. But let it be known that this should not be a license to omit this act of obedience from one's life.

We recently received an e-mail on this topic but it had a slightly different twist to the situationIt read

If a man has recently come into obedience but has not had a physical circumcision yet, must he be excluded from the Passover?

He is totally obedient and is circumcised in the heart but is financially unable to have a circumcision and is also having a hard time finding a doctor who will do the circumcision without medical necessity. He wants to have it done and is going to as soon as he can but it will be too late for Passover this year. Please let us know what you think.

Thanks,

We recently had to change our response to them regarding the Passover as we see no foundation to keep them from participating from something that no one can biblically partake of. Yet again this should not be a license to omit this act of obedience from one's life. We perfectly understand the position they presented by way of finances and availability of a doctor.

And again, we admit that we are truly unable to fully observe this feast as prescribed because of no

priesthood or temple showing where He has established His Name. Yet, we believe that we should still do our best to observe all that we can when possible.

Though we understand this position, we see no other scripture that presents a different scenario on this topic. These would be questions I guess one would need to answer if in this situation....

1 - How long have you been a believer in this situation? A couple months? A couple of years? For one who is circumcised in the heart and believes they are to be circumcised will make it happen eventually, regardless of how long they need to save to have it done.

2 - Are you in fact doing all that you can to have this done?

Again, we understand this kind of situation and one could debate that since we can't fully observe the feast as described in the Scriptures, what's the difference? But, again, we must understand that we are to do all that we can if we are truly wanting to pursue obedience from the heart.

So is one breaking Exodus 12:48 if they are not circumcised and yet they still join in a Passover celebration? No because no one can biblically observe this feast as it is described in the scriptures. But circumcision is still something that **CAN** be done. The individual just needs to save to have it done.

To be honest, if I knew I had a **CLOSE** friend in this position, I would help financially to assist in covering the cost of the procedure. If any brother is in this position of need and is truly wanting to obey, I believe there is nothing wrong for him to consult his local brothers for help.

Circumcision is NOT something for the new believer. It's something for you to grow into. Something that you are to be convinced of. It's the Final exam if you will. The act of obedience that is to be the personal sign between you and the Father. Just as it was for Abraham in his later years.

For even Titus himself was not convinced to be circumcised right away...

Galatians 2:3

Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

But in this act of obedience, one must not think that this is their "proof" of following after the ways of God. Compare Paul's words to the Romans.

Romans 2:25

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.

Meaning, Circumcision has value as it is an act of obedience to God's instructions. But if you disregard other instructions in the Law, it'll be as if that sign of circumcision is nothing.

In fact, the surrounding text informs the audience being spoken to that though they may teach the law, if they don't obey it, they would be condemned by those who do obey it yet are not circumcised.

Those who are not circumcised and keep the law's requirements, will be regarded as though they were

circumcised. And yet, though the audience themselves were circumcised, they would be regarded as if they weren't.

Circumcision of the heart ... is the goal. Circumcision of the flesh is to be the result of circumcised heart. Again ...

Romans 2:25

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.

Thus circumcision is to be the result of a heart that pursues all of God's law not just some of it. Circumcision is not to be jumped into. It's to be a willful and well considered decision for the covenant that it represents.

Circumcision is not FOR salvation but to confirm and show your salvation between you and the Father.

Just as those who were in Galatia were trying to be justified BY the Law, one who gets circumcised FOR salvation is therefore required to obey the rest of the law... since they wish to be saved on that premise, the premise that was being preached by the circumcision party. Thus, Paul's words in verse 3...

Galatians 5:3

Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

Circumcision is a SIGN of the covenant. Not a mandate for salvation. Circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:11). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all circumcised. Even Yeshua our Messiah was circumcised (Luke 2:21). The Apostle Paul as well (Philippians 3:5). If it is our heart's intent to follow the example of these men, then one should not look down on the practice of circumcision.

They should be encouraged to have this sign as a matter of simple obedience. Yet, being circumcised as an adult should always be entered with the knowledge that Abraham was considered righteous while *uncircumcised* (Romans 4:9-10 and Genesis 15:6), only to be circumcised later in life, at the age of ninety-nine, as he grew in the faith (Romans 4:11 and Genesis 17:1, 10- 11).

So should one be circumcised? Yes, if it is being done out of a heart of obedience. But no, if it is being done out of a feeling of requirement for salvation.

Again, we at 119 Ministries do not consider circumcision to be a salvation issue. As Colossians 3:11 makes this very clear.

Colossians 3:11

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Yet, we do recognize the place of circumcision for the believer, given the right motive. Circumcision was a controversial issue in the New Testament because gentiles were coming to the faith who were not

circumcised as infants as instructed in the Scriptures.

In recent past, circumcision has been the common norm in the medical field in most countries. However, it appears this is quickly changing. We find it interesting that at the same time the awareness to the Father's Torah still applies to believers today, that child circumcision is becoming "taboo" or even illegal ... in some places around the world.

We believe that families pursuing Torah should be encouraged to circumcise their infant males. Simply out of obedience to the eternal word. Plus, it is believed to have health benefits as well. An adult being circumcised should be an issue of maturity in the faith. Again, just like with Abraham.

Though it is not necessary to be physically circumcised in order to be saved, going through the procedure as a simple act of obedience, and not a conversion procedure, should be encouraged by the body as obedience to the Word.

Now, allow me to present a situation that was shared with me not too long ago. Let's say you've just come to Torah, yet your spouse has not.

This means that we have a house that is divided. Thus, the man is truly not over his house since it's divided.

Should the Father get his son circumcised though he is unable to be over him all the time? The concern that was given to me was, would this bring judgment on the head of the house or even on the child since the spouse would not join in raising the child in Torah?

In this particular case, the son was already 5 years old. The problem that we see, with this, is that the instruction given to the parents ... is to circumcise the child when he is 8 days old. Not before, not after.

It would seem, that if this instruction is not followed by the parents, for whatever reason, the child would have to choose circumcision on his own later in life. Much like those who were circumcised under Joshua before entering the promise land.

Could a parent have their child circumcised AFTER he is 8 days old? While we see no instruction forbidding it, if a parent was to do such a thing, they need to understand that it is not being done in obedience to the command given to the parents regarding circumcision. For that instruction specifies the 8th day.

If the child is just born and the decision to circumcise is debated between the two parents, we can see how this would create a difficult situation and we're not sure we have the answer.

Yet we must understand that we are not living in a day or even in a country where Torah is being followed as a whole. And if you think about it, Torah is not even the Law of the land in Jerusalem today. So, what are we saying? Obey where you have ability to obey. There is nothing more we can do beyond that.

The day will come when we will be able to serve in 100% obedience, but until then, we continue as those who were captive in Babylon. Simply doing what we can.

As mentioned in the first teaching, we believe the point, that must not be overlooked, is that of circumcision of the heart... to both male and female. The rest follows from there.

I once heard it said that circumcision is required if you want to be in the family of Abraham, the body of Messiah. In their debate they used the following Scriptures.

Genesis 34:15-17

¹⁵ We will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. ¹⁶ Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We'll settle among you and become one people with you. ¹⁷ But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we'll take our sister and go."

Their defense was showing how these verses declared circumcision the foundation for being a part of the family. And I agree, when looking at these verses only, it does indeed give that appearance. Yet let's read a couple verses before to see if this is really what's going on...

Genesis 34:13-14

¹³ Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's sons replied **deceitfully** as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. ¹⁴ They said to them, "We can't do such a thing; we can't give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us.

This is the story where Shechem had defiled Dinah and the brothers were saddened and angry. They had no intent of joining with these people. Thus, their deceitful reply. If you read the rest of the story, you find what the brothers' intent was.

Genesis 34:25

Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male.

This is not a good reference to defend circumcision as mandatory for the body of Messiah.

In wrapping this teaching up, we want to again say that we do not believe circumcision is a salvation issue. Yet we DO believe that it is an instruction given by the Father that one should pursue in obedience and not in obligation.

And because it can be obeyed, we believe one should pursue it in obedience, but one should not be excluded from any Passover celebration since Exodus 12:48 is very clear that it is the eating of the Passover lamb the uncircumcised is prohibited from eating that we are biblically unable to prepare for anyone.

In conclusion, we'd like to share a quote we ran across that we found rather interesting. Especially considering the source.

It's from the 4th century "Church Father" Epiphanius. It's concerning the ancient Nazarenes. Obviously we differ with this "Church Father" as we don't consider ourselves "Fettered" by the circumcision, the Sabbath or any of God's instructions.

Yet we found it interesting nonetheless as he refers to and expounds on believers who believe in

Messiah Yeshua, and also pursue the Torah.

It reads...

"But these sectarians... did not call themselves Christians--but "Nazarenes," ... However they are simply complete Jews. They use not only the New Testament but the Old Testament as well, as the Jews do... They have no different ideas, but confess everything exactly as the Law proclaims it and in the Jewish fashion-- except for their belief in Messiah, if you please! For they acknowledge both the resurrection of the dead and the divine creation of all things, and declare that Elohim is one, and that his son is Yeshua the Messiah. They are trained to a nicety in Hebrew. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets, and the... Writings... are read in Hebrew, as they surely are by the Jews. They are different from the Jews, and different from Christians, only in the following. They disagree with Jews because they have come to faith in Messiah; but since they are still fettered by the Law--circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest-- they are not in accord with Christians.... they are nothing but Jews.... They have the Good news according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew. For it is clear that they still preserve this, in the Hebrew alphabet, as it was originally written. (Epiphanius; Panarion 29)"

May we never lose sight that Yeshua, the living Word, lived the Torah. Giving us his example. And instructed us to do the same in Matthew 23. And may we never forget that this included that of circumcision.

We pray you have been blessed by this study. Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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