

Position Paper: Circumcision

Since the logic for physical circumcision provides the necessary understanding to comprehend the great falling away of the Christian Church (2 Thess 2:3), followed by the recovery of the fullness of the circumcised nation and Jesus' words about patient endurance (Matt 24:13–14), circumcision has entered recent eschatological discussions. Its entry has created the need for wider distribution of its logic, and of the understanding used by the Philadelphia Church in its apologetics and criticism of Paul's epistles.

Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin of the penis, the natural covering which when removed produces nakedness in the most hidden part of the male. In Scripture, its appearance begins with Abraham, and the nakedness it produces becomes symbolic of Adam's state in Eden, when obedience to God was his covering for sin and when his disobedience caused him to realize his nakedness. God had told Abraham, then Abram, to sojourn in the land that had been Eden (Gen 12:1). By faith (Heb 11:8), Abraham obeyed. Following this demonstrated obedience, the Lord then made His covenant with Abraham:

As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations...So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from my people; he has broken my covenant. (Gen 17:9–14)

Despite the apparent construction of the sentence, the referent for *my covenant* isn't circumcision, but found in the first words spoken by the Lord: "I am God Almighty; **walk before me and be blameless**, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly" (Gen 17:1–2). Circumcision is, rather, the ratifying sign of Abram's acceptance of *my covenant* for himself, his offspring, and the generations that would come from them. *My covenant* came with conditions. Abram, whose name was here changed to Abraham (Abr/ah/am) through the addition of voiced breath, was to walk blameless before God, who would in turn make him the father of a multitude of nations and would give to Abraham and his offspring the land of his sojourning as an everlasting possession—would give Eden, the garden of God where the tree of life grows, to Abraham and his offspring. Plus, He would be the God of Abraham's generations.

My covenant was physical, was made in the flesh, and was for physical blessings for physically walking blameless before God; it was a type of the eternal covenant by which the promised land of Canaan becomes glorification. Abraham's circumcision of his household that very day (Gen 17:26–27) was Abraham's acceptance of the covenant on behalf of the physical generations that would come from him; he ratified the covenant for his posterity. For them, Abraham agreed that he and they were to walk blameless before God, which he did (Gen 26:5)

Therefore, physical circumcision became the everlasting sign of the commitment of Abraham's generations to walking blameless before God. Acceptance of physical circumcision placed upon the male the obligation to live by the laws of God. Because the male was circumcised at eight days age, the male's parents accepted this obligation on behalf of the male, and bequeathed this obligation to the male as their legacy to him. And Abraham's generations chafed under this obligation that they never fully understood. Thus, these generations went into captivity, repeatedly. For the element missing from

their understanding of the obligation to walk blameless appears in the second covenant mediated by Moses.

And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your [*naphesh* or mind], then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you....And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [mind], that you may live. (Deu 30:1–6)

The land of these Israelites' father was the land where Abraham had sojourned, was Eden, where the tree of life grows. There, they would live with everlasting life.

Abraham received the Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Alion*] through which comes spiritual birth when vocalized breath was added to his name at ninety-nine years of age. For decades he had walked by faith before God, obeying “when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance” (Heb 11:8). Faith that produced obedience preceded Abraham receiving spiritual birth, after which he was expected to walk blameless before God. Under the second covenant mediated by Moses (Deu chptrs 29 through 31), faith producing obedience while in a foreign land precedes the offer of circumcision of the heart and mind, a euphemistic expression for receiving the Breath of God. Circumcision, again, produces the demand that the male walk blameless before God, as Abraham was expected to do under *my covenant*.

Because of Abraham's faith, circumcision and spiritual birth were offered to his offspring and to his generations. With circumcision, Abraham's generations cut away their beast-like skin covering, thereby making themselves naked before God as Adam was before the Lord made for Adam and his wife clothing of skins (Gen 3:21). These generations of Abraham were to cover their sin with their obedience, or their blameless walk before God. Their walk wasn't with perfection, for all have sinned, but by faith, doing whatever God asked of them when He asked. And when this faith was demonstrated through their obedience, they received spiritual birth through the Breath of God.

Faith demonstrated through obedience is a matter of following the Lamb of God wherever He leads (Rev 14:1–4). It is hearing the words of Jesus and believing the One who sent Him (John 5:24). Thus, when the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to receive everlasting life (Luke 18:18), the first thing Jesus did was ascertain that the young ruler was walking blameless before God. The ruler wasn't, but the ruler thought he was—and this is an important point since under the second covenant mediated by Moses judgment is given to the spiritual Israelite, the Israelite who has a circumcised heart and mind (Deu 30:15). Hypocrisy is the spiritual killer. Disciples are to do what they know is right. A lack of knowledge isn't counted against them; failure to do is. So after Jesus ascertained that the young ruler walked blameless, Jesus told the young ruler to sell all he had and to give to the poor. This, the ruler couldn't do: the ruler lacked faith. He was unwilling to follow the Lamb where He led. The ruler lacked what Abraham repeatedly demonstrated, even to offering up Isaac.

The Apostle Paul writes, “What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching this law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:30–32).

Because of the orthodoxy and tradition that has developed over the past two millennia, Paul's words need set in context. He will, in half a dozen sentences, cite the second covenant mediated by Moses, saying that this covenant is “the righteousness based on faith” (Rom 10:6 — compare with Deu

30:11–14). Why? Because obedience comes while in a foreign land. For Gentiles, this righteousness based on faith will have them leave their traditions and customs (the equivalent of a circumcised Israelite living in a foreign land) and begin living as Judeans (Gal 2:14)¹. The Gentile converts at Colossae were so doing, but they were under pressure to return to their former pagan practices. Thus, Paul tells them not to let anyone pass judgment on them “in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath” (Col 2:16). All of the previous are shadows of things to come (v. 17), just as the physical nation is the shadow of the spiritual nation; just as the first Adam was a shadow, or type of the last Adam (Rom 5:14 & 1 Cor 15:45–49); just as the first Eve is a shadow of the second Eve, the Church.

Gentile converts at Colossae had changed their eating and drinking habits. They had begun to obey God in the foreign land of roast pork and oysters on the half-shell. They had begun to obey in the foreign land of the seventh day of the week being the biggest market day, in the foreign land of Bacchanalian festivals instead of the feasts of God (Lev chptr 23). They had begun to live as Judeans in their former geographical landscapes. What changed was their mental topography. Therefore, they were by faith returning to God even though they had not previously been God’s holy nation. The Father had drawn them from the world (John 6:44, 65) and had made them His holy nation (1 Pet 2:9) through writing His laws on their hearts and minds, another euphemistic expression, like circumcising hearts and minds, for receiving the Holy Spirit.

Gentile converts that do not leave behind their former traditions and practices, and begin to live as spiritual Judeans lack faith. They will not follow the Lamb wherever He leads; they do not keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17). Their righteousness doesn’t exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees (Matt 5:20), who had the law and did not keep it (John 7:19). These converts have the laws of God written on their hearts and minds; the law is not far from them, nor too hard to keep. They would rather, though, keep their former traditions, which negate the laws of God. Thus, they will in no way enter the kingdom of heaven.

Throughout his ministry, the Apostle Paul fought the circumcision faction, leading men from the Jerusalem Church who taught that Gentile converts must first become physical Israelites before becoming spiritual Israelites. In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul begins with a classic Aristotelian argument against the teachings of the circumcision faction, then resorts to proverbially throwing the kitchen sink at the saints in Galatia, some of whom had been persuaded to become physically circumcised. He understands what he never well expresses: physical circumcision comes with the requirement that the person walk blameless before God, with his obedience as his only covering for sin. Thus, circumcision negates the importance of Jesus’ sacrifice as the paschal Lamb for the household of God.

The logic for circumcision was lost prior to the 1st-Century, for the apostles and Church elders that advocated continued circumcision would not have done so if they had understood what they were teaching. In this way, they foreshadow the many endtime false prophets that espouse physical fulfillment of prophecies about the recovery of Israel a second time. Paul’s doubly accursed gospel is the mingling of the physical and spiritual covenants. Similar mingling was used by such prophecy pundits as Ellen G. White and Herbert W. Armstrong, and is continuing to be used by their theological descendants as well as by most pundits within the Evangelical Church.

The circumcision faction and endtime false prophets initially seem to share few similarities, but both have caused or will cause the rejection of disciples. To comprehend the justification for their

¹ Paul doesn’t condemn what Peter has been teaching Gentile converts, but Peter’s hypocrisy. Peter separated himself from the uncircumcised converts when the circumcision faction arrived from Jerusalem. If Peter was attempting to maintain peace by doing so, he erred. For circumcision negates Christ’s sacrifice through its retention of the requirement that the circumcised male walk blameless before God. The circumcised male’s covering for sin is his obedience, not Christ’s righteousness.

juxtaposition, a person must realize that the scribes and Pharisees were the derivative of the remnant of Israel that had returned to Jerusalem from the nation's Babylonian captivity. Under Ezra, this remnant had left to rebuild the temple. Israel didn't leave Babylon as a liberated people; rather, the majority of the nation had prospered in Babylon, and remained in Persia even after Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to finish the work Ezra had begun.

The Sabbath-keeping Christian denominations that developed from the Reformed Movement of the 16th-Century were foreshadowed by the remnant of circumcised Israel that left Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem—disciples are the temple of God; rebuilding the temple constitutes restoring all truth. The early Sabbath movement multiplied disciples as the remnant of Israel that had returned to Jerusalem multiplied physically. And as the circumcised remnant determined to never again trespass the law of Moses, especially the Sabbath, the spiritual remnant that left spiritual Babylon elevated the Sabbath to the status of an idol.

The majority of Israel remained in Babylon; likewise, the majority of spiritual Israel remained in spiritual Babylon when the remnant left to rebuild the temple. Thus, the Sadducees and the Pharisees as derivatives of the remnant of the physical nation that left Babylon foreshadow the derivative denominations that have developed from the 16th and 17th Century Seventh Day Baptists. These Sabbath-keeping derivatives come from the teachings of Ellen G. White (Seventh Day Adventists), Andrew Dugger (Church of God 7th Day), and Herbert W. Armstrong (the splintered Worldwide Church of God), along with other less known evangelists. As far as can be determined from Scripture, the leading men from Jerusalem that constituted the circumcision faction were former Sadducees and Pharisees who had accepted Christ after Calvary. Their endtime spiritual equivalent will be evangelists from the derivative denominations that, following Israel's liberation from sin when the Son of Man is revealed, mingle physical fulfillment of prophecies with spiritual fulfillment. These false teachers can today be recognized through their consistent insertion of Rome, the Holy Rome Empire, and the Roman Church into the visions of Daniel. These false teachers will inevitably identify the woman of Revelation chapter 17 as the Roman Church, and the king of the North as the head of a European coalition of ten nations lead by the Roman Church. As such, they will be blindsided by the success of the Arian Church, which will first leverage food into discipleship, then through the office of its prophet convert all of Islam to Christianity, a claim that defies human logic. The spiritual power behind the Arian Church will make war against the spiritual power behind the denominations derived from the school at Alexandria—and the king of the North shall prevail against the king of the South. Arian Christianity will defeat Roman Christianity before the man of perdition declares himself god 1290 days before Christ Jesus returns as the Messiah. Roman Christianity will no longer exist when the whore of Revelation 17 materializes. So the false teachers coming from Ellen G. White and Herbert W. Armstrong will cause Sabbath-keeping disciples to look for Christ to return when Satan is cast from heaven. It is Satan who will come as the true antiChrist². Nebuchadnezzar's seven years of living as a beast foreshadow Satan, the spiritual king of Babylon (Isa 14:4–21), being cast from heaven to live as a man. Three and a half of those years will be the last 1260 days of the Tribulation (Rev 12:14). The remainder of those years will be the little while that Satan is released following Christ's Millennium reign (Rev 20:3).

The above presupposes that spiritual Israel was taken captive by the king of Babylon as the circumcised nation was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. This captivity occurs at and before the Council at Nicea (ca 325), when the Emperor Constantine determined what sound doctrine for the Christian Church would be. Sabbath-keeping disciples have few problems accepting the juxtaposition of the Church being taken captive by Satan as the physical nation was taken captive by

² The man of perdition or the lawless one, same person, will be an Arian Christian possessed by Satan. Thus, he is the time-linked shadow of Satan being cast into the creation, just as the first half of the Tribulation will be the time-linked shadow of the second half.

Nebuchadnezzar. Greater spiritual Israel, however, doesn't perceive itself to be a captive people. But its captivity is easily discernable through the Sabbath commandment. The circumcised nation could not enter the promised land because of its unbelief (Heb 3:19), which became disobedience (Heb 4:6) when the nation tried to enter the following day. The spiritual nation, today, tries to enter the promised land of God's rest on the following day, despite there remaining a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Heb 4:9). The Sabbath of God is not the eighth day, but the seventh. And the laws of God written on the hearts and minds of drawn [sanctified] and called [justified] (John 15:16) disciples include the Sabbath commandment.

Sabbath-keepers need to understand that the Roman Church didn't cause Christians to begin worshipping God on the eighth day, the following day. Unbelief did. Unbelief and the Roman Emperor in his decree of 307 CE. So when the little horn attempts to change times and the law in the three and a half years preceding the kingdom of the world becoming the kingdom of the Father and of the Son, he will attempt to add to Scripture through the insertion of another testament of Jesus. The Roman Church did not have authority earlier than the 5th Century to establish Scripture, as noted by Augustine (*On Christian Doctrine*, Bk. 2, VIII, 12). It did not have the authority to cause the holy spiritual nation to enter into unbelief that would become spiritual disobedience. However, the man of perdition—the lawless one (2 Thess 2:3)—will attempt to legislate what has been the tradition established by bondage to sin. Once Israel is liberated from bondage to sin, the entirety of Christendom will know to keep the Sabbath, and will have the ability, through faith, to keep the Sabbath. And for the first half of the Tribulation, Sabbath observance will establish who is of God (Exod 31:13, 17) as the mark of the beast [*chi xi stigma*, or the tattoo of the cross] (Rev 13:18) will establish who is of the antiChrist during the second half of the Tribulation.

When the circumcised nation was liberated from bondage to Pharaoh, it left Egypt with a high hand. But when this nation saw Pharaoh pursuing them, they feared greatly (Exod 14:10). Even though they had just seen the difference God had made between them and the Egyptians, they did not believe that God would again manifest His power on their behalf. Frankly, the nation didn't trust God. They said to Moses, “[I]t would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness [of Sin]” (v. 12). For this nation, slavery was preferable to liberation. And so will it be for spiritual Israel: this spiritual nation will prefer bondage to sin under the cloak of Christ's righteousness rather than to walk blameless by faith before God. It hides its lawlessness from God; it makes no effort to rid itself of its lawlessness. Thus, when the cloak of Christ is lifted to reveal the Son of Man to the world, the Church will be as a mouse when the feed dish is lifted—it will scurry back into bondage to sin 2300 days before Christ returns as the Messiah. It will believe the ten witnesses instead of the two as the circumcised nation that left Egypt did (Num 13:25–14:10). It will rebel against God, who will then send a great delusion over the rejected spiritual nation (2 Thess 2:11–12).

Disciples are sons of God, joint heirs with Christ Jesus (Rom 8:29). They will be revealed when the Son of Man is revealed; they will be revealed through liberation from sin, and Christ no longer needing to cover their sins. Christ, like a broody hen (Matt 23:37), has covered spiritual Israel with His righteousness. To mix metaphors, His righteousness is like a garment covering His disciples as well as Himself. The Son of Man will be revealed when He removes this garment because the fullness of iniquity has been obtained. He will then be seen through His disciples' walk with God. Disciples will have no covering but their obedience. Their uncircumcision will then be counted as circumcision. And those sons of God who have practiced walking blameless by faith, thereby following the Lamb of God wherever He leads, will take their first tottering steps without the help of their elder brother. Those who have not practiced walking blameless before God will fall flat on their faces with all of heaven watching.

The above is the essence of Christianity: since the Lamb of God was sacrificed for the sins of the household of God, the household has been roasting with fire and eating the Lamb until the death angels pass through spiritual Egypt or Babylon, slaying all firstborns not covered by the blood of the

Lamb. Liberation of the spiritual nation follows this slaughter of firstborns, just as liberation of the physical nation followed the slaughter. Until this slaughter and liberation occurs, the household of God roasts the Lamb with fire through having Jesus bear the household's sins. Jesus covers the sins of disciples in a manner similar to how a person puts on a cloak: His righteousness *cloaks* their lawlessness. The household then eats the Lamb by eating His body, symbolized by the broken piece of unleavened bread, and drinking from the cup that symbolizes the blood of the covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins. And throughout this long spiritual night between the sacrifice of the paschal Lamb of God and the passing of death angels throughout the land, the sons of God were to be practicing walking blameless before God so that when revealed by the light of day they stand and walk as children of faith—so that they don't founder as spiritual infants, still in need of diapers, unable to stand, unwilling to try. They were to eat the paschal lamb with their feet shod and staffs in hands, so that they would be ready to walk when liberated.

The second covenant mediated by Moses was made with the uncircumcised children of the nation that left Egypt. However, after these children crossed into the promised land of the 10th day of the first month, they were circumcised (Josh 52–7). They kept the Passover as a circumcised nation. And they foreshadow the children of the spiritually circumcised nation who will be led by a spiritual Joshua and Caleb to victory and into glory. These children will receive spiritually circumcised hearts and minds when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh. Thus, Israel crossing the Jordan symbolically marks the middle (Day 1260) of seven years of endtime tribulation. And physical circumcision foreshadows receipt of the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the physical nation foreshadows the spiritual nation. Both are mostly-hidden markers of who has been made holy by God. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entirety of humanity, the priesthood that serves in the temple during Christ's Millennium reign will be separated from the remainder of humanity through both spiritual and physical circumcision (Ezek 44:7, 9). All of humanity will have circumcised hearts and be as the born-from-above Christian Church is today.

Paul writes that “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom 5:12); yet Eve first ate forbidden fruit, not Adam (Gen 3:6). This apparent inconsistency is usually explained by *Eve was deceived, but Adam was not*. However, Eve was created from Adam; thus she was a daughter of man. She received the life Adam had, whereas Adam was created by God from the elements of the earth. He had no precursor but God; thus he was a son of God, the expression used as it is also used for angels that God created from formerly non-existing life. The expression is additionally used by God the Father when His Breath descended upon Jesus as a dove (Matt 3:16–17).

Eve's covering for sin was Adam, just as the second Eve's covering for sin is the last Adam, Christ Jesus. But Adam's covering for sin was his obedience to God, as the last Adam's covering was His obedience. Thus, when the first Adam ate forbidden fruit, sin or lawlessness (1 John 3:4) entered the world. With sin came death, so death entered by one man.

When Adam ate, he received knowledge of good and evil—and he realized that he was naked before God. He had no covering for his sin, so he sought to hide from God (Gen 3:8). The story of Adam's Fall is usually taught such that sin separates humanity from God, but this is not the case. Adam could not hide from God, who came looking for him. And God covered Adam's nakedness through the shedding of blood: “And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (v. 21). But in sacrifices [the death of animals] “there is a reminder of sin every year” (Heb 10:3). The skin clothing that Adam wore was a daily reminder of his sin, of his nakedness that God had covered.

Without knowledge of the laws of God, lawlessness or sin is not counted against the sinner (Rom 5:13) even though death reigns over the sinner, whose sins are covered by beast-like ignorance. Death “reigned from Adam to Moses” (v. 14), when its reign suffers, for again, under the second covenant mediated by Moses, circumcision of the heart and mind [*naphesh*] was offered to Israel upon

demonstrated obedience to God. It became possible for every Israelite to receive everlasting life upon demonstrated obedience by faith, this faith revealed through obedience beginning when in a foreign land as it had with Abram leaving country and kinsmen. And this paper has circled back upon itself.

Failure to understand the juxtaposition of demonstrated faith through obedience beginning in a foreign land with Gentile converts beginning to live as Judeans by faith reveals the lack of spiritual understanding possessed by the circumcision faction, and by today's teachers of lawlessness, who have the greater Church proudly living as spiritual Gentiles. They would have Abraham returning to Ur, rather than sojourning in Canaan, such is their duplicity.

Circumcision requires an Israelite to walk blameless before God. It has no meaning until the fullness of the Gentiles have come to God. When this fullness has been reached, the fullness of iniquity will also be reached. The Son of Man will be revealed. The sons of God will also be revealed. And the fullness of the circumcised nation will then begin to follow the Lamb of God wherever He leads. This fullness is represented in the number 144,000, and by the 12 disciples Paul baptized at Ephesus. They will receive the Holy Spirit following baptism in the name of Jesus, rather than before baptism.

Living within the laws of God (i.e., walking blameless before God) will be the marker of who is and who isn't of Christ during the first half of the Tribulation. This marker will be most apparent through the Sabbath commandment. Therefore, keeping the Sabbath will be counted as circumcision throughout the time, times, and half a time that the man of perdition attempts to change times and the law (Dan 7:25). The rejected spiritual nation will attempt to enter God's rest on the following day.

The conclusion of the matter: the cutting of the flesh has no meaning to the person who has the laws of God written on his or her heart and mind, and is actually detrimental to the person, for it has needlessly caused the person to walk blameless before God without the covering of Christ Jesus' righteousness before the Son of Man is revealed. Disciples are to redeem their time by practicing to walk blameless before God under the cover of Christ. When they are liberated from sin and are themselves revealed, they will be liberated by the Holy Spirit; they will be given the power to walk blameless. However, they will be as the circumcised nation in a foreign land. They have not been living as Judeans, but by faith they now must begin if their walk will be to the promised land of glorification. Prophecy and typology, though, reveal that the greater Christian Church will return to sin, to bondage to the spiritual king of the South. They will blaspheme the Holy Spirit by denying that they can walk blameless before God. Because they didn't love righteousness enough to practice walking blameless, they will spiritually die because God sends a great delusion over them (2 Thess 2:11-12); they will become the walking dead. And this should not be, nor does it have to happen to any disciple.

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