

Acts Week 20

7:8-

Verse 7:8; “Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

Genesis 17:9-14; 9 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. 13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

This seems a strange covenant, the cutting back of the flesh, what was it that God was wanting us to understand. Not only was this covenant for Israel but also for any that were bought for a price and would live among them but also for those who wished to assimilate into their religious culture.

Anchor Bible Dictionary has much to say about the Covenant of Circumcision, how it was believed to have started in Egypt but more recent archeological findings are now pointing toward Israel. However, last week we look at a couple of verses that would seem to be in conflict with one another but when we dug a little deeper we found there was no conflict but a misunderstanding or God revealing something to us at a later date, perhaps something that had been written that many challenged or did not believe and new findings still help to better understand the Scripture. It really does not matter who practiced circumcision first, God chose to use it for a purpose.

It would not be long after the covenant that Israel would not perform as they should. As they wandered in the desert it was noticed that they were not continuing as God had commanded, however Joshua called for it to begin again faithfully before entering the promised land. Also, after the covenant was put in place it took on numerous different meanings. Exodus 6:12; “Uncircumcised lips” a person such as Moses who stumbles with speech, “Uncircumcised ears and heart”, “failure to hear, love, and obey the Lord God.”¹ I hope everyone takes a moment to think about what is being said here in reference to the different body parts, they were not to

¹ Mac Donald, William, “Believers Bible Commentary” Thomas Nelson publishing, 2016, page 51

physically cut these members off. We were looking at a covenant that was to mark the nation of Israel as God's people, as a brand. Israel would become known as the circumcised and the uncircumcised would be the gentiles. As we look to what it came to mean by the use of others terms and titles as distinct parts of the body we find a much deeper meaning.

Looking at Moses, God sent him to face the Pharaoh but Moses says he is weak in speech, actually the term he uses in the NKJV states he has "faltering" lips, he is unskilled in speech. Your bibles may say something completely different but it does not change the message. Faltering lips **Leviticus 26:41, Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6, Jeremiah 6:10, Acts 7:5:1, Uncircumcised Flesh, Ezekiel 44:7. and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.**

So circumcision was both spiritual and physical and as we have read it includes both. How did we get from the idea of circumcision of the foreskin to character qualities of heart and lips? I do not believe that God had planned it to play out this way, that we would just look at the verses of when He first talks with Abraham and then would walk away just focusing on that one idea; no He uses it to point to a commitment and changes in attitudes. **Ezekiel 36:26; "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."** This kind of sounds like another conflict in those verses that tell us about leaving behind. **Romans 8:5; For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 4:11; For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.** We have specific references as to the old heart and the new heart, the old flesh and the new flesh, look again at Ezekiel 36:26, "heart of stone" versus "heart of flesh." This is indicating not the flesh or lust of the flesh in which we are born but a changed heart and changed desires we once sought after. It starts in the heart and we are created anew leaving behind those desires of our old flesh.

"God promises to gather the Hebrews from the nations where they had been scattered (Ezekiel 11:17) and give them a new, undivided heart (verse 19). The result of their receiving a new heart will be obedience to God's commands: "Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God" (verse 20). This prophecy will be fulfilled in the millennium, when Jesus the Messiah rules from Zion and Israel has been restored to faith (Romans 11:26)." ²

Romans 2:25-29; Circumcision of No Avail

25 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 Therefore, if an

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/new-heart.html>

uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

When grace came through Jesus the law was fulfilled and circumcision took on a new meaning. Look here at **1 Corinthians 7:17-24, “Live as You were Called” 17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. 18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. 20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. 22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.**

There became a practice called in modern terms “Epispasm” and it means becoming uncircumcised, reversing the act of circumcision. Skin would be grafted back on. This became something men would do when abandoning their faith to become accepted by gentiles in their communities.

On the eighth day

The question naturally is why did God give this command to carry out circumcision on the eighth day? Not until fairly recently did mankind have any idea if there were any medical reasons for the eight day, however, the Bible almost 4,000 years ago, while it didn’t say why the eight day, did know something that took mankind 4,000 years to understand. And it all has to do with the way blood clots.

Before we talk about blood clotting, I believe that God intentionally didn’t share the medical reason for the eight day in the Bible because like many scientific facts he left it up to man to discover why, sometimes hundreds and sometimes thousands of years later, in order to give us just another amazing proof that the Holy Scriptures are truly inspired by God. As we have already shared, in several past devotions, when man discovers something that the Bible said long before science caught up with the Scriptures, it only allows us to have our faith strengthened and give us pause to glorify God for His wonderful foreknowledge.³ Follow the link in the footnote to better understand.

³ <https://bibleapologetics.org/circumcision-why-the-eight-day/>

We see here some of the reasons we can often misunderstand certain commands or what appears to be conflict in the Scripture, we are still getting or finding the deeper meaning of God's commands in modern times. We are to live according to God's timing and not ours. I believe God has much more yet to be revealed and a great deal more when we stand face to face.