

Covenant of Circumcision

Key Verse: *“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.”*
—Genesis 17:10

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 17:9-14

throughout subsequent generations.—Gen. 17:12,13

In a general way, circumcision serves as an illustration of man's need for putting away the sinful ways of the flesh inherited from Father Adam. The accomplishment of this has been enabled by God's plan for man's salvation, centered in Jesus. He was the spiritual fulfillment of the seed promised to Abraham. (Gen. 22:18; 28:14; Gal. 3:16) Although born of a woman, and circumcised as required under the Jewish Law, Jesus' was the son of his Heavenly Father. As such, he was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26) By maintaining this perfection, even in the midst of a sin-filled world around him, he showed that true separation from sin was not to be accomplished by fleshly circumcision,

IN OUR CONSIDERATION

of the covenant of circumcision, the Scriptures say that it was enjoined not only upon Abraham and his seed, but also upon all his servants, and all male children born in his house. Male servants purchased from foreigners were also to be circumcised. In his capacity as a father and a master, Abraham was given the responsibility of administering this rite, and it was to be followed

but by a circumcision of character.

Circumcision is a reminder to us that, even as followers of Christ, we were all “shapen in iniquity,” and conceived “in sin,” from birth. (Ps. 51:5) We were in need of purification, regeneration, and the making of “all things . . . new.” (Heb. 10:22; Tit. 3:5; II Cor. 5:17) Only by these provisions, made by God through his Son, could we hope to achieve any success in the circumcision of our character.

The spiritual circumcision of our character begins with the innermost motivations and sentiments of the heart. The Israelites were told, “The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart. (Deut. 30:6) How much more this is so with the followers of Christ. Paul reminds us of this in his words to the brethren at Corinth, where he commended them for their heart character. “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”—II Cor. 3:2,3, *New American Standard Bible*

As our heart becomes circumcised, we are also to be engaged in cutting off, or separating ourselves, from the flesh—its aims, hopes and desires. Our goal is to comply with these words: “Put off the old man with his deeds;” and “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Col. 3:9; Rom. 12:2

Circumcision teaches an important work which is to be daily seen in our life. God carries out his part by having provided his son, Christ Jesus, as our means of salvation, and by supervising the daily experiences which are to circumcise our characters. Our part is to look to the Heavenly Father, and the perfect example of Jesus, being submissive and obedient to their leading in our lives. Thus, may we have fulfilled in us the words, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—Col. 1:27 ■