

# **GENTILE CIRCUMCISION?**

**by Avram Yehoshua**

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# GENTILE CIRCUMCISION?

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Tim Hegg, a proponent of physical (covenantal)<sup>1</sup> circumcision for the male Gentile believer in Yeshua (Jesus) bases his theological position on the Apostle Paul's young assistant, Timothy. Hegg sees Timothy as a *Gentile* that Paul circumcised, and builds upon this fanciful and false understanding of Acts 16:1-3 to present his dangerous and heretical teaching—that male Gentile believers should be circumcised *for the right reason* (i.e. in order to keep Torah;<sup>2</sup> Gen. 17:10-14; Ex. 12:43-49), but not, as he is quick to say, for salvation. Yet, why would Paul circumcise a Gentile man when he expressly taught against it?<sup>3</sup> Hegg has no answer for that, but instead writes:

“Is Timothy an example of a non-Jew who, *for reasons unknown to us* but acceptable to Paul, underwent circumcision as the appropriate measure for a Torah submissive Gentile? Is it possible that Paul was convinced of Timothy's genuine understanding of justification by faith alone, so much so that receiving circumcision was permissible as a Torah observant act without any sense of gaining status with God?”<sup>4</sup>

Aside from some obvious problems (Hegg makes Gentile circumcision a matter of subjectivity—Paul *saw* that Timothy had a *genuine understanding of justification alone*, and speculation—*for reasons unknown to us*, which means that Hegg has no New Testament Scripture to support his position), he is greatly mistaken when he teaches that male Gentile believers should be physically (covenantally) circumcised ‘in order to obey Torah.’

Timothy was *not* an example of *Gentile* circumcision. Timothy was seen by Paul as a Jew, and the Apostle circumcised him because he wanted Timothy to minister alongside of him among the *non-believing Jewish* people. Timothy hadn't been circumcised as an infant and this would have been a major Gospel hindrance for Paul *among the Jews*. Acts 16:3 states,

‘Paul wanted this man to go with him and he took him and circumcised him *because of the Jews* who were in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.’

Why would Paul need to circumcise a *Gentile* man *for the non-believing Jews* in the area? They would have cared less about a *Gentile* being circumcised, and actually, they would probably have been very offended. They might have said to Paul, ‘We don't believe in your Jesus, and therefore, your circumcision of Gentile Timothy isn't valid!’ Paul's circumcision of a Gentile Timothy would have raised more prob-

<sup>1</sup> The physical circumcision of the Bible (Gen. 17:10-14; Ex. 12:43f.) is always a *covenantal* circumcision. It would allow a male Gentile to come into covenant with Israel and her God (Ex. 12:43f.). This physical circumcision was given to Father Abraham as the *sign* of the covenant that God had made with Abraham (Gen. 15:1f.).

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word *Torah* is used for the first five books of Scripture (Genesis through Deuteronomy; the Law of Moses) as well as a general term for all of Scripture. The Law that applies to every believer. Physical covenantal circumcision, though, doesn't apply to the male Gentile believer because he is not of the racial Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were given the sign of circumcision for their sons forever.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 4:1-16; 1st Cor. 7:17-24; Gal. 1:6-9; 2:1-5; 5:2, 11; Phil. 3:2-3f.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Hegg, *The Letter Writer: Paul's Background and Torah Perspective* (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 2002), p. 114. Hegg writes, “Paul felt free to have Timothy circumcised because it was a matter of Torah-obedience,” and on p. 285, that Timothy was a “Torah-obedient Gentile.”

lems than it solved. With Luke writing, though, that the Jews ‘knew that his father was a Greek,’ the unbelieving Jews in the area would have realized that Timothy’s belief in Messiah Yeshua had caused him to keep the commandment of circumcision, as a Jew (cf. Acts 21:20-24). This is exactly what Luke writes of as the *cause* for Timothy’s circumcision: ‘because of the Jews...in that area.’

Timothy was seen as a Jew by those Jews, as well as by Paul and Luke, even though he hadn’t been circumcised when he should have been—when he was eight days old (Gen. 17:10-14), hence, the phrase, ‘his father was a Greek,’ which reveals the reason why Timothy hadn’t been circumcised as an infant. Timothy’s mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1) and *this* is the criteria that Paul went by, despite a passing reference by Hegg to Shaye Cohen’s work on Timothy allegedly being a Gentile.<sup>5</sup> (In Orthodox Judaism if the mother is Jewish the child is also Jewish.) Ben Witherington dismantles Cohen’s arguments:

“S. Cohen has argued at some length that Acts 16:3 implies that Timothy was a Gentile, and that even if he had a Jewish mother he would still have been viewed by Paul (and Luke) as a Gentile because the matrilineal principle that the son of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father did not come into Judaism before the second century AD. Neither of these arguments is compelling. The very reason for mentioning *first* in v. 2” (*sic*;<sup>6</sup> it’s verse 1) “that Timothy was the son of a Jewish women is to prepare for what is said in v. 3—Paul has him circumcised. Had this information been omitted in v. 2” (*sic*; it’s v. 1), v. 3 would have been inexplicable. There is obviously some connection between the two facts in the author’s mind. Furthermore, we are told that Timothy was circumcised *because* of the Jews in Lystra’ (his hometown) ‘and Iconium (v. 3,” *sic*; it’s v. 2). “The assumption is surely that they would assume he should have been circumcised.<sup>7</sup> Whether they would have or not, in Luke’s narrative outline this story prepares for the remarks in 21:21 and makes clear to Theophilus in advance that there was no basis for the complaint that Paul was insisting that *Jews* forsake Moses, in particular that they not circumcise their” sons.<sup>8</sup>

Witherington further takes the sociological foundation out from under Cohen, and therefore, Hegg, by saying that ‘the key anonymous ruling found in *m. Qidd.* 3:12 is admitted by Cohen’ to be earlier than the second century AD, and that,

“Cohen’s reading of Acts 16:1-3 makes no sense in light of Acts 15. The decree made clear that circumcision was not expected or required of Gentiles.”<sup>9</sup>

Intermarriage with non-Hebrews (pagans) was forbidden by the Law of Moses.<sup>10</sup> Obviously, Timothy’s mother hadn’t followed that commandment. Yet, rabbinic thought stated that where the mother was Jew-

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 113, notes 232-233.

<sup>6</sup> The Latin adverb *sic* (‘thus;’ in full, *sic erat scriptum*, ‘thus was it written,’ inserted immediately after a quoted word or passage, indicates that the quoted matter has been transcribed exactly as found in the source text, complete with any erroneous or archaic spelling, surprising assertion, faulty reasoning, or other matter that might otherwise be taken as an error of transcription. (From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sic>)

<sup>7</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p. 475, note 19: “For some reason Cohen, *Was Timothy Jewish?* p. 254, focuses entirely on the clause that refers to his father being Greek as proof that Luke (and the Jews in Lystra and Iconium) thought of Timothy as being a Gentile. This makes Paul’s actions, which Luke clearly records, quite inexplicable. Probably the *γαρ* clause (‘*for/because* they all knew that his father was a Greek;’ v. 3) should be seen as an explanation of why Timothy had not *yet* been circumcised, as his fellow Jews were well aware.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 474-475.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. ‘*m. Qidd.*’ is short for *Mishnah Qiddushin* (Sanctification), a tractate in the Mishnah, part of the Talmud.

<sup>10</sup> Ex. 34:12-16; Dt. 7:1-4, see also Ezra 9:1-2, 12; 10:1-14f; Neh. 9:-13; 10:28-30; 13:23-28.

ish, the children were to be regarded as Jews. By Paul's day, as Witherington has shown, any child who had a Jewish mother was considered Jewish according to the Rabbis. Witherington also adds that, "Lüdemann is right to conclude... 'Timothy was a Jew by rabbinic law.'"<sup>11</sup> Theologian David Williams affirms this, stating that,

"the children were regarded as Jews (*j. Yebamoth* 2.6). Clearly, in Timothy's case the Jewish influence was predominant (2 Tim. 3:15). But for some reason—his pagan father may have prevented it—he had never been circumcised."<sup>12</sup>

Internationally recognized scholar I. Howard Marshall also sees Timothy as Jewish. He writes:

"Timothy ranked as a Jew' and 'it was absolutely essential to give him good standing in the eyes of the' non-believing 'Jews among whom he would be working.'"<sup>13</sup>

The early 20th century scholar, R. J. Knowling, said that if Timothy had remained uncircumcised,

"he would have been unacceptable to them" (i.e. the unbelieving Jews in the area) "since with a Jewish mother and with a Jewish education" (Acts 16:1; 2nd Tim. 3:10-15) "he would be regarded as"<sup>14</sup> an apostate, but since he "thus submitted even in manhood to this painful rite," it "afforded the clearest evidence that neither he, nor his spiritual father, despised the seal of the covenant for *those who were Jewish according to the flesh*, while the Christian Jews would see in the act a loyal adherence to the Jerusalem decree."<sup>15</sup>

Acts 16:1-3 presents Timothy as a Jew who hadn't been covenantally circumcised as a baby, and was circumcised by Paul so that they could preach Messiah Yeshua among the Jews who didn't yet believe in Him, especially in Timothy's hometown of Lystra. Hegg's interpretation, that Timothy is a Gentile who was circumcised 'for the right reasons,' is seriously flawed. Also, Hegg has no 'second witness' in the New Testament (Mt. 18:16; 2nd Cor. 13:1; 1st Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28) to support his position on either Timothy being a Gentile, or any Gentile being covenantally circumcised 'in order to obey Torah.'

An interesting phenomenon, and one with theological significance, is where Timothy's story of circumcision is presented—sandwiched right in-between Acts 15:1-32 (the very decision that the Gentiles *weren't* to be circumcised) and Acts 16:4-5, which states that Paul and Silas, etc., took the Decree of Acts 15 to many congregations! It's impossible to understand that Luke would have written of a Gentile man being circumcised, with these two theological bookends acting as staunch pillars against it! Obviously, Timothy was *not* a *Gentile* that Paul circumcised 'for the right reason' and/or 'to obey Torah' and/or 'to keep the Passover,' etc., but that Timothy was a Jew who had come to Messiah and fulfilled Torah's commandment of circumcision for the Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 17:10-14).

After those three succinct verses about Timothy, Luke writes of Paul and his companions proclaiming the Decree of Acts 15, that the Gentiles *weren't* to be covenantally circumcised:

'And as they went through the cities, *they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem*. So, the congregations were

<sup>11</sup> Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 476, note 23: *Early Christianity*, p. 176.

<sup>12</sup> David J. Williams, author; W. Ward Gasque, New Testament editor, *New International Biblical Commentary: Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), p. 275. "*j. Yebamoth* 2.6" is *Yirushalami [Jerusalem] Yebamoth* and deals with Levirate marriage in the Jerusalem Talmud.

<sup>13</sup> I. Howard Marshall, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., author; Professor R.V.G. Tasker, M.A., B.D., General editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Acts* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 260.

<sup>14</sup> R. J. Knowling, D.D.; author; W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., editor, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. two: *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 339.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.’ (Acts 16:4-5)

The *decrees* spoke of the Gentile not being circumcised in order to be saved and the four rules they needed to implement immediately, in order for their faith in Messiah Yeshua to be seen as genuine.<sup>16</sup> The Greek word for *decrees* is *dogma*, which means, ‘a formal statement concerning rules or regulations that are to be observed.’<sup>17</sup> Acts 15 *authoritatively* determined that Gentile circumcision, in order to be saved, was not the will of God, and we *never see any reasons* in the New Testament why Gentiles should or could be covenantally circumcised at a later time, ‘for the right reason,’ as Hegg heretically teaches.

Nowhere does the book of Acts, nor anywhere else in the entire New Testament, even hint at, let alone address, the issue that a Gentile (or his eight day old son) should receive physical covenantal circumcision in order to comply with Gen. 17:10-14 and/or Ex. 12:43-48, if he understood that he wasn’t doing it in order to be saved, or more properly, justified, or to save/justify his son. (It’s hard to imagine how an eight day old infant could understand this!) The New Testament neither speaks of it, nor authorizes it. In other words, if Hegg is right about Gentile circumcision, why doesn’t the New Testament teach or affirm it?

Seeing that Gentile circumcision for justification is negated in Acts 15, it would seem imperative that Gentile circumcision ‘for the right reason’ be written in the New Testament, so as not to confuse the two issues, but Luke doesn’t write anything about Gentiles being circumcised ‘for the right reason,’ nor does Paul, nor does anyone else. One would think that if it were part of God’s will, someone in the New Testament would have endorsed it, taught it, and/or perhaps even shown us a living example of a Gentile who had been circumcised ‘for the right reason.’ The New Testament, though, explicitly states that the Gentile *wasn’t* to be circumcised for theological/covenantal reasons.<sup>18</sup>

Old Testament circumcision cannot be stripped of its theological (covenantal) reality by saying that one isn’t doing it for justification, but in order to be ‘Torah obedient.’ It remains an act of entry into the Abrahamic (and Mosaic) Covenant; of becoming one with Israel ‘after the flesh’ (1st Cor. 10:18; see also Galatians 6:10-16), something that no male Gentile believer should want to do because it diminishes the efficacy or intended result of Messiah’s sacrifice, meaning that it wasn’t enough for the Gentile.

With Timothy being circumcised it reveals that boys born to a Jewish woman should be considered Jewish and physically covenantally circumcised, but even if ‘only’ the father is Jewish, the boy should still be circumcised.<sup>19</sup> This transcends rabbinic tradition, where only the mother’s lineage determines if the child is Jewish, but Tamar wasn’t a Jewess, yet who would say that Perez wasn’t a Hebrew or part of the covenant that God gave to Abraham (Gen. 38:29; 46:12)? Asenath was an Egyptian woman (Gen. 41:50-52), but both her sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, literally became two of the 12 Tribes of Israel (Gen. 48:1-5; Num. 1:10). Also, Moses married a Midianite woman named Zipporah, who bore him two sons (Ex. 18:6) and we know that God almost killed Moses because he hadn’t circumcised one of them (Ex.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 15 is *the* theological pillar in the New Testament that establishes the Law of Moses for every believer in Yeshua. See, *The Lifting of the Veil: Acts 15:20-21*, two chapters of which can be read at <http://SeedofAbraham.net/LiftingTheVeil.html>. The book reveals that the four rules of Act 15:20 are not for ‘table fellowship,’ as the Church erroneously teaches, but are a comprehensive *unit* on sacrificial-sexual idolatry. James presents them as a biblical filter for the Gentile to pass through to prove that his faith in Yeshua is genuine.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 254.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 15:1-32; Rom. 2:26-29; 3:30; 4:1-12, 16; 1st Cor. 7:17-19, 24; Gal. 2:3, 12; 5:2, 11; 6:12-17. The covenantal circumcision of Gen. 17:10f., is a physical circumcision that is done in order to enter into the covenant of Father Abraham, and is theologically different from a medical circumcision, even though the two may look identical.

<sup>19</sup> If one knows that he has any lineage from the natural seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (i.e. that there’s a Jewish grandparent or great-grandparent, etc. in his background) he/she should consider himself a Jew.



4:24-26), so they were obviously considered Hebrews by the Lord. Therefore, sons born to any parent who has any Jewish lineage should be seen as Jewish and circumcised on the eighth day because Jews are born into the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants through physical lineage.<sup>20</sup>

Tim Hegg has no biblical (nor rabbinic) foundation to call Timothy a Gentile, and therefore, his theological position, that Gentile circumcision ‘for the right reason’ is God’s will, is a major heresy because it diametrically opposes the Word of God and negates Yeshua’s sacrifice.

## But what of Passover for the Gentiles?

One reason why most leaders in the Hebrew Roots/One Law movement want male Gentile believers to be circumcised is because of what is written in Ex. 12:43-49 concerning the Passover, especially verse 48:

“And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants to keep the Passover* to Yahveh, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it and he shall be as a native of the land. *For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.*”<sup>21</sup>

Their reasoning is logical—Gentiles should keep Torah (the Law of Moses) and Gentile covenantal circumcision is part of Torah. Therefore, the male Gentile should be circumcised, ‘not for salvation, but for the right reason’ (in order to celebrate Passover; Exodus 12:48, and ‘to keep’ this part of the Law). As logical as this reasoning is, it’s false because the New Testament *repeatedly teaches against it*. Satan, too, knows how to use logic and this is a prime example of how he has deceived many well meaning people.

There is no *appended* legislation in Acts 15 (or anywhere in the New Testament) that allows for Gentile circumcision in order to keep this part of Torah (Ex. 12:48; Gen. 17:10-14), and so, Gentile circumcision is struck down in the New Testament—it’s not an option. For instance, in Acts 15:24, after all the believers realized that physical circumcision for the Gentile wasn’t what God wanted in order for them to be saved (Acts 15:1-21), Yakov (Jacob/James, the half-brother of Messiah Yeshua) is recorded as saying in his letter to the Jewish and Gentile believers in Antioch that the Gentiles weren’t to be circumcised (and keep the Law in order to be saved):

“Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’—to whom we gave no such commandment—” (Acts 15:24).

According to those who teach Gentile circumcision, shouldn’t James have said something like this:

“Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’—to whom we gave no such commandment—**BUT when you realize that you’re not to be circumcised for salvation, you must be circumcised in order to keep the Passover...**”

We never read of any writer in the New Testament speaking like this. What if a Gentile came to believe in Messiah Yeshua a day or two before Passover? Would that be enough time for him to realize that he wasn’t being circumcised in order to be saved, but in order to keep Passover? One reason why there is no

<sup>20</sup> Physical covenantal circumcision effects the most intimate part of a man and symbolizes that he is totally submitted to the God of Israel (Dt. 10:16; 30:6; Josh. 5:2-7; Jer. 4:4; see also Lev. 26:41; Ezk. 44:7). See Acts 21:20f., where Paul is slanderously accused of teaching that *Jews* shouldn’t circumcise their sons. James knew that it was a lie and a distortion of Paul’s teaching, so he led Paul to be purified, along with four other Jewish believers under the Nazarite Vow, in order to prove that Paul still kept the Law of Moses; Acts 21:24).

<sup>21</sup> Also important to them is Gen. 17:14: ‘And the uncircumcised male child who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, *that person shall be cut off from his people*—he has broken My covenant!’

Scripture to this effect is because Gentile circumcision ‘for the right reason’ is *works righteousness*. According to the Law, if a man is part of Israel and doesn’t keep Passover he will be *cut off* from Israel! Anyone not keeping the Passover under Moses was ‘cut off’ (Num. 9:13). It’s quite a dilemma for the proponents of Gentile circumcision. In other words, according to their position, whether they realize it or not, the male Gentile *must be* circumcised *or he will lose his place in the Kingdom of God!*

Didn’t God realize, though, what He had said to Abraham and Moses about circumcision (Gen. 17:10-14; Ex. 12:43-49)? Obviously, He did, but the ‘circumcision made without hands,’ pictured in Dt. 30:6, is what God requires of the Gentile (*and* the Jew) today. Physical biblical circumcision *for the Gentile* doesn’t bring him (nor the Jew) into Yeshua’s Kingdom—only the circumcision of the heart:

‘*For we are the circumcision*, who worship God *in the Spirit*, rejoice in Messiah Yeshua, and have no confidence in the flesh’ (Phil. 3:3; see also Jn. 4:23-24).

‘In Him *you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Messiah’ (Col. 2:11).

The Scripture, that all who keep Passover must be physically covenantally circumcised (Ex. 12:48), is of the Old Covenant and the Egyptian Passover, but in order to keep the Second Passover, Messiah’s Passover in Jerusalem, one must be circumcised in the heart. This is why Paul seems confusing to some, in 1st Cor. 7:17-20, where he commands Jews to remain circumcised and Gentiles to not be circumcised, and ends by saying to keep the commandments of God. The commandment of circumcision for the Gentile has been canceled for entry into the New Covenant.

Circumcision was given to the Jew as a *sign* of the covenant relationship that Abraham had with God (Gen. 17:1-14, 23-27), and therefore, with every Son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This physical sign is still in effect for the Jewish believer and his sons, as is evident from the remark of James because the Jew is of that lineage. Some wrongly thought that Paul taught against Jews being circumcised, but this was put to rest by James (Acts 21:20-21, 24-25).

Others might say that if the believing Gentile shouldn’t be circumcised, then the concept of the Law still being in effect is shattered because, as they see it, if the Gentile doesn’t have to keep one law he shouldn’t have to keep any of them. This ‘all or nothing’ concept fails to recognize that some Mosaic laws are modified in the New Covenant. For instance, our Messiah, from the Tribe of Judah, is our High Priest, but the Law of Moses states that the high priest can only come from the Tribe of Levi (Ex. 28:1, 3; 29:30; Heb. 7:1ff.).

Modification of a law code does not do away with the entire law code. The Law of Moses is for the Gentile, but God doesn’t want him to be physically covenantally circumcised. Also, the position of not having to keep any of the laws of Moses is clearly seen as non-biblical when one realizes that the laws of love for God and Man, as well as the laws against adultery and homosexuality, all come from the Law of Moses. This should not be ‘waved away’ by saying that they are moral laws, and so, they come into the New, for homosexuality today (and in ancient Greece) is seen as ‘moral.’

We Jews are also adopted into the Family of Israel who love Messiah, just as the Gentiles are.<sup>22</sup> It’s by *the circumcision made without hands* that we enter into the New Covenant, which is symbolized by water baptism. The *sign* has changed to reflect that one is a new creature in Messiah Yeshua (more on this in *Yeshua’s Water Baptism*, p. 9f.) That’s why the Apostles Peter and Paul could say that (physical covenantal) circumcision wasn’t for the Gentile, but that *all* must keep the commandments of God, *as they apply to them*.<sup>23</sup> Yet, wouldn’t the continued circumcision of Jewish sons create a problem if Gentile sons were

<sup>22</sup> Acts 15:7-11; Rom. 8:15-16, 23; Gal. 4:1-5; 6:15; Eph. 1:5.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 15:1, 7-11; 1st Cor. 7:17-24; see also Rom. 3:20, 31; 4:11.

not circumcised? After all, if both sets of parents were to keep the Law, how could one be required to circumcise his son, while the other was forbidden to do so? The theological reason is that the Gentile was never part of the Abrahamic covenant, but the Jew is. Also, at any one time in Israel's history only half the population was circumcised—the men, not the women! Yet, the women were just as much a part of the covenant as the men, and so the Gentile is just as much a part of the New Covenant as the Jew.

## CORNELIUS—THE FIRST GENTILE

Another major point against Gentile physical covenantal circumcision is Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48). He was the first Gentile to come to Messiah Yeshua (39-40 AD;<sup>24</sup> Acts 10:28, 34-35; 11:18; 15:7), but nine years later, at the time of Acts 15 (48-49 AD),<sup>25</sup> where it was divinely determined that Gentiles weren't to be covenantally circumcised, Peter stands up and relates that it was by his mouth that the Gentiles (meaning Cornelius, his household and friends) first heard about Messiah Yeshua. Yet, in those *nine years* Cornelius hadn't been circumcised because here was Peter saying that it hadn't happened! (Acts 15:7-11) We know that Cornelius was walking in all the Law that applied to him, and with Peter and James coming against circumcision in Acts 15, would Cornelius ever consider being circumcised? What was the need?! Hadn't he kept Passover as an uncircumcised Gentile in those nine years?

Hegg, though, would have us to believe that in order for Cornelius to be a 'Torah submissive Gentile' he would have had to have been physically circumcised, so that he could obey Torah (Ex. 12:48). If so, where do we find even a *hint* of that possibility for Cornelius, or any other Gentile, in Acts 15 or anywhere else in the New Testament? The New Testament is the ultimate criteria for ascertaining if a Gentile should be physically covenantally circumcised (PyCC) or not. Those that say that they want to follow the Law in the area of Gentile circumcision, but disregard what the New Testament says about it, are walking in the sin of presumption (Dt. 1:19-46, v. 43; see also Num 14:44) and involved in a major heresy.

## Titus and Dr. Luke

Turning to Titus, one of Paul's Gentile traveling companions, Gal. 2:1-3 speaks of him being in Jerusalem with Paul (about 52 AD) among the Apostles and that he was 'not being compelled to be circumcised.'<sup>26</sup> *Why shouldn't he have been compelled to be circumcised* in order to keep the Passover?! *When would he be compelled to be circumcised?!* There's no mention of Titus ever being PyCC, and the obvious implication of what 'compelled' means is that he would never have to be circumcised.<sup>27</sup>

Just a few verses later Paul speaks of Peter's sin in separating himself from the Gentile believers when *those of the circumcision* arrived (Gal. 2:11-13), obviously meaning the Jewish believers. Weren't *any* of those Gentile believers circumcised yet, in order to keep Passover? They were some of the first Gentiles to believe in Yeshua (Acts 11:19-26), so, how long would it be before some of them/most of them/all of

<sup>24</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 346: 39-40 AD. Marshall, *Acts*, p. 183: 'before 41 AD.'

<sup>25</sup> Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 486-488: 48 AD.

Douglas, *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, part 1, pp. 279-283: 48 AD.

Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. one, p. 692: 49 AD.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Galatians was written from Ephesus about 52-53 AD.

<sup>27</sup> See Acts 21:25 (54-59 AD) where James reiterates that Gentiles 'should observe no such thing' (i.e. circumcision). To understand that James meant circumcision and not 'the Law,' see, *The Lifting of the Veil*, chapter *Acts 21:25—Observe No Such Thing!* or ask for its PDF.

them would be circumcised to keep Passover? Also, how could Paul use that language ('of the circumcision') if *Gentiles* had already been circumcised for *the right reason*?!

There are some who misinterpret the phrase (that there isn't any Jew or Greek; Col. 3:11, etc.) to mean that those distinctions don't exist anymore, but the problem with their understanding is that Paul also says that there aren't any males or females, slaves or free. Would Paul endorse a marriage between two men since 'men and women' didn't exist anymore? Of course not, and in the following verses Paul speaks to the slaves and to the masters, and to wives and to husbands (Col. 3:18-22; 4:1, etc.). Also, Paul continues to use, and make the distinction between the Jew and the Greek (Rom. 1:16; 2:9; Gal. 2:11-13). What Paul means by speaking of 'no Jew and Greek,' etc., is that 'before God,' the Jew and the Gentile, the slave and the free, the husband and his wife, *are equal* ('one in Christ;' Gal. 3:28). This was a new concept to pagan society, as well as Hebrew, but it doesn't negate their identity.

Paul's sense of 'Jew and Gentile' is also seen when he begins to close his letter to the Colossians in chapter four. He speaks of Onesimus (v. 9) as 'one of you' (meaning that he was a Gentile, possibly of that congregation). Was Onesimus circumcised? In vv. 10-11, Paul writes of Aristarchus, (John) Mark and a certain Jesus who was also known as Justus. Paul says that they are 'the *only* fellow workers for the Kingdom of God *who are of the circumcision*.' Paul then goes on to mention Epaphras and 'Luke, the beloved physician,' as well as Demas (vv. 12-14). How could Paul make such a distinction if all the Gentiles had been circumcised? If not, when would they be circumcised?!

How long had Dr. Luke been a believer? According to Luke he had 'perfect understanding from the very first' (Lk. 1:3), which seems to imply that he was one of the first Gentiles to come to Christ in Antioch (Acts 11:19-20), which is dated about 41 AD.<sup>28</sup> How many years had Dr. Luke been with Paul when he wrote Colossians? Luke first 'appears' in Acts 16, with the beginning of his 'we' passages that speak of Luke writing of the events first hand.<sup>29</sup> Acts 16 is seen to have taken place about 48-49 AD. The letter to the Colossians is said to have been written from Rome about 58-62 AD.<sup>30</sup> Luke had been with Paul for at least nine years, and had been a believer for at least 17 years. Why hadn't this Gentile doctor been circumcised yet?<sup>31</sup>

Also significant is that Scripture implies that Luke, *while uncircumcised*, kept the Passover *before* Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians. Acts 20 took place about 57 AD,<sup>32</sup> yet it wouldn't be for at least one to five years later that Colossians would be written, but Luke records that he and the others stayed at Philippi *during the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread* (Passover week),<sup>33</sup> which strongly suggests that he kept the Passover with Paul in Philippi in 57 AD—*uncircumcised*:

'But we sailed away from Philippi *after* the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days

<sup>28</sup> Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 486-488.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 16:10, 11, 12, 13, 16; 20:6, 13, 14, 15; 21:8, 10-12, 14, 18; 27:1f., etc.

<sup>30</sup> Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. one, p. 692: 58 AD.

Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 233. Colossians was written in 61-62 AD.

<sup>31</sup> See *Luke the Jew?* at <http://seedofabraham.net/articles.html> or ask for its PDF as to why Luke is a Gentile.

<sup>32</sup> Douglas, *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Part 1, p. 279-283.

<sup>33</sup> The term *Passover* is used interchangeably with *the Feast of Unleavened Bread* (Matt. 26:17-20; Mark 14:12-18; Lk. 22:1, 7-14; Acts 12:3-4). See also Acts 27:9f., where Luke writes, 'and sailing was now dangerous because *the Fast* was already over.' The *Fast* that Luke refers to is the fast of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26-32), which occurs in mid to late October. From mid-September to mid-November it was 'risky' to venture into the Mediterranean Sea, while from mid-November to the beginning of March it was 'dangerous' because of the strong winds; James B. Pritchard, *The Harper Atlas of the Bible*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), p. 172. The *Fast*, like Passover, is a holy Sabbath, and if one doesn't keep it he will be 'cut off from his people' (Lev. 23:29-30). Luke wasn't circumcised, yet it seems that he also kept the *Fast*.

joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days' (Acts 20:6).

Paul certainly kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Acts 21:20-27). Are we to think that his good friend and traveling companion Dr. Luke didn't?<sup>34</sup>

## Passover in Corinth

Another facet of this issue on Gentile circumcision is seen when Paul writes to the Gentiles in the Corinthian assembly about *not* being circumcised (1st Cor. 7:17-24) *after he's already spoken to them about keeping the Passover!* (1st Cor. 5:6-8) Many One Law/Hebrew Roots congregations *demand* that Gentiles be circumcised in order to keep the Passover, basing their demand on Gen. 17:10-14 and Ex. 12:48. This is the logical outcome of following their teaching on keeping Torah *and* being circumcised 'for the right reason,' and/or to keep Passover, etc. Yet, Paul, certainly aware of those verses in Torah, admonishes the Gentile believers in Corinth to keep the Passover, but *not* to be circumcised!

Unless one is ready to charge the Apostle Paul with heresy, which some in their pride and ignorance do,<sup>35</sup> Gentile believers in the days of the Apostles *weren't* circumcised in order to keep Passover. If Gentile circumcision wasn't done in Apostolic times, why the need to do it today? The teaching that espouses Gentile (covenantal) circumcision 'for the right reason' is logical, false, deceptive and dangerous because it nullifies Messiah's atoning sacrifice.

## YESHUA'S WATER BAPTISM AND GENTILE CIRCUMCISION

If circumcision was so important in the days of Abraham, Moses and King David, and it was, why does God, in the New Covenant, nullify circumcision for the male Gentile believer in Yeshua? Circumcision is nullified for the Gentile because both the covenant and the sign have changed. Covenants are made through the shedding of blood. The blood of the physical, covenantal circumcision is linked to the blood sacrifices of the animals of the covenant that God made with Abraham by making circumcision the *sign* of that covenant (Gen. 15:1f; 17:1f.; cf. Ex. 24:1-8f.). The eight day old Hebrew infant, unbeknownst to him, but chosen by God, was brought into the covenant of Abraham by the shedding of his own blood in the act of circumcision. This linked him back to the animals sacrificed when God made His covenant with Abraham. Before the believer comes to Messiah, also unbeknownst to him, he was chosen by God. Yeshua said:

"You did not choose Me, *but I chose you* and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, and that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." (John 15:16)

"And He said, 'Therefore, I have said to you that *no one can come to Me unless it has*

<sup>34</sup> Gentiles were to *imitate* the Apostle Paul (1st Cor. 4:14-17; 11:1; Phil. 3:15-17; 4:9; 1st Thess. 1:6-7; 2nd Thess. 3:7, 9), as he followed Christ.

<sup>35</sup> Some charge the Apostle Paul with being a false apostle and a heretic, but this is the height of arrogance, or perhaps I should say the depths of depravity? They don't understand his writings on the Law and/or circumcision, and so, they accuse the Apostle of being false and 'of the Devil,' but 'everyone proud in heart is an abomination to Yahveh. Though they join forces, none will go unpunished' (Prov. 16:5). Charging Paul with heresy is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Paul's writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit and recognized as such by James and all the other Apostles (Gal. 2:6-9; 2nd Peter 3:15-16). No one in the New Testament ever warns us to beware of 'Paul the Apostate,' as some now mockingly call him.

*been granted to him by My Father.’”* (John 6:65)

The covenant of circumcision for Abraham included redemption (future salvation) from Egyptian slavery and entry into the Promised Land (Gen. 15:12-14; Ex. 6:1-8). It was the prototype of God’s New Covenant with Israel (Jer. 31:31-34) in which His Son’s sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, brings about Israel’s redemption from Satan, and brings us into the eternal Kingdom of Messiah. The *sign* of the New Covenant is not physical covenantal circumcision, but *water baptism* in the name of Messiah Yeshua,<sup>36</sup> which speaks of being Born Again and having one’s heart circumcised with the circumcision made without hands (Col. 2:11), but how can *water baptism* link the believer to the *blood* of Yeshua’s sacrifice?

Baptism in water signifies the believer’s death in dying to self (Rom. 6:1f.), *which symbolically speaks of the shedding of his blood*. This is the ‘blood’ of water baptism, which is the *physical sign* that both Jew and Gentile must have. The hope of every ancient righteous Hebrew was that his circumcised infant son would grow into a man who would love Yahveh and keep His commandments. Baptism in water speaks of that same hope, but now, with the blood and Spirit of Messiah, one is able to love God with all his heart and keep His commandments *by Yeshua’s blood and Spirit within*. Being Born Again, symbolized in water baptism, brings this new reality with it—the circumcision of the heart. In Dt. 10:16 God *commanded* Israel to circumcise their *hearts* and to no longer resist Him and His ways by their stubborn, carnal nature, but in Dt. 30:6 God said that *He* would circumcise the hearts of Israel so that they would no longer be stubborn, but instead, love Him, and consequently, delight to keep His commandments, which is one of the express reasons for the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33; see also Ezk. 36:24-27).

With the shedding of the sacrificial blood of Yeshua, both circumcised Jew and uncircumcised Gentile are able to enter into the New Covenant, by faith in *His* shed blood. It is *this* blood that God requires of us in order to keep Passover in the Kingdom of His Son, and it is *this* blood that will avert God’s wrath on Judgment Day, not the blood of physical covenantal circumcision, nor the blood of Abram’s sacrifice, although both pictured it. *This* blood is given to every believer, pictured in the ‘death to self’ of water baptism. This is what links the believer, both Jew and Gentile, to the blood sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua. A Jew who is only physically covenantally circumcised cannot enter into Messiah’s Kingdom, nor participate in *His* Passover.

## The New Creature

Water baptism has another significant aspect to it, which further emphasizes its potent spiritual reality. This leads to a question, though—*why* was Yeshua baptized in water? Certainly not, as some think, for identification with Israel *in her sins*, as noble a concept as that is, and it certainly wasn’t for His need for cleansing, for He was sinless.<sup>37</sup> Even though Yeshua is the quintessential Israeli, representing all Israel, Israel must identify with Him. The water baptism of Yeshua was *a symbolic, physical reenactment* of how Yeshua, God the Son,<sup>38</sup> *came forth* from the Father<sup>39</sup> and the Holy Spirit on Day One of Creation week, and how we’re recreated into His Image and Likeness. Therefore, all who follow Yeshua in this physical-spiritual sign of ‘death to self’ are not only saying that their ‘death to self blood’ links them to Yeshua’s

<sup>36</sup> Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 10:47; Heb. 10:22; 1st Pet. 3:20.

<sup>37</sup> John 8:46; 2nd Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1st John 3:5; 1st Peter 2:22.

<sup>38</sup> See *Yeshua: God the Son* at <http://seedofabraham.net/yeshua.html> for the Hebraic concept of how Yeshua is deity, along with His Father (and the Spirit) or ask for its PDF.

<sup>39</sup> Psalm 2:7; 89:26-37; John 1:14, 18; 3:16; with John 16:27-28 and 17:8 where Yeshua says that He ‘came forth’ from the Father. John 8:42 has the identical concept, that Yeshua ‘proceeded forth’ from the Father. See also Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; 1st Jn. 4:9.

sacrifice, but that symbolically and spiritually they are *coming forth from God the Father just as Yeshua* did on Day One, which means they are a new creature. One day, the Father promises that we will be like Yeshua is now—glorified. Baptism in water pictures all this and why it is important for believers.

Water baptism is a real *spiritual* picture of dying to self and of one becoming *a new creation* in Yeshua (Jn. 3:5-6; Rom. 6:1f., 2nd Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; 2nd Pet. 1:1-4). *In the Beginning*, Yeshua *came forth* from the Father and the Spirit. Looking at the very first words recorded in Scripture that the Father uttered, ‘Let there be light!’ (Gen. 1:3) we see Yeshua *coming forth* from the Father and the Spirit. Yeshua *was not created*, but *came forth*—as a baby comes forth from the womb of its mother, *begotten* of the father. The *waters* of Genesis 1:2 picture the Father.<sup>40</sup> The verse speaks of the Spirit of God *hovering* over the *waters* ‘like a bird...with fluttering wings...that moves its wings back and forth constantly.’<sup>41</sup> This beautiful picture speaks of the active involvement of the Holy Spirit in both the Son coming forth, and the Creation of the universe (Prov. 8:22-36).

In Genesis 1:2-3 we see the Father and the Spirit...and then the Son comes forth as both the Word of God,<sup>42</sup> alive!,<sup>43</sup> and the Light of God. This, then—how Yeshua *came forth* from the *Waters* of the Father is *why* Yeshua was baptized in water 2,000 years ago. It was *a living reenactment* of His coming forth from the Father and the Spirit on Day One, and as such, a picture of us being Born Again into His Image:

“Yeshua answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of Water *and* the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.’” (John 3:5)

“Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is Born Again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.’” (John 3:3)

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29)

“And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” (1st Cor. 15:49)

When Yeshua *came forth from the waters of His baptism*, the Father *spoke* and the Spirit *descended* upon Him *like a dove*, reminiscent of the Three being there on Day One:

“When He had been baptized, Yeshua came up immediately *from the water*, and behold! Heaven was opened to him (John) and he saw the Spirit of God *descending* like a dove and alighting upon Him, and suddenly, *a Voice came from Heaven*, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!’” (Matthew 3:16-17)

*This* is why God commands us to be immersed in water—it’s a spiritual picture of our coming forth from the Father (and the Spirit), like Yeshua—of being *begotten* like Yeshua (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, etc.), al-

<sup>40</sup> The ‘waters’ of Genesis 1:2 picture of the Father (see Psalm 104:3; 148:4; Is. 8:6; 55:1; Jer. 51:16; Ezk. 1:24-26f; 2nd Peter 3:5). The waters in Gen. 1:2 are not the waters of the oceans of the Earth because on Day Two (Gen. 1:6-8) these waters are divided by a ‘firmament,’ which God calls ‘Heaven.’ Creation of the universe took place in the waters *under* Heaven, while God *dwells* in the waters *above* the firmament, above Heaven. This may be why Paul can say that he was caught up to the third Heaven (2nd Cor. 12:2).

<sup>41</sup> Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* vol. 3 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), pp. 1219-1220. The Hebrew word in Gen. 1:2 for the Spirit *hovering* over the waters is מִרְחֶפֶת *mira’cheh’fet* and it speaks of the motion made by the wings of a dove or an eagle as they hover over an object (Dt. 32:11).

<sup>42</sup> In Hebrew the first words of the Father were, ‘Light be!’ which makes Yeshua both the living Word of God and the Light (of the world; John 1:1-9; 8:12; 1st John 1:1-4; Rev. 19:13).

<sup>43</sup> God’s living Word came forth from the Waters (which picture the Father). This living Word was the Light of Day One. This Light wasn’t the sun, moon or the stars, for they were created on Day Four (Gen. 1:14-19).

though, technically, we are created anew—it's the new creation (2nd Cor. 5:17). This is why water baptism is necessary and why physical covenantal circumcision (PCC), although *symbolizing* this, is not the sign of the New Covenant. When salvation in the name of Messiah Yeshua was first proclaimed it was immediately linked to water (and Spirit) baptism. Now we know why Peter said:

“Repent! Let every one of you *be baptized in the name of Yeshua the Messiah* for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your sons, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38–39; see also 10:44–48)

Water baptism is the *sign* of the *New Covenant*. This is why the Gentile believer *must not* be *physically* covenantally circumcised.<sup>44</sup> Both Jew and Gentile enter into the New Covenant not by the sign of physical covenantal circumcision, but by being Born Again, which sign is that of water baptism. Unfortunately, there are some today who don't understand this and teach that the Gentile must be PyCC, but this teaching negates God's word in the New Testament and *tramples* over the shed blood of Yeshua's sacrifice. *Physical covenantal circumcision marks entry into the Old Covenant and links the Gentile to the wrong sacrifice!* Circumcision of the flesh brings the Gentile to the animals of Abram's sacrifice, which cannot make anyone into Messiah's Image, nor make him acceptable for celebrating Messiah's Passover. Those who teach Gentile circumcision are *adding* to all that the Father has done in sacrificing His Son.

Those who teach Gentile circumcision *assume* that since it's commanded in the Old Testament it must also be kept in the New. They refuse, though, to hear the many New Testament Scriptures that forbid and deny it. Their sin is the deadly sin of presumption. They assume that God wants something when He doesn't, *even though He may have wanted it earlier*. An example of this is God wanting Israel to conquer Canaan after coming out from Egypt, but because Israel believed the faithless witness of the 10 spies, God told Israel 'to turn around' and go back into the Wilderness where they would die over the next 40 years because of their unbelief and contempt for Him (Num. 14:11, 27). After the incident, though, some of the Hebrews said that they wanted to obey God and go into the land, but Moses *warned them not to go* because God had *redirected* them, and neither Yahveh, nor the Ark of the Covenant, nor Moses was going with them (Num. 14:42, 44). Moses said to them, 'Why do you transgress the commandment of Yahveh?!' (Num. 14:41) They insisted, however, on 'obeying' what God had *previously* said and many of them were killed by the Amalekites and the Canaanites (Num. 14:1–45; cf. Dt. 1:19–46). It's not a superficial sin to presume upon God and His word, *but this is exactly what those who teach Gentile circumcision are guilty of:*

'the person who does anything *presumptuously*, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings *reproach* on Yahveh, and *he shall be cut off from among his people* because he has *despised the word of Yahveh* and has broken His commandment—that person shall be *completely cut off*. His guilt shall be upon him!' (Num. 15:30–31; see also Dt. 1:19–43)

The New Testament *never modifies* the decision of Acts 15, which struck down Gentile covenantal circumcision in order to be saved, to make allowance for Gentile circumcision for Passover and/or to fulfill the commandment given to Abraham because God has changed both the sacrifice and the sign for the New Covenant. The Old sign means nothing in terms of entry into the New Covenant or the keeping of Messiah's Passover, and this is exactly what Paul meant. Circumcision of the flesh didn't change the He-

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<sup>44</sup> Many Gentiles were circumcised by their parents for medical-health reasons and that's alright because it is not the same reason as the theological, covenantal circumcision of Gen. 17:9–14 and Ex. 12:43–49.

Any Gentile, though, who has wrongly followed the teaching (that he must be circumcised in order to keep the Passover, etc.), has grievously sinned against God. He should repent and ask God the Father, who is rich in mercy, to forgive him, in the name of Yeshua.



brew infant's nature, but circumcision of the heart, the sign of which is baptism in water, does change our nature for it reflects the New Birth. What physical circumcision pointed to, the circumcision of the heart (Dt. 30:6), baptism in water symbolizes by being Born Again. This is why covenantal circumcision of the flesh doesn't do a Gentile any good and why Paul wrote:

“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 assemblies*. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised!<sup>45</sup> Was anyone called *while uncircumcised*? *Let him not be circumcised!* Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing’ (in terms of entering Messiah’s Kingdom) “but keeping the commandments of God is what matters! Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.”<sup>46</sup> (1st Corinthians 7:17-20)

The sign of covenantal circumcision given to Abraham has given way to water baptism. Physical circumcision has given way to the reality that God promised in Dt. 30:6—the circumcision of the heart. Those who insist on PCC for the male Gentile are walking in the sins of presumption and rebellion against God and His word in the New Covenant.

Gentile covenantal circumcision is a false and dangerous heresy. This is one reason why the Apostle Paul wrote against it and said:

“Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the *false* circumcision, *For we are the circumcision*, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Messiah Yeshua and *have no confidence in the flesh*, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so—*circumcised* the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews! (Philippians 3:2-5; see also vv. 17-19).

Paul was saying that he, too, could have *confidence in the flesh* (physical covenantal circumcision!) if that was what God wanted, but that is not what God wants. The Old has given way to the New. The sign has given way to the reality.

The Gentile believer is a new creature in Christ and circumcised in his heart, to the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and is able to partake of Messiah’s Passover without PCC. On the other hand, the Jew must continue to physically covenantally circumcise his sons because he is born into the covenant that God made with Abraham, and all his descendants, through Isaac and Jacob. The Old Covenant and God’s promises to ancient Israel<sup>47</sup> will be gloriously fulfilled in the thousand year reign of King Yeshua, the Son of David (Lk. 1:31-33), from Jerusalem, the city of the great king (Ps. 48:2; Mt. 5:35) to the glory and praise of God the Father.

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<sup>45</sup> Paul’s admonition to the Jewish believer to not become uncircumcised was a real prohibition. In Paul’s day there was a surgical operation that attached some skin to the remaining foreskin of a Jew so that the Jewish man would look like he hadn’t been circumcised—in other words, to look like a Gentile. Gentiles would be naked in their gymnasiums, and so, any Jew who was with them would automatically be seen to be Jewish (and despised in Gentile eyes) unless he had the operation. This operation was prevalent about 200 years earlier in the days of the Maccabees. See 1st Maccabees 1:15; 1:2f; Josephus, Antiquities xii. 241.

<sup>46</sup> Some might say that Gen. 17:9-14 and Ex. 12:43-49 are part of the commandments of God for Gentile believers, but this totally negates what God says about it in the New Covenant.

<sup>47</sup> Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:7, 12-16, 18-21; 17:7-8, 19-22; 24:7; 26:2-5; 28:3-4, 13-15; 35:9-13; 48:3-4; 50:24-25; Ex. 3:7-10, 14-17; 6:1-8; 12:21-25; 13:3-5, 11-12; 23:20-33; 32:7-14; Ezk. 40-48; Rev. 20:3-6.

# CIRCUMCISION, SALVATION AND COVENANT

Those who advocate Gentile circumcision are careful to say that they are not doing it ‘for salvation.’ They realize that Acts 15 expressly forbids this, as well as Gal. 2:1–5:12 and Phil. 3:2-4, but this is exactly what they’re doing whether they realize it or not because biblical circumcision is always covenantal. Physical covenantal circumcision was given by God as a sign of the *covenant* that He had with Abraham (Gen. 15:1-21; 17:1-27). When God gave that covenant He spoke of *saving* the Sons of Abraham out of slavery (Gen. 15:13-14). In Exodus 12 God *saves* the Sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from Egyptian slavery. The mentioning of the need for a Gentile who wanted to keep the Passover to be circumcised (Ex. 12:43-49) only emphasized the salvation aspect of the covenant of circumcision because Exodus chapter 12 is *the* chapter on the *salvation* (redemption/deliverance) of Israel out of Egypt—the very promise that God had given to Abram (Gen. 15:13-14). Any Gentile who wanted to keep the Passover (i.e. to become a part of an *already* saved *carnal* Israel) had to be physically covenantally circumcised (PyCC).

The keeping of future Passovers after Israel left Egypt were a time for *remembrance* of the *salvation* that God *had already done* for Israel. Physical circumcision, then, done at God’s direction in Genesis 17 and Exodus 12, is the sign of entry into *the covenant of Abraham* to become part of God’s *saved* (past tense), *already redeemed* people Israel (from Egypt), but this covenant has given way to the New Covenant. We are in the ‘Abrahamic stage’ of the New Covenant, so to speak—*we have not yet been saved*. We have been given a promise—we await eternal glorification, and like Abraham, await the fulfillment of the promise (Rom. 8:24-25; 1st Pet. 1:3-5). Therefore, the very concept which Gentile circumcisers insist that they are not doing is what they are doing. Gentiles who are circumcised ‘in order to keep the Passover’ and/or ‘to obey Torah,’ etc., enter into the covenant of Abraham to become part of the ‘already saved from Egypt’ people of Israel *after the flesh*. PCC makes the Gentile part of *natural* Israel, which *was* saved, *but who are still enslaved to their carnal nature*, which Mosaic Law condemns them for (Rom. 6:1–8:8). The salvation that the New Covenant speaks of is one that is yet to come, for we have not yet been glorified.

With the circumcision of our hearts we receive the divine downpayment—the heavenly assurance that we will be glorified, as we persevere. We are made new creatures in Messiah (2nd Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), symbolized by water baptism. *This* brings us into Messiah’s Kingdom *without* PCC, as Cornelius demonstrates and Peter testifies to (Acts 10:1–11:18; 15:7-9f.). The Gentile comes into the Kingdom of Messiah because of the circumcision of his heart, not his flesh. This is what Peter said in Acts 15:7-9:

‘Men and brethren! You know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe.<sup>48</sup> So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, *just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them*, purifying their hearts by faith.’

Peter declared that there was no need for the Gentile to be PyCC (see also Acts 15:1-6). God had not made a difference between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, bringing both into Messiah’s Kingdom by water and Spirit baptism, and God didn’t require that they be physically covenantally circumcised after their baptism in the Spirit. They only needed to be baptized in water.

The Gentile who is PyCC places himself within a covenant people who *aren’t* saved by the blood of Messiah Yeshua. The Gentile who does that places himself *under the Old Covenant, and under Mosaic Law*, to his detriment. He has gone from the New to the Old—from freedom in Christ to slavery ‘in self.’ It’s a spiritual oxymoron and a major heresy because it negates Messiah’s sacrifice, which brought him into the

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<sup>48</sup> This is Cornelius, his Gentile household and some of his friends that Peter is referring to (Acts 10:1-48; 11:1f.).

New Covenant. Yeshua didn't die to bring the Gentile into the Old Covenant and to an enslaved people, but to bring them into the freedom of His Kingdom, which is another Kingdom, another Covenant, another Priesthood, and another Israel.<sup>49</sup> It also has another sign. Physical covenantal circumcision for the male Gentile believer is the wrong sign for the wrong covenant. It is truly the Old covenantal sign of salvation that Hegg, despite objections that he, and all those like him, might say to the contrary, perform. That's why it's such a grievous sin. The sign and the covenant have changed. Hegg & Co. truly jeopardize their salvation by their sin of presumption.

## GENTILE CIRCUMCISION IN EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE?

### EZEKIEL 44:7-9

Ezekiel 44 speaks primarily about the Sons of Zadok being elevated to perform the priestly rites of the future Temple in Jerusalem. Zadok was the High Priest in Solomon's Temple. He, and his sons, and their sons, etc., remained true to God,<sup>50</sup> while the other Sons of Aaron (and Levites) didn't.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Zadok's descendants will be priests in the future 'Temple of Ezekiel,' as it's called.

Ezekiel 44 is not about the priesthood of all believers or that Gentile believers are to be circumcised in the flesh in order to enter the Temple grounds. It's about which priests will be able to enter into the Holy Place, and also, minister at the Altar of Sacrifice in Ezekiel's Temple when Messiah Yeshua reigns for a thousand years. According to the Law this ministry can only be done by Aaron and his Sons,<sup>52</sup> and here God is making a distinction between which *Sons of Aaron* will be able to sacrifice and minister in His Name (Zadok and his sons), and which will not be able to (any other sons of Aaron).

Only three of the thirty-one verses in the chapter pertain to the foreigner (i.e. Gentile; vv. 7-9) whom God isn't going to permit to enter the Holy Place (His Sanctuary), etc., because of his evil attitude toward God, symbolized by his not being circumcised in the flesh and the heart. Some point to Ezekiel 44:9 and interpret it to mean that male Gentile believers will be physically circumcised in the future Temple, and so they believe that they have scriptural authority to be circumcised now, but their thought is based on a poor interpretation of the verse. Ezekiel 44:7-9 reads:

<sup>7</sup>“When you brought in foreigners (plural בְּנֵי נֹכַר *b'nae nay'char*) uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My Sanctuary to defile it—My House—and when you **offered** My food, the fat and the blood, then they broke My covenant because of all your abominations. <sup>8</sup>You have not kept charge of My holy things, but **you have set others to keep charge of My Sanctuary for you.** <sup>9</sup>Thus says the Lord Yahveh! ‘Every foreigner (singular בֶּן נֹכַר *ben nay'char*) uncircumcised in heart and<sup>53</sup> uncircumcised in flesh will

<sup>49</sup> The 'Israel of God,' etc. (Gal. 6:10-16; see also Ps. 110:4; Jer. 31:31-34; Mt. 16:19; Heb. 7:1-8:13; Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 10).

<sup>50</sup> Ezekiel 40:46; 44:15-16f.

<sup>51</sup> Ezekiel 44:6-8 implied, v. 10f.

<sup>52</sup> Exodus 28:43; 30:20; Numbers 16:40.

<sup>53</sup> Some English translations have 'or' (NKJV), or 'nor' (KJV), and the Hebrew letter for those two is the *vav* ך but 90% of the time it's translated as 'and' (so, the NASB, NIV, NCBS, etc.). It's a judgment call because the word can be translated as 'or,' but translating it as 'and' will make the sentence to be correctly understood because the condition of 'either' (i.e. 'or' or 'nor') cannot be applied to the foreigner because this foreigner was uncircumcised in both his heart *and* his flesh.

*not enter into My Sanctuary, of every foreigner (singular בֶּן נֵיִךְ ben nay'char) who is among the Sons of Israel.*” (Ezekiel 44:7-9)<sup>54</sup>

During Ezekiel’s time Israel had allowed this type of Gentile, *this* particular foreigner (בֶּן נֵיִךְ ben nay'char) who was uncircumcised in both his heart *and* his flesh, to be, at the very least, a priest’s assistant to help the priest minister, and also, to take the priest’s responsibility of ministering unto Yahveh and *offering sacrifice to Him* and/or going into the Holy Place (Sanctuary/House), which would entail the offering up of incense on the gold Altar of Incense, the lighting and extinguishing of the gold Lampstand, and the placing of the Bread of the Presence upon the gold Table of Bread (‘you have set others to keep charge of My Sanctuary for you’). Of course, the Lord wasn’t pleased for two reasons:

1. This Gentile despised Yahveh, which is seen when God refers to him as uncircumcised in both body and heart. *This Gentile had no interest whatsoever* in the God of Israel, nor the things of God (i.e. His Torah), nor the people of God (Israel), and
2. Only the Sons of Aaron were to minister in the Temple precincts. Not even the Sons of Israel or the Levitical Priesthood could do that, yet here were Gentiles performing in that capacity. The Levites could assist the Sons of Aaron, but they couldn’t take over their responsibilities of sacrifice and attending to the Holy Place.<sup>55</sup>

This is what the Lord is addressing in Ezekiel 44:7-9. It has nothing to do with a Gentile believer needing to be circumcised in his body in order to enter into the Temple grounds and worship the Lord in the future, but of God excluding that type of Gentile. Ralph Alexander, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, states that Israel had brought these men into the service of the Temple ‘to help’ the Aaronic Priests:

“The religions of the ancient Near East frequently used foreign captives as temple servants to aid the priests. The Lord’s rebuke of Israel in these verses reflected ancient Israel’s adoption of this practice...the Mosaic covenant expressed that foreigners who were uncircumcised in flesh and heart *were not to minister in the temple as priests*, along with all other Israelites not of the Aaronic line (cf. Num 3:10)...Israel had broken the Mosaic covenant...having foreign temple-servants not only entering the sanctuary *but also taking charge of the temple duties*. By their handling priestly functions related to the holy things (vv. 6-8), they had desecrated the temple...foreigners should never have been permitted to take over the priests’ functions. This showed a great disregard for God’s covenant on the part of the priests.”<sup>56</sup>

*This* particular foreigner is one of five types of Gentiles mentioned in the Old Testament that resided within Israel who weren’t of the racial Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Law of Moses applied to only two types of Gentiles—the slave (by circumstance) and the גֵר (ger) stranger (by choice).

The King James Version Bible translates *foreigner* in Ezk. 44:9 as *stranger* and in these verses it’s not noticeable, but in Ex. 12:43-48, which speaks of the five different categories of Gentiles, the KJV is very confusing because it uses the same term, *stranger*, for both the ben nay’char #1 below (בֶּן נֵיִךְ) and the ger #5 (גֵר).<sup>57</sup> The former (#1) could *never* partake of the Passover (i.e. become part of Israel), while the latter (#5) could, by being PyCC. They are two totally different categories of Gentiles, as the Hebrew brings

<sup>54</sup> Verse nine is my translation. This is supported by the NASB, which reads, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart *and* uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners *who are among the sons of Israel*, shall enter My sanctuary” (Ezekiel 44:9). There are translations that separate and make a distinction between the first *foreigner* and the second *foreigner* by saying ‘including any foreigner’ and ‘not even the foreigners who live among Israel (NKJV and NIV respectively), but this is not supported by the Hebrew.

<sup>55</sup> Lev. 1:7; 6:14; Num. 3:2, 10; 8:19; 18:13, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Ralph H. Alexander, author; Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas, ed.; *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, *Ezekiel* (Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), n.p.

out. The following five Hebrew words are found in the Passover chapter (Ex. 12:43-48) where the Lord says who can, and who cannot, become part of Israel and take part in the Passover once he's PyCC:

- |                       |            |                         |          |                |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------------------|----------|----------------|
| 1. Foreigner          | בֶּן-נֹכַר | ( <i>ben nay'char</i> ) | ...No    | .....Ex. 12:43 |
| 2. Hired worker       | שָׂכִיר    | ( <i>sah'here</i> )     | .....No  | .....Ex. 12:45 |
| 3. Temporary resident | תּוֹשָׁב   | ( <i>toe'shav</i> )     | .....No  | .....Ex. 12:45 |
| 4. Slave              | עֶבֶד      | ( <i>eh'ved</i> )       | .....Yes | .....Ex. 12:44 |
| 5. Stranger           | גֵּר       | ( <i>ger</i> )          | .....Yes | .....Ex. 12:48 |

The KJV, in not making a distinction between the foreigner (#1) and the stranger (#5), calling them both *strangers*, distorts the Word of God because it seems that God is contradicting Himself.<sup>58</sup> The KJV has God saying that the *stranger* (#1 Ex. 12:43) *cannot* keep the Passover, while the *stranger* (#5 Ex. 12:48) can keep it! Actually, God is saying that the foreigner #1 (בֶּן-נֹכַר *ben nay'char*) *cannot* keep the Passover, while the stranger #5 (גֵּר *ger*) can keep it once he's PyCC. What is the difference between these two Gentiles? Why could one take part in the Passover while the other couldn't? It seems to revolve around what was *in their heart* toward God, and this reflects back on what God said to Ezekiel about the foreigner being uncircumcised in heart. The definitions of the words bring this out:

1. The foreigner (#1 *ben nay'char*) *could not eat* of the Passover (Ex. 12:43). The noun means 'what is strange, foreign;' the verb, 'to estrange, alienate...to seem strange...to reject.'<sup>59</sup> The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* says that it speaks of 'a foreign god...Dt. 32:12' and 'everything foreign (Neh. 13:30).'<sup>60</sup> This person worships other gods and *wants* to be alienated from Israel, her God and His Torah, all of which appear 'strange' to him.
2. The hired worker *could not eat* of the Passover (Ex. 12:45). The noun means a 'hired laborer, hireling.'<sup>61</sup> He's not interested in the God of Israel, only in himself and finding work (cf. Jn. 10:12-13).
3. The temporary resident *could not eat* of the Passover (Ex. 12:45). This is a person who is also called a 'sojourner.'<sup>62</sup> He's a migrant, a 'temporary, landless wage earner.' The word can also be 'a synonym for a hired servant (Lev. 22:10; 25:40).'<sup>63</sup>
4. The slave *could eat* of the Passover *after* he was covenantally circumcised (Ex. 12:44). The slave served his master, doing his will.<sup>64</sup> This slave seems to be 'one' with his Hebrew master (Gen. 17:9-13, 23-27).
5. The stranger (#5 *ger*) *could eat* the Passover once he and all the males in his house were circum-

<sup>57</sup> Most Bibles translate *ben nay'char* (בֶּן-נֹכַר) as *foreigner* (e.g. ASV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV, and NIV) and use something else for *ger* (e.g. ASV, NASB *stranger*; NIV, NRSV *alien*).

<sup>58</sup> The NET and HCSB use the term *foreigner* for both verses, which of course, is as confusing as the KJV using *strangers* for both verses. Even if a #1 *ben nay'char* could become a #5 *ger* it's best to distinguish them so as not to cause obvious confusion, especially as the Hebrew words used for them are totally different.

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 549.

<sup>60</sup> R. L. Harris, editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 580.

<sup>61</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 715.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>63</sup> Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. I, p. 412.

<sup>64</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 583.

cised (Ex. 12:48). The verb means to ‘dwell for a time.’<sup>65</sup> Once circumcised the stranger kept the Sabbath laws (Ex. 20:10; 23:12) and *expressed the same loyalty to God as the native-born* (Lev. 20:2).<sup>66</sup> He was to hear the Law read (Dt. 31:12), and the Feasts applied to him also (Ex. 12:19; Lev. 16:29; Num. 9:14; Dt. 16:14).

- a. His punishment was death if he sacrificed to a foreign god (Lev. 17:8f.) and he was forbidden to eat blood (Lev. 17:10-13). The special cleansing of the red heifer’s ashes applied to him (Num. 19:10) as well as all the laws of forbidden sexual unions (Lev. 18:26).
- b. It’s written that Yahveh loves *this* stranger, giving him his food and clothing (Dt. 10:18). This stranger wasn’t to be oppressed by the Israeli and enjoyed the same rights as the native born Israeli (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:3; Jer. 7:6). He was to be helped if he was poor (Lev. 19:10; Dt. 14:29; 16:11) and he could take of the gleanings of the olive trees and vineyards, which were only reserved for the widow and the orphan (Dt. 24:20-21).

This stranger (#5 *ger*) loved Israel and was covenantally circumcised to become part of Israel and follow God’s Torah. He remained a *ger* (#5) ‘a stranger’ all his life, but was *one* with Israel and kept all of Torah that applied to him.<sup>67</sup> The foreigner (#1 *ben nay’char*) didn’t want to have anything to do with Israel, her God or His laws. It’s specifically this foreigner (#1 *ben nay’char*) that Yahveh comes against in the future Temple of Ezekiel 44:7-9.

The five designations are consistent, but aren’t ‘set in stone.’<sup>68</sup> They offer a basic, thematic understanding of who could be part of ancient Israel and who couldn’t. In other words, it may be that a #1, *ben nay’char*, could ‘move over’ into the category of a #5 (*ger*), but the biblical understanding is that the *ben nay’char* wasn’t interested in the God of Israel, His Torah or His people. With this mindset it’s easy to understand why God would say that no foreigner (#1) like this, uncircumcised in heart *and* flesh, would ever help, let alone take over the responsibilities of a priest, a Son of Aaron. Ezekiel 44:7-9 does not teach that Gentiles should be physically covenantally circumcised, either now or in the future. It places the responsibility for keeping the rites of the Temple squarely upon the Sons of Aaron, specifically, the Sons of Zadok.

## CHURCH HISTORY AND GENTILE CIRCUMCISION

If Gentile circumcision was valid in the days of the Apostles, and thereafter, we should find something written of physically covenantally circumcised Gentiles in Church history, but there isn’t anything.<sup>69</sup> Yet, with things like the 7th day Sabbath and the Passover, Church history, after about 130 AD, abounds with railings against the many Gentile believers who rightfully were keeping the 7th day Sabbath and the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>66</sup> Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. I, p. 156.

<sup>67</sup> For why this stranger didn’t become a Jew or a Hebrew, ask for the PDF, *Is the Gentile Now a Jew?* or see it at [http://SeedofAbraham.net/Is\\_The\\_Gentile\\_Now\\_A\\_Jew.html](http://SeedofAbraham.net/Is_The_Gentile_Now_A_Jew.html).

<sup>68</sup> Although the stranger (#5 *ger*) is in a separate category from other foreigners who weren’t native Hebrews, there are times when the word seems to be used as a general designation for anyone not of Israel (e.g. Dt. 10:19; 28:43). Also, see Isaiah 56: 3, 6-7 where God allows #1 to be part of Israel, and 1st Kings 8:41-43 where Solomon prays that the prayers of #1, who come from a distant land to the Temple, be heard by God. It may be possible that a *ben nay’char* could ‘change’ and become a *ger* and become part of Israel, or that God’s Spirit would be able to woo even some of them.

<sup>69</sup> Gentile circumcision is mentioned (e.g. Justin, *Dialogue* 47:2, about 140 AD), but this relates to Judaizers who told the Gentiles that *they couldn’t be saved without it*, not Gentiles doing it for ‘the right reason’ and/or in order to keep Torah and the Passover.

Passover.<sup>70</sup> Why, then, isn't anything mentioned or written against Gentile circumcision by the so-called Church Fathers? There should have been numerous Gentiles, if not all of them, that were following this practice of PCC, no? Were there no Gentile baby boys whose fathers wanted them circumcised to comply with Torah in the days of the Apostles and thereafter? Were there no Gentile believers who wanted to be 'Torah compliant'?

The New Testament, as well as Church history, reveals that PCC for the Gentile was never a biblical practice. The teaching that Gentiles need to be PyCC in order to keep the Torah and the Passover (and to be acceptable to God) is only a recent aberration.

## CONCLUSION

For the Gentile before the crucifixion, physical covenantal circumcision was necessary to enter into the covenant of Abraham (and Moses). PCC was how the Gentile became part of Israel, but God changed the sign for the New Covenant to the physical rite of water baptism, which reflects what PCC symbolized—the circumcision of the heart. The nullification of PCC by God for the Gentile is seen through Peter and James in Acts 15, and by Paul in First Corinthians, Galatians and Philippians.<sup>71</sup> Those who teach PCC for the Gentile don't realize that entry into the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) has changed with the New Covenant and its 'circumcision made without hands' (Col. 2:11). *This* circumcision allows the Gentile (and the PyCC Jew) to come into Messiah's Kingdom and partake of His Passover.

Acts 15 declares that Gentiles aren't to be PyCC. There are no extenuating reasons or circumstances given for a Gentile to be PyCC and there isn't a single instance in the New Covenant of a Gentile being PyCC, despite Hegg's attempt at making Timothy a Gentile. The only Gentiles that were circumcised in New Testament times were done by the Judaizers 'for the wrong reason.'<sup>72</sup>

PCC was given as the *sign* of the Abrahamic covenant. Yeshua, though, came with the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Mt. 16:19; Heb. 7:1-8:13; Gal. 6:16), which has a new sign. PCC for the Gentile is the wrong sign for the wrong covenant.

Many so-called Hebrew Roots and One Law people think that the Apostle Paul is the culprit in this teaching against Gentiles not being PyCC 'in order to obey Torah,' but Paul was correctly following the decision of all the Apostles and Elders at the Council of Acts 15, which authoritatively ruled that Gentiles weren't to be circumcised, period. Paul acted and wrote on the authority of the Council, even though Barnabas and he had a proper understanding of the issue before it was brought to the Council (Acts 15:1-2). Are we to think that Barnabas, Paul, James and Peter didn't know what the Law said about the need for Gentiles to be PyCC in order to keep the Passover? Or that they weren't hearing from God on this issue? None of them, nor anyone else in the New Testament, ever speak of Gentiles being PyCC in order to be 'Torah obedient,' and/or to keep Passover, and/or 'for the right reason,' or any reason. On the contrary, Paul admonishes the Corinthians to keep the Passover *and* then tells the Gentiles *not* to be PyCC (1st Cor. 5:6-8; 7:17-24; see also Rom. 3:30; 4:9-12). It's not without theological significance that Gentile circumcision 'for the right reason' is never found in the New Testament. Also, Paul's Gospel was endorsed by the Apostles and Yakov (James; Gal. 2:1-10), as well as specifically by the chief Apostle,

<sup>70</sup> For references to the many thousands of believers, both Jew and Gentile, who kept the holy days, etc., ask for the PDF, *Passover, Sabbath, Sunday and the Lord's Supper*.

<sup>71</sup> Acts 15:1-31; 16:4-5; Rom. 3:30; 4:9-12, 16-18; 1st Cor. 7:17-24; Gal. 2:1-5:12; 6:15; Phil. 3:2-5, 17-19; Col. 2:11.

<sup>72</sup> There were Gentile believers who, following the false teaching of the Judaizers, were circumcised, but this was condemned by Paul, following the Council of Acts 15 (48 AD), in his letter to the Galatians (ca. 54 AD).

Peter (2nd Peter 3:14-18). Paul is not the offender, but rather all those who twist and pervert the Word of God to their logical and carnal way of thinking. Those who teach that Gentiles should be circumcised are not only heretics, but in danger of losing their salvation in Messiah Yeshua. Here are nine points why:

1. Acts 15 authoritatively rules that the Gentile isn't to be circumcised in order to be saved. There is nothing in Acts, nor in the New Testament, where the ruling is ever modified to allow Gentile (religious/covenantal) circumcision *for any reason*. The subject is never brought up again in Acts, which was written more than 35 years after the resurrection.
2. Tim Hegg's teaching that Timothy was a Gentile, whom Paul circumcised, and therefore, Gentile circumcision is taught in the New Testament, fails for at least seven reasons:
  1. It defies logic and common sense to think that Paul circumcised 'a *Gentile Timothy*' *for the non-believing Jews* in the area. This would have been meaningless to the Jews, except to possibly anger them that a Gentile had been circumcised who believed in Yeshua, and therefore, it would have gone directly against the Apostle's desire that Timothy could help him minister to the Jews in the area so that they would come to Christ.
  2. Timothy hadn't been circumcised as an infant because his father was a Greek, and apparently, his father hadn't wanted it done to his son because Jewish circumcision was a stigma in the eyes of the Romans and the Greeks. Timothy is seen, though, fulfilling his Torah obligation *as a Jew*, so that he wouldn't be a hindrance to the furtherance of the Gospel among the unbelieving Jews who would have wondered why this Jewish boy, proclaiming the Jewish Messiah, wasn't circumcised.
  3. Timothy's Jewishness is established by his mother being Jewish (Acts 16:1) and is the reason why Paul had him circumcised (Acts 16:3; '*because of the Jews in the region*'). There would have been no reason to circumcise a Gentile for '*the Jews in the region*.'
  4. Luke would certainly not have written of Paul reversing himself against his own understanding on the subject, and also, the Council's Decree of Acts 15, without explaining why. Also, Paul *never* writes that he circumcised any Gentiles *or that it was alright or necessary to do so* if they knew that it wasn't being done for salvation.
  5. Luke places Timothy's circumcision (Acts 16:1-3) immediately after Acts 15, which states that Gentiles weren't to be circumcised, and just before the Apostle Paul and he take the Decree of Acts 15 to some believing congregations (Acts 16:4-5). Placing a '*just-circumcised Gentile*' between these two sections defies reason, logic, common sense and Scripture. On the other hand, by placing it where he does, Luke reveals that Timothy was a believing *Jewish* man who became PyCC in order to obey God's desire for every Jewish man to be PyCC, even after the resurrection. Luke reveals that the prohibition for the Gentiles, *not* to be circumcised, *didn't effect the Jewish believer* (or his sons) even if the Jewish man was already part of the New Covenant (cf. Acts 21:20-25).
  6. There's no '*second witness*' in the New Testament to support Hegg's assertion that Timothy was a Gentile.
  7. There's also no '*second witness*' in Scripture to support Hegg's assertion that Timothy was an example of a *Gentile* believer circumcised '*in order to be Torah submissive,*' but on the contrary, there are a number of passages that speak against Gentile PCC.
3. The Gentile who is circumcised '*in order to keep Passover*' is guilty of works righteousness and the sin of presumption. He thinks that if he doesn't have PCC he can't keep the Passover, and therefore, he will be cut off from Israel. This is tantamount to losing one's salvation, but God has made another way to enter into the Kingdom of His Son, and therefore, partake of Messiah's Passover. Being PCC



nullifies God's way of salvation and the taking of the Passover for him. These people do not rightly divide (interpret/understand) God's Word (2nd Tim. 2:15).

4. Neither Cornelius, Titus, or Dr. Luke were ever PyCC, yet they kept Torah, Passover and the *Fast* of the Day of Atonement (Acts 15:21; 20:6; 27:9f.; Gal. 2:1-3). Obviously, there was no need for them to be PyCC in order to participate in the Feasts of Israel, specifically the Passover. This reveals that PCC for the Gentile wasn't needed.
  1. The Feast of the New Testament Passover is the celebration of God's salvation through His Lamb. Those who say that the Gentile must be PyCC in order to keep the Passover are saying that the Gentile can't be saved (is not acceptable to God) without it! This totally negates what the Lamb of God has done for the Gentile believer and why it's such a heinous teaching.
  2. The New Testament expressly denies PCC for the Gentile believer. There is no Gentile in all the New Testament that is ever *authorized* to become PyCC. Yes, some did, but they did it because they listened to *false teachers* (Gal. 1:6-8ff.). The 'circumcision made without hands,' done by Messiah Yeshua Himself (Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11) allows the Gentile (and the Jew!) to enter His Kingdom *and* partake of His Passover.
5. Paul commands the Corinthian Gentiles to keep the Passover, and only two chapters later he says to the Gentiles that they were *to remain the way they were* and *not* be PyCC (1st Cor. 5:6-8; 7:18). Paul never teaches otherwise (nor does anyone else in the New Testament). This specifically reveals that uncircumcised Gentiles *were keeping the Passover*, the very thing that the Hebrew Roots people say an uncircumcised Gentile cannot do! Paul's words in First Corinthians affirm the Decree of Acts 15, and also, that Gentile PCC 'for the right reason' was never a valid biblical teaching (see also Romans 2:26; 3:30; 4:11, 16-18).
  1. Also, by the time that Paul wrote Colossians, about 60 AD, he speaks of his fellow workers *of the circumcision*, distinguishing them from the Gentiles. Here we see that 30 after the resurrection, no male Gentile had been circumcised 'in order to keep Passover.'
  2. One of those Gentiles mentioned by Paul had been following Christ for at least 17 years, but Dr. Luke hadn't been PyCC because there was no theological reason for him to be so.
6. Physical covenantal circumcision brought (and continues to bring) the Hebrew baby boy into the Old Covenant redeemed people of God, and protected him from being cut off from Israel. Covenantal circumcision personally linked the Jewish infant, by the shedding of his own blood, back to the sacrifices of the covenant that God had made with Father Abraham. It was a sacrificial blood covering for every Hebrew male.<sup>73</sup> Water baptism personally links the believer, by the spiritually symbolic shedding of his own blood, in dying to self, to the sacrifice of Yeshua, a blood covering for every believer, and makes him part of redeemed Israel 'after the Spirit.'<sup>74</sup>
  1. Baptism in water, with its circumcision made without hands, is the sign of the New Covenant for both Jew and Gentile (Acts 2:38-39; 15:7-11; Rom. 6:1ff.; Col. 2:11).
  2. Water baptism pictures both Jew and Gentile dying to self, which links them to both the sacrifice of Messiah, and also, how Yeshua *came forth* as God the Son on Day One. This is a picture of what awaits the believer on the Day of Judgment (i.e. to be exactly like Yeshua is now, except that

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<sup>73</sup> Females didn't need it because they were/are 'one' with their fathers and husbands.

<sup>74</sup> Interesting to note, God ordained PCC for the eight day old *infant*. All those who believe in Yeshua are said to be **Born** Again, which means that they are *spiritual infants*, but instead of being PyCC, God requires the infinitely more powerful spiritual sign of water baptism—which pictures the circumcision of the heart—the giving of the new nature to man.

He was always God the Son, whereby we will be deity [glorified] by the power of His life-transforming blood and His Spirit. Glory to God!).<sup>75</sup> This reality is what PCC pictured.

3. What circumcision pointed to, the circumcision of the heart, the transformation of the carnal nature and total consecration to Yahveh, water baptism, through the blood of Messiah and the power of the Holy Spirit fulfills for every true follower of Messiah Yeshua. Believers are new creatures in Messiah, *circumcised by God the Son*, fulfilling Deut. 30:6, which says that *God would circumcise the hearts/nature* of Israel.
4. The sign of the covenant that God made with Father Abraham was very important to God, so much so that anyone failing to keep it would be cut off from the covenant. Is water baptism of any less importance to God? As the New Covenant is the flowering and fulfillment of the Old, so is water baptism to PCC and why all who call upon the name of Yeshua need to be *fully immersed* in water, not sprinkled, and certainly *not* immersed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>76</sup> We are immersed into Yeshua's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1f.)—neither the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, died for us.
  - a. Water baptism also implies the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-41f.), which is extremely important for every believer so he can walk in all of Torah that applies to him, starting with the two great commandments (Mt. 22:35-40). Immersion in water is also a picture of the immersion in the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48).
7. The Gentile who is PyCC for alleged biblical reasons places himself *under* Mosaic Law (see Rom. 6:1f.), without the aid of the blood of Messiah, and has attached himself to Israel *after the flesh*, a people who are enslaved to sin and death. He has left the New for the Old by his own 'works' (righteousness), which defies God's instructions in the New Covenant. This is known as rebellion.
8. Ezekiel 44:9 cannot be used to support Gentile PCC because God was speaking about a specific Gentile, who had no interest in the God of Israel, who was performing rites that only the Sons of Aaron were supposed to do. God wasn't demanding that this Gentile (#1 *ben nay'char*), uncircumcised in heart and flesh, was to be circumcised, but on the contrary, that *this* Gentile was never to perform the priestly rites for the future Temple.
9. Church history, which vociferously comes against Gentile believers who rightly kept the 7th day Sabbath and the Passover (after 150 AD) is glaringly silent on Gentile PCC 'for the right reason.' This reveals that Gentiles weren't being circumcised after Apostolic times, and also confirms that Gentiles weren't being PyCC during Apostolic times (except for the wrong reason, by the Judaizers).

The New Testament does not authorize Gentile PCC, but comes against it every time it speaks about it. Authority from God, in the form of Scripture, to physically covenantally circumcise the male Gentile who believes in Yeshua, is glaringly absent. That's why Hegg has to manufacture a '*Gentile Timothy*,' while others decry Paul to be a false Apostle because of his passages in the New Testament that come against their heretical position. 'After all,' they say, '*how* could God say one thing in the Old and deny it in the New?' We saw *how* God could change His mind in the rebellion of Israel (Num. 14).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Gen. 1:24-27; 2:18, 20, 21-24; 6:19-20; Psalm 17:15; Isaiah 43:7; John 1:12-13; 17:11, 22; Romans 8:15-17, 18-21, 29-30; 1st Cor. 6:15; 15:48-49, 53; Eph. 1:3-5; 5:30-32; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 1:15, 18; 2nd Thess. 2:13-14; Heb. 2:1-3; 12:10; 2nd Peter 1:2-4; 1st John 2:25, 29; 3:2; Rev. 19:7; 21:9; 22:17.

<sup>76</sup> The formula found in Mt. 28:19 (baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit) is not authentic, but false. It was changed by the Roman Catholic Church in the days of Constantine (4th century). The Apostles *always* baptized in the name of Yeshua (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16). For an article on how Mt. 28:19 originally didn't speak of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, ask for *Mt. 28:19—Father, Son & Holy Spirit?*

The proponents of Gentile circumcision say that the New Testament only comes against it ‘for salvation,’ but there isn’t *any* New Testament teaching that plainly and clearly declares that Gentile circumcision is required, or even suggested, in order ‘to be Torah obedient.’ With all the Scriptures in the New Testament that speak against Gentile circumcision, there certainly would have been the need for God to further clarify and distinctly address the issue of Gentile PCC, if such a concept was biblical. It doesn’t exist, though, because Gentile circumcision ‘for the right reason’ is not a biblical doctrine.

Gentile circumcision ‘for the right reason,’ in order to keep the Passover (Ex. 12:43-49), etc., is a major heresy because it negates the efficacy of Yeshua’s sacrifice and the meaning of water baptism. It’s a teaching of arrogant presumption and works righteousness because it defies the Word of God in the New Covenant. They say that without PCC the male Gentile isn’t able to keep the Passover, and hence, he should/would be cut off from Israel (lose his salvation). This is why *Gentile circumcision* is a major heresy. The Apostle Paul declares that anyone presenting ‘another Gospel,’ and Gentile circumcision ‘in order to obey Torah’ is certainly that, will be accursed (cut off!, the very thing they are trying to avoid):

“I am astonished that you are *so quickly deserting* the One who called you in the grace of Messiah and are turning to another gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the Gospel of Messiah, but even if we, or an angel from Heaven, should proclaim to you a gospel *contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!*” (Galatians 1:6-8)

Gentile circumcision is an act of pride and presumption, rebellion and ignorance, because it’s works righteousness in order to be acceptable to God. Gentiles who teach and/or circumcise themselves, and/or their sons, ‘for religious reasons’ have crossed over a red line. The Gentile who becomes physically covenantally circumcised *negates God’s design* of eternal redemption and he voluntarily places himself *under* the Law’s ability to condemn him to Hell. Gentiles must *not* be circumcised ‘in order to obey the Law’ and/or for religious reasons.<sup>78</sup>

For those Gentiles that have had themselves physically covenantally circumcised, wrongly following the

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<sup>77</sup> See also Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:1, 5-6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 15, 17, 20-21, 26; 8:1-4; 9:11; where the High Priest for the New Covenant doesn’t come from the Tribe of Levi, as the Law demands (Lev. 8–9), but from the Tribe of Judah.

<sup>78</sup> *Religious* means that one shouldn’t do it in order to follow what’s written in Gen. 17:10-14 and/or Ex. 12:43-49, or because he thinks that it would strengthen his faith, or that it would be a cause for unity, or that it would glorify Jesus, etc. Those who proclaim and/or practice this teaching are under a spirit of deception. They’ve opened a door into spiritual darkness and are truly in danger of losing their salvation.

Of course, there have been many Gentile baby boys that were circumcised for medical reasons at birth, or three days later, or five days later, etc., but unless their circumcision was done as an act of entering into the Abrahamic covenant, it didn’t make it a *covenantal* circumcision. In other words, if one was circumcised for medical reasons it doesn’t make it the theological covenantal circumcision of Abraham—no more than salt, looking exactly like sugar, becomes sugar because of its looks.

There are tribes in Africa, etc., that practice circumcision as a cultural and/or religious-covenantal rite, for circumcision predates Father Abraham. Also, Muslims circumcise their 13 year old sons, following the age of Ishmael when he was covenantally circumcised (Gen. 17:24), but these don’t enter the realm of being done by Gentile *believers* for alleged obedience to Torah. When a Muslim comes to faith in the Jewish Messiah, he is cleansed from the theological meaning of his false circumcision.

Individual cases are just that. If the Holy Spirit leads a Gentile to be PCC, that’s a matter of God directing an individual, who obviously, has some physical lineage to the House of Israel that he might not have known about, but he best be sure that’s it’s the Holy Spirit that’s leading him, and not that he’s doing it to follow Hegg & Co. Teaching that all male Gentiles should be physically, biblically circumcised is a false and perverse doctrine. False, because obviously, there’s nothing in the New Testament to support this circumcision for the Gentile, and perverse because it perverts both the Word of God and the Body of Messiah.

teaching of Hegg and others, there is a need for repentance and for asking of forgiveness from God, in the name of Yeshua. He will forgive all those who come to Him. The Gift of God, through faith in Messiah Yeshua, has made the Gentile acceptable to God the Father, and therefore, able to keep His New Covenant Passover (and Old Covenant Passover) without physical, biblical circumcision.

On Paul's way to chains in Jerusalem, the Apostle told the Ephesian Elders that some *believers* would arise and teach perverse things. His words clearly speak to us today concerning Gentile PCC:

'For I know...that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the Flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, *speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves*' (Acts 20:29-30).<sup>79</sup>

The perverse teaching of Gentile PCC has not taken God by surprise. Paul also spoke prophetically about our time in his first letter to his spiritual son, Timothy:

'Now the Spirit *expressly* says that in *latter times* some will depart from the faith, giving heed to *deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*' (1st Tim. 4:1).

The reason why the Lord doesn't want Gentiles to be circumcised is also conceptually seen in the Letter to the Hebrews:

'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Yeshua, *by a new and living way* which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,<sup>80</sup> and having a High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water' (Heb. 10:19-22).

The body of our Messiah was destroyed so that we, our Adamic nature, could 'die to self' and be Born Again and transformed into His Image, which is what PCC pictured (Dt. 30:6). Jew and Gentile enter Messiah's Kingdom through His sacrifice and baptism in water and Spirit, not the circumcision of the flesh. There's absolutely no *scriptural* reason for a Gentile to be PyCC:

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<sup>79</sup> Another heresy has arisen in the Messianic/Hebrew Roots/One Law communities that is closely related to Gentile circumcision and that is Gentile *conversion*, where a Gentile seeks to become a Jew. This is an odious teaching and totally unscriptural (Acts 15:1-21; 1st Cor. 7:17-24; Gal. 1:6-9). In Judaism there is Gentile conversion, but this is just another instance of rabbinic folly. In Scripture there is not one instance of a Gentile becoming a Jew or a Hebrew. In other words, Gentiles becoming proselytes are rabbinic fantasy. Ruth, the great grandmother of King David, after aligning herself with Israel, was still called and seen as a Moabitess (Ruth 1:16-17; 4:5, 10). If Gentile circumcision is a false theological teaching, how much more so, Gentile conversion, which obviously entails circumcision for the Gentile, and also has no Scripture to support it? In other words, God never says in the Old (or the New) that a Gentile becomes a Jew. What spiritual need is there on the part of a Gentile 'to convert' to being a Jew when the Gentile is already 'one' with Israel in Messiah Yeshua (Rom. 11:13f; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11-22)? For an article on this see p. 18, note 67.

<sup>80</sup> There were two curtains in the Tabernacle of Moses that acted as its ceiling, completely covering the top of it and draping over its three sides to the ground. One curtain covered the Holy of Holies, picturing God the Father, and the other curtain covered the Holy Place, picturing the Holy Spirit. A third curtain hung from where the two ceiling curtains came together, and all three were fastened together by gold hooks or clasps to blue loops on the edges of the curtains where they met (Exodus 26:1-6, 11). The divine design had the two ceiling curtains coming together directly over where the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place met. The third curtain hung from them to the ground and separated the two holy rooms. It was this third curtain/veil that was torn in two, from top to bottom, when Yeshua was crucified because *this* curtain symbolized God the Son (Mt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; Lk. 23:45). This is how the author of Hebrews can speak of the veil that was torn as being Messiah Yeshua's flesh (Heb. 10:19-20). For more on the Tabernacle of Moses and what it represented see the CDs and diagrams available at <http://seedofabraham.net/c&v.html> (*The Tabernacle of Moses: A Picture of Heaven*).

‘For in Messiah Yeshua neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love’ (Gal. 5:6).

‘For in Messiah Yeshua neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation’ (Gal. 6:15).

‘In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Messiah’ (Colossians 2:11).

‘Beware of dogs! Beware of evil workers! Beware of the mutilation!’<sup>81</sup> *For we are the circumcision*, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Messiah Yeshua, and *have no confidence in the flesh*, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so—*circumcised* the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews! Concerning the Law, a Pharisee! Concerning zeal, persecuting the Assembly! Concerning the righteousness, which is in the Law, blameless, but what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Messiah. Yet, indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Messiah and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Messiah, *the righteousness which is from God by faith*—that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.’ (Philippians 3:2-11; see also 2nd Peter 2:1-2, 18-22; 3:15-18; 2nd Timothy 4:3-4)<sup>82</sup>

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.” (2nd Thessalonians 3:6)

By his belief in Messiah Yeshua, the Gentile is already part of Israel, acceptable to God the Father, and able to partake of Passover. There is no reason for him to be physically, covenantally circumcised.

**We must not bend God’s Word to our way of thinking,  
but bend our way of thinking to God’s Word.**

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<sup>81</sup> This whole phrase, from ‘dogs’ to ‘mutilation,’ refers to those who wanted to circumcise the Gentile. The first part of the quote speaks directly against PCC for the male Gentile believer. The Apostle never modifies his stance for any supposed need ‘to keep the Passover or Torah.’

<sup>82</sup> It’s not as though I can’t sympathize with Tim Hegg and others who teach Gentile circumcision. It seems so logical and reasonable. It was in the mid 1980s when I first began to wrestle with this issue. As much as I imagined that it was right for the Gentile to be PyCC, to comply with Torah, I found that the New Testament continually prohibited it, and so, I realized that it wasn’t God’s will, as I’ve brought out in this paper. I truly thank the Lord Yeshua for the insights that He has given me, to be able to write and refute PCC for the Gentile.

On the other hand, the issue of the Jewish believer, continuing to circumcise his sons, is upheld in the New Testament (Acts 16:1-3; 21: 20-24; 1st Cor. 7:17-19). This is because the Jew is still literally part of the covenant of circumcision that God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When a Jew, such as myself, is circumcised on the eighth day of his life, and then comes into the New Covenant with its circumcision of the heart, God’s Word is literally fulfilled yet another time. In Dt. 30:6 God says that He will circumcise the heart of Israel. I am a living witness to that. The Gentile, however, not having been a part of the Covenant of Circumcision, must not be physically circumcised for any alleged theological, spiritual or biblical reason. As *illogical* as “Jew ‘yes,’ but Gentile ‘no’” might seem, it’s actually of God. It’s up to us to obey Him whether we understand it or not. Praise God that He has given us much understanding of why the Gentile male believer must not be PCC.

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<sup>83</sup> This article was revised on 10 June 2015.