

ZOOM STUDY: IMPORTANT TERMS

CIRCUMCISION

1.) According to the following passage, what were the requirements surrounding the covenant of circumcision?

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

2.) What does Paul say is the relationship between Abraham’s faith and circumcision? Did circumcision make him (or any person) righteous?

Romans 4:9-12 ...We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹²And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

3.) The covenant of circumcision was part of the bi-lateral covenant meant for the biological descendants of Abraham and was not otherwise binding for Gentile believers to be saved. What non-Hebrews are held up as models of faith in the Old Testament?

4.) The following Scriptures urge us to have “circumcised” hearts. What is the picture? How and when does this happen?

Deuteronomy 10:16 (In advance of the second generation entering the Promised Land), “Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.”

Romans 2:28-29 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

Colossians 2:11-12 In [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

5.) Look at the Colossians passage again. Circumcision represented the cutting off of the sinful nature. How does baptism do better?

6.) How would you advise a Christian couple who is wondering if they should have their baby boy circumcised?

Closing Prayer: Holy Spirit, we praise you for the gift of baptism, by which you have circumcised our hearts. Enable us anew to cut off sin and live new lives ever more dedicated to Christ. Amen.