

Biblical Baptism 5: Relationship Between Circumcision And Baptism (Gen 17:7-14) Nov 06

- o Apart from using covenant theology, the paedobaptists appeal to the relationship between circumcision and baptism to support infant baptism. The argument is that circumcision and baptism are parallel signs and seals of their respective covenants. Therefore, by a supposed good and necessary inference, the subjects of baptism must be the same as the subjects of circumcision (i.e. believers and their infant seed).
- = What is the relationship between circumcision and baptism? Is baptism a sign and seal of the NC, to be applied to believers and their seed?

I. Paedobaptist confusion over circumcision.

1. In Gen. 17, God introduced circumcision into the Abrahamic Covenant after Abraham was justified by faith, having believed in God and the certainty of His promise.
 - This covenant sign of circumcision, itself called “the covenant,” was continued under the Sinai Covenant because that covenant was “added to” the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:19).
 - : Not to be circumcised as a member of Abraham’s household was to break the covenant.
 - For some unclear reason, circumcision was not practised by Moses in the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38; Joshua 5:2-7).
 - : Some paedobaptists argue that the church in the wilderness is one with the NT church. The argument is extended by saying that since the wilderness church was made up of covenant members and their seed, so the NT church must be made up of covenant members and their seed. If that is the case, the NT church should not apply the covenant sign to infants as the “church in the wilderness” did not. Inconsistencies arise when we try to make the NT people of God identical in every detail to those in the OT.
 - The OT people of God were told to circumcise their hearts as well as their bodies by loving God and keeping His commandments (Dt. 10:16). They were all in the Abrahamic and Sinaitic Covenants, but they were not all circumcised in their hearts.
 - : Later, God prophesied that after captivity and future restoration, in the New Covenant days, He would “circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed” (Dt. 30:6). Paedobaptists sometimes use this passage to support infant baptism, when it actually is a reference to members of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 32:37-41). God promises to continue His heart work from generation to generation (cf. Acts 2:39). Jer. 32:39 says, “for the good of them and their children after them,” which simply means it will be good for the children to be raised in Christian homes.
2. The NT strongly opposes circumcision as a work for justification (Gal. 1:9; 5:2; 6:15; Col. 2:8-11).
 - However, it still was practised by many Jewish Christians out of respect for biblical tradition (Acts 21:18-25), or out of accommodation to Jewish customs for evangelism (1 Cor. 10:32; Acts 16:3).
 - : These professing Jewish Christians who continued to practise circumcision were continually tempted to depend upon this fleshly practice to make their children real covenant children of Abraham, instead of depending on faith alone in Christ alone (Gal. 3-6).
 - Some paedobaptists wrongly argue from the permission of circumcision for those from Jewish background to be the approval of circumcision as a Christian entrance sign to the New Covenant. It is further argued that the use of the term “synagogue” in James 2:2-4 means that Christian Jews practised infant admission to the Christian church through circumcision in a similar manner that the non-Christian Jews were admitted to the synagogue.
 - : There is no biblical or historical evidence that Jewish circumcised infants were automatically considered baptised and admitted to the Christian church.
 - : Much less, that the Gentile parents requested infant baptism so that their children would not be left out. This is pure speculation, not exegesis.
3. Based on Rom. 4:11, paedobaptists call baptism *the sign and seal* of the New Covenant, just as circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and the seal of Abraham’s faith which he had while uncircumcised.
 - It is true that circumcision was called a *sign* of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:11), but it was never called a *seal* of that covenant.
 - : In only one place in Scripture circumcision is called a *seal* and that was of the righteousness of

the faith which Abraham had while uncircumcised (Rom. 4:11). In other words, circumcision was a seal, not of every member of the Abrahamic Covenant, but of the salvation experience, or personal faith, of Abraham alone.

: Neither is *baptism* ever called the seal of the New Covenant. Instead, the seal of the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit, who regenerates the believer, in direct fulfillment of Abrahamic circumcision (Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).

II. The true relationship between circumcision and baptism.

1. In Scripture, the true Jew, or Abraham's seed, in fulfillment of God's promise to him, are those Jew and Gentiles who have been circumcised in the heart by the Spirit, as revealed by their faith (Gal. 3:14, 28-29).

- Rom. 2:25-29 shows that circumcision was always meant to represent the inward work of the Spirit on the heart. This inward work must be present for a person to be a true Jew, and thereby a receiver of all of God's New Covenant blessings (Phil. 3:3).
- Rom. 4:12-13, 23 show that the promised seed of Abraham are not those of physical descent, but those who have the same faith as Abraham, whether circumcised or not.
- Rom. 9:6-8 tells us that "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." The children of the promise are the elect.

2. Col. 2:9-12 links circumcision to baptism, but not in the way claimed by paedobaptists. Rather, this passage teaches that the Christian's circumcision (made not by hands) is his union with Christ's death and resurrection, which is evidenced by personal faith in the heart, and symbolized visibly (i.e. publicly) by baptism.

- Circumcision under the old covenant has been replaced by regeneration or heart circumcision. A *type* has to be fulfilled by an *antitype* that is spiritual in nature, not by another type. Baptism is a new sign of the New Covenant. Baptism points us to regeneration. Regeneration is the seal of the New Covenant.
- In Rom 6:3-4, union with Christ in baptism is referred to. Some paedobaptists correctly consider the passage as referring primarily to regeneration, and secondarily to water baptism. However, they show great inconsistency by taking water baptism to be primary in Col. 2:11-12, and regeneration to be secondary.

= Circumcision was a prospective sign of the need of heart circumcision, while baptism is a retrospective sign of that heart-circumcision already received and confessed.

= The sign of baptism may be applied only to disciples who show evidence of the Holy Spirit's seal, regeneration, revealed in their outward repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a baptism of disciples alone.