**The Circumcision of Christ**

Paul wrote to Christians, “In Him (Christ) you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:11). This figure is an obvious reference to physical circumcision practiced by the Jews as a sign of the covenant between God and the Israelite people.

From Abraham, Isaac and Jacob until the death of Messiah, the physical descendants of Jacob (Israel) enjoyed a special covenant relationship with God. In honor of that covenant, they obeyed God’s command to circumcise every son on the eighth day. Jesus replaced the old covenant with a new covenant (Hebrews 8:13) between God and the spiritual descendants of Abraham, those who belong to Christ (Galatians 3:29). The basis for this relationship is the reconciliation that was made possible by the blood Jesus shed on the cross. That is why Jesus, when instituting the Lord’s Supper, said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood” (1 Corinthians 11:25).

With that background information in mind, we should revisit Colossians 2 to define the circumcision of Christ. Paul clearly identifies it in verse 12: “Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” He further develops the parallel between circumcision and baptism in Romans 6:3-7. Not only does the burial under and raising out of the waters of baptism symbolize the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, Paul teaches that something is removed from us in the process: God removes the guilt of our past sins and we resolve to put the old man of sin to death.

It is no wonder, then, that Jesus left His disciples with a life-long mission before He ascended to the Father, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). We are clothed with a covenant relationship with Christ when we are baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27).

Those who belong to Christ are those willing to repent of their past sins, who confess Jesus as Lord and are immersed in water, the sign of that new covenant relationship with spiritual Israelites. To deny the important role of baptism in one’s salvation is to discount the significance of the covenant relationship of God with His people. Immersion in water is no less than the circumcision of Christ, the sign of the new covenant, the reenactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. To profess otherwise is to ignore the plain teachings of the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

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