

The Circumcision Wars I

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One of the biggest fallacies that ‘religious’ people believe and that Protestants believe is that the children of Israel under the Old Covenant were given eternal life through their works. That is not true! The only ones under the Old Covenant who receive the Holy Spirit were the prophets and the kings; that was it. None of the rest of the people received the Holy Spirit to have *the heart* to obey God.

Let’s read what God said of the people, though they were well intended. All human beings are well intended unless you’re so miserably evil and hateful and dedicated to evil. Even then you justify your evil in your own mind, because you have good intentions or it’s going to do good for you, or it’s going to do good for someone else.

That’s why murderers can murder, and justify it and say that this person deserved it. Or people can steal by saying ‘he’s got all of this and I don’t have it.’ Or commit adultery because it ‘feels good.’ Or commit idolatry because ‘it’s really not an idol.’ Or to worship other gods because ‘after all they’re really not other gods.’ *That’s all carnal reasoning!*

When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt they were rebellious from day one. They were never given an opportunity for salvation, they were promised land, territory, *blessings for obedience* in the letter of the Law, *curses for disobedience* in the letter of the Law.

God wanted them to know something and to always remember this. With this there is a spiritual lesson for us, too. Deuteronomy 9:1: “Hear, O Israel! You *are* to pass over Jordan today to go in to expel nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fenced up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the giants, whom you know and have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak!’ Therefore, understand this day that the LORD your God *is* He Who goes over before you. *Like* a consuming fire, He shall destroy them, and He shall bring them down before your face. So you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly as the LORD has said to you” (vs 1-3).

The *spiritual* lesson is this: God has called us. God fights our battles for us. God is the One Who has made everything possible. That’s why he says—and this applies to us:

Verse 4: “Do not speak in your heart after the LORD your God has cast them out from before you, saying, ‘For my righteousness, the LORD has

brought me in to possess this land’; but for the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you. **Not for your righteousness...**” (vs 4-5). That’s why God calls sinners. He doesn’t call those who *think* they’re good. That’s why Jesus said when He came, ‘He did not come to call the righteous—that is the self-righteous—to repentance, but sinners.’

In Worldwide [Church of God] it got to the point that they were glorifying Herbert Armstrong so much that the church members became ‘groupies.’ Do you know what a ‘groupie’ is? *A follower and one that stalks his movie star!* So, they would all go out to the airport and see him land in his private jet. They would come to the Feast of Tabernacles, and when Herbert Armstrong would come up on the stage, they’d clap their hands and cheer and yell and all this sort of thing.

What he should have done was that the first time that happened, he should have said, ‘Look, brethren, let’s understand something: God has called all of us. He has called me; He’s called you. We’re not going to get carried away and I don’t want you to think more of me than I actually am. I’m just a man filled with faults and mistakes. But if God can use me, that’s fine. It’s not because of me and who I am. God did not have to call me, but He did.’

I think that would have helped the whole Church. I will say that’s what I say to you, brethren. Not for *our* righteousness.

Verse 5: “Not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart, do you go to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you, so that He may perform the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” {see *The Christian Passover*, chapters 21-23}

God promised Abraham two things: *physical seed and spiritual seed*. We’re here as the result of the promise to give Abraham *spiritual* seed. It applies both ways, brethren. There’s so much we can learn. That’s why it is so absolutely ungodly and lawless for the Protestants to cast away all the Old Testament and the books of Moses, because they’re casting away the Word of God. There are many lessons in there for them to learn if they would just apply them. He swore to them an irrevocable oath! This is to help keep us all on an even playing field.

Verse 6: “Therefore, understand that the LORD your God does not give you this good land, to

possess it for your righteousness, for you *are* a stiff-necked people. Remember, *and* do not forget, how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you departed out of the land of Egypt, until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD” (vs 6-7).

I tell you Moses had to suffer from it, too. Yet, Moses intervened and saved the children of Israel—didn’t he? *Yes!*

- They never received the Holy Spirit.
- They were never converted.
- They were never promised eternal life.
- And the vast majority of the Israelites will come up in the second resurrection.

The reason that the Protestants have it that they receive salvation this way is because they do not understand the plan of God with the first resurrection and the second resurrection. They do not understand Ezek. 37 and the valley of dry bones. They have a theology that if you are not saved today, and if you don’t accept the Lord tonight, you’re going to hell and burn forever. They have everything all confused, but here’s what God says:

Deuteronomy 5:26: “For who of all flesh has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived?” Let’s get a spiritual thing here, too. Who of all living flesh has God called? *Us!* Of all the people of the earth *we hear the voice of God, through the Word of God by the Spirit of God* so that it becomes part of us.

So, the people said to Moses, v 27: “You go near and hear all that the LORD our God shall say. And you speak to us all that the LORD our God shall speak to you, and we will hear *it*, and do *it*.” Today we don’t do that. We study the Word of God and the Holy Spirit leads us to the understanding of it. We have a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ through the grace of God, by the Spirit of God.

We are all taught of the Father. When you read the Bible or I read the Bible to you in Sabbath services, your understanding of it, when I’m going through it, comes because of the Spirit of God, which gives you understanding through the words of God. That’s how it’s accomplished. It is God Who is teaching you. I’m an instrument involved in it. I’m happy to do so, but I understand that everything that I have comes from God. It doesn’t come from me. It doesn’t come because I’m smart, because I’m not smart. It comes because God gives understanding. It’s the same thing with you, the words that you understand.

Verse 28: “And the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me. And the LORD

said to me, ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They have well *said* all that they have spoken. Oh, that there were such a heart in them that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, so that it might be well with them and with their children forever!’” (vs 28-29).

The sermon *Refuting Sunday-Keeping #s 5-6* {see entire series} I showed very clearly that the Protestants theology—that all the commandments of God were bondage—*they are not! They are for our good!*

They did not have the heart because their hearts were not circumcised. This gets into the whole problem in the book of Galatians. It is something that we have understood in the past, maybe 90%. We’ve had a good understanding of it. When I get done today, after reading to you certain things concerning Hellenistic Judaism and Judaism in general, you will understand it completely as never before.

Deuteronomy 10 talks about *circumcision of the heart*. Let’s understand something that’s so vitally important: You hear the Protestants say all the time that it’s done away or it’s abolished. Please understand this: Circumcision has not been abolished. You’re now required to have a greater circumcision—*circumcision of the heart!* That’s why they did not have the heart, they did not receive the Holy Spirit to have their heart circumcised.

You now have a temple service that is greater than the temple in Jerusalem. That’s why God destroyed it! You do not offer animal sacrifices—which never took away the sins from anyone, it only justified to the physical temple. *You now come before God in heaven above, into the Holy of Holies by the flesh of Jesus Christ* being the sacrifice, and you have direct contact with God the Father.

- We have a greater temple!
- We have a greater sacrifice!
- We have a greater circumcision—*circumcision of the heart!*

Whenever you hear someone say that it’s abolished or done away, correct them and tell them that *no, it has been superceded by a greater!* None of those things that they did could forgive sin. How could they bring eternal life?

If eternal life is a gift of God, it has to be a gift of God, and you can’t earn it by meritorious works. However, you must keep the commandments of God, because God requires it.

Let’s look at the circumcision of the heart and what it does for us. This is very important,

brethren. This is profound to understand. Under the Old Covenant there was circumcision of the flesh. The circumcision of Abraham was a token of the covenant, it was not *the* covenant.

Deuteronomy 10:12: “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (vs 12-13). You can apply that spiritually.

Verse 14: “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *belong* to the LORD your God, the earth also, with all that is in it. Only the LORD had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, you above all people, as *it is* today. Therefore, **circumcise the foreskin of your heart**, and be no longer stiff-necked” (vs 14-16).

A person, even carnally speaking, can have a decent and submissive attitude, even though they’re not converted. For example: Jesus said of Nathan, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.’ That’s a hard one to find. That’s why He gave this. This was also a prophecy of what is going to be for the New Testament. As we will see a little later, the Jews and their proselytism had an interpretation of circumcision of the heart, which is where we get into the problems of Acts 15 in the book of Galatians on the question of circumcision.

When there was circumcision in the flesh, only the men were circumcised. The women did not participate in that until they were married. Then they participated in the circumcision of their husbands through the sexual dues in marriage. In the New Covenant, the circumcision is not of the flesh, but of the Spirit, and women have their hearts circumcised as well as men.

These are fighting words for a Jew, Romans 2:17: “Behold, you are called a Jew, and you yourself rest in the law, and boast in God.” Please understand: when the Jews ‘rest in the law’ the Pharisees’ interpretation of the law was just like *The Code of Jewish Law*—thousands and thousands of extra laws that they had. When we come to Acts 15 and the keeping of the Law of Moses, this is what they’re talking about.

They said, all of these were given by ‘oral tradition’ and carried down from Moses to the fathers and finally we have it written down. That’s what circumcision and proselytizing was the problem.

Verse 18: “And know *His* will, and approve of the things that are more excellent, being

instructed out of the Law; and are persuaded *that* you yourself are a guide of *the* blind, a light for those in darkness... [which are all ‘goyeem’ or Gentiles] ...an instructor of *the* foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of the knowledge and of the Truth *contained* in the Law” (vs 18-20). So, they only had a form of it.

Verse 21: “You, then, who are teaching another, do you not teach yourself also? You who preach, ‘Do not steal,’ are you stealing? You who say, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ are you committing adultery? You who abhor idols, are you committing sacrilege?” (vs 21-22).

In the *Code of Jewish Law* they have ways around almost every one of the Laws of God to do what they want to do, though they have all kinds of laws and they look very righteous. It is really an amazing thing! This is part of the ‘mystery of lawlessness’—though they have laws—that’s why it’s a mystery. How could it be lawless when you have laws? *It’s lawless because you make laws that are against the Laws of God!* Isn’t that amazing? That’s why it’s a mystery. Same thing with Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, all the ‘isms’ of religion.

Verse 23: “You who boast in law, are you dishonoring God through your transgression of the Law? For through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, exactly as it is written” (vs 23-24). How can the name of God be blasphemed if they were keeping the Laws of God? *Couldn’t be*—could it? *No!* But no one understands that through this book—*Code of Jewish Laws*—the name of God is blasphemy! They have all their own laws, all their own rules, all their own regulations, designed to close off the Laws of God. They keep you so busy thinking about so many different things that hopefully you won’t break any laws.

But in doing all of these extra things out here that they had you do, you are actually breaking the commandments of God because you have no time to really truly keep them, and keep them *from the heart*. This is what *circumcision of the heart* is going to be all about. That’s why God says in Deut. 5, ‘Oh that there were such a heart in them that they would fear Me and keep My commandments always’—which they did not do!

Verse 25—New Testament doctrine, brethren. Anyone who brings up circumcision, never forget v 25: “For on the one hand, circumcision profits **if** you are observing *the* Law; on the other hand, if you are a transgressor of *the* Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.” Paul is telling the Jews, you’re as bad as an uncircumcised Gentile.

You need to understand something, they held all the Gentiles in contempt. All of the Gentiles were to be vassals or servants to serve the Jews. God never intended that. The Talmud is one of the most abominable pieces of work that the Jews have written. In it they have excoriations and cursings against Christ and Christians. They defame Him, debunk Him and blaspheme Him and denounce Him in the worst and most degrading ways possible. They view all other people as 'goyeem,' 'made for our use and our chattel, therefore, we can steal from them, lie to them, take their property.' That's the heart and core of Talmudism in the kabalist Talmud.

What we're going to learn out of all of this, in order to understand some of the things that are in the Bible, you need to understand what the Jews were doing and thinking; then you'll know why the confrontations took place. Why were the Jews so hateful against Paul and Christ and all of that? *Because they could no longer claim the power that they claim!* It's an amazing thing! It is absolutely an amazing thing!

Paul is making it clear here. He says the unthinkable, v 26: "Therefore, if the uncircumcised is keeping the requirements [righteousness] of the Law..." The righteousness of the Law is different from just law—period! Righteousness of the Law is found in the Word of God. The Pharisaic interpretation of the law is found in the *Code of Jewish Law*. Most people don't know that.

Let me just say this: Unless you have familiarity with this book—*Code of Jewish Law*—you cannot understand Hebrews, Romans and Galatians. It's an impossibility, because you don't know what they're talking about and what the problems were here in these books. The first time I came across this book was in 1972. This book should have been part of our study of the Epistles of Paul at Ambassador College, had they taught it properly. Then you would understand the difference between law and grace.

God's way is really simple, but men have made it complicated. That's what the trouble is. Then everybody comes along with false doctrines and misinterpretations, and they make it all confusing. One of the things that most people do when they start reading the Bible, they go to the difficult Scriptures first. All carnal people look to find fault in God.

Why do people look to find fault in God? *Because if they can find a fault in God, then they're justified in not obeying Him*, because 'God is wrong.' That's a tactic of human nature beginning with Adam and Eve. 'Lord, it was the serpent,' said the woman. And the man said, 'Lord, the woman

You gave me; it's Your fault.' God says, 'All three of you are wrong!'

Now then, this is one of the harshest things that an orthodox Jew could hear, v 26: "Therefore, if the uncircumcised is keeping the requirements [righteousness] of the Law... [keeping the spirit of the Laws of God as defined by Christ] ...shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision? And shall not the uncircumcised, who by nature is fulfilling the Law... [far from doing away with any laws] ...judge you, who, with *the* letter and circumcision, *are* a transgressor of *the* law?" (vs 26-27). I don't think we grasp how absolutely hostile those two verses are to any antagonistic Jew. I mean, this is worthy to be ripped out of the Bible. No doubt about it!

Verse 28: "For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, neither *is* that circumcision which *is* external in *the* flesh... [because it's only skin deep, circumcision of the flesh] ...rather, he *is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly... [with the Spirit of God; referring back to Christ] ...and **circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit** and not in *the* letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God" (vs 28-29).

Did you know that the Jews praise those Gentiles who receive physical circumcision? That it was part of their proselytizing? The Church, beginning with the apostles and to the Jew first, had to come out of the community of Judaism. A lot of them thought that Christianity was an extension of Judaism. Therefore, those Pharisees who believed, and a lot of the Jews who believed, thought that the evangelizing done by the Church was the same as the proselytizing that they did with the Gentiles.

That's where the problem comes in Galatians, and people don't understand that. Paul explains circumcision of the heart. {See sermon: *More About Colossians Two* (part of the Colossians Series)}

Colossians 2:9: "For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of all principality and power in Whom you have also been circumcised with *the* circumcision not made by hands..." (vs 9-11). When you are converted your mind is changed. The stiff-neckedness of the heart and mind, and the rebelliousness of human nature has been circumcised from you. That's made *without hands*, but by the Spirit of God through repentance and baptism.

"...in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ... [Circumcision today is required—is it not? *Yes! Not of the flesh, but of the Spirit!*] (here's how it's done): ...having been buried with Him in baptism, by which you have also been raised with *Him* through the inner working of

God, Who raised Him from the dead. For you, who were *once* dead in *your* sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has *now* made alive with Him..." (vs 11-13).

They remained uncircumcised in the flesh, because circumcision of the heart took away the carnal-mindedness; took away the rebellion and stiff-neckedness; took away the hostility that the carnal mind has toward God. It didn't take away human nature entirely, but it began.

So, you being "...dead in *your* sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has *now* made alive with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses. He has blotted out the note of debt against us *with* the decrees of *our* sins... [sin is contrary to us, not the commandments of God] ...which was contrary to us; and He has taken it [sin] away, having nailed it to the cross" (vs 13-14). That is the *circumcision of the heart*. What happens when that is done?

Hebrews 10:16: "'This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them **after those days,**' says the Lord..." After the days of the ministry of Christ; His crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven; then the giving of the Holy Spirit. It includes all of it.

"...I will give My laws into their hearts... [Why is that possible? *Because you have the spiritual circumcision; that you desire it!* You want to.] ...and I will **inscribe** them in their minds" (v 16). Our minds are made in such a way that it actually puts a permanent record of those things in our mind

- as we read them
- as we study them
- as we practice them
- as we meditate on them
- as we conform our lives to the way of God

Our brains actually change through the rearrangement of the neuro-cells that are in our mind. That's what it means to be converted, changed. This is what the *circumcision of the heart* accomplishes, provided that you grow, overcome, study and all of that.

Notice, God does something that's important, too, v 17: "And their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again." In dealing with one another, Christ said that 'if you don't forgive your brother his sins, I won't forgive yours either.' It's very important to not only forgive, but also to *forget* so that you're not always dangling the little carnal knife to stick under the fifth rib whenever anything comes up: 'I remember this'—30 years ago! God doesn't do that.

When you repent, He removes your sins as

far away from you as the east is from the west. How much further away can He do it? When that happens, don't go back and remind God of it. If you sin sufficiently that you need some sort of discipline upon you, like David when he sinned with Bathsheba, his discipline was that his whole household was against him the rest of his life. That was not remembering the sin, but that was so he would never forget to love God and serve Him.

Notice what this does, v 18: "Now, where remission of these *is, it is* no longer *necessary to offer* sacrifices for sin." And we might add *nor requirement of physical circumcision*.

Verse 19: Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter into the *true* Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way..." (vs 19-20). Why is it a *living way*?

- you have the Spirit of God
- your heart has been circumcised
- you love God
- you love the brethren
- you want to serve God
- your whole desire is to be in the Kingdom of God
 - ✓ to be with Christ
 - ✓ to be with the Father

—which will happen when Christ returns to the earth and you are resurrected and meet Christ in the air. That becomes the whole goal and the whole purpose of your life.

"...which He consecrated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh), and *having* a great High Priest over the house of God, let us approach *God* with a true heart... [which has been circumcised] ...with full conviction of faith, our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience... [that's what the circumcision of the heart does] ...and our bodies having been washed with pure water. Let us hold fast without wavering *to* the hope *that* we profess, for He Who promised *is* faithful" (vs 20-23).

God will do it! That's why it's so important to believe God. believe His Word, live by His Truth. You grow in it! Let's finish the effects of circumcision of the heart. Here is what you will do. This is contrasted to the carnal mind. The carnal mind, being fleshly, looks to physical things to be done. That's why the Jews look to the physical circumcision. But those of us who have the Holy Spirit of God in us—living by the way of God, overcoming human nature and so forth:

Romans 8:1: "Consequently, *there is* now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit." If you have had your heart

circumcised by the Spirit of God, you now have a struggle against human nature, because the Spirit of God is there tugging on you, but you want to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh.

If you truly have the Spirit of God, if you try and walk after the flesh, God's Spirit is going to bring you back to repentance, and you will realize that no, you can't do that. Physical circumcision never did that.

Verse 2: "Because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has delivered [justified] me from the law of sin and death. For what *was* impossible for the law to do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son in *the* likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; in order that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit" (vs 2-4). Because we've had our heart circumcised with the Spirit of God

Verse 5: "For those who walk according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who walk according to *the* Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace, because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God" (vs 5-8). Those who are not converted cannot please God because they are not subject to the Law of God; their hearts have not been converted.

Therefore, when you go back to Deut. 5 where we began, when God said 'you do not have the heart in you' they were carnal, they were uncircumcised in the heart and could not even obey in the letter of the Law; were rebellious and stiff-necked from the very first day that He met them, clear to the end.

All Protestant religion is a stiff-necked, self-righteous religion. It's carnal. When you have that kind of thing in carnality, you must always give your way of escape by accusing God. It can come from the right—Orthodox Judaism; it can come from the left—Gnosticism.

Please understand: there were great varieties of Jewish sects. The Essenes, by the way, were sun-worshippers. They had a solar calendar. *Their* sabbath was on Wednesday. You need to understand that the Jews were just as confused in what they were doing—and still are today—as all people are in their religions.

How many different branches of Protestantism do we have? *Gillions!* How many variations on Catholicism do we have? *Gillions!* But

there's only one God and one way and that's right here—the Bible!

Now we're ready to begin to understand the problem of circumcision as related to Acts 15, Acts 10 and Galatians.

(go to the next track)

We're just going to cover the topic of circumcision; we're not going to cover all the rest of the things related to Acts 15. {see sermon series: *Refuting Sunday-Keeping #6*}

Acts 15:1: "Now, certain men who had come down from Judea..." These were orthodox Jews who converted to Christ, but did not give up Judaism. Those later became the Ebionites who kept all the customs of Judaism. This is a very interesting section in Scripture, because from this time on we never hear of Pharisees within the Church, again. This caused a great split within the Church. The Pharisees and the Circumcision Party left.

"...were teaching the brethren, *saying*, 'Unless you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'" (v 1). The Greek here means that it's impossible for you to be saved. Why did they say that? If they believed in Christ, didn't they know better?

Verse 2: "Therefore, after a great deal of strife and arguing with them by Paul and Barnabas, the *brethren* appointed Paul and Barnabas, and certain others from among them, to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this question." Notice that they didn't go to the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Verse 3: So then, after being sent on their way by the Church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, *where* they reported the conversion of the Gentiles. And they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all the things that God had done with them. But there stood up certain of those who believed, who were of the sect of the Pharisees, saying, 'It is obligatory... [because it's impossible to be saved unless you're circumcised in the flesh] ...to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the Law of Moses'" (vs 3-5). Understand when a Pharisee says to keep the Law of Moses, that includes all the oral laws.

Verse 6: "Then the apostles and the elders gathered together to see about this matter.... [the Pharisees weren't there] ...And after much discussion had taken place, Peter stood up and said to them, 'Men, brethren, you know that from *the* early days, God made *the* choice among us *that* by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the Word of the Gospel, and believe. And God, Who knows the

heart... [the heart-knowing God] ...bore witness to them *by* giving them the Holy Spirit, even as *He did* to us, and made no difference between us and them, *and* has purified their hearts through the faith. Now therefore, why do you tempt God by putting a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (vs 6-10). That yoke of bondages was Judaism. We will see that in Judaism's proselytizing Gentiles, once the Gentiles received circumcision they became a citizen of the nation of the Jews and were obligated to keep all the oral laws and the temple laws.

Now you know why God destroyed the temple. Can you imagine the argument we would be having today if the temple still stood? You think we have difficulties today, just wait and see what happens when the temple gets going in Jerusalem—and it's going to get going. You know that the Jews will never sign any peace pact unless they are able to have a temple and offer sacrifices. And you might understand that that's the only way the sacrifices can be stopped is if they're started again.

Let's see what happened and then I'll read to you out of this book: *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism*; it also covers other branches of Judaism. What is called Judaism in Palestine is called 'normative' Judaism, which then is the Pharisaic Judaism. A lot of the Hellenists did not believe in circumcision. Some of the Hellenists did not believe in Sabbath-keeping. Doesn't that bring up Heb. 4, which Paul wrote to the Hebrews—the Hellenists—that there 'remains therefore, for the people of God, Sabbath-keeping.' This stuff becomes incredible, brethren. This becomes absolutely so clear. Now then, Acts 10 becomes a profound section.

Acts 10:1: "Now *there* was in Caesarea a certain man named Cornelius, a centurion of a band that is called *the Italian band*, a devout man who also feared God with all his house, both in giving many alms to the people and *in* beseeching God continually *in prayer*" (vs 1-2). Here's an uncircumcised man doing the righteousness of the Law—correct? And in this case, before conversion in the letter—correct? That's what it's saying here.

Verse 3: "He clearly saw in a vision, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming to him and saying to him, 'Cornelius.' But as he fixed his eyes on him, he became afraid *and* said, 'What is it, Lord?' And he said to him, 'Your prayers and your alms have gone up for a memorial before God'" (vs 3-4). That's a profound statement, because any uncircumcised Gentile could 'never have his prayers answered directly of God,' but had to have a Jew go offer a sacrifice at the temple before his prayer could be heard.

You need to understand how profound this verse is. Why did God send an angel to tell him? *Because only God knows the heart! God was answering the prayer!* Do you think that a Jew would have gone and told him that? Even in spite of all that he was doing in giving much alms. Or as the Centurion was who came to Christ and says, 'Could you please heal my son?' Christ said, 'I'll come down and do it.' And the Centurion said, 'Don't bother, I'm a man under authority and I tell this one to go and they go, and come and he comes. All you have to do is give the word and my son will be healed.'

Here was this Roman Centurion uncircumcised talking directly with Christ and Christ turned around and told all the Israelites, all the Jews that were there: 'I have not found such faith, no, not in all of Israel!' Do you know what a put-down that was to the Jews? He said, 'Go, your son is healed.'

Judaism claims that it alone has an exclusive hold on God. That's why this verse is so important. Since all the apostles were considered Jews, most of them were from the tribe of Benjamin, but they were considered Jews. God had to intervene and do this supernaturally, because only God could make this known.

Verse 5: "And now send men to Joppa, and call for Simon who is surnamed Peter. He is lodging with a certain Simon, a tanner, whose house is by *the sea*. He shall tell you what you must do.' And when the angel who had spoken to him departed, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who continually waited on him; and after relating everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. And on the next day, about the sixth hour, as these were journeying and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray. And he became very hungry and desired to eat. But while they were preparing *the meal*, a trance fell upon him... [God is going to give him a vision] ...and he saw the heaven opened; and a certain vessel descended upon him, like a great sheet, bound by *the* four corners and let down upon the earth; in which were all the four-footed beasts of the earth, including the wild beasts, and the creeping things and the birds of heaven" (vs 5-12).

This is done because this is how Judaism views all other people, as no more than just animals made to be used and exploited for their own benefit.

Verse 13: "Then a voice came to him, *saying*, 'Arise, Peter, kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'In no way, Lord; for I have never eaten anything *that is common or unclean*'" (vs 13-14). When Peter says this, this was quite a few years after the New

Testament Church had begun at Jerusalem. He still had never eaten anything common or unclean. This is proof that Christians are not to eat unclean foods; this is not the purifying of foods, but the purifying of men.

Verse 15: “And a voice *came* again the second time to him, *saying*, ‘What God has cleansed, you are not to call common.’.... [Very interesting—isn’t it? What does that mean?] ...Now, this took place three times, and the vessel was taken up again into heaven. And as Peter was questioning within himself what the vision that he saw might mean, the men who were sent from Cornelius, having inquired for the house of Simon, immediately stood at the porch” (vs 15-17).

Apparently, the angel that brought this vision—or if Christ brought it directly—He waited until the men were coming right up to the door, getting close, then He sent the vision and as Peter got up and as he went out there were the three men from Cornelius. He was told to go ‘without doubting.’ There were three Gentiles, two devout servants and one a soldier

Verse 23: “Then he called them in to lodge *there*. And on the next day Peter went with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And on the next day, they came to Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them *and* had called together his kinsmen and *his* intimate friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him *and* fell at *his* feet, worshiping *him*” (vs 23-25)—and said, ‘Oh, the first pope! I am so happy to see you.’ NO! He didn’t say that!

Verse 26: “But Peter raised him up, saying, ‘Stand up, for I myself am also a man.’ And as he was talking with him, he went in and found many gathered together” (vs 26-27). Is God able to call people that even the apostles didn’t know anything about? *Yes, indeed! No question about it!*

Verse 28: “And he said to them, ‘You know that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to associate with or come near to anyone of another race....’” Where in the Old Testament is that law? *Not there!* What law was it? *Code of Jewish Law!* What was God abolishing? *Any requirements for the Code of Jewish Law!*

“...But God has shown me *that* no man should be called common or unclean” (v 28). This has nothing to do with clean or unclean meats whatsoever, but categories of human beings as Judaism categorized human beings. There was a difference between a common Gentile and an unclean Gentile. All of these men, and all of those there were uncircumcised.

Verse 29: “For this reason, I also came

without objection when I was sent for. I ask therefore, for what purpose did you send for me?’ And Cornelius said, ‘Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and *at* the ninth hour I was praying in my house; and suddenly a man stood before me in bright apparel, and said, “Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Now then, send to Joppa and call for Simon who is surnamed Peter; he is lodging by *the* sea in *the* house of Simon, a tanner. When he comes, he will speak to you.” Therefore, I sent for you at once; and you did well to come. So then, we are all present before God to hear all things that have been commanded you by God.”’ (vs 29-33).

Verse 34: “Then Peter opened *his* mouth *and* said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons... [concerning circumcision] ...but in every nation the one who fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. The word that He sent to the children of Israel, preaching the Gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you have knowledge of; which declaration came throughout the whole of Judea...’” (vs 34-37). To the Gentile that he knew this, had to tell you how profound it was in preaching the Gospel in all of Judea and all of what Christ did: all of His preaching, miracles, healings, feeding the 4,000 and 5,000, His crucifixion, resurrection and the whole thing.

“...beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed, *concerning* Jesus, Who *was* from Nazareth: how God anointed Him with *the* Holy Spirit and with power, *and* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all *the* things that He did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Him by hanging *Him* on a tree. *But* God raised Him up the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses who had been chosen before by God, to *those of* us who did eat and drink with Him after He had risen from *the* dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to fully testify that it is He Who has been appointed by God *to be* Judge of *the* living and *the* dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness, *that* everyone who believes in Him receives remission of sins through His name.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came upon all those who were listening to the message” (vs 37-44).

Why did God do it this way? *To show that Jewish proselytism*—requiring Gentiles to be circumcised in the flesh after they had altered their behavior to conform to the Laws of God—*was not required*. That’s why He did it.

Verse 45: “And the believers from the circumcision were astonished...” Why? *Because*

they didn't in their own hearts until that minute understand or even believe God would deal with people uncircumcised.

"...as many as had come with Peter, that upon the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out; for they heard them speak in *other* languages and magnify God.... [speaking in languages is to magnify God] ...Then Peter responded *by saying*, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have also received the Holy Spirit as we *did*?' (vs 45-47).

Here they received the Holy Spirit first and then were baptized, because that had to break the chain of physical proselytism through physical circumcision by Judaism. It had to be given first. They were not required to be circumcised afterward. We're going to see that's the heart and core of the problem in Galatians.

Verse 48: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they besought him to remain *for* a number of days." So, he stayed there and probably preached to them day and night. Peter was in deep 'do-do' with the Circumcision Party—the Greek is 'skubalon.'

Acts 11:1: "Now, the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God." The people were running up and telling them, 'Peter went down there and you know what happened?' They were astonished!

Verse 2: "And when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of *the* circumcision disputed with him." They were the ones who believed in the *Code of Jewish Law*, who were believers in Christ and hadn't understood what God was going to do.

Verse 3: "Saying, 'You went in to men who were uncircumcised and did eat with them.'.... [This is a grave Jewish sin!] ...But Peter related *the event* from the beginning and expounded *everything* in order to them, saying" (vs 3-4). So, he told them.

Verse 15: "And when I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came upon them, even as *it* also *came* upon us in *the* beginning. Then I remembered the Word of *the* Lord, how He had said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with *the* Holy Spirit.' Therefore, if God also gave them the same gift that *was given* to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I *to dissent*? Do I have the power to forbid God?" (vs 15-17). They had to know that this came directly from God.

Verse 18: "And after hearing these things, they were silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also has God indeed granted repentance unto life.'"

Then from there on it talks about how Gentiles were brought into the Church. The problem in Acts 15 was that the Circumcision Party came all the way down to Antioch and they were trying to bring about circumcision. Why? Why would they do that? The answer is in this book; I'll just read you the summary. He goes through many technical things

Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism
by Peder Borgen:

pg. 259: Entry into the people of God or remaining in it.

Galatians 6:12: "As many as desire to make a good impression in *the* flesh, these are the ones who compel you to be circumcised..." Why did they believe that? *They carried over the Jewish proselytism into the Church to try and make Christian evangelizing Jewish proselytism!*

Here's what *Josephus* writes in Life 113:

When the Jews would have compelled them to be circumcised, if they wanted to be with them.

That's what the Maccabees did. When the Maccabees conquered the Edomites, what did they do? They forced them to have physical circumcision and accept all the law of Judaism. Compelled them to be circumcised.

Galatians 2:3 "But indeed, Titus, who *was* with me, being a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised"—as a necessary measure for salvation. That's what the problem was.

In Antiquities:

He compelled the inhabitants to be circumcised and to live according to the Jewish laws. Ptolemy writes, "The Idomeans, having been subjected by the Jews and having been compelled to undergo circumcision..."

Although these parallels occur in different context, all demonstrate that it was common to regard circumcision as such to be a basic identity marker for a Jew, and that when needed Gentiles were forcibly circumcised. By this act, they were made citizens of the Jewish nation.

That's what proselytism was for.

There are several aspects other than circumcision involved in becoming a Jewish proselyte, however. For example: Philo of Alexandria...

Philo lived during the days of the apostles. Philo wrote during the days of the apostles. There would be Jews who would go out and proselytize from Alexandria. There was even one called Apollos who came in contact with the Church at Corinth—a Hellenistic Jew.

...generally concentrates on three aspects:

1. **the religious conversion**, which is the changing of worshipping of many gods to worship the one true God

That is also a first step in evangelizing—correct? *Yes!*

2. **The ethical conversion**—called ethical circumcision, which was that they would be keeping the laws of God although they were uncircumcised. They were allowed to come to the synagogue and there was a Gentile section in which they could sit.

All Gentiles who were uncircumcised, physically, but had ethical conversion or circumcision were called *common*. All Gentiles not circumcised, still in the pagan religions were called *unclean*.

Now you understand why Peter said, ‘God has shown me why I should call no man *common* or *unclean*.’ Having nothing to do with clean or unclean meats, unless you’re a cannibal (I say that factiously).

3. **the social national conversion**, which required physical circumcision.

Those Pharisees who believed were transferring over the operation of proselytism to the new converts that God was calling and saying that you had to be circumcised after the manner of Moses or you can’t be saved.

God, in a supernatural miracle, made it clear that they were not be circumcised and their conversion was a true conversion of the circumcision of the heart, not an ethical conversion or an ethical circumcision as it is called in another place.

From the Jewish side there were subtle discussions about exactly when a Gentile convert received the status of being a Jew. Although the Babylonian Talmud was written at a much later time, it exemplifies how such distinctions were made.

Here he’s quoting from a section of that Talmud:

If baptized and not circumcised such a person is a proselyte, for we find that regarding his mother, our foremothers who were baptized and not circumcised. More important for the understanding of the Galatians’ situation is a corresponding but a different distinction drawn by Philo.

He differentiates between ethical circumcision and bodily circumcision. It is not the one who has circumcised his uncircumcision, but the one who has circumcised his desires and sexual pleasures and other passions from the soul.

Philo gives an answer and here’s the question:

When does a person receive status as a proselyte in the Jewish community and cease to be a heathen? In this saying, ethical circumcision and not bodily circumcision was basic requirement for entering the Jewish community.

But bodily circumcision was one of the commandments which the proselytes had to obey upon having received the status as a Jew.

Now you understand the basis for the problem in Galatians. They came down saying that you must be circumcised, because although you are keeping the laws, you cannot receive salvation until you finally receive the bodily circumcision. That’s what they were saying. That’s why God showed that it was not necessary. God had to do it supernaturally.

Here shows the problem, Galatians 2:1: “Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with *me* also. And I went up according to revelation, and laid before them the Gospel that I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run in vain. (But indeed, Titus, who *was* with me, being a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised.) Now, *this meeting* was *private* because of false brethren brought in secretly, who came in by stealth to spy out our freedom...” (vs 1-4).

What is this? If you think you had spies in the Church of God you were in, here they had latrine spies to examine men! You talk about an outrageous condition in the Church of God!

“...which we have in Christ Jesus, in order that they might bring us into bondage” (v 4). The bondage is not the Laws of God, but the bondage is the *physical* circumcision and the code of Jewish laws! If you receive the Holy Spirit without being circumcised, being circumcised is not going to make you any better.

That's why he said in Galatians 3:1: "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you *into* not obeying the Truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ, crucified, was set forth in a written public proclamation?" Meaning they had writings already there about Christ.

Verse 2: "This only I desire to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit of God by works of law... [*Code of Jewish Law*] ...or by *the* hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in *the* Spirit, are you now being perfected in *the* flesh?" (vs 2-3)—meaning circumcision.

The Circumcision Party, who believed, said that you cannot be righteous before God unless you had the *physical* circumcision, which was the carryover of Judaism proselytism. That it's okay if you have *ethical conversion*, but you're really not a Jew until you are circumcised. So, they came along and said the same thing, that you really are not a Christian until you are circumcised.

What were they doing in saying that? *They were going directly against God, Who by a supernatural incident of two miracles*—Cornelius and Peter—through the receiving of the Holy Spirit they were going directly against God. That's why there was such an uproar. That's why Paul said,

Galatians 2:5—to these false latrine spies: "To whom we did not yield in subjection, *not* even for one hour, so that the Truth of the Gospel might continue with you." I'm sure Paul was very passionate about this.

Verse 6: "But *the Gospel that I preach did not come* from those reputed to be something. (Whatever they were does not make any difference to me; God does not accept *the* person of a man.).... [You can stand for the Truth all the time and no man makes any difference—correct? *Yes!*] ...For those who are of repute conferred nothing upon me. But on the contrary, after seeing that I had been entrusted with the Gospel of the uncircumcision, exactly as Peter *had been entrusted with the Gospel* of the circumcision" (vs 6-7).

Some people are going to get mad at me, but you get mad and you get offended because I'm going to tell you the truth. Peter made a grave mistake here in Gal. 2. James made a great mistake, because he was captive of the Circumcision Party in Jerusalem. That's why Paul had to go there and go through what he did, and witness to all those Jews who were in Jerusalem.

When James repented of that, the zealots turned on him and killed him, because there were a lot of clingers-on who didn't believe in Christ. When James went against the *Code of Jewish Law* they did

him in. I mean, we're dealing with some very passionate stuff here in the New Testament, brethren.

Verse 11: "But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to *his* face because he was to be condemned; for before certain *ones* came from James..." (vs 11-12). They came down and said, 'We're from James; we're on the Sanhedrin with James, because James had his own council, which is the Sanhedrin. Not the Judaism Sanhedrin, but just a repeat of it that James had.

And don't you know "...he was eating with the Gentiles..." (v 12). It would be like someone in our past experience coming out from Pasadena saying, 'I'm from Pasadena. Have you heard? Did you know?'

"...However, when they came, he drew back and separated himself *from the Gentiles*, being afraid of those of *the* circumcision party. And the rest of *the* Jews joined him in *this* hypocritical act, insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy" (vs 12-13).

That's what it means, because the *Code of Jewish Law* says you shall not keep company with a man who is not circumcised. Peter knew better—did he not? *Yes!* That's why he was to be blamed when all this was brought out.

Verse 14: "But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter in the presence of them all, 'If you, being a Jew, are living like the Gentiles...'" Keeping the spirit of the laws and commandments of God, not requiring circumcision, living among them, eating among them—because they came down and said, 'If you eat with these Gentiles you're living like a Gentile.' That's what they were saying.

"...and not according to Judaism, why do you compel the Gentiles to Judaize?" When you Judaize you keep the *Code of Jewish Law*. When Paul says the whole law, he means all the oral and the written law. But that's why he said, '*If you are circumcised, Christ is of no value to you.*' You have given up on the Spirit of God and rely on your own flesh and have gone against God.

Verse 15: "We who are Jews by nature—and not sinners of *the* Gentiles—knowing that a man is not justified by works of law..." (vs 15-16). The Jewish law says that you will not company with a man. If you think you separate from a Gentile by that work of law you are in better standing before God, *you are wrong!* That's what he's telling them.

"...but through *the* faith of Jesus Christ, we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified by *the* faith of Christ, and not by

works of law; because by works of law shall no flesh be justified” (v 16).

Let me say this right here: *works of law has nothing to do with the commandments of God* as He gave them, called *the righteousness of the law*, but has to do with the *Code of Jewish Law*. That’s what it has to do with. This was a heated, knock down, drag out battle. You talk about offense. Those who believe in politics and not be offended or not speak against anyone publicly, Paul_[transcriber’s correction] did it to Peter’s face and recorded it in the Scripture, and Peter had to keep in the inspired text because Paul died before Peter, and Peter had to finish canonizing it and send it on to John to finish the New Testament. You talk about having your sins recorded forever!

This will give us a good start concerning what it means the *works of law*.

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Deuteronomy 9:1-7
- 2) Deuteronomy 5:26-29
- 3) Deuteronomy 10:12-16
- 4) Romans 2:17-29
- 5) Colossians 2:9-14
- 6) Hebrews 10:16-23
- 7) Romans 8:1-8
- 8) Acts 15:1-10
- 9) Acts 10:1-17, 23-48
- 10) Acts 11:1-4, 15-18
- 11) Galatians 6:12
- 12) Galatians 2:3, 1-4
- 13) Galatians 3:1-3
- 14) Galatians 2:5-7, 11-16

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Ezekiel 37
- Hebrews 4

Also referenced:

Books:

- *The Christian Passover* by Fred R. Coulter
- *Code of Jewish Law* by Ganzfried & Goldin
- *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* by Peder Borgen
- *Josephus—Life 113*

Sermon Series:

- *Refuting Sunday Keeping* (specifically #s 5-6)
- *Colossians* (More About Colossians Two)

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Transcribed: 10-14-12