

# The Torah & The Apostolic Scriptures, part 4

## Covenant of Circumcision or Pagan Requirements

Don Cole

*(NOTE: these are only draft notes!)*

Refer to the last page: "How to Interpret Scripture"

Your notes:

### Historical Context ESV

When reading the Scriptures one needs to incorporate its historical context, for without this understanding, your interpretation becomes clouded with personal man-made ideas. Every serious student of the Bible knows that a text without its historical context becomes a half-truth or a misleading counterfeit of God's Word. Without employing this skill, one joins the manifold ranks of various traditionalists. This is where "tradition" itself becomes the guiding principle as a substitute of a Scriptural Text!

### The Traditional Opinion of Circumcision

A typical reading at first glance of Galatians 5:2 gives one the impression that circumcision has no value. 2 "Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ (Messiah) will be of no advantage to you." And again 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love." From these two Scriptures one concludes that circumcision is not relevant and replaced by love only!

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Period in the time of Paul, he was also accused of being against circumcision. However, the historical context especially of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> period reveals that circumcision was the main controversial issue, especially for The Way.

Circumcision was no longer understood as a sign of the covenant with Abraham, traditional opinion and rabbinic rulings overwhelmed society on such a scale that individuals could not interpret between the Scriptures and religious teachings! Just as we have witnessed today.

Rabbis and Pharisees taught that Jews had covenant status because they were Jews. It was taught that all of Israel would be saved because of their covenant status with Abraham. Consequently, if a gentile wanted to obtain

covenant status, they could be grafted into Israel through a conversion as a proselyte. We see during the time of Yeshua that the rabbinic followers recruited proselytes.

This rabbinic ritual of circumcision could define you as being Jewish! This rabbinic conversion sent a wrong signal of being grafted into Israel. And it was this issue of circumcision that Paul spoke out against, not against circumcision but rather against any form of circumcision.

## **The question that lay before Paul was:**

### **Are Gentiles saved on the basis of faith in the Messiah Yeshua or by becoming Jewish?**

All believers in Yeshua are grafted into Israel not into a church.

### **Many people down through history wanted to become citizens of Israel**

Ephesians 2:12 Paul states [12](#) “remember that at that time you were separate from Christ (Messiah), excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and *without* God in the world.” NIV And again [6](#) “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua).” Eph 3:6.NIV

Let us see what other people see... [4](#) “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. [5](#)To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” Rom 9:4-5

### **This dilemma of the Gospel**

The Torah commanded that all males who were covenant members to be circumcised. Not only that, but males who are not circumcised were forbidden to participate in the Passover Festival Ex 12:43. Paul and the Apostles were against circumcision, however they wanted to be sure that the Gentiles understood the clear issue of God’s Grace could only be obtained through faith apart from works (circumcision) of the Torah. How could this direct violation of God’s Word be understood, in light of the Gospel. [9](#) “Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. [10](#)How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. [11](#)He received the sign of

circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, **12**and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised”. Rom 4:9-12.

The Gentiles were to be received before they were circumcised. Paul and the Apostles wanted to be convinced that the Gentiles faith was mature enough

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## “How to Interpret Scripture”

*Three things to always apply when studying Scripture:*

1. *Contextually* – study Scripture within the context of the entire Bible.
  2. *Literally* – read Scripture literally – what do the words actually mean.
  3. *Historically* – understand Scripture within its historical/chronological context.
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*The character of Yeshua according to His Word:*

1. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, & forever,” [Heb 13:8; Malachi 3:6]
  2. “God is not a man that He should lie,” [Num 23:19; Heb 6:18]
  3. Do not add or subtract from the Scriptures, [Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19]
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### *Key Scriptures to Interpret the Bible*

Matt 28:18-20 – this is after His resurrection.

<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Acts 1:6-8 – after Yeshua’s resurrection, He spoke to His disciples about the restoration of Israel.

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup>He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

John 3:36 – the book of John stated that obedience is key to eternal life:

<sup>3</sup>Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

1 John 2:3-6 - the Apostle John asked, "Do you really know God?":

<sup>3</sup>And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup>Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, <sup>5</sup>but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup>whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. [Note: Yeshua perfectly kept the Torah; likewise, we also need to &, thereby, stop sinning.]

## Timeline

Pre-30AD - <i>Rabbinic tradition</i>	30AD – <i>Resurrection / Pentecost</i>	40AD – <i>Peter’s vision &amp; Cornelius (Acts 10)</i>	50AD – <i>Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)</i>	325AD – <i>Council of Nicaea</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Oral Law</li> <li>○ Customs of Moses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outpouring of the Holy Spirit to <u>Jews only</u> who came up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 10 years after Pentecost</li> <li>○ Outpouring of Holy Spirit on <u>Gentiles only</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 10 years after Acts 10</li> <li>○ Jerusalem Council – discussion about Gentiles’ salvation &amp; circumcision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Under the auspices of Constantine</li> <li>○ Only Gentile bishops were allowed – Jews could not attend</li> </ul>