Dear Readers,

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 1:4). We are nearing the time when Jesus Christ will come to rescue His people. I pray that you will be ready. “It is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you” (Hosea 10:12). The temporary things that so often occupy our time will soon pass away. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). May the Lord prepare you to meet Him in peace! (Read Philippians 1:6.)

Circumcision and the Law of Moses

by Lynnford Beachy

Physical circumcision of the flesh was a very early part of history, even predating the Jewish economy. This ceremony was a cutting of the flesh, yet it included a deeper significance than just the physical. It represented the born-again experience, circumcision of the heart. The fleshly cutting, in itself, did not change a person’s heart, it was only a symbol of a much more important reality. As we look at the subject of circumcision in the Bible, we can gain a deeper understanding of God’s real purposes in other aspects of the Jewish economy as well.

Circumcision was first given to the patriarch Abraham as a sign of an everlasting covenant. God told Abraham, “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant” (Genesis 17:10-14).

Also in This Issue:

Young at Heart.......................page 15
Free as a Bird.........................page 16
by Ellet J. Waggoner
Here we learn that physical circumcision was an integral part of God’s “everlasting covenant.” It was such an important ritual for God’s plan that anyone who was not circumcised would not be accepted as one of God’s people. It was that serious! It was a salvational issue.

There are a few other things mentioned in the Bible as an “everlasting covenant.” In regard to the earthly sanctuary, God said to the Levitical priests, “And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. ... Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant” (Leviticus 24:5, 8). It was “an everlasting covenant” for the Levites to bake bread and set it in the sanctuary every Sabbath.

Concerning the Levitical priesthood, God said about Phinehas, “Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel” (Numbers 25:12, 13). Phinehas’ priesthood was said to be the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. The term everlasting certainly sounds permanent.

For Ever

Concerning the lamps in the earthly sanctuary, God said, “Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the vail of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the Lord continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations” (Leviticus 24:2, 3).

We are seeing that even though the Bible uses language that seems to be of an eternal nature, it speaks of things that were temporary, such as the earthly sanctuary and the Levitical priesthood. These were symbols of a deeper reality. They were shadows of the heavenly sanctuary and the priesthood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews chapters 7 and 8). If something was to be continued “for ever in your generations,” it does not usually mean that it was to be continued for every generation in every nation, as we shall clearly see shortly.

Here is another thing mentioned as an ordinance for ever in your generations. “And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of
the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an *ordinance for ever in your generations*: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord” (Numbers 15:14, 15). Here an animal sacrifice is said to be “an ordinance for ever,” but we know that when Christ died all animal sacrifices were to cease. Daniel was told by an angel, that when Jesus came, He would “cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Daniel 9:27).

Regarding the Passover, God said, “And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. ... And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever” (Exodus 12:14, 17). The ordinance of the Passover was to be kept “for ever.” Later in the chapter God said, “This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man’s servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.... And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof” (Exodus 12:43, 44, 48). The Passover ceremony was inextricably connected to circumcision.

When the Israelites finally entered the promised land after forty years in the wilderness, the Bible says, “At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. ... Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. ... And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho” (Joshua 5:2, 5, 10). The reason they had to circumcise the men of Israel at this time was because they were about to keep the Passover for the first time in nearly 40 years, and that could not be done by any uncircumcised man.

The Passover was also intricately connected to a physical location in the land of Canaan along with the timing of the barley harvest in Jerusalem. “Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee: But at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 16:5, 6; see also Leviticus 23:14; Exodus 34:18).

**Circumcision of the Heart**

There is nothing in the Old Testament that indicates that circumcision of the flesh would ever cease. It is spoken of as lasting “for ever,” and part of an “everlasting covenant.” But as we shall soon see, God planned for it to have an end.
Although physical circumcision is often emphasized in the Old Testament, circumcision of the heart was also given great importance. Moses wrote, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deuteronomy 10:16). He later wrote, “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Another Old Testament author wrote, “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings” (Jeremiah 4:4). Jeremiah later wrote, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart” (Jeremiah 9:25, 26).

Circumcision of the heart was just as much a requirement in Old Testament times as was circumcision of the flesh. In the Old Testament book of Ezekiel we read, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel” (Ezekiel 44:9). Here, God gave a direct link between circumcision of the heart and of the flesh. Both were inherently connected and both were required. Some have thought that in the New Testament fleshly circumcision ceased because it was replaced by circumcision of the heart. However, we have just read that circumcision of the heart was not a new concept of the New Testament. It was very much taught in the Old Testament.

God promised in the Old Testament, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). This is the new birth experience.

How Circumcision was Regarded

Circumcision of the flesh was so highly regarded by the Jewish nation that to be uncircumcised was a sign of inferiority. When David was about to fight Goliath, he said, “…who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (1 Samuel 17:26). David could have just said, “who is this Philistine,” but he added the word “uncircumcised” to imply inferiority. The uncircumcised were considered lower-class citizens who could not possibly be accepted by God unless they became circumcised.

Circumcision was so highly regarded that Jesus said, “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the
fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?” (John 7:22, 23). The Jews regarded circumcision of the flesh so highly that the Sabbath would not interfere with it. At the same time they were willing to plan how they could kill Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath.

Fleshly circumcision was regarded as the primary identifying mark of God’s people. You could not be a follower of God and refuse to get circumcised.

A Startling Surprise

Shortly after Jesus died, the early Christian church was surprised by an event that was to change the way God’s people are to look at circumcision. But before this event could take place, God had to change the thinking of some key people. The first significant change was wrought in Saul of Tarsus, who made it his mission to kill every Christian he could. In Acts chapter nine we learn of Saul’s conversion to Christianity. He then became known as the apostle Paul, the foremost missionary to the Gentiles. God said of him, “...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

In Acts chapter ten another amazing change took place, this time in the apostle Peter. Peter had adopted the common Jewish view of uncircumcised people. He refused to eat with them, or have any dealings with them. God sent him a vision to change that. One day when Peter was hungry and anticipating the meal that was being prepared for him, he was given a vision of a sheet descending from heaven filled with all manner of unclean animals. “And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” (Acts 10:13-15). This strange vision was repeated three times for emphasis.

While Peter was trying to figure out why God would give him such a strange vision, some uncircumcised men knocked at his door looking for Peter to come to preach to them. Peter went with them to the home of the uncircumcised Cornelius. When Peter arrived at this man’s house he said to them, “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). Peter figured out the meaning of the strange vision. He learned that he should not view uncircumcised people in the same way as before.

Peter began to preach to these people and he was startled! “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out
the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 10:44, 45).

This unprecedented event opened the door for the gospel to be preached to uncircumcised people, who received salvation just as completely as those of the circumcision. This was almost too much for early Jewish Christians to accept. “And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them” (Acts 11:2, 3). Jesus came to break down the barriers that separated these two classes of people. Fleshly circumcision was no longer to be recognized as a prerequisite for salvation or any part thereof.

**Separating Wall Removed**

Later in the New Testament we read, “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Ephesians 2:11-15).

There were laws of commandments contained in ordinances that separated the Jews from the Gentiles, but Jesus came to abolish those laws and bring peace. Fleshly circumcision was one of those laws that was abolished. Colossians 2:14-17 explains further details on those laws that were abolished. Keep in mind that the laws that were abolished were not any part of the Ten Commandments. That law is as eternal as God is, for it is a transcript of His character. It existed before sin, and will exist after sin is destroyed. The only laws that were abolished are the ones “which are a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17).

Circumcision is a law that was instituted after sin and is dependent upon sin to exist. It was given as a teaching tool to explain how a person can receive conversion and forgiveness of sins. Circumcision would never have existed if man had not sinned. Fleshly circumcision is a shadowy type that pointed forward to Christ. It demonstrated that man had a record of sins that needed to be removed. All shadowy types that demonstrated our sinful condition, were to cease when Christ died for us. This includes animal sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, the earthly sanctuary, the feast days, and all the related services that dealt with the sin problem.

Some have mistakenly concluded that the weekly Sabbath was part of the shadowy types that ended with the death of Christ, but the Sabbath is of a much higher nature than any of the shadowy types. It was given to man in
the Garden of Eden before sin entered this world. It was given as a memorial of what God had already done in creating the world. It was part of the only portion of Scripture written with God’s own finger on stone. It is in the heart of the Ten Commandments, which are an explanation of God’s own eternal character. It will also continue after sin is completely destroyed (Isaiah 66:23). It is part of the character of Christ which is written in the hearts of born-again Christians.

God instituted two ceremonies to take the place of the Jewish services—baptism and the communion service. These are not shadowy types that point forward to future events, but rather memorials of what God has already done. Both call us to remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Obstinate Pharisees

It was hard for Christian Pharisees to accept that any of the distinct features of Judaism would ever change. “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:1, 2). God raised Paul to be a missionary to the Gentiles, and Paul strongly argued with the obstinate Pharisees who insisted that Gentiles should be circumcised. They didn’t end with circumcision though, they also taught “That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). Just as circumcision was the identifying mark of God’s people in the Old Testament, it became an identifying mark in the New Testament of those who clung to the old shadowy system.

When the apostles gathered to discuss this matter there was “much disputing” (Acts 15:7). Finally, “Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:7-11).

The event that Peter witnessed when the Holy Spirit was given to uncircumcised Gentiles proved to him that God had made a drastic change, and therefore circumcision and keeping “the law of Moses” should no longer be a test of fellowship or an evidence of salvation. It was hard to break the traditions that held them for over 1,000 years. Finally, James said, “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and
from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day” (Acts 15:19-21). The Holy Spirit directed the apostles to pick representative items from the Law of Moses that guard and explain the Ten Commandments. None of these things mentioned were shadowy types which demonstrate that we have a record of sin that must be removed. Instead they were all natural explanations of God’s character as expressed in the Ten Commandments, including some of the health laws which were given to prolong our lives (6th Commandment).

The apostles commissioned certain men to carry a letter to be read in all the churches, which said in part, “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment” (Acts 15:24). This conclusion clearly disagreed with the Pharisees whose teachings instigated this meeting. No longer was circumcision and shadowy types in the law of Moses to be a wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles. Neither class was obligated to keep these ceremonies any longer. The letter ended, “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 15:28, 29).

Notice that the Ten Commandments themselves were not mentioned at all, not because they were abolished, but because they were not part of the subject under consideration. The issue was circumcision and the law of Moses. The Gentiles were still obligated to keep the moral precepts of the Ten Commandments, as clearly demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 7:18, 19; Galatians 5:19-24; James 2:8-12; Revelation 22:14; 1 John 5:3; Romans 13:8-10, etc. The portions selected from the law of Moses were merely an explanation of the Ten Commandments, just like, “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 19:16-19; Leviticus 19:18). Of course, this eternal principle is just as binding after Christ’s death as before. It was the shadowy types that express our indebtedness because of sin that were to pass away at the death of Christ.

Why Did Paul Circumcise Timothy?

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and he told the Gentiles, “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing” (Galatians 5:2). In spite of this, the Bible says, “Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:…. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:1-3).
Present Truth

From Paul’s statement about circumcision to the Galatians, it would seem that Paul purposely doomed Timothy to be eternally lost. Yet, we can be sure that Paul did not do this. Let’s get a little more context to Paul’s statement. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:1-4). The real issue Paul had with the Gentiles who were seeking to be circumcised was that they were trying to be “justified by the law.” Paul himself was circumcised, yet he believed that he was justified, not by the law, but by Jesus Christ.

Paul had Timothy circumcised, not to be justified, but “because of the Jews which were in those quarters” where Paul and Timothy would be doing ministry. So Timothy’s circumcision was an attempt to further his missionary success among the Jews who had a difficult time abandoning circumcision and the rest of their Jewish rituals.

Application of the Jerusalem Council

The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 recognized that circumcision was not to be binding upon Gentiles. Paul took the decision and applied it in his missionary journeys among the Gentiles. After a few years Paul returned to Jerusalem and visited with James and the other elders who had been at the Jerusalem Council. James immediately expressed a concern, by saying, “Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs” (Acts 21:20, 21).

There was a rumor going around that Paul was teaching the Jews that they need to stop circumcision their children and observing the law of Moses. This was the exact subject under discussion at the Jerusalem Council, but the audience was different. At the Jerusalem Council Christian Pharisees were teaching the Gentiles that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. In this case the rumor was that Paul was telling the Jews that they must not be circumcised nor keep the law of Moses.

This was a false rumor, for Paul himself had the half-Jew Timothy circumcised to help win the Jews. Paul was adhering to the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council by discouraging Gentiles from getting circumcised and observing the law of Moses, but not Jews. James continued explaining the rumor, then finished by saying, “As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing; save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication” (Acts 21:25). James applied the Jerusalem Council’s conclusions by saying that the Gentiles should “observe
no such thing (circumcision and the law of Moses).”

So Jews were permitted to continue getting circumcised and to keep the law of Moses, but Gentiles were discouraged from observing these practices. This explains why Paul could encourage the half-Jew, Timothy, to get circumcised, but refused to compel the Gentile, Titus, to get circumcised. Paul explained, “But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (Galatians 2:3-5).

There was a contention going on in the early Christian church between the Jews who accepted Christ, and the Gentiles who accepted Christ. One class held tenaciously to circumcision and the law of Moses, while the other class were taught not to observe such things. Paul’s encouragement of Timothy to get circumcised, but his refusal to compel Titus get circumcised demonstrated that fleshly circumcision was not a salvational issue.

Paul wrote, “Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God” (1 Corinthians 7:18, 19). Fleshly circumcision is nothing, what really matters is keeping the moral precepts of the Ten Commandments. After Christ died, the shadowy ceremonies of the Jewish system were no longer necessary, but the Ten Commandments were still binding.

Paul wrote, “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6). Here, instead of mentioning the commandments as the real importance, Paul said that “faith” is what is important. Paul later wrote, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Galatians 6:15). Putting all this together, the real importance is for us to become a new creature by faith, which will result in keeping the moral precepts of the Ten Commandments by faith. It is also important for us to recognize that the shadowy ceremonies are no longer obligatory.

The new creature is the new birth, being born again by receiving the Spirit of Christ in your heart. When you allow Jesus Christ to “dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:17), you will be a new creature. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God implants the victorious Spirit of His Son into your heart to transform you from the inside out (Acts 3:26; Galatians 4:6). When this happens your life will naturally change to reflect the character of Christ.

**Paul’s Constant Battle**

Wherever Paul went, he was constantly opposed by Jews who were
trying to impose their rituals upon the Gentiles. In almost all of Paul’s letters you will see evidence of this turmoil. To the Galatians he wrote, “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dispersed likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:11-16).

It is wrong to try to compel “Gentiles to live as do the Jews.” Why? Because God broke down the middle wall of partition that separated the Jews and Gentiles. The Jewish rituals were shadowy types that were temporary, while Christ is the reality to which the rituals were pointing. After Christ came, those rituals have the tendency of drawing people away from Christ. That is why Paul said to the Galatians, “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Galatians 4:11). He went on to say, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). The danger of compelling the Gentiles to live as the Jews do is that it has the very real potential of causing Christ to be of none of effect to them.

To the Phillipians Paul wrote, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision [the circumcised Jews]. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:2, 3). To Titus Paul wrote, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision” (Titus 1:10). Paul was not happy with the continual barrage of fighting that came from the circumcised Jews. His trouble with them was that they were trying to get the Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the shadowy types in the law of Moses.

What is For Ever

Physical circumcision is spoken of using “for ever” language, even called “an everlasting covenant.” Yet, we have learned from the Bible that God intervened in the affairs of men to show that physical circumcision was no longer to be a part of God’s plan. He demonstrated this by the vision given to Peter, pouring out the Holy Spirit upon Gentiles, and converting Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; the gospel which Jesus Himself
taught Paul (Galatians 1:11, 12), and which clearly eliminated circumcision. This is unmistakable proof that God did not design for circumcision to last for ever throughout all generations as we, today, understand these terms.

Notice some other temporary things called “for ever” in the Bible:

**Priestly Garments:** “And for Aaron’s sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty. ... And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him” (Exodus 28:40, 43).

**Animal Sacrifices:** “And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the shoulder of the heave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons: ... And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons’ by a statute for ever from the children of Israel: for it is an heave offering: and it shall be an heave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, even their heave offering unto the Lord” (Exodus 29:27, 28).

**Feast of Trumpets:** “And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you” (Leviticus 16:29). “And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations” (Leviticus 23:21).

**Day of Atonement:** “And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the Lord commanded Moses” (Leviticus 16:33, 34). “Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings” (Leviticus 23:31).

**Feast of Tabernacles:** “And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month” (Leviticus 23:41).

**Daily Animal Sacrifices:** “Without the vail of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the Lord continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations” (Leviticus 24:3).

**Servants:** “Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore
his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever” (Exodus 21:6).

It is clear that “a statute for ever” does not mean that it should last for ever without end. Their whole ceremonial economy was to cease when Christ died and the veil of the temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:51).

The term “statute for ever” is used 26 times in the Bible. Every single time it is referring to temporary statutes of animal sacrifices, sanctuary services, the Levitical priesthood, or annual ceremonies. Read them for yourself: Exodus 12:14, 17; 27:21; 28:43; 29:28; 30:21; Leviticus 6:18, 22; 7:34, 36; 10:9, 15; 16:29, 31; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 31; 23:41; 24:3; Numbers 10:8; 15:15; 18:11, 19, 23; 19:10.

**Conclusion**

Fleshly circumcision had its temporary place as a sign of an everlasting covenant from Abraham to Christ’s death. It was a teaching tool to bring us to Christ. It represented circumcision of the heart, the new birth. “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:10, 11).

Today, there are still Jews who accept Christ, as well as Gentiles who have adopted the Jewish culture, who wish to impose circumcision and the law of Moses upon Gentiles. This was wrong during the time of the disciples, and it is wrong today. It actually has the very real potential of pulling you away from Christ. That is why Paul was so opposed to it.

I recently read a Jewish article that was intriguing. The title of the article is “Israeli Professor: Our Problem is With Paul, Not Jesus.” The article stated:

“In a recent article for Israel’s Ma’ariv daily newspaper, a renowned Israeli-born professor of Talmud, Admiel Kosman, explained that mainstream Judaism doesn’t so much have a problem with Jesus as it does with the teachings of the Apostle Paul.

“Exploring the early history of the Church, Kosman asserted that Paul intentionally worked to undo the Jewish character of the early community of believers to pave the way for Christianity to become its own religion. ‘It is Paul who founded Christianity, and not Jesus,’ he wrote.

“The professor pointed out that even in the pages of the New Testament, the rest of the early church leadership was opposed to Paul moving in a non-Jewish direction, and believed that anyone wanting to follow the Jewish Messiah needed to join the Jewish faith.

“According to Kosman, Paul wasn’t a true follower of Jesus, but rather used the platform provided by Jesus to advance his own teachings. That being the case, Kosman concluded that Jesus, himself a law-abiding Jew, would not have been pleased with Paul’s activities” (Israel Today, February 07, 2014, online at: www.israeltoday.co.il/News-Item/tabid/178/nid/24421/Default.aspx).
This sentiment echoes the mentality of many today who have followed the path of the early Christian Pharisees who cling to Jewish traditions. Some go so far as to maintain that we should still be physically circumcised, and even kill animals and participate in the sanctuary services. Many of these people are poised to move to Jerusalem if the earthly sanctuary is ever rebuilt. These have taken the push for a return to Jewish traditions to their logical conclusions. It makes sense to do that if one maintains that we must still keep the shadowy types of the law of Moses. Yet, Paul’s writings and the history of the early church stand in the way of the progress of this movement. That is why some claim that Paul was not inspired. This definitely distorts the gospel.

The bottom line is that we must be careful not to go down a road that leads to these faulty conclusions. The last step is in the first. If you are not willing to take the last step, then do not bother taking the first. I would definitely not encourage anyone to get physically circumcised or practice any of the shadowy types of the Mosaic law, because there are many problems following in its train.

Circumcision represents the new birth, to have Jesus Christ living in our hearts. This is the only circumcision that matters today, and it is of vital importance. Without this experience we have no life. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11, 12). I pray that you will accept this wonderful gift, and receive Jesus into your heart. For those of you who live in the experience of the freedom found in righteousness by the faith of Jesus, I pray that you will not turn away from your freedom and frustrate the grace of our heavenly Father.
Something for the Young at Heart

This month we are continuing a series of studies written by my children. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line. (The KJV is required.)

Creation - by Josiah Beachy

Answers will be printed on the back page of next month’s issue.

> “In the beginning God ____ the heaven and the earth.” Genesis 1:1—16 Across

> “And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was ____.” Genesis 1:21—10 Down

> “So God created ____ in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Genesis 1:27—6 Down

> “And God ____ the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” Genesis 2:3—11 Down

> “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the ____ of God made he him.” Genesis 5:1—5 Down

> “This shall be written for the generation to come: and the ____ which shall be created shall praise the Lord.” Psalm 102:18—7 Across
“Thou sendest forth thy ___, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.” Psalm 104:30—13 Down

“For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be ____: I am the LORD; and there is none else.” Isaiah 45:18—8 Across

“You wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till ____ was found in thee.” Ezekiel 28:15—3 Across

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto ____ ____, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10—4 Down (2 words)

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by ____ ___.” Ephesians 3:9—2 Down (2 words)

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or ____: all things were created by him, and for him.” Colossians 1:16—12 Across

“You art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy ____ they are and were created.” Revelation 4:11—7 Down

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**As Free as a Bird**

by Ellet J. Waggoner

The Lord Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry by reading in the synagogue at Nazareth the following words from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them...
that are bruised, to proclaim the ac-
ceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19). And then He said to the congre-
gation, “This day is this scripture ful-
filled in your ears.”

Turning to the place from which Christ read, we find these words: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; be-
cause the Lord hath anointed Me to pre-
ach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-
hearted, to proclaim liberty to the cap-
tives and the opening of the prison to
them that are bound.” (Isaiah 61:1).

The Hebrew term which in Isaiah is rendered, “the opening of the prison,” has the general signification of “open-
ing,” and is applied to the opening of the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf. Accordingly the Saviour gave it this double application, in reading it, so that in Luke we have instead of the one statement, “the opening of the prison to them that are bound” the two statements, “recovering of sight to the blind,” and, “to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

The whole import of the text there-
fore is that Christ came to give free-
dom in every sense of the word. It is charged with the idea of liberty, and that to an extent that few realize. We shall be amply repaid for a few mo-
ments closer study of it, and for many hours of meditation upon it afterwards.

The word “liberty,” in the state-
mnt, in Isaiah 61:1, that Christ was anoin-
ted “to proclaim liberty to the capti-
vies,” is from a Hebrew word, the primary signification of which is “a swallow.” This noun is derived from a verb which signifies “to fly in a circle, to wheel in flight,” like a bird in the air. From this it is easy to see how the word came to signify “freedom” and “liberty.”

We learn, therefore, that the Bible idea of liberty is best represented by

the graceful flight of a swallow through
the air. We often use the figure, “as
free as a bird,” and that exactly ex-
presses the liberty wherewith Christ
makes us free. Is it not a glorious
thing? What a sense of freedom thrills
the soul at the very thought of it!

Sin is bondage. Jesus said, “Verily,
verily I say unto you, Every one that
committeth sin is the bondservant of
sin” (John 8:34 ASV). Not only is the
sinner in bondage, but he is in prison.
The Apostle Paul says, “The Scripture
hath concluded all under sin, that the
promise by faith of Jesus Christ might
be given to them that believe. But be-
fore faith came we were kept under
the law, shut up unto the faith which
should afterwards be revealed” (Galat-
tians 3:22, 23). The word “concluded”
means, literally, “shut up together.” All
sinners are in bondage, shut up to-
gether in prison, condemned to hard
labour.

The end of sin is death (James
1:15). Consequently the sinner is not
only shut up in prison, condemned to
hard, unprofitable labour, but he has
the fear of death continually before
him. It is from this that Christ delivers
us (Hebrews 2:14, 15). So we read in
Psalm 102:19, 20, “For He hath
looked down from the height of His
sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord
behold the earth; to hear the groaning
of the prisoner, to loose those that are
appointed to death.” Christ says, “If
the Son therefore shall make you free,
ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

“Free indeed.” With the knowledge
already gained from Isaiah 61:1, we
can easily grasp the fullness of that
freedom. Imagine a bird that has been
captured, and shut up in a cage. It longs
for freedom, but the cruel bars make
that impossible. Someone comes
along and opens the door. The bird
sees the opening, but has so often
been deceived in his attempts to gain his liberty, that he hesitates. He hops down finds that his prison is really open, trembles a moment for very joy at the thought of liberty, then spreads his wings and wheels through the air with such rapture as can be known only by one who has been a captive. “Free indeed.” As free as a bird.

This is the liberty wherewith Christ frees the captive of sin. The Psalmist had that experience, for he said “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers, the snare is broken, and we are escaped” (Psalm 124:7). And this is the experience of every one who truly and without reserve accepts Christ.

But it is the truth that gives this freedom; for Christ says, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). He is the truth, and His word is truth. The Psalmist says, “Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth” (Psalm 119:142). And he also says, “I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts” (Psalm 119:45). As we learn from the margin, this is literally, “I will walk in a broad place, for I seek Thy precepts;” and this fits with what we learn in verse 96: “I have seen an end of all perfection; but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.” The commandments of God form an exceedingly broad place in which all may walk who seek them. They are the truth, and it is the truth that gives freedom.

“The law is spiritual” (Romans 7:14). That is, the law is the nature of God, for “the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Because the Spirit of the Lord God was in Christ, He could proclaim liberty to the captives of sin. So we read the words of one who had been a captive slave, “sold under sin:” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1, 2).

The law of God was, and is, in the heart of Christ (Psalm 40:8). Out of the heart are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23); therefore the life of Christ is the law of God. When men attempt to keep the law in their own strength, they invariably get into bondage, just as surely as though they willfully broke it. The only difference is that in the latter case they are willing slaves, while in the former they are unwilling slaves. In Christ alone the perfect righteousness of the law is found, and therefore His life is “the perfect law of liberty,” into which we are exhorted continually to look (James 1:25; Hebrews 12:2). The law that shuts up to certain death the man who is out of Christ, becomes life and liberty to the man who is in Christ.

We have seen that the “commandment is exceeding broad.” How broad? Just as broad as the life of God. Therefore the liberty, or the “broad place” in which one can walk who seeks the law of God, is the breadth of God’s mind, which comprehends the universe. This is “the glorious liberty of the children of God.” “His commandments are not grievous,” but on the contrary are life and liberty to all who accept them “as the truth is in Jesus.” God has not given us the spirit of bondage, but has called us to the liberty which He Himself enjoys; for if we believe His word we are His sons, “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.”

Only the Spirit of God can give such liberty as this. No man can give it, and no earthly power can take it away. We
have seen that no man can get it by his own efforts to keep the law of God. The greatest human efforts can result in nothing but bondage. Therefore when civil governments enact laws requiring men to follow a certain religious custom, they are simply forging fetters for them; because religion by law means a religion of purely human power. It is not the man who tries to do right, that is free, but the man who actually does right. But no man does the truth, except the one whose works are wrought in him by God Himself.

The liberty which Christ gives is liberty of the soul. It is liberty from the bondage of sin. That, and that alone is real religious liberty. It is found nowhere but in the religion of Jesus Christ. The man who has that liberty is free even in a prison cell. The slave who has it is infinitely more at liberty than his cruel master, even though he be a king. Who is there who does not want liberty that is something more than a name?

And now one more word of encouragement to the slave of sin, who is heart sick because of his bondage, and is discouraged through the failure of repeated attempts to escape. Freedom is yours, if you will but take it. Read again the words of Christ, which are living words today:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isaiah 60:1, 2).

What is that? Liberty has already been proclaimed. Your prison doors are already open, and you have only to believe it, and to walk out, continually believing it. Christ is today proclaiming liberty to you, for He has broken the snare, and loosed your bonds (Psalm 116:16). He tells you that He has opened this prison door, so that you may walk at liberty, if you will only walk by faith in Him. It is faith that opens the door to the one who is shut up in sin. Believe His word, declare yourself free in His name, and then by humble faith stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Then will you know the blessedness of the assurance:

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

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Answers to Last Month’s Crossword Puzzle