



Lesson 2 September 9th, 2017

Circumcision

Study Scripture – Genesis 17:1-14

Background Scripture – Genesis 17

Key Verse:

"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."

Genesis 17:10

INTRODUCTION

The Bible clearly affirms the absolute, total sovereignty of God over His creation, His absolute holiness, and, at the same time, the full responsibility of human beings as moral agents under God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty and human responsibility are true and true at the same time, but God's sovereignty is the basis for everything and must therefore take supremacy and never be diminished in order to affirm human responsibility.

Scripture clearly affirms that *God works all things after the counsel of His will*, not man's will (Eph. 1:11). At the same time and because God is sovereign, men are responsible to obey Him and submit to His sovereignty. So a proper understanding of God's sovereignty is essential for proper obedience to Him.

We see both truths clearly in our Text where God graciously provides circumcision as the sign of His covenant consummated with Abraham and his 'seed'. In chapter 15 God graciously and unilaterally made a covenant with Abram and made him great promises. The covenant was spelled out in the promises and ratified by sacrifice.

It was amazing that the eternal God was willing to enter such a relationship of intimacy with man, and that the familiarity God allowed led to Abraham being called a friend of God. Abram significantly believed God's promise and this counted to him for righteousness.

Not that it is on the basis of this covenant that rulers of Israel such as Jehoshaphat when they faced tremendous danger, they could call on God and pray for help, calling Him the God of their fathers, thus invoking the covenant with the fathers.

Our Text shows that Abraham modelled the proper response of those who come to God through faith; total and immediate obedience to God's commands! They must walk '*perfect*' (blameless) before Him.

Note however Abram's age when he departed from his stay in Haran, after he had left his original home was recorded as 75. God made him promises then. At age 86 Abram had

unwisely listened to Sarai's advice and in a gross error, instead of waiting for God to fulfill His promise, had a child with Hagar their handmaid. God had Abram wait 13 years after this misstep and the subsequent suffering recorded in Chapter 16, and then appeared to Abram when he was 99 years old.

Now was the time for the fulfillment of the covenant. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant pregnant with spiritual significance especially coming after Abram and Sarai's misstep in chapter 16. The Scriptures do not tell us about Abram's understanding of the sign but subsequent revelation in the Old and New Testaments will shed light on this very personal rite.

Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, God appeared to Abram and said: "I am God Almighty ["El Shaddai"]; Walk before Me and be blameless" (17:1). Then God clearly spelled out what He would do with and for Abraham (17:2-8). Note that there is not much human free will or room for debate in these verses! God did not ask Abram's opinion, even on the personal matter of changing the ninety-nine-year-old man's name! He simply announced, "This is the way it is going to be; this is what I am going to do." Period!

There follows another command (17:9), reflecting Abraham's responsibility to keep God's covenant. This is followed by more divine pronouncements about what is going to happen. God changes Sarai's name, He tells Abraham that He will give him a son by her and make her the mother of nations. When Abraham asks that Ishmael, his son by Hagar, might be God's chosen one, God denies the request, while still assenting to bless Ishmael. But God sovereignly choose to establish His covenant with Isaac (17:21).

The chapter ends with Abraham's obedience to God, as he and all the males in his household are circumcised. So the two major themes of this chapter are: (1) God will accomplish His sovereign purpose; (2) God's people are responsible to keep His covenant with them. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, both in the same context. But God's sovereignty is clearly the supreme factor, undergirding everything.

Background

Abraham, as he is renamed in [Genesis 17:5](#), first appears in the biblical record as Abram in [11:26](#). There his birth to Terah is noted, and the remainder of [Genesis 11](#) records the family's move from Ur of the Chaldees (in modern Iraq) to Haran (in modern Syria).

God called Abram to leave his family and to go to a land that God would show him ([Genesis 12:1](#)). Scholars are divided on whether the call in [chapter 12](#) is a repeat of an earlier call, in Ur, or is actually a record of the earlier call.

In Stephen's defence to the Sanhedrin, he affirmed that God called Abram "when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran [Haran]" ([Acts 7:2](#)). God promised to make of Abram a great nation, to bless him, and to make his name great ([Genesis 12:2](#)). He was seventy-five years old when he left Haran for Canaan ([12:4](#)).



God repeated His promise in Genesis 13. Abram had separated from nephew Lot because the land could not support the livestock of both groups (13:5-12). Lot took the lush Jordan valley toward Sodom, so Abram was left with land that had lesser pasture. It seemed he got the worse part of the deal, but God reassured him of his future (13:16, 17). The promises are stated a third time in Genesis 15. Abram “*believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness*” (15:6).

The promises depended on Abram’s having an heir, but he remained childless through Genesis 15. Sarai, Abram’s wife, proposed a solution: “*Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her*” (16:2). Abram agreed, and so he became the father of Ishmael by Sarai’s servant, Hagar. But Ishmael, born to Abram at age eighty-six (16:16), was not the ‘child of promise’.

The Lord confirmed His covenant with Abram, thirteen years after Ishmael's birth, by reiterating the promises of descendants and land and by commanding Abram to circumcise all the males in his household. Circumcision thereby became the physical demonstration (sign) of the obedient faith of Abram and his descendants.

There were three types of signs in the Old Testament. Some signs were proofs that convinced observers of something (e.g., the Egyptian plagues). Others were certain acts that resembled an announced situation (e.g., acted prophecies). Still others were reminders of something (e.g., the rainbow, circumcision). God further encouraged the patriarch's faith by changing Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah. This was an added confirmation that God would indeed give them innumerable seed as He had promised.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. Thirteen years pass without note in the divine record between Genesis 16:16 and 17:1, given mentions of Abram’s age. Whether the Lord appears or otherwise speaks to him during these years, we cannot say. It was now 24 years after Abram had migrated from Ur of the Chaldees.

... *ninety-nine years old*... Genesis records Abram's age several times to give a chronology of his faith pilgrimage; e.g.

1. 75 years old, 12:4 - YHWH's first revelation to him
2. 86 years old, 16:16 - Birth of Ishmael
3. 99 years old, 17:1 - YHWH's third revelation to him

... *the Lord YHWH* is the covenant name for God, (Exodus 3:14).

... *the Almighty God*... The name by which *the Lord* identifies Himself is the first of dozens of times He is designated as such (sometimes rendered simply as “the Almighty”). The Almighty God is *El Shaddai* in Hebrew, a term we hear in Christian songs today. The name suggests immediately that God was not bargaining with Abram but was laying down the conditions for him enjoying the blessings of the covenant that God was graciously giving him.



There are many arguments about what the name “*El Shaddai*” means. Some believe it comes from the Hebrew word meaning “mountain”. Others believe it comes from the word meaning “sufficiency”. Others believe the name comes from the word meaning “breast”. Others believe it comes from the word “to destroy” as used in Joel 1:15. The significance of this designation seems to be that God is unlimited in His ability to act for the good of His people; nothing can thwart His plans. It ultimately refers to “the all-powerful and all-sufficient God who can do anything and meet any need

... *Walk before Me*... this is the first of two commands by YHWH to Abram. YHWH seeks a fellowship with Abram as He had with Adam, Enoch, and Noah. As such, the words imply Abram should walk before Him and listen to His instructions, and not to Sarai’s advice for He was God Almighty. The phrase speaks to intimacy; a personal relationship; a distinctive type of faith and life! This is an emphasis on a lifestyle faith relationship. This same term *walk*, was used of Enoch's (Gen. 5:24) and Noah's (Gen. 6:9) lifestyle faith.

Walking is a picture of continuous repetition. It may not be exciting. It is not running, jumping, or climbing. God wants us to faithfully walk step by step with Him.

...*blameless*... This is interpreted by some to denote a "whole-heartedness," "completeness," "soundness," "integrity," and "innocence." It was used of Noah (Gen. 6:9), Abram (Gen. 17:1, a command), Job (Job 1:1,8; 2:3). These interpreters believe it is not to be understood as absolute perfection, but more as ‘without blame’, ‘sincere’, ‘wholly devoted to the Lord.’

But other interpreters point to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5:48 “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect*”. It is of course accepted that man unaided is not able to achieve any such thing, but he “must” try as he loves and serves God. One writer however helps us in understanding the force of this responsibility believers have and comments:

“To walk before God seems to me to walk with the eyes of God upon all of our affairs. It means that we do not run ahead of Him. It means we do not hang back behind Him as if we were afraid that He will examine our steps, but we walk before Him. That is desirous of His approval, of His pleasure. *“Walk before Me and be blameless”*.

Now, a great deal of discussion has taken place over this “*be blameless*” or “*be perfect*” and some have erected out of texts like this, the doctrine of sinless perfection, as if it is possible. I must suggest to you that as far as the text is concerned, I do not think that when it says, “*be perfect*” or “*be blameless*” we are to understand by this something less than perfection. Can you imagine this holy God suggesting to us, “Walk before Me and be almost perfect”? How would you like that? “Walk before Me and have a passing grade in holiness, 70”. Of course not. We would expect a totally holy God and infinitely holy God to have a standard of perfection.

I find no difficulty in accepting that as the teaching of the word of God. The Apostle John said, “*These things I write unto you that you sin not*”, not that you sin not often or something like



that. So, to be blameless, to be perfect, well, it would be all right to say the standard is the standard of perfection. The word, however, probably does not quite connote that idea. The Hebrew word had the idea of soundness. “Be perfect” in the sense of being sound. I think that the idea is wholeness, the kind of thing that Job had, the kind of thing that David had, for God was pleased with Job”.

Note carefully however that these positions do not allow for the modern kind of casual treatment of God and His commandments, or for a lifestyle that resembles that of the world. Believers have to give themselves over to the Lord. The priorities of their life have to be rearranged so that the Lord Jesus Christ has first place. There might not be perfect surrender but there must be a striving for this under the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit.

God cannot be pleased with what we often do in our daily lives, and for the unjust, selfish, greedy, self-serving, ignoring of the poor and helpless, and the nationalistic and tribal behaviour we often exhibit.

One writer warns rightfully that there must be a God-conscience of the best type and also faithful observance of all covenant duties.

Verse 2. This is the third time God has promised to bless Abram (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21). In the second blessing, God specifically told him that a son of Abram’s own flesh and blood would be his heir (15:4). The record then notes the implications of Abram’s belief (15:6).

In spite of that faith, Abram had come to believe that he needed to take matters in his own hands. When Sarai, his wife, suggests he take her servant Hagar as a surrogate wife, he agrees; Ishmael is born as a result but the covenant of which God speaks does not involve Ishmael. God will multiply Abram through another son, one yet to be born to Abram and Sarai.

Verse 3. *Abram fell on his face...* Abram is properly awed by this appearance of the Lord. Whether falling *on his face* means lying prostrate before God or dropping to his knees and bowing forward is not specified. In either case, Abram shows the respect due to the Lord. We often see this reaction when humanity encounters Divinity. It was a sign of respect and reverence for God (18:2).

Remember that the only right posture is man on his face with God sitting on His throne. The Almighty God is all sufficient when people in business face immense difficulties. One can depend on Him then for He has all the resources to deal with all difficulties in the home and family, or when one engages with others in daily life. The Covenant that God has established with man means that man is dependent on Him alone.

God (Elohim) is the common name for God in the Ancient Near East, based on the root El. The rabbis say that it emphasizes God's power and control of nature as Creator, while YHWH denotes the self-existent, covenant-keeping God and this essence of God will be fully revealed later as He rescues and redeems Israel from bondage and leads them to the land of promise.



Verse 4. ...*a father of many nations...* earlier God had promised to make of Abram “a great nation” (Genesis 12:2). Now the promise is that he will be *a father of many nations*. It is easy to read this and to see the fulfillment in Israel (through Isaac and his son Jacob), Edom (through Isaac and his son Esau), the nations that descend from Ishmael, and also the nations that descend from Abraham via Keturah (the woman he married after Sarah’s death; Genesis 25:1-6).

But there is more to the covenant than political nations, since Paul makes clear that Isaac alone is the heir of promise (Romans 9:7). Thus the nations primarily in view, the ones included in this promise, must come from Isaac, whom Abram will father.

... *As for me...* God outlines what He will do as per the covenant. Note that the Covenant was already executed in chapter 15. God refers to and speaks of what He will give and what He will do in this covenant relationship.

Verse 5. ...*thy name shall be Abraham ...* Abram, whose name means “exalted father,” is henceforth to be known as Abraham, which likely means *father of a multitude*.
... *have I made thee...* As God repeats the promise of making Abraham such a father, He speaks as if it was already the case.

Note the magnitude of this statement and the astounding effect it must have had on Abram. Abram must have been much embarrassed at his name, for though he had that name, he had been barren. He had a great name which meant nothing. Can you imagine how people would laugh at his name behind his back! Do not forget that Verse 17 tells us Abraham laughed at the prospect of a 99-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman becoming fruitful.

The name change also pictured God’s Lordship. To name someone in the ancient world, as it does today, pictured lordship or sovereignty (2 Kgs 24:17). Only one in complete ownership of another could name them. Mothers and fathers named their children. Kings at times renamed their subjects (Dan 1:7). Adam named the animals in the field and his wife Eve. God named Abraham because he was his sovereign.

Verse 6. ...*And I will make thee exceeding fruitful...* Abraham is ninety-nine years old at this point and has one son: Ishmael, whose mother is Hagar. God promises a greater fruitfulness to come. It will be seen in the birth of Isaac and, later, in the birth of six sons to Keturah (Genesis 25:1, 2). However, the key to the covenant promise is Isaac, so the fruitfulness God promises is Abraham’s through his descendants. Grandson Jacob will have twelve sons and a daughter. The nation of Israel will come from these sons, with many kings born to them.

The kings will make their entrance some nine hundred years later with Saul. He will be a descendant of Abraham’s great-grandson Benjamin. Greater far than the kings of Israel will be the King of kings and Lord of lords: Jesus (see Matthew 1:1-16).



Verse 7. *I will establish* is a term used with oaths to assure their fulfillment (6:18; 17:19; Exod. 6:4; Lev. 26:9; Ezek. 16:62). God is committing Himself to the completion of His promises.

... *an everlasting covenant*... does not necessarily mean "forever and ever" (vv. 8,13,19), but it must be interpreted in its context.

The language of *everlasting covenant* is the same as that used in [Genesis 9:16](#) and [Exodus 31:16](#). Insofar as it finds its fulfillment in Christ, it is an enduring covenant in the fullest sense of the term *everlasting*. Paul makes clear that Christ is the fulfillment; see [Galatians 3:16](#), where the apostle distinguishes between the singular seed as opposed to the plural seeds. This indicates the fulfillment is in the one person, Jesus Christ.

Even so, there appears to be a dual fulfillment, as it is to *thy seed after thee in their generations*. So the fulfillment is in the generations of Abraham's seed until the ultimate fulfillment is seen in Christ Himself.

Verse 8. *And I will give unto thee ... the land ...* Abraham has been in Canaan for more than two decades at this point, but the this point has lived somewhat nomadic. Further, God has already said his descendants will be oppressed in a foreign land for four hundred years ([Genesis 15:13](#)). Even so, God assures Abraham that his descendants will indeed be given *all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession*. This is one of YHWH's initial promises (12:7; 13:15, 17; and 15:18) and was later given to Jacob in 48:4.

This is one of the verses on which Jews base their divine right to the land of Israel, a claim that many people, including some Christians deny. It is clear however that when the Jewish nation rebelled against God and followed the idolatrous paganism for which the pagan nations and tribes were expelled, they too were expelled from the land in punishment and into captivity. But the people of Israel, as the prophets and the Apostles stated, did not forfeit the promise of the Land.

Generally those who hold the view that the promise of the Land was forfeited or voided because of Israelite disobedience believe in Displacement theology, which in practice means that they have replaced Israel as the people of God. This of course refuses to acknowledge the Apostle Paul's discourse and firm teaching in Romans 9 through 11.

Accordingly as one writer stated Abraham's doubts would be expelled when he considered what God was saying. So this writer asks us to observe:

"Did you notice the "I wills" and "shalls"? Listen, verse 2, "I will", "I will". Verse 4, "You shall be". Verse 5, no longer "shall your name be", "but your name shall be". "I will", verse 6."I will", "I will" Verse 7, "I will". Verse 8, "I will. Look at the shalls and the wills. Oh! Those glorious wills and shalls! Mr. Spurgeon says, "Brethren, you cannot serve the Lord with a perfect heart until first your faith gets a grip of the divine will and shall".

But note with the land promise to ethnic Israel, all gathered into the body of Christ as the Jewish Apostle Peter affirmed are '*strangers and pilgrims*' on earth ([1 Peter 2:11](#)), where we



“pass the time . . . sojourning . . . in fear” (1:17). Believers need not look at their promised land as a geographical location. Ultimately, neither was Abraham’s. Even though “by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, . . . he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9, 10). May we do so as well.

And I will be their God.... Even more important than the land promise is the relationship promised here. This promise is repeated in texts such as Exodus 29:45 and is included in the New Covenant that is promised in Jeremiah 31:33.

Verse 9. ... *Thou shalt keep...* The covenant God made will not be broken. God is not in a bargain session with Abraham. Here Abraham is being instructed as to how he will experience the full blessing of the Covenant. Obedience is the key to the full appropriation of God’s gracious acts to His people and this is the call here. This means to submit to Him as their God and obey His commandments (vs.1). One of the first items requiring obedience is set forth in the next two verses.

Verses 10 - 11. The *token of the covenant* is the circumcision of each male. This token (symbol) is so important that it is spoken of as if it were the covenant in and of itself: *this is my covenant*. Circumcision will be the mark of God’s people for generations. It was always an outer sign of an inner faith (cf. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Rom. 2:28-29; Col. 2:11-13) since Abraham was already justified, (Gen.15:6).

Circumcision, the cutting off of a small piece of flesh becomes a symbol of putting off the sins of the flesh in the new covenant (Colossians 2:11-13). This circumcision is not done with hands; thus it is a spiritual event. Colossians 2:12 connects it with baptism, a physical act and yet one in which God is working spiritually as well: “*wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God.*”

It is believed that circumcision was practiced in other cultures and here God took a common cultural practice, changed the time of its initiation and used it as a visible sign of His unique people. This was not necessarily for hygiene, but religious purpose.

Verse 12. ... *he that is eight days old* ... it was to be done on the eighth day after a male child was born in the Covenant family (Leviticus 12:3; Philippians 3:5). This will become part of a ceremony that includes bestowing a name on the child (Luke 1:59; 2:21). The law applied both to natural-born sons and sons *not of thy seed* (Genesis 17:27; Exodus 12:48).

Verse 13. ... *my covenant shall be in your flesh* ... the sign of the covenant is on the physical bodies of the Covenant people, specifically on the sex organ of the males. One might wonder how a mark in a part of the body that is kept covered (1 Corinthians 12:23) can be a symbol since symbols are meant to be seen. In this case, the symbol of the Covenant is not to be seen by others, but is a reminder to the covenant-keeper himself. As he dedicates the most personal



part of his body to the Lord, so also he dedicates his whole life. Through marriage and marital relations, the wife of the covenant keeper is included in this sacred covenant.

God stipulated that Abraham should circumcise his male servants as well as his children. The reason was that the Abrahamic Covenant would affect all who had a relationship with Abraham. Consequently they needed to bear the sign of that covenant. The person who refused circumcision was "cut off" from his people (v. 14) because by refusing it he was repudiating God's promises to Abraham.

One writer notes: "**Circumcision was a fitting symbol for several reasons.**

- 1. It would have been a frequent reminder to every circumcised male of God's promises involving seed.**
- 2. It involved the cutting off of flesh. The circumcised male was one who repudiated "the flesh" (i.e., the simply physical and natural aspects of life) in favour of trust in Yahweh and His spiritual promises.**
- 3. It resulted in greater cleanliness of life and freedom from the effects of sin (i.e., disease and death)."**

Verse 14. ... *that soul shall be cut off from his people...* disobedience to the covenant led to exclusion from the covenant community. There is a play on words here. To circumcise someone is to cut off a small piece of flesh; refusal to submit to the procedure results in the man's being *cut off from his people*. The person who refused to participate in circumcision demonstrated his lack of faith in God by his refusal. Thus he broke the covenant sign of circumcision.

It is not clear what that penalty involved, whether capital punishment or banishment, or whether it is done by God or by a human agent. When Moses started toward Egypt in obedience to God's call, "*the Lord met him, and sought to kill him*"; Moses' wife quickly circumcised their son, and the Lord "*let him go*" ([Exodus 4:24-26](#)). This may suggest that it is God who cuts off the one who fails to keep the covenant. However, no deaths are noted when the entire nation of Israel later fails to circumcise the next generation until after crossing the Jordan ([Joshua 5:2-8](#)). Apparently the cutting off of the covenant breaker is to be a human responsibility. Note the important spiritually and physically of the circumcision of all males at Gilgal where the LORD then said to Joshua "*This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you*"

The Old and New Testaments reveal no such middle-of-the-road stance. Submission to circumcision in the Old Testament was mandatory if one wanted to remain part of the covenant people. The opposite is seen in the New Testament: physical circumcision is advised against for those who were not ethnically Jews. The only exception was for one who was of Jewish blood for practical reasons. [Acts 16:3](#). This part of the law was not considered as relevant for Gentile Christians converts, as circumcision of the heart was the requirement for all, both Jew and Gentile.

The New Testament advocates Jesus' emphasis on purity of the inner person ([Matthew 15:18](#)) which brings us full circle back to the Old Testament, where the same emphasis is found,



(Leviticus 26:41; Jeremiah 6:10; compare Acts 7:51). There is one law and one standard for God's people in all ages!

THE ISSUE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM

There are some in the Christian community who believe circumcision foreshadows Christian baptism and so it is helpful to show one writer's discussion of this matter and the similarities and the differences as follows:

The similarities

- 1. It was mandatory for all (the males) who belonged to Abram's posterity, and baptism is mandatory for all who WISH to become Christians, men and women alike, there being neither male nor female in Christ.**
- 2. One who refused to comply with the requirement was rejected and cut off forever from God's people, and the same may be said for baptism.**
- 3. It did not take the place of obedience to God's commandments, despite the fact of the rite itself being a required response to God; baptism also cannot relieve the Christian of his duties as a member of the community of faith, despite the ceremony itself being a required response to God.**
- 4. It stood at the gateway of entrance by birth into the Abrahamic covenant; baptism is the initiation of the Christian into the family of God. He is baptised "into Christ".**
- 5. Another similarly, derived not from the Word of God but from the actions of men, is seen in the Jewish custom of naming their sons on the occasion of their circumcision, and the christening (blessing) of babies when they are "baptized" (?) in infancy. This latter of course is contrary to the Word of God.**
- 6. The "cutting off" in the rite of circumcision is similar in implication to the burial of the old man in baptism. In both, the purity and morality of the life that should follow were indicated**

The Differences

- 1. Circumcision is for males only. Christian baptism is for ALL Christians.**
- 2. Circumcision was performed on infants that were eight days old. Christian baptism, in the Scriptural sense, cannot be administered upon any persons whomsoever, except those of accountable age who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have repented of their sins and have confessed Christ before a group of persons.**
- 3. Circumcision had absolutely no connection whatever with the forgiveness of sins; Christian baptism is for the purpose of receiving the remission of sins.**
- 4. In circumcision, the initiative for the performance of the rite necessarily existed apart from the one circumcised, whereas, in Christian baptism, the Lord said, "*Repent and have yourself baptized*" (Acts 2:38), showing that in Christianity, the initiative must derive from the person being baptized.**



5. Circumcision had nothing at all to do with Abraham being justified, because that took place BEFORE the rite was even given; however, baptism is a factor in the Christian's justification, in the sense that he cannot be justified while refusing to submit to it. Note: God had not commanded Abraham to be circumcised PRIOR TO his justification, but God has commanded all people of this dispensation to be baptized, nor can their justification occur if they refuse, neglect, or ignore that commandment...Paul indeed compared circumcision with baptism, but in that comparison, the necessity of putting off the old man with his sinful deeds was the point under consideration.
6. Circumcision was merely a "token" of the covenant, whereas baptism into Christ is a most essential element of the Christian covenant itself. Circumcision was only a token, but baptism is more than that and it is never referred to as "a sign" or "a token" in the Bible, despite the frequency with which human writers use such expression".

CONCLUSION

The precise reason circumcision was so important is never stated in the Text. But it was indeed critically important and *that fact was* stated. No Israelite had an excuse for failure in this matter.

Perhaps the reason it was so important was because it had significance beyond itself, beyond even the Covenant to which it witnessed.

The New Testament calls features of the old covenant "a shadow" of something more substantial to come (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). "*In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love*" (Galatians 5:6; compare 6:15). This was the symbol the Almighty chose to mark the covenant and therein lie its significance.

All who come to God must do so through faith expressed in the New Testament era through faith in Jesus Christ. All those who do so are justified even as Abraham and must '*walk before God and be perfect* (blameless).

Thus Abraham and Noah are presented as examples of those who have lived in obedience to the covenant and are thus 'blameless' before God, because both obeyed God as He commanded them (17:23; cf. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16).

Blameless does not mean sinless but with integrity, wholeness of relationship (6:9). God requires a sanctified life of those who anticipate His promised blessings.

Abraham's experiences should teach us that natural law (barrenness) is no barrier to the purposes and plans for Almighty God, El Shaddai.

