

# The Torah & The Apostolic Scriptures, part 4

## Covenant of Circumcision or Pagan Requirements

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

Refer to the last page: “How to Interpret Scripture”

Your notes:

### Historical Context

When reading the Scriptures one needs to incorporate its historical context.

Without this understanding, one’s interpretation becomes clouded with personal man-made ideas. Every serious Bible student knows that a text without its historical context becomes a half-truth or a misleading counterfeit of God’s Word. Without employing historical context, one joins the many ranks of various traditionalists. This is where “tradition” itself becomes the guiding principle rather than the Scriptural Text!

### Opinions Concerning Circumcision

At first glance, a typical reading of Galatians 5:2 gives one the impression that circumcision has no value.

<sup>2</sup> “Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ [Messiah] will be of no advantage to you.” [Gal 5:2 ESV]

And again in Galatians 5:6

“For in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.” [Gal 5:6 ESV]

From these two Scriptures one concludes that circumcision is not relevant and has been replaced by love!

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Period, many people believed that they would have eternal life if they were to become part of Israel by being a proselyte. When looking at the historical context, we understand that circumcision was the controversial issue during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Period.

The controversy was whether one who desired to become a proselyte<sup>1</sup> had to follow the rulings of the rabbis or those of The Way<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A proselyte was one who desired to become part of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> The Way were the followers of Yeshua, who taught the Gospel of the Messiah in the Scriptures.

The rabbis taught that first the proselyte must be circumcised in order to become Jewish and, thereby, be grafted into Israel. Whereas, The Way taught that the proselyte must first have faith in the Messiah in order to be grafted into Israel.

Rabbis and Pharisees taught that Jews had covenant status because they were Jewish. They taught that all of Israel would be saved because of their covenant status (circumcision) with Abraham. Therefore, if a gentile wanted to obtain the covenant status, they needed to be grafted into Israel by being circumcised.

Rabbinic rulings overwhelmed society so that individuals could no longer differentiate between the Scriptures and the religious teachings!

During the time of Yeshua, those who followed the rabbis were recruiting individuals to become proselytes by rabbinic rulings (circumcision).

However, The Way maintained that there was no other way to obtain the Gospel.

Rabbis taught that rabbinic ritual of circumcision defined one as being Jewish; whereby becoming a citizen of Israel & obtaining eternal life. Yeshua spoke out not against circumcision itself, but rather against the rabbis defining another way to obtain eternal life.

Note Yeshua's words about the misuse of circumcision as one of the 7 reasons for judgment that He pronounced upon the people of Israel.

<sup>13</sup>“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. <sup>15</sup>Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. [Matt 23:13-15 ESV]

The Way stated specifically that there was only one way for Gentiles could be grafted into Israel & have eternal life. Gentiles are saved on the basis of faith in the Messiah Yeshua.

In Ephesians 2:12 Paul states:

<sup>12</sup> “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.” [Eph 2:12 NIV]

And again

<sup>6</sup> “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]

Paul stated that everything that the Gentiles have started with Israel...

<sup>4</sup> “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup>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. ESV]

### This dilemma of the Gospel

The Torah commanded that all covenant member males were to be circumcised. (Gen 17:10-12) Not only that, but males who were not circumcised were forbidden to participate in the Passover Festival. (Ex 12:43) Paul and the Apostles were NOT against circumcision. They wanted to make certain that Gentiles understood clearly that God’s Gospel could only be obtained through faith in Yeshua apart from works (circumcision). In the verses below, Paul clearly explains:

<sup>2</sup> “Is this blessing [referring the Gospel] then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 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. <sup>11</sup>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, <sup>12</sup>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. NIV]

The Gentiles were received by God before they were circumcised. Paul and the Apostles wanted Gentiles’ to comprehend the issue of the Gospel & circumcision.

### Additional Scriptures:

#### John 3:31-36

<sup>31</sup>He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes

from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup>He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. <sup>33</sup>Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup>For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup>The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. <sup>36</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. [John 3:31-36. ESV]

### Acts 3:22-23

<sup>22</sup>Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. <sup>23</sup>And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ [Acts 3:22-23 ESV]

### Titus 1:16

<sup>16</sup>They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. [Titus 1:16 ESV]

### 1 John 5:3

<sup>3</sup>For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. [1John 5:3. ESV]

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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>36</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>