

Principles of Christian Living #1

“So As To Make Israel Jealous”

So I ask, did they [Israel] stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the nations, so as to make Israel jealous. (Roman 11:11)

1.

So as to make Israel jealous—is this why salvation has come to the nations? Is this why you have been drawn from the world (John 6:44), and made part of the holy nation of God (1 Pet 2:9)? *To make a nation jealous*, a nation that had a law that would have led to salvation if pursued by faith (Rom 9:31-32) ... in two closely connected passages, the Apostle Paul asserts, first, that Gentiles have been offered salvation to make his fellow countrymen jealous, and second, that his ministry to the Gentiles is conducted so as to provoke jealousy. But what can any uncircumcised person do that will cause a natural Israelite to be jealous? Will eating a juicy pork chop make an Observant Jew jealous?

The thought of eating a cheeseburger is enough to make many Observant Jews physically ill. The mixing of dairy and meat is, because of voluntary lifelong avoidance [the Observant Jew is one by choice, not by birth], enough to turn the stomach. Thus, there is no desire to eat a pork chop. There is, instead, actual revulsion at the prospect. While eating a pork chop, today, may cause a Reformed or non-practicing Jew to be jealous for a bite, neither that pork chop nor any other pork product will cause an Observant Jew to be jealous. Instead, eating that mislabeled *other white meat* will cause the Observant person to reject the theology of the person. If anything, eating a pork chop will confirm to this Observant Jew the utter lawlessness of Christianity and of the heathen pig-eater.

Is the above said too harshly? Will not *the liberty of Christianity* cause jealousy? But isn't *liberty* also found in Reformed Judaism, where rabbis doubt that the received Scriptures are the very words of God? If doubts can be called *liberty*, then no person circumcised on the 8th-day is presently excluded from attending a synagogue with others of like mind, or from spending the Sabbath sunbathing on the beach. Thus, the Observant person is so because this person has rejected *freedom from the Law* and has chosen instead *the liberty of the Law*, where moral standards are not Ten Suggestions but the Ten Living Words by which the person who keeps them shall live and shall have life.

If eating a pork chop will not cause an Observant Jew to be jealous, will then shopping on Saturday make this Observant person jealous? Not likely. What about parading in Easter finery—will attending a Sunday morning sunrise service make this Jew jealous? No, neither will, nor should either. So what will make any Jew jealous? What about attending Church services on the Sabbath? Will you, an uncircumcised Gentile, cause a Jew to be jealous if you do no work from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown? Will you, a Gentile, cause a Jew to be jealous if you keep Passover week, eating no leavened bread from the 15th of the first month [Abib] through the 22nd? Will you cause jealousy by keeping Sukkoth for eight days, staying in the temporary tent of flesh in which the born anew son of God regularly dwells, this tent symbolized by booths built on Jerusalem rooftops?

Whether the Observant person wants to admit the truth of the situation, this person will feel the pangs of jealousy and the anger of conviction when a Christian teaches the Observant person's children that Christ Jesus is the Passover Lamb of God, that the day will come when Israel's exodus from Egypt will no longer be remembered, that what will be remembered is Christ Jesus recovering a spiritually circumcised nation of Israel from sin and death, that the High Sabbaths under Moses were a shadow and copy of the resurrections to life, that these High Sabbaths under Christ Jesus are to be kept until the last resurrection occurs, bringing with it new heavens and a new earth. This is what 1st-Century Gentile converts should have learned hearing Moses read every Sabbath, but probably didn't for those early Observant converts that should have been teachers lacked spiritual understanding and were themselves in need of being taught the basics of salvation.

A pattern emerges from what will not cause jealousy: to cause jealousy, a person must take what belongs to the circumcised nation of Israel and do these things without being physically circumcised. Not only will taking the things of Moses cause jealousy, but will cause anger—the type of anger that got the Apostle Paul condemned for what he taught. For there is nothing short of a Gentile, physically uncircumcised or circumcised for health practices and not for religious reasons, doing by faith those

things that belong to Moses that will cause the Observant Jew to be jealous of how the Gentile lives life. Only by beginning to live as a Judean can a Gentile truly produce in an Observant person the type of jealousy that will cause this Observant person to reexamine Christianity and the claims for Jesus being the Messiah, having come in the flesh as a shadow and type of His later coming to harvest the Firstfruits, of which He was First. It will take the faith of a Gentile convert who in the 1st-Century entered a synagogue to hear Moses read every Sabbath for an Observant Jew to profess that Jesus is Lord, even though this Observant person has found Jesus throughout the prophecies. As long as the followers [disciples] of Jesus live as heathens, the Observant person will reject Jesus and deny that He is the Christ.

A dilemma, one that 1st-Century Christianity never was able to resolve: what is the relationship between faith and law? Or put into the words of Protestantism, Grace and Law? In the 1st-Century the proper solution to this dilemma depended upon Israel, physical and spiritual, understanding the Law of Moses, which Jesus said that none of the Pharisees kept (John 7:19) through not rightly judging a matter (*v.* 24). So keeping the Law of Moses requiring making right judgments, and not judging by appearances—requires being spiritually minded. And if the 1st-Century Church could not resolve this dilemma of the relationship between faith and law, what possibility was there for the 2nd, or 3rd, or 4th Century Church to rightly judge the matter. No possibility. It remained for the 21st-Century Church to vertically move beyond where the 1st-Century Church became stuck in a quagmire of extra-textual practices and doctrines that were originally intended to keep the physical nation from returning to Babylon. What these extra-textual practices did was keep Observant disciples stuck in physical Jerusalem, where only the physical temple was. These Observant disciples were unable to set their sons and daughters as living stones atop the foundation the Apostle Paul laid for the house of God in the heavenly city of Jerusalem. Likewise, Gentile converts were unable to fit as living stones their sons and daughters on the foundation they lost sight-of, a foundation that wasn't laid in heavenly Corinth, or in heavenly Rome, or even in heavenly Ephesus.

Concerning faith and the Law, the Apostle Paul writes that circumcision is of value to the Israelite who obeys the Law, but if this Israelite breaks the Law, circumcision becomes uncircumcision (Rom 2:25) ... how is that possible? Does the foreskin grow back when laws are broken? Of course not. Obeying the Law is what is of value, not a pared away foreskin. Thus, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the Law, his uncircumcision will be regarded as circumcision (*v.* 26), and by his faith—displayed through keeping the precepts of the Law when under no social pressure to do so—the physically uncircumcised man will condemn the Israelite who has the Commandments given from atop Sinai, but who breaks the law (*v.* 27). "For no one is a Jew who is merely one outward, nor is circumcision outward and physical" (*v.* 28).

Before going any further and before addressing questions of what law, when the rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life" (Luke 18:18), Jesus answered by first asking, "Why do you call me good" (*v.* 19) before going on to say that the ruler knew the Commandments, clearly equating keeping the Commandments with the answer to the young ruler's question about inheriting eternal life. And this juxtaposition must be remembered.

Jesus was without sin. He had never broken one of the Commandments; He had not subjected Himself to death by having broken a Commandment. In order for Him to die, He had to be made sin through taking on the lawlessness of all whom the Father would draw from the world. Yet, with His record of perfect Commandment keeping, Jesus denied that He was good, for He was flesh tempted as all humankind is tempted. Only God, who is not in this world and not within Satan's sphere of influence, was truly good. Therefore, even if a person perfectly keeps the Commandments as Jesus did, the person is still not a *good person*. Keeping the Commandments is the reasonable expectation for all who are of the household of God; so keeping the Commandments alone does not produce goodness, a major fact overlooked by Observant Jews in both the 1st and in the 21st Centuries ... no person can earn through keeping the Commandments a relationship with God, but breaking the Commandments will sever a relationship with God.

Said bluntly, if a person has perfectly kept the Commandments since birth, the person has done nothing more than what was expected of the person by the person's parents. Yes, the parents will be well pleased with the person, as the Father was well pleased with Jesus (Matt 3:17). But it is to this base of perfect behavior that goodness and righteousness are added to the person. And since all of humankind has come short of the glory of God because of being consigned by God to disobedience

(Rom 11:32), this base of perfect behavior must be given to the person through the mercy of God, through "canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands" (Col 2:14).

2.

What are the precepts of the Law that both the uncircumcised Gentile will keep, and the circumcised Israelite will keep? Are they not to fear God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve Him with all one's heart and mind, and to keep the commandments and statutes God gave for good (Deu 10:12-13)? Are they not found in the second covenant, a covenant made in addition to the covenant made at Horeb (Deu 29:1), a covenant made with the older circumcised and younger uncircumcised children of the nation that left Egypt (Josh 5:2-7), the covenant that the Apostle Paul describes as *the righteousness based upon faith* (cf. Rom 10:6-8; Deu 30:11-14)? Of course these precepts are found in the Book of Deuteronomy; for in Deuteronomy, Moses stands as the accuser of all Israel (cf. John 5:45-47; Deu 31:24-27). In Deuteronomy, spiritual circumcision is promised if Israel, exiled in a far land, will return to God, and will obey His voice with heart and mind, keeping His commandments and statutes written in Deuteronomy (Deu 30:1-10). And choice is placed before every Israelite (*vv.* 15-20), with God telling Israel to choose life.

Obedying the commandments and statutes of God *with hands and bodies only* does not satisfy the terms of the second covenant as initially mediated by Moses, or now as mediated by Christ Jesus. A Jew or Israelite is one inwardly (Rom 2:29), with circumcision being a matter of the heart, with the laws of God written on fleshy tablets, not on slabs of stone. And on the softness of the heart, circumcision will be made by the divine Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*], not by human hands according to the letter of the Law. Circumcision is the cleansing of the heart by faith.

The acceptable faith of a Gentile will cause this person to begin living as a Judean, thereby becoming a cause for jealousy in natural Israelites. No other expression of *faith* is profitable to God. Therefore, the person who professes faith in Christ Jesus, but who will not begin to live as a Judean, has dead faith and is a liar.

The question of what is acceptable faith brings the disciple to the Jerusalem Conference, called to resolve the importance of the flesh ... in His Olivet Discourse, Jesus warned His disciples not to deceive (Matt 24:4 — read the passage in Greek), for they were the ones who could deceive. And some men of apparent importance had gone out from Jerusalem as unofficial representatives of the "perfected faith of Christ," implied from the Council's denial of these men's credentials and from what Paul writes in his epistle to the Galatians. Nevertheless, those who had gone out were Pharisee converts. For them, first, professing that Jesus was Lord, and second, believing that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9) would have been acts of faith equivalent to, first, Abraham leaving home and kin and journeying to Canaan, and second, believing God that from his loins would come a son. But these Pharisee converts were far from understanding the nuances of Christian living. They were literal babes in Christ, their hearts cleansed by faith, their minds being spiritually those of infants in need of milk and far from being able to digest solid food.

Again, for these former Pharisees, keeping the Commandments of God was their reasonable expectation, for they physically matured in an environment that observed the Law of Moses. In the unrecorded position of the proceedings at Jerusalem Council, they asked that Gentile converts come to Christ from the same baseline of knowledge and tradition as they had come to Christ. They asked for fairness, for a just application of the law, for a reaffirming of Moses. They asked, literally, for nothing more than that one standard (the application of "one law" — Exod 12:49) pertain to both Jew and Greek.

No Israelite of natural birth or any stranger within Israel was to take the Passover sacraments without first being physically circumcised, a command Moses received from the Lord that presents a problem as the forty years of wandering in the wilderness saw the deaths of the men who had tested the Lord ten times (Num 14:21-23). Children were born into the tents of these men who tested the Lord. The children were uncircumcised (Josh 5:2-7), and were therefore unable to eat of the Passover lambs when they reached maturity — or did they eat of the Passover lambs? Scripture is silent about what happened after the second Passover.

For the disciple, the sacraments of bread and wine, taken on the night that Jesus was betrayed, are the body and blood of the Passover Lamb of God. Eating the bread reaffirms the indwelling of Christ Jesus, for He is the Bread of Life. Drinking of the cup is the reality of the blood ancient Israelites smeared on doorposts and lintels of their houses in Egypt that caused the death angel to pass over the

nation; drinking of the cup is the annual renewing of the covenant by which Jesus bears the sins of disciples. It is the reality of the high priest of Israel reading the sins of Israel over the head of the Azazel goat—

As an insert, for disciples schooled by Herbert Armstrong, the seven annual High Sabbaths are a physical shadow and type of the plan of God. A spiritual shadow also exists, in that the plan of salvation is fully represented in the spring holy day season [Passover through Pentecost], and again [a second time] represented in the fall holy day season [Trumpets through Last Great Day]; for the resurrection of Firstfruits, of which Christ was First, is a shadow and copy of the resurrection into the great White Throne Judgment (i.e., the second Resurrection). So *understanding the plan of God* doesn't automatically come from keeping the seven annual High days, but only begins with keeping these High Sabbaths of God. Understanding comes with comprehending the compression of events attributable to the timelessness of the heavenly realm. Whereas in the physical shadow seven weeks separate the Wave Sheaf Offering from Pentecost, in the shadow's spiritual reality all of the Church era fits into these seven weeks, with the seven endtime years of tribulation left over. For the Second Passover liberation of the second holy nation of Israel from bondage to sin and the spiritual king of Babylon occurs when this second nation of Israel is invisibly empowered [filled] with the Holy Spirit in a manner foreshadowed by the visible empowerment on that day of Pentecost following Calvary. In other words, in its spiritual reality Pentecost occurs at the midnight hour of the one long spiritual night that began at Calvary. Approximately two millennia will have passed between when the Passover Lamb of God was sacrificed and the midnight hour of this one long night of watching, but only three and a half years will pass between midnight and dawn.

This Second Passover liberation begins the seven endtime years. Hence, Pentecost in its spiritual reality isn't about the resurrection of firstfruits [it is only about the first resurrection when perceived as a lifeless physical shadow of this resurrection], but about the liberation of all disciples from the sin and death that has been dwelling in the flesh of disciples (Rom 7:25), with this spiritual empowerment the spiritual shadow and copy of the first resurrection. The second High Sabbath of Passover week [Unleavened Bread] represents the resurrection of Firstfruits and the harvest of Firstfruits who have just lived through years without sin.

Herbert Armstrong had what the annual High days represent half correct. And it is the responsibility of endtime disciples to move beyond a nearly 80-year-old teaching as the walls of the spiritual house of God are stood on the foundation Paul laid in the 1st-Century; for the disciple who continues to teach that Pentecost for spiritually circumcised Israel represents the same imagery as the Feast of Weeks represented for physically circumcised Israel is physically minded and has no business representing him or herself as a teacher. Unlike the Feast of Weeks which occurs on the same day as Pentecost as Sadducees counted the weeks, Pentecost represents leaving sin and the indwelling of death just as Israel left bondage to Pharaoh and Egypt on the night of the first Passover. What the Feast of Weeks represents is spiritually shoved backwards so that the counting of the seven weeks becomes the counting of the seven days of Unleavened Bread and the counting of the seven endtime years of tribulation. For disciples, the reality of Pentecost will begin the Tribulation: the escape from sin and the indwelling of death is not to a physical place of safety [*Petra*] or in a heavenly Rapture, but in liberation through being *filled* or *empowered* by the Holy Spirit, thereby making of every disciple a sacrifice acceptable to God. The place of safety is in the grave for all but a remnant of today's Church.

The faith once delivered is for the next generation a dead faith. Jude, the brother of James, argued for a return to the foundation Paul and the elders at the Jerusalem Council laid, not for remaining stationary as if statuary on this foundation. Disciples are to grow in grace and knowledge; they are not to become lifeless stones cast aside somewhere east of the heavenly city of Jerusalem.

Remember, the letters delivered to the seven churches on that Asia Minor mail route are to be delivered on the Lord's day (Rev 1:10), where John is in his vision, not in the 1st-Century when everyone in Asia had left Paul (2 Tim 1:15). These letters are not to seven eras of one church as *dispensationalists* began to teach in the 19th-Century. They are letters to seven churches that co-exist in the Lord's day as they co-existed in the 1st-Century, when they all needed to return to the faith once delivered ... before Paul was martyred in Rome, so shortly after Paul laid the only foundation the spiritual house of God can ever have, all of the churches in Asia had abandoned him, including the seven named churches, thereby giving insight into the endtime messages to the spiritually empowered realities of these churches. Even after three and a half years of tribulation, the Lord is not pleased with

five of the seven churches, finds one church without works, and only one church doing the work it was commissioned to do. Thus, after two millennia most of these churches of Asia [no longer, though, headquartered in Asia] still haven't fully returned to *the faith once delivered*, let alone having built on that foundation laid in the heavenly city.

3.

Jesus said to the Pharisees that none of them kept the Law of Moses (John 7:19), that they judged by appearances and did not judge rightly (*v.* 24); thus, by close association [i.e., context] Jesus made judging rightly part of keeping the Law of Moses. And judging rightly would have Israelites live under the Law of Moses in a manner different from how the Pharisees attempted to keep all that was written in the *Torah*. For the Pharisees' relationship to keeping the Law of Moses was not significantly better than that of the Gentile who did by nature those things that the law requires (Rom 2:14-16), a concept that Paul apparently never successfully transmitted to the fellowships in Asia.

Physical circumcision is the symbolic removal of the skin clothing with which *Elohim* [singular in usage] clothed Adam when He drove the man from the garden of God. Physical circumcision causes an Israelite to appear naked before God, the man covered only by his obedience to God (the woman is covered by her husband or father's obedience). Abraham had two plus decades of demonstrated obedience while still uncircumcised in addition to the faith that was counted to him as righteousness before he ratified by circumcision the covenant by which he, Abram, received use of the Breath of *Yah* [seen through the insertion of the linguistic radical /*ah*/ that represents aspirated or vocalized breath in his name]. Again, for two plus decades Abraham had demonstrated obedience before being made naked through no longer being covered by natural grace (Rom 5:13). The insertion of the linguistic /*ah*/ radical in Abram's name is an audible [visible] foreshadowing of disciples receiving the invisible divine Breath of God that results in being born of Spirit (John 3:5). Therefore, until disciples are spiritually empowered by the Holy Spirit after the shadow and copy of empowerment visibly seen in Acts chapter 2, disciples should not strip themselves naked before God through physical circumcision.

Following the Jerusalem Council's decision concerning circumcision of Gentile converts, the Apostle Paul, nonetheless, had Timothy outwardly circumcised so as not to offend the Jews who knew that Timothy's father was a Greek (Acts 16:1-3). So it cannot be argued that Paul opposed a natural Israelite circumcising a son on the 8th day as was said about Paul by Observant disciples zealous for the law (Acts 21:20-21). Circumcision must, now, be placed into the context the ruling of the Jerusalem Council.

A first conflict requiring that the full number of the disciples be summoned together was resolved with the appointing of seven men to serve at the tables where the daily distribution took place—the Hellenists [Greek Jews] complained that their widows were being neglected. This appointment of seven men to serve in this capacity [as deacons might serve in endtime fellowships] was to solve a specific problem that had resulted from the organization of the, then, minuscule Body of Christ. This solution was not a *one-size-fits-all* fix that is appropriate to the splintered endtime Body—and yes, the endtime Body is as fractured as was natural Israel when a remnant returned from Babylon. A major portion of Israel remained missing from Judea, this portion identified as "the lost ten tribes" which were not really lost, only dispersed never to return because of the sins of Jeroboam that drove the northern house of Israel far from the Lord (2 Kings 17:21-23). Another large portion of Israel remained in Babylon, where this portion dwelt comfortably in houses it had built there. Only a sliver of the former nation trekked across the desert plains of what is today western Iraq to return to Judea. And of this sliver, no more than a tithe ever dwelt in the holy city of Jerusalem.

The endtime Church of God is, indeed, a divided house while still in the womb of the last Eve. Today, two sons struggle in this womb, one hated, one loved but deceitful. These two sons, like Esau and Jacob, will be born in a day—that day being when all of Israel is liberated from bondage to sin and the indwelling of death. And the elder son, the one that has relaxed the least of the commandments (Matt 5:19), will serve spiritually the younger, who will have to wrestle with God and prevail through martyrdom. Yes, except for a remnant, the elder son will slay physically his righteous younger brother.

Therefore, at the Jerusalem Council a resolution to the early Church's second serious conflict was thrashed out as *a solution to that conflict*, a solution that is as inappropriate to the endtime Church as

would be appointing seven men to care for the daily distribution to the widows in the splintered endtime Church. Put another way, the Jerusalem Council delivered a context specific resolution. As with the resolution of the first serious problem, the resolution of the second serious problem serves merely as a shadow and copy of a future resolution. However, the basis or logic for making this context specific resolution remains valid even though its logic has eluded scholars from all traditions for centuries.

The second conflict revolved around the importance of the flesh: believers who were previously Pharisees contended that a Gentile convert must first become a physical Israelite before the person could become a spiritual Israelite, that physical circumcision must necessarily precede spiritual circumcision as Moses had commanded. Paul and Barnabas opposed the former Pharisees in "no small dissension" (Acts 15:2). For Paul and Barnabas, any return to physical circumcision (even though he had Timothy physically circumcised immediately after this Council adjourned) was, in this age from cup to cup (Matt 26:27-29), a serious doctrinal error, and confirmation that these former Pharisees never understood what circumcision represented. In addition to citing Moses, these former Pharisees would have argued that "No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary" (Ezek 44:9); so the former Pharisees had Scripture on their side, Scripture that stretched from when Israel left Egypt to when the Messiah would come. Paul and Barnabas could only argue precedent, which is the direction the Council proceeded when Peter stood up and said, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe ... and [God] made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:7, 9).

Hearts cleansed by faith—here is the basis for, and the logic behind the ruling of the Jerusalem Council, simplified in the letter sent out:

The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Celicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immortality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. (Acts 15:23-29)

What degree of faith is necessary for a 1st-Century Greek living as a pagan Greek to turn to God, profess that Jesus is Lord, and cease living as a Greek, cease eating blood, cease eating meats that were strangled so as to retain the blood, cease eating meats offered to idols, cease frequenting prostitutes, and begin entering the synagogue on the Sabbath day to hear Moses read? Part of what James the Just said and what Judas and Silas would have relayed orally was that "from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues" (Acts 15:21). To grow in grace and knowledge [from where would this knowledge come if not from Moses and the Prophets], this Greek disciple would go where knowledge of God was expounded, which meant going to the synagogues until fellowships of disciples could acquire their own copies of Moses.

The Greek convert who had spiritually separated him or herself from kith and kin—family, friends, and neighbors—would have convinced former associates that the convert had lost his or her mind. And if this convert's family and friends were not thoroughly convinced that he or she was mad for professing that Jesus is Lord, they would have been convinced beyond doubt when the convert began associating with *Jews*, the lowest of humanity in the Hellenistic world of Asia Minor, especially after 70 CE.

A former Pharisee had to separate himself from his family and friends when he professed with his mouth that Jesus was Lord and believed with his heart that the Father had raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9). The same would have applied even more so for the Sadducee. So was not the Pharisee's heart cleansed by professing and believing? How did the Pharisee's law-keeping, or lack thereof come into play in this cleansing of his heart? It didn't come into play. Nevertheless, it was the expectation of all who lived in Jerusalem.

Would not an Observant Jew today have his or her heart cleansed by professing that Jesus is Lord and believing that the Father raised Jesus from the dead ... the same standard pertains to an Observant Jew today as pertained to an Observant Jew in the 1st-Century. And the same expectation of continued law-keeping would also apply, for Jewish disciples observed even the purification rites decades after Calvary (Acts 21:23-24). Sacrifice of the Passover Lamb of God didn't abolish the Passover. Jesus' acceptance by the Father as the First of the Firstfruits didn't abolish the Wave Sheaf Offering [celebrated by most Christians as Resurrection Sunday]. Nor did Jesus' death as the acceptable sacrifice for sin (Rom 8:3) abolish the need for a covering for sin, the reason for annually drinking from the cup. So the Observant disciple will continue keeping the Law of Moses while growing in knowledge of what this Law means and represents—and this growth in knowledge will be accomplished by growth in Grace.

What would've happened in the 1st-Century if an Observant Jew failed to circumcise his son on the 8th-day? This Jew would have been treated as a heathen, not a Judean, right? And what did the Apostle Paul do when he returned to Jerusalem? Did he not go into the temple to purify himself (Acts 21:26). So Paul never taught observant Jews to cease being observant, did he? Rather, he taught that the Gentile who left kith and kin and mentally journeyed to Judea through going to the synagogue to hear Moses read every Sabbath (again, Moses was read nowhere else) had his or her heart cleansed just as a Pharisee or a Sadducee had when professing that Jesus is Lord. Keeping the Commandments was the reasonable expectation of both the former Pharisee and the former Sadducee, as was the Gentile going to the synagogue to hear Moses read. And through repeatedly hearing Moses read, the Gentile disciple would begin keeping the Law for the same reason that today an Observant Jew is not a Reformed or non-practicing Jew.

Are not the above degrees of faith comparable to the faith of Abraham who left home and kin to journey to Canaan, the Promised Land, the visible representation of God's rest? Is not the Pharisee's journey to Christ comparable? Is not the Sadducee's journey to Christ comparable? Is not the Greek's journey to Christ comparable? All three are, aren't they? And since they are, then do Greek converts need to do anything more to have their hearts cleansed by faith than the four things written in the letter sent from the Jerusalem Council? They don't, do they?

Returning now to physical circumcision, with the understanding that Paul had Timothy circumcised immediately after the decision of the Jerusalem Council was made: the cleansing of the heart that allows the heart to be spiritually circumcised depends upon two actions of faith, the first leaving kith and kin and journeying into God's rest, and the second being the faith to believe God. These two actions of faith have nothing to do with the flesh, or with physical circumcision, or with the traditions of Israel. They have everything, though, to do with Moses. And here is where the Hellenistic disciples in Asia went way wrong, for they sloughed away all of Moses as a snake sheds its skin.

After the Jerusalem Council's letter was widely circulated among Gentile fellowships—and even more so after Paul's epistles were circulated—early fellowships in Asia, especially, feeling *the taint of Moses*, sloughed away this taint through the hard work of pagan philosophers who became pagan theologians: these fellowships abolished the Law and the Prophets, for Gentile converts only needed to do four things to be followers of Christ Jesus, correct? That is what James the Just wrote to "Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia" (Acts 15:23), when these Gentiles were still living as Greeks rather than Judeans, and how better to eliminate one's accuser than to abolish the Law of Moses? These pagan theologians were now free to teach what they believed about heaven and hell without fear of contraction by an Observant disciple. And lawlessness reigned throughout the fellowships in Asia as the Circumcision Faction was turned back.

If the uncircumcised disciple becomes physically circumcised for religious reasons after being born of Spirit, the disciple removes the garment of Grace and stands naked in the heavenly realm. Without being empowered by the Holy Spirit, this disciple is covered only by his obedience to God; thus, this disciple has no covering for the first sin that the disciple commits. One sin by the new self will send this son of God into the lake of fire. Therefore, a disciple's physical circumcision after spiritual birth and before empowerment by the Holy Spirit is akin to the disciple immediately committing spiritual suicide.

Note, though, the constraints of time that coincide with *the cup to cup period* (again, Matt 26:27-29): spiritual birth did not occur prior to when Jesus' disciples drank from the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed, for it was on this night that Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. Spiritual birth actually occurs when the glorified Jesus breathed on ten of His disciples (John 20:22). So the beginning of this covenant precedes its implementation by three days and three nights. Likewise,

the covenant ends when Jesus again drinks from the cup new in the Kingdom. But the implementation of this covenant ends when His disciples are glorified, shortly before the Wedding Feast. The spiritual darkness prior to the invisible spiritual empowerment of His disciples by the Holy Spirit is analogous to the three days and three nights that He was in the grave—and is analogous to the first three years of the Tribulation as the second half of the Tribulation forms the mirror image of the first half, meaning that the history of Israel is condensed and repeated during the first 1260 days of the Tribulation, followed by the history of the Church era (a repeat of the history of natural Israel) being condensed and repeated during the last 1260 days. And all of this is important when understanding the message that must be delivered to the third part of humankind (Zech 13:7-9) born of Spirit when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ; for this third part will be as Greek converts were in the 1st-Century.

Instead of a 1st-Century physical Circumcision Faction that left physical Jerusalem to teach Gentile converts to mutilate their flesh, halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation a spiritual Circumcision Faction will leave spiritual Jerusalem to teach the third part of humankind to mutilate their spiritual lives by taking the Mark of the Beast with the same logic as the physical Circumcision Faction used when disputing with Paul. So it behooves disciples today to understand the issues, the logic behind James' letter, and the arguments used at the Jerusalem Council against the Circumcision Faction.

Paul did not circumcise Timothy for sake of belief, but because of the weakness of the faith of Jewish converts, the basis for why Paul writes what he does about eating meat to Roman converts.

The Apostle Paul apparently understood what physical circumcision represented. The former Pharisees apparently did not understand that if a Gentile convert was circumcised for spiritual reasons, the convert made the garment of Christ Jesus' righteousness of no effect. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas vigorously opposed the former Pharisees. Understand, therefore—

- Physical circumcision represents stripping away the natural covering for sin, with the foreskin representing the skin clothing with which *Elohim* clothed Adam when He drove the man from His garden (Gen 3:21-24).
- When God drove the man and the woman from His garden, He consigned humanity to disobedience (Rom 11:32); literally, to be bondservants of the Adversary, that old serpent Satan the devil.
- As bondservants to Satan, humankind did not have its lawlessness counted against it (Rom 5:13); for Satan as the lord and prince of this world was fully accountable for the actions of his bondservants.

When no sin is reckoned to [or counted against] a person, the person is under *natural grace*, a term and concept alien to previous theological discussions. Because *Elohim* drove the man and woman from His garden before the man and woman could eat of the Tree of Life, the man and woman had no life in them but that which came from physical breath [*psuche*] and the cellular oxidation of sugars. Hence, all of humankind died because of the sin that dwelt in the flesh of human beings from being consigned to disobedience—what *Elohim* told the man came to pass (Gen 2:17). From Adam to Moses, humankind didn't go to a place of separation from God after the cessation of consciousness through the loss of breath; rather, the flesh returned to dust (Eccl 3:18-20). The breath returned to God. And the names and lives of those who feared God were recorded in a book of remembrance (Mal 3:16-18).

- The first Eve believed the serpent, who told her that she would not die (Gen 3:4). The last Eve believed that old serpent, Satan the devil, as the first Eve believed—that old serpent told the last Eve that she would not die, for she had an immortal soul, the lie entering Christianity through Hellenistic converts.

From when Israel entered Egypt as 70 persons [75 counting Joseph], Israel entered into the geographical representation of sin, and entered in the same position Joseph held. Although he was second only to Pharaoh, Joseph had been sold into bondage and was never formally released in Scripture. Thus, when Israel entered Egypt, the nation accepted the bondage into which Joseph had been sold before being raised up without being liberated. Israel was a favored "slave." Therefore, the sins of Israel while in Egypt were not counted against the nation; for these sins properly belonged to Pharaoh, the then earthly representative of Satan. And grasping this concept becomes important in grasping how physical circumcision relates to endtime disciples.

- Until Israel left Egypt, the lawlessness of Israel was physically covered through, first, Joseph, then all of Israel being Pharaoh's slaves.
- Abraham walked uprightly before God. His sin was covered by obedience through faith (Gen 26:5), so no sin was reckoned against him even though he had come short of the glory of God—he was not without sin.
- Because of Isaac's faith in the matter of being offered as a sacrifice, and because Isaac walked uprightly before God according to the covenant God made with him (Gen 26:1-4) and because Abraham his father covered him, God reckoned no sin against Isaac.
- Because Jacob was by nature a deceiver, he theologically had to journey to the North Country [to death], whereas a representative was sent back to Haran for Isaac, for Isaac was not to go North (Gen 24:6-8).
- But after visiting the North Country and taking two wives there, Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed, with this wrestling being akin to judgment. God then reckoned no sin against the renamed patriarch, Israel, who late in life went down to Egypt.
- Therefore, between when the covenant given to Abraham was ratified by physical circumcision and when the patriarch Israel went into Egypt, no sin was reckoned against Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even though all three came short of the glory of God and died. They were not without sin, nor exempt from death. But their sins were not counted as sin because of their faith.
- The identifying phrase, *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, contains within the identification of these three men the concept that no sin was imputed to these patriarchs.

One of the objections Sabbatarian disciples habitually hear from 8th-day disciples is that Israel didn't keep the Sabbath—didn't keep the Commandments—while slaves in Egypt. This is probably true, but because Israel was enslaved by Pharaoh, no sin would have been reckoned against Israel while the nation was in Egypt even though physical circumcision made the nation naked before God. So following when Abraham received the covenant ratified by circumcision, the promised son [Isaac] and his descendants had no sin reckoned against the nation even though the nation was covered only by its obedience. And for this reason, the children of the nation born in the wilderness were not circumcised until after they crossed the Jordan (Josh 5:2-7), for these children were never bondservants to Pharaoh. Circumcision would have made them naked before God before crossing into God's rest.

- Israel's exodus from Egypt was a shadow and type of endtime Israel leaving sin and death.
- The North Country [Assyria] represents Death, as Egypt [the Southland] represents sin.
- The kings of the North and of the South will be defeated when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Father and of His Christ (Rev 11:15); when Satan is cast from heaven (Rev 12:9-10).
- Sin and Death will be defeated when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28), thereby *filling* or *empowering* all of humankind three and a half years before Christ Jesus visibly returns as the Messiah.
- By faith, the third part of humanity will be born of Spirit when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh. This third part will be saved by enduring to the end, and this is the good news that must be proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Matt 24:13-14).
- Recovery of endtime Israel from the North Country [Assyria] represents the resurrection of firstfruits: *cf.* Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8; Isa 11:11-16; Ezek 36:24-29; 20:33-38; 37:21-28.
- The calling, judging, and resurrection of firstfruits from the coming of the Second Adam to the Second Advent of Christ are a shadow and type of the great White Throne Judgment.

The Apostle Paul wrote that "death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Rom 5:14), not *death reigned from Adam to Christ*. Moses brings an end to death, and he does so in the Moab covenant through which spiritual circumcision is promised (Deu 30:6) if this law [covenant] is pursued by faith (*vv.* 1-2). Spiritual circumcision of a heart cleansed by faith causes a disciple to pass from death to life.

Thus, physical circumcision prior to the making of the Second Covenant on the plains of Moab, and spiritual circumcision following the making of this covenant and prior to the resurrection of firstfruits together represent the shadow and copy of the holy nation of Israel during the Millennial reign of the

Messiah, when Israel will be physically and spiritually circumcised as the prophet Ezekiel writes ... all of Israel will be spiritually empowered throughout the Millennium, meaning that the nation will not need nor have any covering for sin but obedience. Physical circumcision will be the reminder that the only covering the nation has for sin is its obedience. But because the holy nation will also be born of Spirit, this nation will need to have hearts cleansed by faith, where the Jerusalem Council will conclude its decision.

Again, cleansing a heart by spiritual circumcision is not a one-size-fits-all action of faith. It is a qualitative action of faith patterned after the degree of faith required of Abraham to (1) leave home and kin, then to (2) believe God that a son would come from his loins. So for a disciple, physical circumcision for religious reasons makes Jesus' sacrifice of no effect, for this disciple has willingly undressed himself, removing from his shoulders the garment of Grace. This disciple lacks faith, and looks to what is physical.

4.

If the Observant Jew who keeps all of Moses to the best of the person's ability professes that Jesus is Lord, this Observant person has displayed faith of the qualitative degree that Abraham displayed when leaving Ur with his father. Now, the old self of this Observant person must die as Terah died in Haran. The new self, like Abraham, himself, will continue the journey to God's rest ... but both the old self and the new self have been dwelling in the Sabbath, the transitional representation [between the geography of Judea and the supra-dimensional realm called heaven] of God's rest. So where does this Observant person journey in professing that Jesus is Lord?

Three times the question of what must one do to inherit everlasting life is asked in Scripture. The first time, a lawyer asks Jesus the question (Luke 10:25), and Jesus asks this lawyer how does he read what is written in the Law (*v.* 26). The lawyer gives the right answer: *Love God with heart, breath, mind, and strength; and one's neighbor as self.* Jesus said for the lawyer to do as he answered, and he would live.

The Observant Jew who professes that Jesus is Lord is as this lawyer was, in that this Observant person knows the law and can give the right answer to a question about inheriting everlasting life. The hard part is now doing what this Observant person knows to do—and if the Observant person has to ask who is his or her neighbor this person has no love for his or her neighbor. Therefore, the Observant one who professes that Jesus is Lord will open his heart and mind to accept all of the world as his or her neighbor, thereby breaking down the barrier of physical circumcision as if circumcision were abolished. And this is, for the Observant Jew, a journey that equals in distance and exceeds in difficulty the journey of Abraham to Canaan.

The second time that Jesus is asked about what a person must do to inherit everlasting life, it is the rich young ruler asking the question (Luke 18:18).

The lawyer who asked might or might not have had material wealth; however, he certainly had intellectual wealth, whereas the young ruler had material wealth, the accumulation of which was testimony of the young ruler's righteousness in a carnal culture. Jesus told the rich young ruler that he knew the law, then cited enough of the commandments so there would be no doubt as to the law Jesus addressed. And the ruler said, "All these I have kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Luke 18:21-22).

The lawyer did not love his neighbor, circumcised or uncircumcised [in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus did not say whether man robbed and stripped of his clothing was circumcised—that information is supplied to the auditor by neither the priest or the Levite stopping, something the lawyer would have realized]. The rich young ruler did not have the faith necessary to sell all that he had and followed Jesus. Thus, these two, the invited guests to the wedding feast from the natural nation of Israel would not be there because of their lack of love and lack of faith, the two stumbling blocks over which most Observant Jews will trip even if professing that Jesus is Lord.

The above situation will repeat itself during the first half of the seven endtime years when another portion of natural Israel will be grafted to the root of righteousness, this portion including the 144,000 *virgins* as well as however many other natural Israelites perish after professing that Jesus is Lord.

Therefore, to prevent the loss of a people loved for the sake of their ancestors, the man of perdition will seek to change times and the law, thereby making himself easily recognizable by Observant disciples who will have to display love and faith to endure once this lawless one is revealed.

On the third occasion when the question is asked about what one must do to be saved (i.e., when the Philippian jailer asks Paul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved") Paul's answer doesn't mention the law as Jesus had twice. Instead Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:30).

Why the difference in response? A different *dispensation* as Evangelical Christianity teaches? No, not a different *dispensation*—the *dispensation of Law* hasn't been replaced by a *dispensation of Grace*. The same standard applies in all three incidents. Only in this third incident, love is extended by dressing Paul's and Silas' wounds. Faith is exercised by the jailer being baptized immediately upon being convicted by God.

The jailer's heart was cleansed by faith, as the rich young ruler's heart would have been if he would have sold all he had and followed Jesus. The jailer showed love to his neighbors, both his prisoners, by taking them into his house and caring for them in a manner similar to that of the Good Samaritan. Now this jailer, out of the conviction of his heart, would go to the synagogue to hear Moses read on the Sabbath ... there is no different *dispensation*, or change from Law to Grace. What has happened is that the faith of this Philippian jailer will cause Observant Jews in Philippi to be jealous, the reason for salvation coming to the Gentiles.

5.

In the Lord's day, a specific time that remains in the future, a synagogue of Satan, saying they are Jews [Israelites] but lying, will exist (Rev 2:9 & 3:9), and will slander genuine disciples dwelling in tribulation and poverty and distress. This synagogue of Satan won't identify itself as such, but as the unified Body of Christ teaching the Cross of Christ. It will not be a Sabbath-observing organization; for it will emerge alive out of the first half of the seven endtime years of tribulation, that period when the lawless one attempts to change times and the law (Dan 7:25) through cooperating with this lawless one. This synagogue will have taken the mark of death onto itself; it will be visibly and invisibly marked by the Cross; and it will bow to two of seven churches that are parts of the remnant pursued by Satan. It will bow either in jealousy or in fear of these disciples who kept Jesus' words, and have the spirit of prophecy, the testimony of Jesus (*cf.* Rev 12:17; 19:10).

As today's fractured Christian Church points fingers at itself, identifying this part of the Body or that part as the synagogue of Satan, the Church misses what Paul said: "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring (Rom 9:6-7). Not all of Christianity is Christian and belongs to Christ Jesus.

The spiritual Circumcision Faction will return to the Jerusalem Council to claim James' letter as all a born of Spirit disciple must do to be saved ... when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh, the animal natures of the great predators will be changed so that there will be no harm in all of God's holy mountain (Isa 11:6-9). Likewise, the human nature of human beings will be similarly changed so that every person knows God, has the laws of God within the person, has the ability to keep these laws, and has the desire to keep these laws. What part of being an Observant Jew is missing? Knowledge is present. Desire is present. Ability is present. And Grace is absent, for it is no longer needed. Therefore, when the spiritual Circumcision Faction tells this third part of humankind that the Law of Moses has been abolished, that *Christians* are under no obligation to keep the laws of God, that Jesus fulfilled the Law by keeping the Law, that Grace will cover all sins, this spiritual Circumcision Faction is as deadly as was the physical Circumcision Faction in the 1st-Century.

Empowerment by the Holy Spirit fully satisfies the terms of the covenant ratified by drinking from the cup—and leaves the disciple who has not drank of the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed [the 14th of Abib] responsible for his or her lawlessness, with no covering of Grace or of demonstrated obedience qualitatively similar to the obedience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Two nations of spiritually circumcised Israel—both today in the womb of the last Eve—one hated, one loved—one lawless, one Observant—one attempting to enter God's rest on the following day, the 8th-day; the other entering His rest on the Sabbath, keeping the High Sabbaths, and well able to make every Observant Jew jealous.

What advantage has the Observant Jew? What is the value of physical circumcision, of being naked before God and covered only by the person's obedience? When the seven endtime years of tribulation begin; when the disciples of Christ Jesus are empowered by the Holy Spirit, having practiced walking uprightly before God will be of great value, and will probably result in the Observant person entering into God's rest as part of the harvest of Firstfruits, reaped upon Jesus' return.

Thus, as principles for Christian living, physical circumcision is of no value to the disciple who has had his or her heart cleansed by faith and circumcised by the divine Breath of God. However, walking uprightly before God as if the person were physically circumcised is of great value, for even the person who by nature does what the law requires will have his or her uncircumcision counted as circumcision. All of humanity will be born of Spirit 1260 days before the Second Advent, so even the person who is not today a disciple will, by enduring to the end, be saved.

The good news that must be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Matt 24:14) contains no caveats, no four things from which to abstain, no requirement to circumcise, but is the very unadorned message that *the one who endures to the end shall be saved* (v. 13). There is here even less than what Paul told the Philippian jailer, for nothing is said about believing in the Lord Jesus—and no one can come to God except through Christ Jesus. So believing in Jesus will be a global condition involved with enduring to the end, as will be cleansing hearts by faith; for Satan will have been cast from heaven and will have come as a roaring lion, devouring the spiritual Circumcision Faction through the tattoo of the Cross (*chi xi stigma* — Rev 13:18). Enduring to the end will mean living solely by faith for three and a half years ... the endtime harvest of Firstfruits will be pleasing to God for they will have the righteousness that comes from faith, daily practiced under the most adverse conditions.

Today's daily practice of living as an Observant disciple is an easy yoke to wear, a small thing lost in the dust underfoot, but a thing that will cause jealousy in those who would make it the centerpiece of their lives. So to every disciple, *Go, and sin no more*. To every teacher of Israel, *Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter heaven, but the one who does the will of the Father*. And to the Observant Jew, *Confess and believe and you will be saved—but do not cease living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*.

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