

Circumcision and Uncircumcision in the Bible

1. How many times are circumcision, uncircumcision and foreskin used?

- Circumcision, uncircumcision and foreskin — 100 times!
- Not just an Old Testament thing — 50 times in the New Testament!!

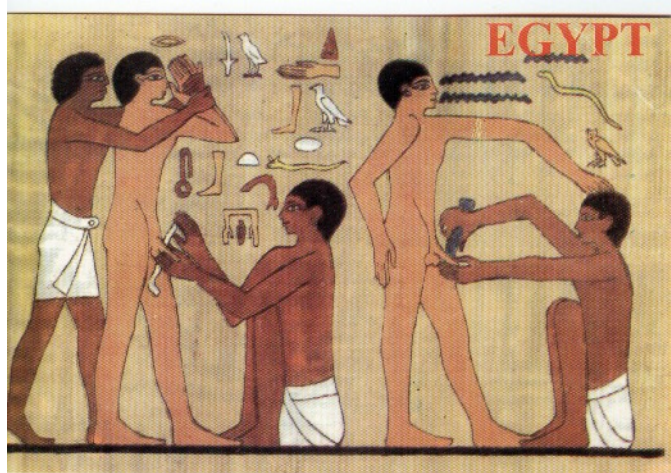
2. Isn't this a kind of earthy topic?

- Very earthy, but we will keep it “family friendly”

- Nothing more central to the story of the Bible

- The whole Bible is in some ways about circumcision

- At conferences I say, “The whole New Testament is about the flint knife!”



- If we don't understand the import of this issue we can NOT understand the New Testament!

3. Describe circumcision

- Father Abraham circumcised Isaac — so it’s a father’s job, but most defer to a trained *Mohel*
- Called brit milah — a ceremonial procedure based on the Law of Moses
- Many non-Jews circumcised for health reasons
- Formerly by flint knife, now with modern anesthetics and stainless steel sanitized scalpel
- Ex 4:25–26 Then Moses’ wife Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin.

4. What is one of the revolting descriptions of a site in the Bible?

- Joshua 5:2-3: “The Lord said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel.” So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the 600,000 sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth.



- *Gibeath-Haaraloth*: Where the Israelites were circumcised after crossing the Jordan River (Josh 5:3). The name literally means “**hill of the foreskins.**”

5. How important was circumcision?

- Genesis 17:14 “Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”
- Circumcision trumped the Sabbath Laws if the 8th day fell on the Sabbath
- John 7:22 Jesus said, “Moses gave you circumcision ... and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well?”

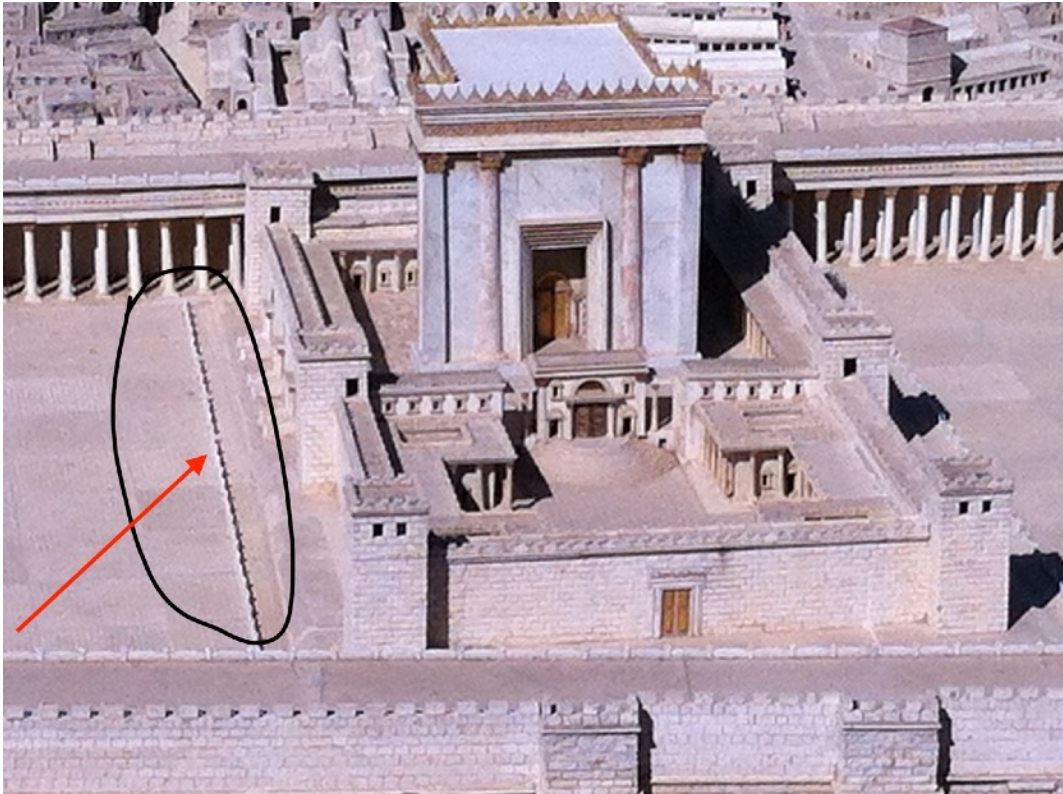
6. How does Jesus as a shepherd explain this?

- Two flocks: Jews and Gentiles brought into one flock
- John 10:16 “And I have other sheep [Gentiles] that are not of this fold [Jews]. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be **one flock**, one shepherd.
- **This verse explains the whole New Testament!**

7. How does the Temple explain the situation?

- There was **an actual wall** that kept Uncircumcised outside the Temple and away from God. (See picture below.)
- Ephesians 2:11 “You Gentiles, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision [Jews], which is made in the

flesh by hands—you were separated from Christ... strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you ... have been brought near by the blood of Christ. He has **broken down the dividing wall of hostility** ... that he might create one new man in place of the two, so making peace...”



- I have never understood how they knew if a man was or wasn't circumcised?

8. What is another name for baptism?

- “Circumcision made without hands” —

- Col 2:11-12 “In him you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off [cutting off] the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism...”

9. Who is the only uncircumcised author of Scripture? Of 73 books, he wrote 2 of them.

- Luke only Bible author of the uncircumcision
- Col 4:11, 14 “These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. ... [Those of the uncircumcision] Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

10. How did one man’s uncircumcision cause a major riot in Jerusalem?

- Suspecting an uncircumcised Greek **Trophimus** had gone into the Temple in Jerusalem with Paul, a civil riot broke out in Jerusalem in which Rome had to intercede, ended up with massive military operations and trials.
- Acts 23:10: “The dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.”
- Acts 23:23: “The Tribune called two of the centurions and said, “Get ready 200 soldiers, with 70 horsemen and 200

spearman to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night [to transport Paul].

11. How were Peter and Paul's distinct missions defined by circumcision?

- Paul apostle to the circumcision (meaning Jews); Peter apostle to the uncircumcised (meaning Gentiles)
- Galatians 2:7 “ [Paul] I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised.”

12. What is the “bottom line” now because of Christ?

- 1 Cor 7:19: “For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.”
- Gal 5:6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”