

Sermon or Lesson: Colossians 2:11-12 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: A Spiritual Circumcision And Regeneration - For Newness Of Life

INTRODUCTION: When visitors come to this church and sit through a worship service, do they see a church that is spiritually alive and vibrant? Or do they see a church that is spiritually dead and decaying? When visitors come to this church and observe you and overhear you talking, are they seeing evidence that you are spiritually alive and vibrant? Or are they seeing evidence that suggests you are spiritually dead and decaying? As part of our study now, let each one of us ponder and consider whether we live as being spiritually alive or we live as being spiritually dead.

READ: Colossians 2:11-12, with vv.4,8-10,13 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - There are people in our churches who use "fine-sounding arguments" to effectively persuade undiscerning believers into believing and adopting false doctrines, that are deceptive, contrary to Scriptures, and destructive to their spiritual well-being. (v.4)
 - - To help believers thwart the adopting of false doctrines, God has provided us with the written Scriptures, which contain the true doctrines that we are to be taught. (v.7)
 - - Also, in the Scriptures we are warned that philosophies about the things of God can easily become "hollow, deceptive", and enslaving because the process that is used to construct the philosophies is prone to be in error. (v.2:8)
 - - Furthermore, the humanistic source of "human tradition" and "the basic principles of this world" automatically makes philosophies about the things of God false, and/or deficient, and/or distorted, and/or in error. (v.8)
 - - Therefore, philosophies about the things of God that are based on humanistic sources are not acceptable to God, particularly because they are not properly based on "Christ" - the key to understanding God because Christ is God Himself revealed in physical bodily form. (vv.8,9)
 - - So, believers are warned not to believe philosophies about the things of God that are based on humanistic sources because they lack truth and reality that can only be found in Christ, as recorded in the Scriptures. (v.8)
 - - And the fullness and the authority supremacy of the divine Christ are internally present within true believers, thereby available to help us successfully resist falling into hollow and deceptive philosophies. (vv.9-10)
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v.11 - READ

[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, and describe the kind of circumcision being referred to here, and include any correlations or similarities that branch from the role that circumcision played in the covenant between God and Abraham (Genesis 17:1-14).]

SECTION POINT: In Christ and by Christ, God institutes a spiritual circumcision of the heart in us true believers, cutting away our previously being spiritually "dead in our sins".

- - In addition to "having been given fullness in Christ" (v.10), true believers "also" have been "circumcised", not in the sense of being through a physical medical procedure performed by a human doctor on the body to cut away flesh, but in a spiritual way.
- - This "circumcision" is performed by God, cutting away the status and condition of a person being regarded by God as being completely unrighteous and "alienated from God", to now being regarded by God as being given the righteousness of Christ and "reconciled to God" because of the person's faith in Christ. (Romans 3:10,21-22; Colossians 1:21,22)

-- This circumcision is also an extended variation of the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 17:1-14, in which now God covenants:
- - - - that if a person correctly places his/her faith in Christ Jesus, then he/she becomes an heir to the promise of eternal life; (Romans 4:13)
- - - - that his/her faith in Christ is credited to him/her as righteousness; (Romans 4:11)
- - - - that God is thereby making an official determination or judicial action that the believing person is in compliance with this new covenant between God and those particular humans; (Colossians 1:21-23; cf. Hebrews 9:15)
- - - - and that God is placing His seal of that righteousness of Christ upon that believer - a seal in the form of spiritual circumcision that formalizes and represents a legally-binding permanent ownership transfer of that believer "from the dominion of darkness" into "the kingdom of the Son". (Colossians 1:13)

- - At its core, this spiritual circumcision involves a spiritual regeneration - cutting away our previously being spiritually "dead in our sins", and now being regenerated by God, who makes us spiritually "alive with Christ". (v.2:13)
- - This "circumcision" is a cutting away or "cleansing of our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God" without being hindered or prevented by our previous deadness in our sins. (Hebrews 9:14)
- - This circumcision is a circumcision of the heart, accomplished "by" and through and "in" Christ. (cf. Romans 2:28-29)
- - God institutes this circumcision automatically at the moment the person correctly places his/her faith in Christ - in the same manner as was stated to the Colossian believers "you were also circumcised...".
- - Notice from the context of Colossians 2:4,8,16 that these benefits instituted by God in this circumcision of our heart serve to further enable and motivate us believers to resist falling to false doctrines and deceptive philosophies about the things of God - to resist reverting back to functioning from our prior state of "uncircumcision" of our heart. (v.13)

v.12 - READ

[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, and determine the effects that these dynamics enacted by God have on believers. You can use cross-reference Romans 6:1-12,18 for clarification and assistance.]

SECTION POINT: Through being buried with Christ and raised with Christ in a spiritual sense, God applies a working of His power to raise us true believers to a regenerated newness of life.

"having been buried with him in baptism"

- - At the moment of salvation, the inherent negative influence in our life of being spiritually "dead in our sins" is circumcised or cut away, and this negative influence is simultaneously replaced by the positive influence of being spiritually regenerated, or "baptized", or "immersed" into being made spiritually "alive with Christ". (Strong's #0908; v.2:13)
- - So, being baptized into Christ means being "baptized into His death" or "buried with him in baptism", in which "we died to sin" - in other words, in Christ, God has granted the death and burial of our natural inborn defenselessness and propensity to being a slave to sin. (v.12; Romans 6:3,2)
- - Also, in Christ, God has granted the death and burial of the consequence of eternal punishment for our sins, "forgiving us [true believers of] all our sins". (Colossians 2:13)
- - So, on a spiritual level we true believers are 'joined' with Christ in His burial, through which He baptizes or puts to death the grip of power that our inherent nature to sin holds on us. (v.12, from Strong's #4916 - "to inter in company with")

"and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

- - In this kind of baptism, we go down and under, being in a state of spiritually "dead in our sins", and God then raises us back up, now being in a new state of liberation from the grip of power that sin had previously held on us.
- - We are raised with Christ, which God accomplishes because of our faith in Christ.
- - Within our faith in Christ, specifically cited here is our faith in the "working" or "power of God" - faith that God indeed raised Christ from the dead on the third day, and faith that God indeed accomplished the eternal forgiveness of all our own sins through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. (from Strong's #1753)
- - Through the establishing of faith in Christ, we satisfy God's requirement for being granted salvation, part of which involves God applying a working of His power to raise us with Christ.
- - Similar to God "raising [Christ] from the dead", God raises us true believers "so we too might walk in newness of life". (v.12; Romans 6:4 NAS)
- - "No longer should we be slaves to sin"; "we have been set free from sin and [now] have become slaves to righteousness". Praise the Lord and thank you, Jesus! (Romans. 6:6,18)
- - On a spiritual level, we true believers share in the death and burial of Christ so that we can share in the benefits of His resurrection in respect to being raised to a newness of life.
- - Again notice from the context of Colossians 2:4,8,16 that these benefits instituted by God in this 'buried with Christ in baptism' / 'raised with Christ' serve to further enable and motivate us believers to resist falling to false doctrines and deceptive philosophies about the things of God - to resist essentially becoming re-enslaved to sin.

BIG IDEA: In and by Christ, God applies a working of His power to spiritually circumcise our deadness to sins and to raise us true believers to a regenerated newness of life, which additionally serve to assist us in resisting falling into false doctrines and deceptive philosophies about the things of God.

APPLICATIONS:

-- For those of us who are true believers, are you living in a manner that reflects how God has cut away or cleansed you from your previous spiritual deadness in your sins?
- - - Or instead, have you been choosing to return to your previous spiritual deadness in your sins, which has hindered and perhaps even prevented you from serving the living God?

-- Do other people around you easily see evidences daily that indeed you have been spiritually regenerated?

- - - Or instead, do they see evidences that you look, and speak, and act as though you are a walking dead person, a spiritual zombie?

- - - Or do they see evidences that suggest you are a spiritual mummy - wrapped up, bound, and stinking as a result of your engaging in sinfulness?

- - - Does God intend for believers to live in the way that you are living?

-- On a corporate level, does this church reflect an atmosphere of being made spiritually alive with Christ?

- - - Do our worship services reflect a vibrant, energetic, loving, and celebratory atmosphere, thereby being attractive to unbelievers who have not been made spiritually alive with Christ?

- - - Or instead, do our worship services look, and feel, and sound as though we are conducting our own funeral - dead in our faith, dead in our worship, dead in living for our Savior who was raised from the dead?

-- Are the members of this church enabled and motivated by this spiritual circumcision to resist falling into false doctrines and deceptive philosophies about the things of God?

- - - Or instead, are the members of this church tolerated, allowed, or even encouraged to pursue false doctrines and deceptive philosophies about the things of God, thereby essentially negating this spiritual circumcision and becoming re-enslaved to the deadness in our sins that Christ has provided liberation from?

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