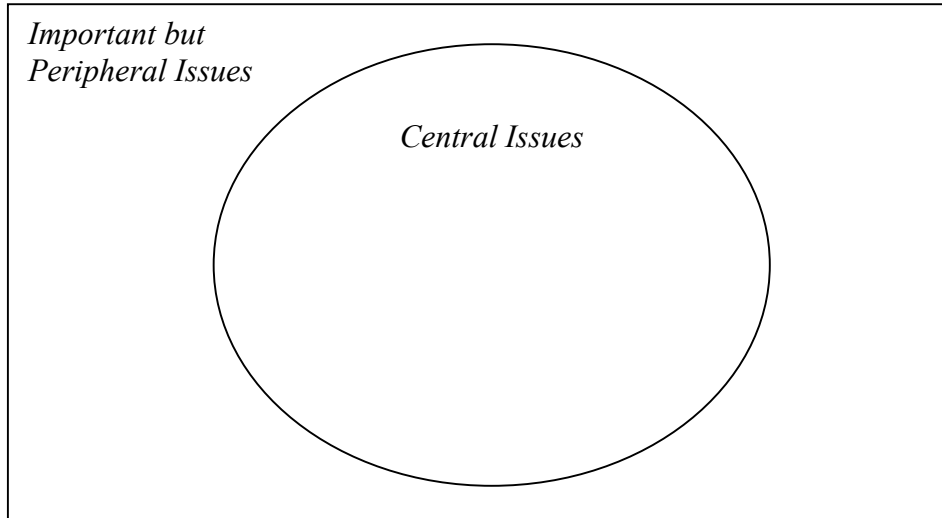


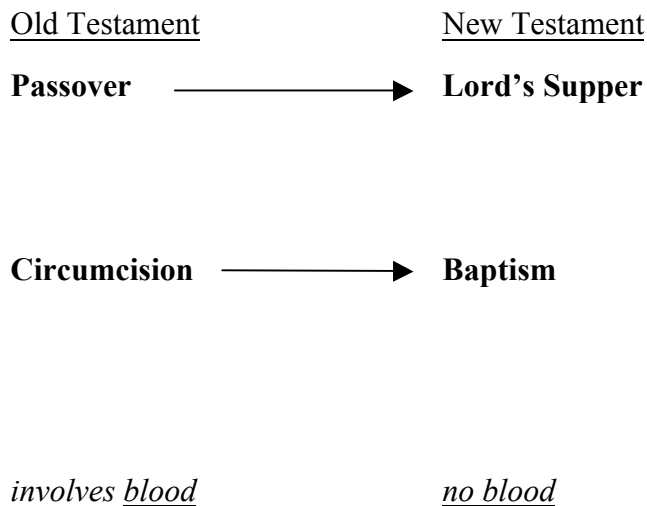
BAPTISM I

(1) Major in the majors; minor in the minors



(2) There are 2 sacraments each in the Old Testament and the New Testament

What is sacrament? “*visible sign of an invisible grace*” – Augustine



Colossians 2:11-12

¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

**(3) The gospel was proclaimed in the Abrahamic Covenant.
And when we believe the gospel, we become sons of Abraham.**

Romans 4:3

For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

Galatians 3:8

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

(4) Circumcision and the Abrahamic Covenant:

Genesis 17:9-11

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

Romans 4:9-11

⁹ We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

(5) What is the symbolism of circumcision?

Deuteronomy 10:14-16

¹⁴ Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.

¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. ¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

Deuteronomy 30:6

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Jeremiah 6:10

To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it.

Acts 7:51

“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit.”

(6) Circumcision by itself does not save anyone. God’s grace saves you. Circumcision is a sign of that grace.

Romans 2:23-29

²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.

²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

Jeremiah 9:25-26

²⁵ Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh – ²⁶ Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.

(7) But circumcision is not merely a sign. It is a seal.

Romans 4:11

Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

Preview of next week:

- (1) Who is to receive the sign of circumcision?
- (2) What role does faith play in circumcision?

Notes

(1) Major in the majors; minor in the minors

Central – gospel, doctrine of God, salvation, justification

Important but peripheral – end times, gender roles, church government, baptism

You can disagree about the peripheral stuff and still be in IGC. I'm not saying you have to agree. The central things you have to agree, but the peripheral stuff is important, but need not be divisive.

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

(2) There are 2 sacraments each in the Old Testament and the New Testament

Passover / Lord's Supper – meal of fellowship, of remembrance of God's saving act, looks forward.

Circumcision / Baptism – sign of salvation, rite of joining God's people

(OT) Circumcision / Passover – bloody sacraments, pointing forward to Christ's death

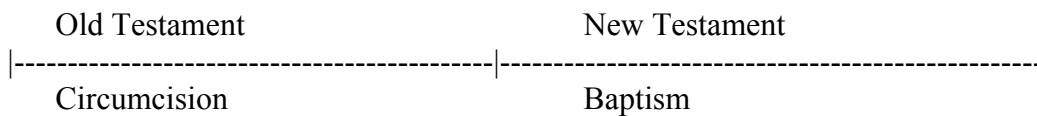
(NT) Baptism / Lord's Supper – non-bloody sacraments, Christ having fulfilled the bloody sacrifice

Colossians 2:11-12

“a circumcision made without hands” – there is a circumcision *with hands*, that is, the circumcision we're all familiar with, in the OT. So what is the kind *without hands*? This goes to the definition of a sacrament – a visible sign of an invisible grace. There's a spiritual reality that circumcision points to. And that reality is salvation in Christ (what Paul calls “the circumcision of Christ”).

What's interesting is that in verse 12, Paul links baptism to all this. In other words, both circumcision and baptism are both pointing to the same thing, *and* in essence do the same thing – an outward sign of salvation.

Circumcision was for the Old Testament, baptism is for the New Testament.



The two are linked because both Old and New Testament, we are under the Covenant of Grace.

The gospel was proclaimed to Abraham – he was saved just like we are saved, by faith he is justified.

And when we believe the gospel, we become sons of Abraham.

(3) The gospel was proclaimed in the Abrahamic Covenant.

And when we believe the gospel, we become sons of Abraham.

The Abrahamic Covenant is also known as the Covenant of Grace.

Romans 4:3 – the Abrahamic Covenant was not ultimately about land. It was about the gospel of salvation.

That's why when Abraham has faith, righteousness is credited to him.

Galatians 3:29 – when we believe the gospel, we become sons of Abraham. Abraham's story is our story; he is our father.

(4) Circumcision and the Abrahamic Covenant.

What do we learn here about circumcision. It was the sign of the covenant. Abraham believes in the promises of God – he is credited with righteousness (Gen. 15). Then the sign of the covenant is applied to Abraham.

Romans 4:9-11. We often think of circumcision as an ethnic sign. It was something only Jews did. But it was not. It was a sign of justification and salvation.

And we also see that Abraham received circumcision after he believed and was justified. Therefore, circumcision does not make you righteous. It's not what you do to earn righteousness. It is a sign of the reality.

(5) What is the symbolism of circumcision?

First, what is circumcision? It is to cut off the foreskin of the penis. That's a weird ceremony! What does that mean? What's the symbolism involved?

Deut. 10:14-16 speaks of the foreskin of the heart. This is a very unusual metaphor, since the heart (internal, non-physical) doesn't have foreskin. But we are to cut off the foreskin of our hearts – and what's the parallel statement? And be no longer stubborn. The foreskin of our hearts is our sin. The same in Jer. 4:4.

So here's how the symbolism works:

foreskin = sin, unrighteousness

cut off the foreskin = to become righteous

We see this again in Deut. 30:6. When your heart (and not just your body) is circumcised, you will love God with all your heart and soul. The same in

Jeremiah 6:10 expands the metaphor to include the ears. Ears that refuse to hear God are “uncircumcised.” We see this again and again, circumcision was not an ethnic marker. It was not what made Jewish people Jewish. It was a sign of *grace in the heart*.

Finally, in Acts 7:51, we see the NT embrace this understanding as well. In Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin, he says of the religious leaders who were actually circumcised in their body, that they were uncircumcised in their heart and ears. What does that mean? It is a resistance to the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: we see circumcision as a sacrament in the Old Testament. It is a visible sign of an invisible grace.

(6) Circumcision by itself does not save anyone. Grace saves you. Circumcision is a sign of that grace.

Let's imagine two men. One is circumcised; the other is uncircumcised. We know that the way circumcision works is that it is supposed to be an outward sign of an inward grace. But if the circumcised man hates God, he shows that his outward sign is meaningless.

And, if a man who is uncircumcised loves God and follows God's commandments, he shows that even though he's missing the outward sign, he has the inward grace.

Therefore, there is a distinction between the outward sign and inward reality.

So that you can't point to the sign and say – “aha! I am clean!”
And you can't point to the lack of the sign and say, “I'm lost.”

In other words, you can be saved without the outward sign.
The sign doesn't do the saving. The sign is a picture of salvation, not salvation itself.

So we see this principle at work:

- (a) Not all who are circumcised/baptized are saved
- (b) Not all who are saved are circumcised/baptized
- (c) But it is a visible sign of salvation

Distinction between the visible church and the invisible church.

(7) But circumcision is not merely a sign. It is a seal.

If there is such a disconnect between the outward sign and the inward grace, why even have the outward sign at all? What's the point? Isn't it just a meaningless ceremony and what counts is the inward grace? No.

Circumcision is also a seal. A “seal” is a promise, a pledge. Like the seal on a document.

In this way, circumcision was a “means of grace,” it communicated God's love and ownership on the person who was circumcised. So that when doubts creep up, that person can look at and remember his circumcision and know that he is indeed saved by God.

In the same way, how can Christians know they are saved? They can look to their baptism, a sign and seal of their righteousness in Christ. Of course, just because you are baptized does not mean you are automatically saved. The inward grace has to accompany the outward sign. But the sign is not meaningless. It speaks tangibly to what is invisible.