



I press on  
toward the goal to  
win the prize for  
which God has  
called me  
heavenward  
in Christ  
Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

## The "True Circumcision"

Many still think "the Jews" are God's chosen people. They believe this in spite of the fact that not one modern "Jew" can prove his ancestry. They believe this in spite of the destruction of the temple nearly 2000 years ago, along with the destruction of the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the altar. They believe this in spite of the fact that God said that they were cast out, as was Hagar and her son Ishmael, that the Jews would not be competition to the church. They believe this in spite of the fact that Jesus repeatedly said that they would be destroyed, that the kingdom would be taken away

from them and given "to a nation producing the fruit of it."

But what about the Jews of the first century AD? If they did not convert to Christianity but remained in their law and their customs, where did they stand with the almighty? And who are the true "chosen of God"?

- ▼ **Circumcision** — Circumcision was a physical sign of a covenant God initiated in the days of Abraham. When Israel was given the law through Moses, circumcision was incorporated into that covenant, a physical sign for a physical people. Thus, by the time the scriptures of the New Testament were being written, "the circumcision" was an expression for the Jewish people — those in Judea and surrounding areas, and those of the *dispersion*. Because of their hostility toward the gospel, the apostle Paul called them "the false circumcision." "For we are the true circumcision," he explains, referring to Christians, "who worship [literally *serve*] in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). If a male in Israel was not circumcised, he was excluded from the old covenant and to be separated from God's people. Under the terms of the new covenant, a "circumcision made without hands" — a spiritual circumcision — is accomplished in immersion into Christ. In this type of circumcision, a spiritual "body of flesh" — a spiritual encasement that formed when the person committed his first sin, was separated from God, and became fleshly-minded and part of the world. The parallel is this: if a person has not been spiritually circumcised in immersion, he is excluded from the new covenant and separated from the people of God.

- ▼ **Worship or service?** — Unfortunately, there is a lot of confusion regarding what *worship* is and what *service* is under the terms of the new covenant. *Worship* for saints is the prostration of their spirits in the presence of the eternal God, they having been raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. *Service* is the action carried out by the saints as they do their part to forward the plan of God executed on earth. The translators, not having followed the progression of God's instruction through, often interchange worship and service. "We are the true circumcision," is the reading of this epistle to the Philippians, "who serve by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus." In other words, Christians serve God by the strength which the Holy Spirit provides, the Spirit who indwells those who come under the terms of the new covenant and who are spiritually circumcised. The Spirit was not indwelling those of the old covenant and who were merely physically circumcised.

The saints, then, serve God by the Spirit, glory in Christ Jesus, "and put no confidence in the flesh." The natural tendency of mankind, because Adam was formed out of the dust of the ground, is to be physically-minded and therefore totally miss the existence and true value of those things of the spiritual realm. Hence the Jew looked to his physical circumcision and ancestral heritage as the means by which he was acceptable to God. But the special people of the new covenant are a spiritual people, a people who know that they have been born again by the living and abiding word of God, and who walk by faith in that which has been revealed in the written word of God rather than by sight. They indeed are "the true circumcision."

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JAY WILSON