



# What's So New About the New Covenant? – Part 2 | KIB 523

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**Circumcision of the Heart | October 1, 2015**

**Kingdom Intelligence Briefing**

## **Two Scriptures to Consider Before We Get into Our Study**

### **a. Philippians 2:12 (ESV)**

**12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

**“Work Out” Greek Definition:**

**Logos Word Sense:** to put something into effect entirely or thoroughly.

Has easy believism or casual Christianity caused believers a false sense of security and lulled them to sleep spiritually so that they have never worked with the Holy Spirit to circumcise their hearts (which is a process)?

### **b. The Seal of God vs. the Mark of the Beast**

The book of Revelation reveals several things: the mark of the Beast and the Seal of God. Revelation 7 is reminiscent of Ezekiel 9:4.

#### **Ezekiel 9:3–4 (ESV)**

**3** Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist. **4** And the LORD said to him, “Pass through

the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.”

The question that we need to be asking ourselves is if the need for believers to be circumcised of heart is preparation to receive the Seal of God?

## **Introduction: Circumcision of Heart in Scripture**

Physical circumcision in the Old Testament functioned as the covenant sign given to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:9–14). Yet even within the Mosaic era, God made it clear that the **outward sign was never meant to substitute for inward transformation**. The deeper issue was always the condition of the heart. The Bible’s teaching on “circumcision of heart” therefore forms an important bridge from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

At its core, **circumcision of the heart** means the removal of spiritual hardness, rebellion, uncleanness, and resistance to God so that a person may love, obey, and belong to Him from the inside out.

### **I. Old Testament Foundations**

#### **a. Deuteronomy 10:16**

**“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.” (ESV)**

This is the first explicit command for Israel to circumcise the heart. Moses is speaking to covenant people who already bore the outward mark of circumcision, yet God demanded something deeper. The parallel phrase, **“be no longer stubborn,”** shows that circumcision of the heart involves:

- Removal of spiritual obstinacy
- Repentance
- Covenant loyalty

- Responsiveness to God

This verse establishes a crucial principle: **external covenant membership does not equal inward covenant faithfulness.**

**b. 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.”

This is one of the most important texts for New Covenant theology. In Deuteronomy 10:16, the people are commanded to circumcise their hearts; in Deuteronomy 30:6, **God Himself promises to do it.**

This movement is profound:

- **Human responsibility:** circumcise your heart
- **Divine promise:** God will circumcise your heart

The goal is equally important:

- **Love for God**
- **Wholehearted devotion**
- **Life**

This anticipates the New Covenant, in which God does internally what the law could command but could not produce in fallen humanity.

**c. Leviticus 26:41**

“...if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity...”

Here, the phrase “**uncircumcised heart**” describes a condition of rebellion that must be humbled. The problem is not merely behavior but inward alienation from God. This verse links the uncircumcision of the heart with:

- Pride
- Covenant violation
- The need for repentance
- Divine chastening

**d. Jeremiah 4:4**

“Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem...”

Jeremiah, like Moses, calls Judah to inward covenant renewal. The warning attached to the verse shows that the lack of heart circumcision brings judgment. **The prophet is exposing the emptiness of ritual religion divorced from repentance.**

The emphasis here is that **outward religiosity cannot protect a nation or a people whose hearts remain unchanged.**

**Note:** Is the entertainment Church just another manifestation of empty ritual religion?

**e. Jeremiah 9:25–26**

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh... For all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”

This is one of the strongest prophetic critiques in the Old Testament. Judah possessed the fleshly sign, yet God declares them spiritually equivalent to the uncircumcised nations because their hearts were unchanged.

This passage destroys covenant presumption. It shows:

- An outward sign without an inward reality is spiritually empty
- Ethnic privilege cannot replace obedience
- God judges the heart

This is foundational for Paul's argument in Romans.

**F. Ezekiel 44:7, 9**

**“uncircumcised in heart and flesh”**

In Ezekiel, the phrase is used in relation to defilement of the sanctuary. The point is that uncleanness of heart disqualifies a person from true holy service. This links heart circumcision with:

- Holiness
- Proper worship
- Access to sacred space
- Covenant purity

**g. Related Expressions: Uncircumcised Ears and Lips**

Though not the exact phrase “circumcision of heart,” these related texts help explain the metaphor.

**Jeremiah 6:10**

“Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen...”

This shows that “uncircumcised” means closed, resistant, spiritually insensitive.

**Exodus 6:12, 30:** Moses speaks of his “**uncircumcised lips.**”

This suggests inadequacy or impediment. In the broader metaphor, circumcision signifies the removal of what hinders proper function before God.

**Acts 7:51:** Stephen says, “**You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears...**”

This deliberately echoes the Old Testament prophetic tradition and applies it to those resisting the Holy Spirit.

## II. Old Testament Theological Meaning

When all these texts are brought together, circumcision of the heart in the Old Testament includes at least five ideas:

**a. Removal of stubbornness**

The heart is naturally resistant to God (Deut. 10:16).

**b. Humbling and repentance**

An uncircumcised heart must be brought low before God (Lev. 26:41).

**c. Inward covenant fidelity**

True covenant membership is not merely external but internal (Jer. 9:25–26).

**d. Capacity to love and obey God**

God's promised circumcision of the heart leads to love and life (Deut. 30:6).

**e. Preparation for prophetic New Covenant promises**

The Old Testament increasingly shows that what God commands inwardly, He must ultimately perform sovereignly.

## III. Connection to the New Covenant in the Prophets

The phrase "circumcision of heart" must be read alongside the major New Covenant passages.

### Jeremiah 31:31–34

God promises a **new covenant** in which:

- His law will be written on the heart
- All will know Him

- Sins will be forgiven

This is the internalization of covenant reality. Heart circumcision and law written on the heart are closely related ideas.

### **Ezekiel 11:19–20**

“And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh...”

This is circumcision-of-heart language in effect, even if not in exact wording. God removes hardness and grants responsiveness.

### **Ezekiel 36:25–27**

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you... And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...”

This is one of the clearest expansions of Deuteronomy 30:6. God cleanses, renews, indwells, and empowers obedience.

So, the prophetic picture is this:

- Deuteronomy promised heart circumcision
- Jeremiah promised the law would be written on the heart
- Ezekiel promised a new heart and the indwelling Spirit

All of these converge in the New Covenant.

## **IV. New Testament Fulfillment**

### **a. Romans 2:25–29**

This is the single most direct New Testament exposition of heart circumcision.

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

Paul is not dismissing the Old Testament; he is drawing out its true intention. His argument echoes Jeremiah 9:25–26 and Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6.

Key truths here:

- True covenant identity is not merely external
- The decisive work is inward
- This circumcision is “**by the Spirit**”
- The letter of the law alone cannot produce it

This is a major New Covenant reality: **the Spirit accomplishes inwardly what ritual could never accomplish outwardly.**

**b. Colossians 2:11–13**

“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...”

This is crucial. Paul describes believers in Christ as having undergone a **non-physical circumcision**. It is:

- **Made without hands**
- Connected to the union with Christ
- Tied to death, burial, and resurrection imagery
- Associated with forgiveness and new life.

This text presents Christ as the sphere and source of true covenant circumcision. Under the New Covenant, believers experience what the outward sign anticipated:

- Putting off the old fleshly domination
- Entering new covenant life
- Sharing in Christ’s redemptive work

**c. Philippians 3:3**

“For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”

Paul identifies New Covenant believers as the true circumcision. The marks are not surgical but spiritual:

- Worship by the Spirit
- Boasting in Christ
- Renouncing fleshly confidence

This is not anti-Jewish; it is covenantally Christ-centered. The people of God are defined by union with Christ and the Spirit’s work, not by a mere external badge.

**d. Acts 7:51**

Stephen’s rebuke, “**uncircumcised in heart and ears,**” shows that rejection of Christ and resistance to the Holy Spirit prove the continuing reality of uncircumcised hearts even among outwardly religious people.

**e. Galatians 5:6; 6:15**

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

“For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”

These are not denials of the Old Testament covenant history; they are affirmations that in Christ, the decisive reality is:

- faith
- love
- new creation

These are the New Covenant fruits of heart circumcision.

## **V. What Circumcision of Heart Means Under the New Covenant**

Considering the full canon, circumcision of the heart under the New Covenant includes the following realities:

### **a. Regeneration**

The heart is changed by God. What Deuteronomy promised, and Ezekiel expanded, is fulfilled in the new birth. The sinner is no longer merely externally religious but inwardly made alive.

### **b. Internalized obedience**

The law is no longer only outside the person as command; it is worked inwardly by the Spirit. This does not abolish God's righteousness but establishes it at a deeper level.

### **c. Love for God**

Deuteronomy 30:6 explicitly states that heart circumcision leads to loving God with all the heart and soul. Under the New Covenant, love for God is not legal striving but Spirit-enabled covenant devotion.

### **d. Separation from fleshly confidence**

Paul says true circumcision puts no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). That includes:

- Confidence in ancestry
- Ritual performance
- Religious status
- Human merit

e. **Union with Christ**

Colossians 2 places true circumcision in union with Christ. Believers share in His death and resurrection life. The old man's domination is broken.

f. **Spirit-empowered holiness**

Heart circumcision is not merely emotional renewal; it is moral and covenantal transformation. It produces real obedience, real worship, and real sanctification.

## **VI. Continuity and Discontinuity Between Old and New Covenants**

### **Continuity**

There is one consistent divine concern throughout Scripture: **God wants a people whose hearts belong to Him.** Even under Moses, the issue was never merely ritual.

### **Discontinuity**

The New Covenant brings a decisive escalation:

- What was commanded becomes divinely effected
- What was shadowed becomes fulfilled
- What was external is brought inward by the Spirit
- What was anticipated in prophecy is realized in Christ

So, the New Covenant does not discard the theology of heart circumcision; it **fulfills and actualizes it.**

## VII. Key Biblical References to Study

### Explicit or near-explicit heart-circumcision texts

- Genesis 17:9–14 — physical covenant sign as background
- Leviticus 26:41 — uncircumcised heart
- Deuteronomy 10:16 — command to circumcise the heart
- Deuteronomy 30:6 — God promises to circumcise the heart
- Jeremiah 4:4 — remove the foreskin of the heart
- Jeremiah 9:25–26 — circumcised merely in flesh; uncircumcised in heart
- Ezekiel 44:7, 9 — uncircumcised in heart and flesh
- Acts 7:51 — uncircumcised in heart and ears
- Romans 2:25–29 — circumcision of the heart by the Spirit
- Colossians 2:11–13 — circumcision made without hands
- Philippians 3:3 — we are the circumcision

### Closely related New Covenant fulfillment texts

- Jeremiah 31:31–34 — law written on the heart
- Ezekiel 11:19–20 — new heart
- Ezekiel 36:25–27 — new heart and Spirit
- John 3:3–8 — new birth by the Spirit
- Galatians 5:6 — faith working through love
- Galatians 6:15 — new creation
- Titus 3:5 — washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit
- Hebrews 8:8–12 — New Covenant fulfillment of Jeremiah 31
- Hebrews 10:16–22 — law on the heart and cleansed conscience

## VIII. Summary Thesis

The biblical doctrine of **circumcision of the heart** teaches that God has always desired inward covenant fidelity rather than mere outward ritual. In the Old Testament, this was both commanded and promised. In the prophets, it becomes part of the larger hope of the New Covenant: a new heart, inward law, forgiveness, and the Spirit's indwelling power. In the New Testament, this promise is fulfilled in Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, under the New Covenant, circumcision of the heart refers to the Spirit-wrought inward

transformation by which believers are united to Christ, freed from fleshly confidence, enabled to love God, and empowered to walk in covenant faithfulness.

## **A concise teaching conclusion**

Physical circumcision marked the covenant externally; circumcision of the heart marks the covenant internally. Under the New Covenant, God performs by the Spirit what the Old Covenant revealed as necessary but could not itself produce.