

## The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus

Alright, who else is excited to talk about circumcision!? Not awkward at all is it?

What is the deal with this thing? I mean, seriously God, you couldn't have done the forehead marking, an earring, clothing, like other religions? It had to be THAT part of the boys? Shouldn't they get a say in this, something so personal, painful, could they give a little consent? And why Just the boys – are girls second rate or what?

There are a lot of questions around this, personal, ceremonial act of the Old Testament. I think the best place to start however, is with noting that the circumcision of a boy, once it was established under Abraham, was never just a circumcision it was, as the back of your bulletin will highlight it was a circumcision and naming. The two came together.

Who is this child going to be? And I suppose you can get your name changed if you don't like the one your parents thrust upon you, but, most people don't. Nor do we usually complain, "Hey why didn't you consult me!? How dare you name me!" No, parents name children. They give them the gift of a name that stays with them forever and it becomes a part of us, who we are. Even names we don't appreciate from our parents, does that not influence us? I think It does.

Likewise Circumcision, may seem like a pretty sour gift, and it was thrust upon these boys, but it is a gift that again answers the question who will this boy be?

Answer: a Son of the covenant.

Covenants were not made in the Hebrew. They were quite literally cut. So the God would cut a covenant with his people and a bull was literally cut, blood was shed.

Because a covenant was a deal with God, sealed in blood – there was skin in the game. And so circumcision is a covenant cut between God and his people and blood is shed by the boys. Blood shed to mark you as God's chosen child.

Why just the boys? First, I think we might mention that as God's people of old were given many weird laws, they did tend to have some aspect of cleanliness and health to them. Nowadays it may not seem like much, when bathing is so easy and routine, but there is a small cleanliness aspect to the circumcision that, obviously, didn't apply to the girls. Second, I think is the simple point that: being the party of the covenant that has to shed the blood, well, that isn't particularly fun. Ask the bulls and lambs. Ask the little boys. So I think it shouldn't be so much a mark of dishonor that women do not partake in circumcision, I think just the opposite.

Blood must be shed, to be made right with God, but fear not ladies, it isn't yours.

Even as the long promised offspring of a woman who will crush the serpents head and shed his lifeblood will be a man. Which is perhaps the third point here.

Abraham had his whole household circumcised and his whole household was

marked as God's people. Likewise the men of the covenant would be those who teach and hearken to the covenant in the way they live and would lead their whole families in it. And now the world screams "patriarchy!" and our thoughts may wander towards some of our neighbors who say their women are saved on behalf of their husbands. And we have to call "timeout" and remember God's compassion to many an unwed daughter of his in the scriptures and point out that in regards to salvation there is truly no slave or free, Jew or Greek, male or female. Yet we might look at our society with its lack of male spiritual leaders and note that perhaps a prayer for more men to lead in the way of the New Covenant (we'll get there shortly) would be good for us all.

For as much as the world screams about the toxicity of masculinity and how men are dogs who treat women like objects, I might say, "Hmm you know what might serve a man like that well? How about a mark on them in a very personal place to remind them to act with honor and grace because there is a holy Judge of all out there who will require blood as payment for wrong?"

Because that is exactly what this very personal sign conveyed that the covenant was just that – personal and with you in each aspect of your life. Something that we all fail at in certain regard, except for one Son of the covenant – Jesus.

Today we remember that Jesus was brought before the temple and, in order to fulfill the law of God, shed his first drops of innocent sinless blood - to be cut into the covenant of God, his Father. And a name would be placed upon him that would define who he is and what he came to do: Jesus – Yeshua – Yahweh Saves.

This one would uphold the covenant, the contract, between himself and God, perfectly. This one would be completely underserving of shedding his blood but shed it none the less for the good of the family, all the children of God – old and new testaments, male and female. And to make that clear, he institutes a new covenant, cut, not in the blood of the foreskin, or of a bull, but cut in his blood, poured out unto death. Is that not personal? Does he not give his all for you? That you may be his?

And the sign then for us in the New covenant, that we might know his name and promise is upon us is the gift of Communion, a participation in the new covenant, and in the gift of baptism. Boys and girls now, since, remember, he shed the blood, not us, are welcomed to the fountain to receive his name upon them. And it used to be the place where you got your name given too, though we've done away with that now for a number of reasons.

But the operative question for the Christian then is, “who are you?” Are you a child of God or not? And lets be clear you didn't HAVE to be circumcised to be a

child of God – I would cite all the women of the Old Testament, and you don't HAVE to be baptized to be a child of God in the New Testament, a child of God is anyone with faith in Jesus that Son of God who gave his perfect life for us. But I will say, when we look at our works and attitudes, "oh, maybe I haven't always looked like a child of God." Or maybe it's the opposite and we have been doing real good, "Oh yeah, Im totally a child of God unlike those losers over there. God must be happy with me." On the basis of what? How well are you keeping that covenant? "You are so holy, pure, and sinless, well, that's news to me, I guess Jesus didn't have to shed his blood for you, covenant keeper?"

Oh, but he did. Because, as you and I both know when we are honest, we don't fulfill the law nearly as good as He did. Which brings me back to my original question, "Who are you?" On the basis of your keeping the covenant? A sinner. Doomed, blood must be shed for your sin. Oh, but you've got God's name on you? I'm sorry, blood HAS been shed for you. By the long prophesied son of the covenant, the perfect son of God. Child of God, be free!

Remember your baptisms brothers and sisters, and meditate on what that blessing might mean to you, if you aren't baptized. All with faith in Jesus are washed clean of their sin by his blood. All with faith in Jesus will be victorious over the grave, even as he is, and in times of doubt and fear, when you've fallen back into that sin, when you seem so insincere, when you don't even know what "belief" is, "so do I

believe?” I dare say a sign upon you, a name placed upon you and yours, that might be a blessed gift of assurance that you might know exactly who you are and who you belong to, for eternity. Not based on feelings, performance, luck, or anything else other than the very real blood of Jesus shed for you and brought to you in very real ways. Amen.