

Luke 2:21  
"Marked"  
Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus

December 31, 2021  
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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

*[Intro]*

***"And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb"*** (Luke 2:21).

Tucked between the events of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and just before He is presented at the temple at 40 days old, an often-overlooked verse reveals one of the most significant moments in salvation history.

This single verse tells us of what happened on that first eighth day of Christmas. This evening on New Years' Eve – the Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus, the very Son of God fulfills one of the most important moments in salvation history as He is marked in His flesh and He is marked by His name for us! Through these marks, He opens the new way to salvation for God's people.

*[The Mark of Circumcision]*

For the Old Testament people of God, circumcision was important. In fact, even some first generation Christians believed that a person must be circumcised in order to become a Christian. This was such a critical debate as it led to the First Church Council in Jerusalem since many Christians were proclaiming, ***"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"*** (Acts 15:1). This was all because circumcision was a promise of Abraham. For God said in Genesis 17:10, ***"This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised."***

Circumcision was important because it was the Jewish initiation right. Circumcision is what made a Jew a Jew. Circumcision is what marked them as one grafted into Israel. It was a sign on the flesh, like that of a branding or tattoo. It was something that marked them as a child of the promise and as the offspring of Abraham.

So, as good Hebrew parents, Mary and Joseph do exactly what good Hebrew parents do, they take their son to be circumcised on the eighth day.

Here on His eighth day out of Mary's womb, this Infant — *Emmanuel: God with us* — begins His mission of fulfillment. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, His parents lead Him to begin His faithful obedience to the Law. On this day, He first sheds His blood as He upholds the covenant of circumcision.

But by this Infant submitting Himself to the covenant of circumcision, He is submitting to His own promise. He is submitting to His own covenant of blood.

Since He was ***“born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons”*** (Galatians 4:4-5), He needed to be marked as a son of Abraham, because He had to fulfill what Abraham was promised. So, through the covenant of circumcision, this marks Him as one of Abraham's people. Again, this also initiated Him into the nation of Israel.

But this Infant does not undergo circumcision for Himself. He undergoes circumcision for you and me! He fulfilled the Jewish ceremonial Law to bring and dispense what the Abrahamic covenant promises.

By the shedding of His blood, His foreskin represents sin and rebellion against God, but He does this without any sin of His own. He does this by taking His place as the sin bearer. Here, He is taking our place under the Law, by shedding His blood for the first time on our behalf. He does this as a once-and-for-all sacrifice for us, since through His fulfillment, no one will enter God's family by a physical circumcision. But, instead through Baptism and Faith in the One who has fulfilled God's Law.

The Apostle Paul confirms this fact in Colossians 2 as he writes, ***“In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 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. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross”*** (Colossians 2:11-14).

So, we have joined our Lord, not by the circumcision of our flesh, but by Baptism — a circumcision without hands. Our circumcision is by water and the Spirit. Our circumcision cannot be seen, but our circumcision is more permanent. It's a union with Christ. He shed His blood on the eighth day for us. Baptism now replaces the circumcision of the flesh as the way in which we enter into eternity with God.

We enter eternity by Baptism and Faith in Christ! Through Baptism, we are marked as a child and heir of God.

### ***[The Mark of the Name]***

After the child of Mary and Joseph was circumcised, He then was marked with His Name.

In the ancient world, names for children were also extremely important. Names conveyed something about the child. Names often were considered a confession and a blessing.

For example, consider the names of some of the Old Testament prophets. Elijah means “the Lord is God.” Isaiah means “the Lord gives salvation.” Jeremiah means “the Lord lifts up.”

Mary and Joseph named their son as a confession of faith. Recall, Gabriel's words to Mary: ***“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus”*** (Luke 1:31). And in a dream, the angel of the Lord said to Joseph: ***“You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”*** (Matthew 1:21).

This confession of faith is their trust in God, who is doing the naming. So, here, the Second Person of the Trinity is naming Himself. For Mary and Joseph, they likely knew the meaning of Jesus' name as they each heard from the angel: ***“for he will save His people from their sins.”***

The eight-day-old Infant, now being named Jesus is marked in His flesh and is now marked by His name as the Savior, the One who has shed His blood as the sin bearer, the One who will through His life, death, and resurrection show us that He is the One who has come to save us from our sins!

But even with His Name — Jesus — He will blend in as a child. He is not distinguished in any way. On all outward appearances, He is just like any other child, but without sin.

From the very beginning, Jesus was set to go to the cross for us. There, He would be marked by nails and a spear that would pierce Him through, the cross that was borne for me and you. There is where the Savior from sin would live out and die the meaning of His name: *“The Lord saves!”*

Then, three days later – *on the eighth day of the week* – He rose from the dead to prove at He is the Savior from sin and that our faith in Him is not in vain!

### ***[Marked by Baptism and Faith]***

Now, Jesus is not the only Person who has been marked by His flesh and by His Name. You see, we too, have been marked. Through the circumcision and Name of Jesus, God says to us: ***“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses”*** (Colossians 2:13). Through Christ alone, we have been adopted as children and heirs through God! (Galatians 4:5, 7).

This is such great news! Consider all of our failures, all our mistakes, all our shortcomings. Consider all the thoughts, words, and actions of the past year or years that you would like to take back.

Right there as He is physically marked by circumcision and marked in His name, Jesus is our Savior from sin!

Back at that First Council in Jerusalem, there was much debate on circumcision as the way to become an heir to the promise, but in the end, the Holy Spirit led the council to proclaim that Christians are not saved by a circumcision made with hands, but we are ***“saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus”*** (Acts 15:11).

As we soon begin a New Year, our New Year’s Resolution should always be to remember who we are — that we are His — that we are Christ’s and that His Name is upon us!

Since our Lord and Savior was named Jesus, we too, bear His Name on our bodies, as we were marked with His Name as He marked us with the sign of the cross at our Baptism. This is who we are! Our identity is in Christ and we confess His name as He is the only Savior from our sins.

As children marked with the promise of salvation, Jesus continues to serve His people through what is known as the Marks of the Church: Word and Sacraments. As the world changes around us, we can always hold on to God's Word, since His Word never changes. When we need hope, He is the One sure and certain hope as He gives us His Body and Blood, which gives us hope through the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith in Him!

In the New Year, we may not know what events are on the horizon, but we know by repentance and faith in His Name and by His grace, that our sins are forgiven, and by Baptism and faith in Him, He has marked us heirs of His eternal Kingdom! In Jesus' Name. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠