

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

God spoke to Abram. First, He changed his name to Abraham. Everything would now be different. He was, in a very real way, a new man. Then God said to the Patriarch “This is My Covenant which you shall keep... every male child among you shall be circumcised... and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between Me and you.”

The Covenant came first. Abraham believed God, and it was credited unto him as righteousness. By Divine monergism, Abraham believed. But he still had his flesh, the flesh of Adam, fallen flesh.

So the cutting of the flesh would be a sign of the Covenant. It was an external symbol that pointed to an invisible, internal truth. It was a concrete change to man’s body that pointed to a spiritual change, a rebirth, that could not be seen with human eyes. To wear such a mark would be a thing of joy, not because men enjoy the cutting of their flesh, but because of what that cutting represented. Abraham was a child of God.

That said, circumcision is not Gospel. It is commanded. It is Law, piercing, slicing, flesh-tearing Law. So it is effected by sharp stone tool, because stone is the stuff of the Law. The Law written in the heart of the first man would be given on tablets of stone, onto which the fiery Finger of God would scribe the will of God for man. So the flint knife was, so to speak, a chip off those two Tables of stone. It was the Law applied to man, where Holy Command meets fallen flesh. And where stone meets flesh, flesh bleeds. But so it must, for the flesh of Adam is corrupt.

Circumcision indelibly marks the flesh. For with the flesh comes sin. So every circumcision is a little death, the cutting of flesh, the shedding of blood, and the casting off of lifeless flesh. And Jewish fathers and Rabbis for centuries wielded flint knives and imposed the mark of the Covenant upon their sons.

But the circumcision we celebrate today is different. This Child needs no circumcision. He is sinless, He is Divine. He has no human father. He is conceived of the Holy Ghost, and so is the Holy One, the Son of God. Terah, Abraham’s father, was a pagan. But this Child, the Child of Bethlehem, is the Son of God. As Isaac lay on the altar and the angel stayed Abraham’s hand, it pointed to this Child. For God would provide for Himself the Lamb, God would provide Himself as the Lamb.

Where there is no sin, the Law has no authority. And in Mary’s Son there is no sin. But in that Son God took on Flesh to redeem mankind. To do that, to purchase you back, Blood had to be shed. So the first drops of the Blood of the Messiah wet the sands of Bethlehem on the eighth day of the Child’s life enfleshed. He is cut not for Himself, but for you.

For you, to place Himself under the Law, the Christ Child suffers Himself to be cut that He might begin His work of fulfilling the Law for you. For you were not conceived and born without sin. Quite the opposite. The sin of Adam finds its full expression in your flesh. Every stony Word of the Decalogue convicts you, the fiery finger carving into that stone the very

Words that require of you a fiery, eternal sentence. For stone is the stuff of tombs. Death is the just sentence for sin. And that death begins an eternal separation from God.

That you not die, but live, the Infant Messiah began His redemptive work by taking on your flesh. And on the eighth day, He suffered Himself to be circumcised. He placed Himself under the Law to complete the Law for you. But that eighth day cutting would not be the last time His Blood would be shed. Scourge, thorny crown, and spike would draw that Crimson River of Salvation out of the sinless Man of Calvary, as He wrapped Himself not in swaddling cloths, but in your sins. And the stone knife found its fruition in that stone tomb, the ultimate expression of Law.

On the eighth day the Messiah was circumcised. And on the eighth day, the day after the Sabbath, the Messiah rose from the dead. The eighth day is the Day of Resurrection, the day of new life. Every circumcision by Jewish hand from Abraham forward pointed to Christ, to Easter morning, and to Christ's resurrection. He is the One who took on your flesh, the One cut for you, the One who kept the Law perfectly, the One who died your death, the One who defeated death on the eighth day and brought forgiveness and life to everyone who believes in Him, to you, dear Christian.

Circumcision is no longer necessary. The Word of the Lord remains forever, but His Law was fulfilled for you by Christ. Circumcision died on the cross when He who took on your flesh was cut off from the living and cast away, lifeless. By faith in His Blood, faith in your Risen Living Lord, the Law has no mastery over you. And with you God has made a New Covenant, a New Testament. You are saved as Abraham was, by believing God, and by His crediting it to you as righteousness. But the New Testament frees you from the Law. The New Testament, the Testament in the Blood of Christ, frees you from death, and gives you everlasting life.

And you, Redeemed of Christ, receive the eternal Mark of Salvation. You receive the Mark both upon your forehead and upon your breast, marking heart and mind, as the Pastor makes the sign of the cross upon you to mark you as one redeemed of Christ, as water comprehended with the Word of God usher you into new life. You are circumcised of heart, marked as God's own by faith. You, like Abraham, are made a new man, a man freed from the curse and from the condemnation of the Law.

You receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit that fills you and leads you in the ways of righteousness, the Spirit that works and sustains faith in you, faith that clings to Christ. You are, as the Apostle wrote, redeemed from every lawless deed, and purified for God His own special people.

You are an heir of the New Testament, the Testament in Christ's Blood, the Blood you are given to drink this day, this eighth day, this Day of Resurrection, every Sunday a little Easter. You are a child of Abraham because God has given you the faith Abraham was given. You are a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, heir to the true Promised Land, Paradise.

Unto you is born in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. A blessed Christmas!

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