

The Feast of the Circumcision and the Name of Jesus, A ✕ D 2008

Luke 2:21 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.

In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Names have meaning, especially when God gives it to a person. To the first human, God gave a name that marked his origin. Adam means earth or dirt. But from the beginning dirt was only Adam's origin, not also his destination. But when Adam rebelled against his creator, dirt became his destination, where he would be buried when he died. And you, descendant of Adam, are also named Mud: Dust you are and to dust you shall return. Dirt is your name and your destination. Even the start of the world's new year only reminds you that you're another year closer to your death.

2 But tonight is not a time for your name, not a time for Adam's name, but for the holy name of Jesus. When the Infant Christ was 8 days old, he was circumcised and given the name Jesus. Circumcision was the sign by which God made people His children. He commanded Abraham, "This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised" (Ge 17:10-13). If Abraham's God was to be your God, circumcision was the sign. The cutting off the foreskin was a sign of this God's promise to cut off sinful flesh through the forgiveness of sins. So if there's anyone who didn't need circumcision, it was this Baby. He had no need to be a son of Abraham; He was the God of Abraham!

3 But He placed Himself under the Law of God—not for His own sake—but for yours. And when He was circumcised, they gave Him the name Jesus, which means He saves His people from their sins. When only eight-days-old, His name intersected with the way in which He would save His people from their sins. As the priest with the razor-sharp flint knife cut off the foreskin of the Baby Jesus, He shed His first drops of blood. "His infant body now Begins the cross to feel; Those precious drops of blood that flow For death the victim seal."

4 He was named as He shed His first drops of blood. That's not unlike any other Jewish boy, except that Jesus never needed to bleed. He never needed to know the pain of the flint knife. He never needed to know the sting of the soldier's whip. He never needed to feel the cold steel of nails into his sinless wrists. He never needed to feel the humiliation and agony of hell. He never needed to be rejected by God the Father, never

needed to endure the full wrath of God. He never needed to feel death's cold blow. He didn't need to, except for His name. The only way to save His people from their sins was to endure the wrath of God in their place, to suffer the death sinners deserve. His very name, given to Him as He shed His first drops of blood, foreshadowed the reason for His having been born in the first place: His death.

5 Because Jesus endured a circumcision for sinners, sinners no longer need circumcision. The sign of circumcision pointed to the Baby whose shed blood and death would pay for all sins. But now the Baby has come, and He has done what His name promised: He has saved His people from their sins. So you who were once named by your forefather Adam have a new name: For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. He has given you His name: Christian, a little Christ. You who were sinner, son of Adam, daughter of Eve, have the very name of Christ. You are a child of God.

6 And now the Lord continues His work of giving a new name to things. Here at the Lord's altar is bread and wine. But the Lord who renames things and who, by naming them, changes what they are, calls bread Body and wine Blood. And—just as He calls you forgiven and so you are—when He calls bread His Body, it is. And when He calls wine His Blood, it is. So take and eat, Christian, what He promises, He gives. And take and drink, child of God, His Blood, which He was born to shed, forgives your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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