

The Circumcision and Name of Jesus
St. Luke 2:21

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dear Redeemed of God, God has a name! And it is that name by which you are saved. Y'shua, the name which means YHWH is salvation—*Jesos* in Greek, Joshua in one form in English, Jesus as English speakers commonly call Him. YHWH saves, YHWH is Savior, God is Savior!

Born in a barn in Bethlehem, the Son of God is one with man, and like man, He takes a name. It was the name given to Him by Himself through the messenger Gabriel to both Mary, His mother, and Joseph, His guardian. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS." (Luke 1:30-31) "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21) He shall be called Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

The angel said, "He will save His people..." This wasn't simply pointing to a future event, though that's certainly included in the message. Dear hearers, you can understand the angel's message to mean that Jesus will be the one to do it. **He** will save His people from their sins.

What this means then, dear hearers, is that you do not save yourself. In Jesus, God saves, God is Savior. No one else is Savior, a fact that St. Peter made clear in one of his sermons:

Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the "stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* (Acts 4:8-12, emphasis mine)

There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, and don't go looking for other named Joshua or Jesus (Spanish), there is only One Jesus given this name from heaven, and only One Jesus who is the Son of God and Son of Man. **He** will save His people from their sins, because no one else will, because no one else is able to. To think otherwise is a sin.

That's the back half of the message from the angel. "...from their sins." This Jesus, eight days old in the text, receives His name, for He will save His people from their sins. Jesus is Savior, but Savior from what? From His people's sins. No work of mere man—no work of your own—is sufficient for your salvation. Only the work of the God-man, Jesus Christ, is fully sufficient.

The world's problem—your problem—is that you hardly ever, if ever, realize it. People like to think that they are just alright. People like to think that God could never reject that which He has created, so He can't reject them the way they are, if they even believe there is a god. People like to think that if they make a mistake (their "milder" word for sin) that there is something they can do to make up for it. In short, if you think that you can work off you sin, that God receives you apart from salvation, or that you're too good for salvation, then you reject Jesus, the Son of God—you reject God—and that is a sin.

And as much as you might like to believe that because you know differently you don't fall into these errors, I'd say it's a much more difficult thing for you to avoid them. Yes, you believe in Jesus Christ, you trust in the salvation that He is, that He brought, that He wrought, but for you, the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh are at work harder in order to sway you from the Truth. And the work

of this unholy triumvirate is more than you can stand against on your own. So, you have moments when you think you're alright, or at least better off than the next person because God loves you more for some reason. You have moments when you think that your faith in Christ is well enough, that you can do whatever you like while the sinner outside of the Church still has to pay for his sins. You have moments when you think that God has punished you for a particular sin, so you have to do something to amend for your error. These, too, dear hearers, are all a rejection of Jesus—they are all sin.

As circular as it may sound, it is because of this that Jesus was conceived and became flesh, that Jesus was born and came to man, that Jesus was given the name Jesus. Ever since the fall, when Adam and Eve took of the forbidden fruit and, against the command of God, ate it, their descendants have been transgressing the commands of God and refusing His grace.

Still, Jesus comes, and still, Jesus saves! God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19) So, while God was the lawgiver through Moses, through Himself in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, He is the law-fulfiller. He has fulfilled the law for you, dear hearers. Jesus Christ is your Savior, whether you think Him to be or not. He has fulfilled the law for you by keeping every little precept in your place and also by being the ransom for your sins—the recompense to the Father in your place for your sins. He has reconciled you to Himself, imputing the sins against Himself.

And in today's text, you see Him keeping the law as He subjects Himself to the covenant of circumcision. You may recall from Christmas Day how it was mentioned that

[Jesus] bore your flesh and blood along through every stage of life, [bearing it out of the womb,] bearing it to the cross, bearing it out of the grave. And all of it is credited to you. You—perfect infant; you—perfect teenager; you—perfect adult, all in Jesus. For God so loved the world, He strapped the world to the back of His Son, so that where He went and what He did, you went and you did also.¹

This includes as He is subjected to the law on His eighth day, and first sheds His blood under the circumcision knife. He is a child of the covenant for you, and so in Him you are a child of the covenant, whether "Jew [or] Greek,...slave [or] free,...male [or] female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:28-29) And all of this is without any merit or worthiness in you—*gratis*, by grace, by God's grace to you in Christ.

"And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." All of this, for you, dear hearers. Into this—into Him—you are baptized. You are marked by Him, no longer in the circumcision of the flesh, but by His name on your forehead (cf. Revelation 14:1), placed there as you were washed in the water and the Word. There, at the font, you were traced with the cross upon forehead—where His name is written—and breast—the circumcision of the heart, which is the cutting away at the old flesh of Adam (cf. Romans 2:28-29)—marking you as one redeemed by Christ the circumcised—by Christ the crucified. You have put on Christ and in Him you are a new creation.

Jesus has come, He has shed His blood for you on the eighth day, and also later in life as He hung, bleeding and dying, on the cross outside of Jerusalem. There, YHWH your Salvation died as your propitiation—as your sacrifice for sin, having suffered the full wrath for your sin and the sins of the world—to rise again on the third day from the grave. Jesus has saved His people from their sins—He has saved you from your sins, you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

1 Chad L. Bird, also quoted in Christmas Sermon, December 25, 2014.