

# BAPTISM II

## Review:

**(a) Baptism is the New Testament sacrament corresponding to Old Testament circumcision.**

sacrament: “*a visible sign of an invisible grace*” – Augustine

Old Testament  
**Circumcision**                      →                      New Testament  
**Baptism**

**(b) Circumcision is not an ethnic marker of being Jewish, but the outward sign of salvation.**

### **Romans 4:11**

Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

**(c) In circumcision, the foreskin is cut off, symbolizing the cutting off of sin (*picture of salvation*).**

### **Jeremiah 4:4**

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem.

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**(1) Circumcision is a sign of belonging to the people of God.**

### **Genesis 17:9-14**

<sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, <sup>13</sup> both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

### **Ephesians 2:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands – <sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

**(2) Circumcision is the boundary line between God’s holy people and the pagan world.  
It is a *sign of covenant membership* – belonging to the people of God.**

**Genesis 34:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. <sup>14</sup> They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. <sup>15</sup> Only on this condition will we agree with you – that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised. <sup>16</sup> Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people. <sup>17</sup> But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone.”

**Exodus 34:12-16**

<sup>12</sup> Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. <sup>13</sup> You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim <sup>14</sup> (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), <sup>15</sup> lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, <sup>16</sup> and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

**Exodus 12:43-48**

<sup>43</sup> And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, <sup>44</sup> but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. <sup>45</sup> No foreigner or hired servant may eat of it. <sup>46</sup> It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. <sup>47</sup> All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. <sup>48</sup> If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

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**(3) The covenant community includes the children of believers.**

**Genesis 17:12**

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

**Deuteronomy 6:4-7**

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

**Psalms 103:17-18**

<sup>17</sup> But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children, <sup>18</sup> to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

**(4) But how can infants be included when they do not have faith?**

**Romans 4:11**

Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

***Answer:* the parent(s) act as the representative head of the household. In other words, the parents act as the representative of the child and their faith counts for the child.**

**Deuteronomy 5:8-10**

<sup>8</sup> You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>9</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>10</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

**Romans 5:19**

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

**Genesis 7:1**

Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation."

**1 Corinthians 7:14**

For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

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**(5) But does that mean that simply because the head of the household is saved, everyone under him is also saved?**

**Romans 9:13**

Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

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**(6) If infant circumcision doesn't mean the baby is guaranteed salvation, why circumcise at all? Wouldn't it be better to wait until the baby actually expresses faith before circumcising him?**

**Romans 4:11**

Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

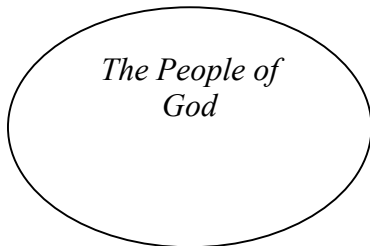
## Notes

### **(1) Circumcision is a sign of belonging to the people of God.**

Genesis 17:9-14. There is a play on words. Circumcision is the cutting off of the foreskin. If someone is not circumcised, he is to be “cut off from his people” (v. 14).

Uncircumcision is to be an outsider. Circumcision is to be an insider.

The world



We see that in Ephesians 2:11-12. The uncircumcised are outside of God’s covenant of promise, alienated from the people of God.

Circumcision is the boundary line between God’s holy people and the pagan world.

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### **(2) Circumcision is the boundary line between God’s holy people and the pagan world.**

***It is a sign of covenant membership – belonging to the people of God.***

In the story of the rape of Dinah, Jacob’s sons told Shechem they could not intermarry. Why? Because Shechem and his people were not the people of God. Exodus 34:12-16 is very clear not to marry pagan peoples, because intermarriage will lead the people of God astray after idols. So the sons of Jacob propose that Shechem and his people become circumcised, and in doing so, take on the sign of the covenant and become the people of God.

Note v. 16 – “and become one people.”

Exodus 12:43-48. The Passover was for the people of God only. No foreigner could partake. Unless the foreigner converts and accepts the God of Israel. Once he joins the covenant people, he then takes on the covenant sign, circumcision, and is allowed to partake of Passover. Circumcision, then, is how you cross over from being an outsider in the world to an inside the people of God.

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### **(3) The covenant community includes the children of believers.**

The circle of God’s people includes children. They are not outside God’s covenant; they are not in “the world”; they are not pagans. The Abrahamic Covenant is very clear about this. Infant boys were to be circumcised when they were 8 days old.

Deut. 6 speaks of rearing children of the covenant. You are to instruct them and include them among the people of God. The whole of the Old Testament is very clear about this. For example, Ps. 103:17-18.

#### **(4) But how can infants be included when they do not have faith?**

Remember from Romans 4:11, Abraham received circumcision after he had faith in the promises of God. By faith Abraham was justified. Circumcision is a sign of that righteousness.

#### ***So how it is proper to give this sign of righteousness to infants who do not have faith?***

The answer is going to be really hard to understand, so please be patient. The answer lies in the fundamental paradigm of how God deals with humans in the Bible. God deals with people not as individuals but as families.

***Answer: the parent(s) act as the representative head of the household. In other words, the parents act as the representative of the child and their faith counts for the child.***

We see this principle in the 10 Commandments. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment, God says the sins of the father will afflict his children multiple generations, and the faithfulness of the father will bless a thousand of his generations.

This seems fundamentally unfair to us. Why should children be affected either way. This is hard for us to accept because we have an individualistic culture. Each person is independent of his family and makes his own choices. But the Bible presupposes a communal culture – you are not isolated from your family, but what happens to the head of the household happens to the entire family.

Romans 5:19. This is how our very salvation works. Adam as our representative head sinned and so plunged all of humanity into sin and death. Even though we weren't personally there, it doesn't matter. We're condemned because Adam sinned. But we have a Second Adam – Christ. Because of his *representative* righteousness – we're credited with righteousness, even though we personally did not fulfill righteousness.

Gen. 7:1. Think about the story of Noah. Noah was righteous. And so God saves Noah and his family. But wait a minute, only Noah was righteous. Why should his entire family be saved? Because Noah was the representative head. His righteousness covered his family.

This is the assumption behind 1 Corinthians 7:14. Are the children of believers unclean or holy? Are they outsiders of God's covenant community or are they inside? Paul says they are inside, because of a single believing parent.

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#### **(5) But does that mean that simply because the head of the household is saved, everyone under him is also saved?**

No! The children who are circumcised must still fulfill the covenant demands and express faith when they come of age.

Let's remember what was learned last week. Circumcision by itself does not save. Not everyone who is circumcised is saved. There is that invisible/visible church distinction.

And look at the example of Jacob and Esau. *Both* were circumcised at 8 days old. But Esau by his lack of faith was excluded from God's salvation, while Jacob was saved.

**(6) If infant circumcision doesn't mean the baby is guaranteed salvation, why circumcise at all?  
Wouldn't it be better to wait until the baby actually expresses faith before circumcising him?**

This is a valid question. Isn't it somewhat misleading to the child to circumcise him before he can really know he is saved. And doesn't it take away from the power and meaning of circumcision to apply it to infants?

We find the answer in Romans 4:11. Circumcision is not merely a sign, but a seal of righteousness. It's God's pledge and promise of salvation. This has value not only for adult believers, but children as well.

Children are born into God's covenant community. Circumcision encourages children to be who they are – a child of God. It communicates grace to the child and encourages the child to take hold of what is already his.

And finally, we need to be careful about making circumcision the absolute marker of salvation. Let's not forget the invisible/visible church paradigm. We cannot know for sure who is saved. We can only look at the outward sign. If we only apply circumcision to adults when they make a rock-solid statement of faith, we are trying to erase that distinction between the visible and invisible. Let's leave it to God to know the difference. We must always remember that there will be people who are circumcised in body but uncircumcised in heart.