

Circumcision & Name of Jesus January 1, 2017
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.

The Bible doesn't tell us whether Jesus went to school; education, of course, being far different than what we are accustomed to in our day. There was no Nazareth Elementary School nor Nazareth Middle or High School. But, we could speculate – and remember we are speculating, so we can have a little fun with it – that if he was raised in Williston, ND, he would have attended Rickard Elementary, Williston Junior High, and Williston High, good old WHS. And He would have been a proud Coyote.

And, at Williston Junior High, He would have had Mrs. Merek for 8th-grade English class, which means he would have to write the dreaded Name Report. It counted for a lot of points, so you put a lot of work into it. It had to be typed up (remember, this was years before anyone knew what a PC was, let alone an Ipad) and complete with Bibliography. The report had to answer three main questions: 1) How did you get your name; 2) What does your name mean; and 3) Is your name important?

Today, we celebrate the Circumcision and Name of Jesus. When you think about it, no one could ever have written a name report like Jesus.

First, consider how He got His name. A lot of parents simply name their child after a family member -- Dad or Grandma. Some will get their children's names from a baby book. Or maybe, they will choose a name they think that just sounds nice.

Well, Jesus' Mom and stepdad had nothing to do with choosing His name. His real Father chose His name. He told His mother and stepdad what it would be. God, His real Father, sent the Angel Gabriel to His

mother, who, at this time, was a virgin and betrothed to Joseph, and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you”. Mary was troubled, of course, so the angel Gabriel told her,

“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High ...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the of Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1).

His stepfather was not married {as we understand marriage in our day} to Mary when she became pregnant with Jesus. When he found out that Mary was with child, He thought Mary had done something pretty bad, and decided to divorce her quietly. So, God sent another angel to him, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”. And all of that was being done, by the way, to fulfill what the Prophet Isaiah had spoken, “the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (Matthew 1).

Joseph did all that. Jesus didn’t get His name on the day He was born, like we do today. He had to wait until the 8th day. On the 8th day, He was circumcised according to the covenant God made with Abraham. That covenant said this,

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. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 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. 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 (Gen 17).

So, on the 8th day, when He was circumcised, He was given the name “Yeshua” in Hebrew as it is written on our bulletin cover, the name given by the angel when He was still in the womb. “Jesus,” is how we say it in English.

Which brings us to the 2nd part of the name report: WHAT DOES HIS NAME MEAN? He was given that name because He would save His people from their sins. “Jesus” was a common name for the day. But, only the Son of Mary perfectly lived up to it. He lived up to it by being circumcised for you. When He was circumcised, a little piece of flesh was removed. The small piece of flesh represents the flesh of each and everyone one of us. The flesh that loves sin. The flesh that represents each and every time you sinned against God by not fearing, loving, and trusting in God as you should. It represents every time you did not call upon Him in prayer; every time you didn’t believe His promises; didn’t respect authority; all those times you were angry with someone and wished ruin upon them; all those times you lusted; when you lied, cheated, stolen; when you were jealous of some possession your neighbor had and wanted it for yourself.

These are your sins. For them, you deserve death and hell, but Jesus came to save us. At His circumcision, He placed Himself under God’s Commandments, under the Law, for you. He did what you couldn’t do for yourself – He completely and perfectly fulfilled the Law for you. He perfectly feared, loved, and trusted in God. He perfectly loved His neighbor. All this He did for you.

And, He did something else for you, as well. He shed His blood for you. “Under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins,” the Bible says (He 9:22). So at His circumcision on the 8th day of His earthly life, Jesus shed His blood, so He could live up to His name and save you from your sins. His blood was also shed when He was flogged, crowned with the crown of thorns, and nailed to the cross of Calvary for you. Upon that cross, He bled and died for you, in your place. He lived up to His name perfectly. And because He lived up to His name, you are forgiven.

That forgiveness that He won on the cross is made your very own when His name is placed upon you when you were baptized. Paul explains it this way,

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made 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. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Colossians 2).

And He makes that forgiveness your very own as you eat His body and drink His blood and as He speaks His word of peace into your ears.

Which brings us to the last part of the name report: IS HIS NAME IMPORTANT? It is important because the name Jesus means your sins are forgiven. I don't know what grade Mrs. Merek would give Jesus for His name report. But, we give Him eternal thanks and praise, because He lived up to His name and shed His blood for you, and that means that you, Dear Child of God, are forgiven all your sins.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.