

Circumcision of our Lord

“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.”

On Christmas we heard that when the angel came to tell Joseph not to divorce Mary, he told Joseph to name him ‘Jesus,’ “for He will save His people from their sins.”

So a Jesus is a Saviour. But not just any Saviour.

He is not a Saviour to pull you out of financial trouble, to patch up your broken relationships, to make you feel better about life or even to cure you of addiction.

All these things are done through other people — other saviors, if you will.

In fact the Scriptures even calls rulers, “saviors” of a sort.

You might say that the Iowa caucuses are the first step in electing a savior.

But, then again, you might not...

The difference is that these saviors, although instruments of God, are not saviors anywhere near equal to Jesus.

For the kind of things that they provide are good only for this life.

Food, money, clothes, friends, comforts etc... are all useless once you die.

Those who are saved from financial ruin, homelessness, addiction or any such problems are still doomed eternally.

If these kinds of things were the only things that we needed, there would be no need for Jesus and there would be no good reason that he is named Saviour.

But He is named “Savior.” And not just by the whim of Joseph either...

He is named Jesus by the unbreakable decree of God — announced by an angel.

There is none like him and there is none other that can provide the kind of salvation that He provides.

But here the devil steps in and seeks to rip you away from this savior.

“Look around you,” he says, “you have all you need right here. Right now!”

“And you don’t need Jesus to have it.

“Just look at all the people who are not Christian!

They are doing just fine. They have plenty to live on. They are happy enough. They have good marriages, good jobs, nice kids etc...

What kind of salvation does Jesus have to offer that I really need?

In fact, it often appears that Jesus doesn’t save anything for me but only takes it away!”

“He takes away my recreation and sleeping time insisting that I come to Church.

“He denies my natural longings by forbidding certain behaviors.

“He makes my life more difficult by commanding me to love and care for others.”

With these and many other complaints, the devil and even your own flesh would have you seek another savior.

To make matters worse, it is commonplace, today, for churches to go along with—and even support—these evils.

It begins when we turn the focus of our activity to curing social ills—addiction programs, parenting classes, welfare distribution and the like.

And this quickly leads to the blatant departure from God’s clear words.

You can observe this all around you.

Those who began with the social gospel years ago, progressed to new morality and an unwillingness to condemn fornication, homosexuality and murder.

What happened? You might ask.

We simply forgot that Jesus “will saved His people from their sins.”

Into the darkness of all this confusion, the Holy Scriptures speak loud and clear...

“He was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.” “For He will save His people from their sins.”

He is the only one who is truly named Savior... All these other things that the world has to offer are nothing. They are phantoms and worthless.

When you put your trust in them — when you live your life for them you are separating yourself from the only thing that really matters.

Whenever you govern your life according to the principles of the world — or even when you give them enough room as to make you waver in obedience to God —

You are rejecting the One named Jesus and following other saviors.

That is why there is no better way to begin the new year than to be re-centered on this text of Holy Scripture.

Today we dedicate ourselves again to the true Savior and His true salvation.

More than that, He dedicates Himself to you and to your salvation.

He is God born into human flesh.

He is the author of the Law and not subject to it—just as parents are not subject to the curfews and bed-times that they impose on their children.

But today, the author of the Law subjects Himself to the Law by circumcision.

And entering under the Law, Jesus our Saviour, first of all has a completely different heart towards it that ours was described before.

Instead of seeing the Law as some enslaving, denying and demanding force, Jesus sees it as it truly is.

Never once did He fall into the sin of letting the pains and the pleasures, the threats and the promises of this present life distort his view of God’s will.

Jesus lives the law in complete freedom—as everyone should carry out the 10 comms!

But Jesus goes farther. And He even rejoices to be circumcised on the eighth day!

He complies with this hideous ceremony willingly and happily.

And in so doing, He foreshadows and even more hideous event—the crucifixion.

He was cut off from the land of the living. He was denied his eternal reward and forsaken by the only God that He lived for and died for.

All this to be your Savior. For Now he comes to exchange your sin for his righteous heart—his love for the law—and to exchange your punishment for His reward.

This is the gift given by the shedding of His blood.

It was begun already with the first drops shed on the day of His circumcision and completed with the draining of His life’s blood on the cross.

Now it is applied to you wherever His blood comes to you for the forgiveness of sins.

Now, Holy Baptism is the washing in His blood that gives you salvation.

Holy Absolution is the verbal application of that blood to your heart and mind.

Holy Communion gives you to drink of this blood to cleanse you from within.

For wherever God’s name is applied to you, there also is His blood and His salvation.

This is Jesus, who has been given a name which is above every name.

He is the savior of the world. He is your savior.

Since 354ad, the circumcision has marked each new year of world history which we call *Anno Domini*—the year of our Lord.

And it is with God’s application of that same Jesus, savior to you and to you life that you are given an entirely new life today — a clean slate — salvation.

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the father.

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