

P Levy Child Baptism

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 02] Thank you. Thank you. Circumcision no more set Israel apart from the nations than Apple iPhones set Americans apart from Japanese.

Both of them use the same phones, don't they? Even though Apple phones are made in America. So if circumcision was primarily, not primarily a national marker, what was it? What was the purpose of it?

And God tells us here in Genesis 17, circumcision was a sign of God's everlasting covenant between Abraham and his descendants.

Physical circumcision was not primarily a national marker. It was primarily a spiritual marker.

Circumcision marked Abraham and his children out as being in a covenant relationship with God. It was a sign that God was their God and they were God's people. And this is what made Israel's circumcision so unique compared with the other nations.

It was not a national marker. It was not a national marker. It was a sign of a spiritual covenant personal relationship with their God.

[4 : 18] Now just think about when this sign was applied to Abraham's children compared to Abraham himself. For Abraham the sign was applied after he repented and after he believed God's promises.

Abraham first repented, turned away from worshipping false gods in the era of the Claudians and then Abraham trusted in God's promise of a new land.

And then 24 years later, he was circumcised. For Abraham's children though, the sign was applied before they repented, before they believed God's promises.

The order for them was circumcision and then faith and repentance. And so they were raised in the faith of their father.

Now remember, step with me, that circumcision was primarily a sign of the spiritual relationship between God and his people. And God commanded Abraham to put that sign on his children before there was any desirable signs of repentance and faith.

[5 : 28] And that is why we baptise our children. Because if in the Old Testament God commanded that the sign of a spiritual relationship should be applied before a child repented and believed, then why will we arrive at the New Testament when that will be reversed?

It makes no sense to reverse the order. But when do you apply the sign? The New Testament fulfills the Old Testament.

The New Testament doesn't change the Old Testament. It fulfills it. It makes no sense to reverse the order of when to apply the sign in the New Testament. Because the God of the New Testament is the same God of the Old Testament.

And God does not change. He does not change in himself. And therefore, he does not change in the way that he relates to these people wonderfully.

Let me read you from Acts chapter 2, verse 30, from the New Testament. Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost. And he says, the promise is for you and your children and all who are far off.

[6 : 38] That's what the Lord will call. I just want you to notice there are three categories. It's for you, Jewish adults, your children and those who are far off, John Turtles.

Those three categories parallel exactly the categories in the covenant of Satan and Satan. With Abraham, he was the Satan himself, his children and all the foreigners in his house. And so if the newness of the new covenant is that children are no longer included, then why at the very point of inaugurating the new covenant, would Peter speak in old covenant language? He speaks in old covenant terms because there's continuity. Not just continuity. And so that is why we've baptized our children. Because God commanded Abraham to circumcise his children. And he did it before they showed any signs of discernible faith. Any signs of repentance. And if baptism is the equivalent covenant sign of circumcision, then we are to apply baptism to our children, even before we see any sign of baptism or of faith or repentance.

[7 : 53] And you may say, okay, I see the logic. But how are we baptized? What does it do? Well, baptism, like circumcision, is a means of grace. Baptism is one of the ways that God uses to bring people to repentance and faith.

Because like baptism, like circumcision, baptism says to you when, when you need God's grace. When you need God to save you.

When you need to be born again. And that is what baptism says to a child. Because that is what circumcision says to a child. The contrast between Israel's circumcision and the circumcision of the surrounding nations was actually when it's a place.

Surrounding nations, Egypt, Eden, Moab, Ammon, they all circumcised their boys at puberty, kind of 12-13, as they entered manhood.

Circumcision for those nations, it's said, you know man myself. You're self-attained man. You're strong enough, you've got the courage to undergo the knife.

[9 : 01] And if you underwent circumcision, you became a man. But an Israelite boy, you run from Genesis 17, was circumcised on the eighth day. After birth. No sign of self-attachment or personal strength or courage.

Circumcision had nothing to do with the little boy, but it had everything to do with God. In circumcision, the child was passive. Something was done to them, before they did anything in response.

First they were catching. And then they cried. You see, the eighth day was chosen because it was the beginning of a new week. It symbolised new creation.

And only God does the work of creation. And it's a single baptism. And so when I baptize, there was Juan this morning. He will be passive in his father's arms.

He might cry, as most children do. He will be helpless. He won't do anything. But something will be done to him. In baptism, God comes to Juan before Juan comes to God.

[10 : 07] In baptism, God displays his undeserved favour on Juan. And says to Juan, I will be your God. Even before Juan can seek anything in response.

It is grace and all grace. And it is mysteriously a means of grace. To bring you to repentance and faith.

And John and Lana, as with circumcision, having your child baptised entails a warning and encouragement. And the warning is this. Do not presume upon your child's baptism.

It is a sign and it is a seal of God's gracious covenant of grace to you. But it's not a guarantee. Circumcision was a means of grace, but it was not a means of guarantee.

Abraham circumcised Ishmael as well as Isaac. Isaac circumcised Esau as well as Jacob. And so as you raise your little boy, you teach him what his baptism means.

[11 : 11] You tell him your baptism means you need a new beginning. What was placed on you on the outside, your baptism, the water of cleansing, that's got to become a reality on the inside. And just because you are born into a Christian home, does not mean you are born in a clean heart.

Cleanse your heart today. Through repentance and faith in Jesus. You were washed at your baptism on the outside. So wash yourself on the inside too.

But there is also great encouragement this morning for you as parents. Because the name of God, into whom one will debaterize, is a God who does not mind.

Who says to your precious son, I will be your God. And you will be my God. And that's where your confidence should lie.

So whether you are a visitor or a regular, that's why I am about to baptize family. Because God commanded Abraham to circumcise his children. And baptism, we believe, is the New Testament equivalent of Old Testament circumcision.

[12 : 18] John and Alana are children of Father Abraham. I am going to invite John and Alana in quiet to come to the front. And then I am going to ask them the founts.

And then I am going to ask the members of this church family, a question to which you respond. And we will. And I don't know whether there is a will we do or yes.

But all three will do. So our heads in prayer. And we thank you that you are gracious heavenly God. We praise you that you are the God who has made promises to your children and to the children of your children. And we thank you for this sign and seal.

And we pray heavenly Father that you might make this sign and seal a blessing to him. That he might hear his baptism. That he might trust in Christ all his days.

[13 : 20] And we pray that you will help John and Alana to keep the bowels available to me. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. I am in honour to acknowledge that you are saved only through faith in Jesus.

You trust not only anything you have done or ever will do. But only in his finished work is there upon the cross. By which he took upon himself a penalty for your sins. Do you realise that baptism is not a saving ordinance.

And though it signifies Juan's membership in the covenant community. It is not a matter of matter. Do you understand that he is himself responsible to receive Christ as Saviour and Lord. As he becomes accountable to him.

To in this sacrament come up together with God to raise Juan in the instruction, obedience and worship of the Lord. To pray for and with him. To keep him in the fellowship of God's people. Be faithful and loving in your home. To be an immediate example of faith. And therefore through your utmost belief in the saving knowledge of Christ and early age. Do you acknowledge that Juan is a gift from God who is of course to be cherished and enjoyed.

[14 : 25] But who belongs at last not to you but to God. Do you undertake to assist him in every possible way as he seeks to lead a life of devoted service to his Lord and Saviour.

Do you with God's help undertake not to complain against God.

Should Juan die before you. The church family. Do the members of this congregation agree to pray for John and Alana as they raise Juan in the Christian faith.

And to support them in their efforts. By dividing Juan with further examples of obedience and service to God. And should they neglect their God given task. Will you in all humility rebuke and correct them.

Amen. Juan, Adam said that. I baptise you in the name of the Father.

[15 : 26] And the Son. And the Holy Spirit. May God bless you. And keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you.

May the Lord turn his countenance upon you. And give you peace. And all the people say. Amen. Amen.