

*Thoughts from my heart...*

## **FOLLOWERS OF ISHMAEL'S CIRCUMCISION**

**(Circumcision vs. Infant Baptism—Galatians 4:21-31)**

It is a known fact that infant baptism is not mentioned in the Bible at all. Also, there is no reference in the church history about the infant baptism until the end of the second century. Yet the paedobaptists (proponents of infant baptism) have tried to legitimize its practice through the doctrine of covenantal circumcision mentioned in Genesis chapter 17. Their premise is that the circumcision was passed on from one generation to another through infant circumcision, and likewise, baptism could also be initiated as a covenantal ritual to infants who are born in a Christian family. But a closer look at Abrahamic covenant does not justify this position at all!

The covenant of circumcision was given to Abraham and all his "descendants", which included Ishmael also. Abraham and Ishmael were the first ones to be circumcised the very same day! Gen 17:13 ... "My covenant shall be in your "flesh" for an everlasting covenant". This was an "exclusive" covenant that was to be passed onto each gen-

eration (which included Ishmael's generations, and Keturah's children also) through flesh. As a matter of fact, this circumcision of the flesh clearly separates "the children of Abraham's descendants by flesh" from "the spiritual children of promise through faith".

The participation in circumcision is indeed a covenantal act, and only those who are part of that covenant were made to circumcise. But if anyone who met the criteria of "Abraham's descendants", and if they refused to circumcise, they were to be cut off (to be put to death!). Ishmael was part of that covenantal act and he accepted it through circumcision. How could we partake in Ishmael's covenant of circumcision, and institute infant baptism based on such a covenant? **Should we not actually dis-**  
**dance ourselves from such a**  
**covenant of the flesh?** Circumcision was handed down to the children of the flesh of Abraham, and not to the children of the Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ! Why

are we so keen on adopting this circumcision tradition for the children of the promise? Comparing the "covenant of the flesh of Ishmael" with "the covenant of the Spirit that comes through faith in Jesus Christ" is like comparing apples and oranges. (or earthly and spiritual! - Galatians 4:21-31)

Abraham's covenant deals with three different groups of people! There are many layers in the Abrahamic Covenant, and we must follow it carefully and study it!

1) Certain blessings to all the descendants of Abraham by flesh ("**general blessing**" that includes Ishmael, and Keturah's Children also). They were all forced to take the covenant of circumcision.

2) The second group is the Nation of Israel. This Covenant deals with the nation of Israel through circumcision, the Law of Moses, and the promise of the land of Canaan.

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3) The Messianic Covenant is for the third group that follows Christ by faith.

“The Seed” (singular) points to Christ, who gives the spiritual, heavenly Kingdom, and eternal life to all who trust in Him (Gen. 28:13,14). Gal.3:16 confirms this Messiah: “He does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to Your seed, who is Christ!” Paul specifically prohibits circumcision for this particular faith group!! (Read book of Galatians, Acts 15)

Also, please note that this third group, “the Children of Faith” cannot receive the Holy Spirit from their parents. Only by faith in Jesus Christ they can receive this Spirit! (Gal 3:14; 3:2) Jesus clearly says that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Here lies the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Every individual must receive the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ only, and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God! (Romans 8:14) Any other “man made gospel” message, such as “children born to a church family and baptized in the church (**without faith**) are automatically saved”, is not the true gospel but it is a different gospel! – Gal.1:8. \*

**“...They which are of faith, the same are the**

**children of Abraham.” (Gal. 3:7) “For you are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ!” (Gal. 3:26)**

The New Testament equates the circumcision with the **sealing of the Holy Spirit (regeneration of the heart)** and not with the Baptism. (Col.2:11 Phil 3:3; Romans 2:29 validate this). But some argue that Col.2:11 equates the circumcision with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Even if we assume that their interpretation is the correct one, still only through faith can we access such sacrifice. So baptism must follow our faith in that sacrifice, and not before that. **If Baptism could take the place of circumcision, Paul would have easily replaced circumcision issue with baptism in his ministry and escaped persecution!** There was no need for Acts chapter 15 that deals with circumcision argument! Paul equates the work of the circumcision that is mentioned in Col.2:11 as **“spiritual” - made without hands.** It is the circumcision of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ (**the seal of the Holy Spirit**). True Baptism ceremony actually confirms the believer’s commitment to bury his self **by faith**, and allow Christ to resurrect within him **by faith**. Baptism in this context, is a deliberate attempt initiated by the believer to transfer the ownership of himself to Jesus Christ. (Gal.2:20). **We**

**receive Christ through faith, we receive the Holy Spirit through faith, but why not opt for baptism by our faith also? Any baptism taken by any individual (either infant or adult) without faith in Jesus Christ is not a baptism at all.** It is only a vain exercise, a form of godliness but denying the power thereof!

Infant baptism came into existence because of the unfounded fear of babies going to hell without baptism!\* It was promoted aggressively by the Catholic church as a “mass conversion tool” to bring the villages, towns, and nations under the power of church. Church and society became one because of infant baptism, and the church became more of a government institution! Early Baptists during reformation period tried to raise their voice concerning “church and state separation”, and “believer’s baptism by faith”. But they were systematically crushed and slaughtered. Reformation giants such as Martin Luther and Zwingli blessed this “slaughter” to gain personal political favor among their earthly Lords and Princes. Let us not be partakers of this “man made” Catholic doctrine of infant baptism that follows the bloody path of Ishmael’s fleshly covenant. **Let us receive Jesus Christ by faith, let us receive the Holy spirit by faith, and let us also take baptism by faith! Baptism taken “without**

**faith” is not at all a baptism.** Believers’ baptism is the only true Biblical “confirmation” of our faith!

If you would like to be baptized as a believer, please email me or call me:

[pastor@acts242church.org](mailto:pastor@acts242church.org).

Phone (410) 418-4500.

*\* **Foot note:** What about those infants who die without baptism?. Are they saved? Even to think that such children would lose their salvation only proves the point that we really do not know the very essence and*

*character of Holy, loving merciful God! It only confirms that we have a warped mind that sees God as an “unjust”, unloving, unmerciful God. By understanding God’s character, we can confidently say that babies will not perish.*

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***Clergy Appreciation***



*October is Pastor Appreciation Month. Take a moment to show your Pastor how much you appreciate his/her efforts throughout the year.*



*Join us for worship and lunch on Thursday, November 25 @ 10:30am*

**Monthly Schedule**

**Sunday Worship Service - 10:30 am**

**Women's Fellowship - 2nd Saturday @ 2:30pm**

**Children's Sunday School - 10:30am**

**Kidz Club - 2nd Saturday @ 4:30 p.m.**

**Prayer Session every Friday, except the 2nd week @ 7:30 p.m. Call for location.**

**Contact**



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