

## **Colossians 2:11-12a, Acts 16:15-16 – New Sign, Old Meaning**

Brother and Sisters in Jesus Christ: A covenant is the agreement God makes with man and a covenant is the only means by which he gives grace to man. If man follows that agreement God makes with him, he would bless him, but if man rejects that agreement, God would curse him. And in order to remember that covenantal agreement with God, God gave man a sign. In the Old Testament that sign was circumcision.

But what did God require of man in the covenant? God required that man have faith in Jesus Christ. That's it. Nothing else! Adam had to have faith in Jesus Christ to be saved... and Noah...and Abraham... and Moses. (Hebrews 11) There was no other way to be saved.

Today we will examine the need to stay in that same old covenant and submit to the same old intention of the sign of the covenant.

Our headings are: **Intention of Baptism and Circumcision**, and the **Submission to Circumcision and Baptism**.

Our goals are: That **you will love what the Lord has done for you so much that you will willingly submit to his covenant sign to you, and that you will willingly serve him**.

### **Intention of Circumcision and Baptism**

11 In Christ you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism...

1. Circumcision (karath) was the cutting off of the foreskin of the male reproductive organ so the **covenant keeper would be marked as part of the covenant** – that agreement God made with man to give him grace and save him.
2. Circumcision was quite a remarkable picture. It was a picture showing that **clean seed would flow from the organ over which the blood had flowed over**. The blood purified the seed. All the seed (covenant children) that came from that organ were therefore considered to be holy. This is why children were circumcised.
3. This blood symbol of circumcision pictured the work of Jesus Christ for sinners. This was why the Apostle Paul in our text taught that **Jesus Christ's death was regarded as your circumcision**. He then compared circumcision to baptism. The point was that now through Christ shed blood, clean seed can come.
4. Similar language of circumcision "cut off" was used to symbolize purification.
  - a. Lepers, because they were unclean, were described as being "cut off" (karath) from among the people.

b. When God flooded the world, he is said to have “cut off” (karath) the descendants of the land, but God’s people in the ark were united with him in baptism, as 1Peter 3:20-21 show. By the way – no immersion 沉浸 there, just the clean ones joining with God.

c. It was the blood on the door posts in Egypt that protected the people of God from being circumcised – cut off – karath – from the land.

5. And see how the Apostle Paul then used the expression “baptism” and circumcision” interchangeably.

Why? Like circumcision, baptism was a symbol of salvation through death – the death of Jesus Christ – cut-off from the living. We can conclude that the purpose of baptism and circumcision was the same. They were both signs of the same covenant. One was bloody...but after the true blood was shed...there was not longer the need for a bloody sign. Christ instituted water baptism.

6. Further, Jesus himself used the term “baptism” to express the resulting unity. Cleanness led to closeness to God. So believers and their children are united to Christ and his covenant people... those who have similar faith.

Mark 10:38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39 They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized;

You can compare this to our expression: “He is in a deep hole.” It doesn’t mean that he is in a literal hole, but he is joined to a lot of trouble. Context must tell you the meaning, not just the literal words. Consider also Romans where Paul spoke of the unity you have with Christ.

Romans 6: 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Paul was not speaking of the mode of baptism – as is often misused. If one wanted to argue that the term “buried” means immersion of those who believe, then we could argue, just as foolishly, that baptism is described as something you “put on” and that baptism by the Holy Spirit was on a mark on the head. But we will leave foolish arguments aside. Context is king.

Galatians 3: 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

So what was the point? Baptism, like circumcision, showed unity with God in covenant.

7. From this you can also gather that when two people are united in baptism there is an exclusion of others. If some are included by the sign, some are logically excluded by not having the sign. Sadly, by refusing infant baptism, some parents treat their children like pagans.

## Submission to Circumcision and Baptism

Acts 16: 14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

1. Since the nature, meaning, and result of baptism and circumcision are the similar, it becomes clear that the application of the signs must continue today – including continuing the sign upon covenant children. Since most of the early Christians were Jewish, removal of the sign from covenant children would have been unfathomable without God explicitly saying so. The burden of proof is not on you to prove that the covenant sign has been removed, but the burden of proof is on those who say it has changed and must be withheld from God's covenant children. God always wants to put his mark on believers and their children. This demand has not changed. This covenant sign helps believers and their children to remember his promises to them. It is an expanding sign!

2. God made a covenant with the parents and the children...that was fully declared to Abram.

Genesis 17:7 - "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.

What is sad is that those who reject God's covenant sign for children often do so out of ignorance. They think that Old Testament believers were saved by works and we by grace. Wrong! We have the same covenant. Abram had to believe in Christ's life and death to be saved, like David, and every other Old Testament saint. (Hebrews 11) The Bible teaches that Old Testament Christians were part of the same church, had the same faith in the same Savior, and had the same hope of heaven. It was the same promise that Peter repeated for the New Testament Church. Though it is sometimes called a new covenant, only the outward sign changes. You, like Old Testament believers are still required to have faith in Jesus' works.

Acts 2:38"For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

3. There is a sanction 制裁 for those who refuse to put the mark of God on the children. That is illustrated for you in the Old Testament when God was going to kill Moses for not giving the sign of the covenant to his son. It would have been an incredible 难以置信的 change to remove the sign of the covenant from children, but Peter said no such thing. That speaks volumes about the continuity of the sign of the covenant on children.

4. Paul makes it clear that children of believers are holy – and even wives were considered holy on account of their Christian husbands. (1Corinthians 7:14) Baptists view children as unholy pagans 异教徒 who are in danger of hell, but not Paul. Some churches actually baptize a non-Christian spouse 配偶 of one who were a Christian. So as you can see, the Apostle 使徒 Paul was not a Baptist 基督教浸信会信徒, he saw children as holy and treated them that way. The Lord Jesus himself blessed children of believers...showing they were holy. This was very important because God does not bless pagans. Mt 19:14, Mk 10:14, Lk 18:16

5. Further, it was God who imposed 强制 his covenant on men. You did not ask for the covenant. So it is not up to you or your children in baptism either. As you can see, the Reformed Christian 基督教改革 (归正) 宗 takes a God-ward view of baptism while Arminians 阿米念派 take a man-ward view of baptism. There are some brothers who reject infant baptism because they believe that

baptism is a sign of human faith. With this view, little children cannot be baptized because they have no faith and are not able to make any commitment to God. That view is wrong when baptism is viewed in a God-ward way – God is the initiator. God’s grace and promises towards you in Christ are the keys, not your age, maturity 成熟 or spiritual level

6. Infant baptism is like a check – which is a promise to pay – and you have to cash it. Only when you believe a check is good, and take it to the bank will you receive the benefits of it. Noelanii and Benjamin will need to respond 响应 to their baptism. Faith is the deciding factor. This is why Esau, who received the sign of the covenant, probably went to hell and Jacob went to heaven.

7. Baptism was always given to the whole family – not just the adults- in the New Testament: Lydia’s household (Acts 16:15), and the Philippian’s household (Acts 16:33), Crispus (Acts 18:8), Gaius and Stephanus (1Corinthians 1:14-16). Never was it recorded that one was baptized when he “came of age.”

8. In addition, Paul, after telling the Ephesians church of their salvation in Jesus Christ, then proceeded to tell the children of believers: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Paul was making it clear that children were part of the church. How sad some treat Christians as pagans!

### **Conclusion:**

Baptism and circumcision were signs of the same covenant, brought people to and united them with, the same Savior, incorporated them into the same church, and shows that they have the same promise of eternal life. Everyone should have this sign. It is a sign to believers and their children. Those who refuse the sign rob themselves, and those who deny this sign to their children rob their children. God will hold them accountable.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. Even though it is commanded that you baptize your children, if you don’t regularly teach and discipline your children in the Lord you will be sinning greatly. Severe judgment waits for those who don’t care about their children. A millstone around your neck and you be drowned in the depths of the sea would be an easier punishment than what God has in store for you. So be afraid – Camilo and Mariana. Let love and fear make you fulfill your duty. 2. And yet, rejoice that God has given you a sensible sign, easily understood, so that you will remember his promises to you and your children. 3. Thank God that you have been brought into unity with Jesus Christ in baptism though you were once alienated from him. Love him for that!

Finally, do you want to be part of this covenant with Christ? He welcomes everyone who will come. He will even give you the faith to trust him. And it is all free. May you be pleased to come into covenant with Christ, receive his eternal benefits, and be joined to his church in holy baptism. May you do it today!