

SERMON NOTES

Eighth Day After Christmas

Synaxis Gospel

Luke 2:21

HIS NAME WAS CALLED JESUS

INTRODUCTION

Eight days after the birth of the Christ, it was time, according to the Law of Moses, to circumcise the baby boy. Mary and Joseph, probably still in Bethlehem, prepared to fulfill the Law.

Centuries before Moses gave the laws of God to the Israelites, the LORD had appeared to Moses' forefather, Abraham.¹ The purpose of that appearance was to establish a covenant, a legal contract, with Abraham and all of Abraham's future descendants. In the covenant the LORD promised to be the God of Abraham and his descendants. This meant that these people would come under His special protection and care. It also meant that the people of Abraham would serve and obey the LORD.

The sign of this covenant between the LORD and the people of Abraham was circumcision. All of the males were to be circumcised, even the servants who were not Israelites. Every newborn baby boy was to be circumcised when he was eight days old. Moreover, any uncircumcised male among the people of Abraham would be considered by God to be a covenant breaker and was to be cut off from the people.

Apparently from the account of the circumcision of Abraham's son Isaac in Genesis 21 and the account of the circumcision of baby John (the Baptist) in Luke 1:59 and the verses which follow, the baby was given his name at the circumcision ceremony. Even today a Jewish baby boy is named at his circumcision eight days after his birth.

In the Bible and in the Jewish culture today, names are very significant and are believed to have a connection with the essence of its bearer. Names are bestowed with the hope that the baby's identity will be reflected in its meaning. And so it was when Jesus was born.

Mary and Joseph fulfilled the command of God to their forefather, Abraham, and circumcised baby Jesus. He was given His name, Jesus, eight days after His birth at His

¹ Genesis 12:1-14.

circumcision ceremony in accordance with the Angel Gabriel's instructions to the young virgin, Mary.²

SYNTAXIS READING

Luke 2:21

“And when eight days were completed before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”

NOTES

“And when eight days were completed before His circumcision,

See Introduction above for this custom among the Jews.

His name was then called Jesus,

Ἰησοῦς, is the Greek form of the Hebrew name יהושע, or Joshua, The Hebrew name is associated with the verb meaning “to save” and could be translated “the LORD is salvation.” In the Old Testament there was but one Savior, God Himself.³ He alone would save. Mary herself recognized this when she proclaimed to her cousin Elizabeth, “My soul has rejoiced in God my Savior.”⁴

Others, angels and inspired humans, witnessed to the fact that this Child born to Mary was the Savior. The Angel of the Lord proclaimed to the shepherds the night He was born, “Today in the city of David there has been born to you a Savior, who is Christ the LORD.” Old and devout Simeon, full of the Holy Spirit, took the infant Jesus in his arms at His dedication and blessed God, saying:

“Now LORD let thy bond-servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES and the glory of Thy people, Israel.”⁵

the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”

God, Himself, had chosen the name Jesus for the Son. In Luke 1:31, the Angel Gabriel appeared to a young virgin, Mary, and told the startled teen that she had been chosen to bear the promised Savior King. She was told to name her Son, Jesus.

² Luke 1:31. Joseph had later been given the same instruction by an angel in a dream when he was commanded to stop being afraid—because of the pregnancy—to take Mary as his wife. But it is the command to Mary before the conception to which our verse specifically refers.

³2 Samuel 22:3; 2 Kings 13:5; Psalm 106:21; Isaiah 19:20; 43:4, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8; Jeremiah 14:8; Hosea 13:4. Even those times that God used a human deliverer (as in the book of Judges) it was recognized that it was God Who was the actual Savior.

⁴ Luke 1:47.

⁵ Luke 2:29-32

Later, after her fiancé, Joseph, learned of the pregnancy and was preparing to break off the engagement, an Angel from God told Joseph that the One Mary carried in her womb “is He who will save His people from their sins.”⁶

APPLICATION

Jewish babies are named in the hope that the child will grow and become like the name he or she bears, that the characteristics reflected in the name will become the child’s or in some way influence the child’s life as a guiding principle. In the case of Jesus, His name was given to Him because He already was—before His birth in Bethlehem—what His name indicates, “the LORD IS SALVATION.”

It is important to note here that LORD is a reverent way to write the four Hebrew letters that stand for the Name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. It was at that meeting with Moses that God declared His identity: “I AM.”

Jesus, at His human birth, was already the great “I AM” Who existed before Abraham and Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush; Who brought the Israelites out of slavery with a mighty Arm. The same great “I AM” Who saved Noah and all the occupants of the Ark from the Flood that destroyed the world of their day. The very same great “I AM” Who twirled into being the uncountable galaxies that fill the endless reaches of the Universe; Who sequenced the DNA of life and created the tiniest components of Matter.

Jesus already was the great “I AM” Who lovingly created mankind in His image, and then, when we had plunged ourselves into the eternal death of doubting His goodness, bound Himself with promises of our salvation. These promises found their fulfillment in the Child named Jesus, The LORD IS SALVATION.

The meaning of Jesus’ name was fully revealed when He took our place on the Cross. He is our Salvation from our sins when we accept Him as such. In the most important issue of life, He is our Salvation. Knowing this, we can fully trust Him with all the other concerns we face. Whether we are like the disciples of old, or like our Armenian relatives of the last century, and find ourselves struggling against overwhelming and terrifying situations, we need our Savior. Or if we are like our children today, and are inundated by the equally deadly dark winds and tempestuous waves of modern culture, we need our Savior. The good news is: He is here. We need only lift our eyes and hear Him say, “I AM, do not be afraid!” He will bring us safely to shore.

May this New Year find us constantly aware of His Presence and love for us. This Presence is worth infinitely more than all the economic bliss sought by those who intended to make Jesus their political king. It is worth infinitely more than all the prosperity hawked by those who misunderstand the mission of the great I AM in the person of Jesus—Who was and is forevermore, “THE LORD IS SALVATION.”

⁶ Matthew 1:21.