

27/09/09 (am)

God's Covenant & Children

Genesis 17:1-14; 23-27

Theme: The children of God's people are special to God.

God's Covenant with Abraham and its Sign

God called Abram out of Ur of the
Chaldeans.

Ur was a pagan city.

God promised Abram: land,
descendants, blessing (Gen.
12:1,3).

Abram travelled 300 miles to
Haran ...

... and stayed there for 15 years!

He then travelled to Canaan.

God made a covenant with Abram
(Gen. 15:18-20).

Abram believed God – he was an
Old Testament Christian! *cf.* Gen.
15:6; Rom. 4:3,9b.

About 13 years later God confirmed
His covenant (Gen. 17).

Abram became Abraham.

Sarai became Sarah.

Sign of covenant? Circumcision.

Circumcision was a sign of God's agreement with Abraham but it was also a sign of Abraham's salvation, *cf.* Rom. 4:9-11.

But the sign was not restricted to
Abraham!

It was also to be applied to his sons.

For them it did not signify salvation but
that they were connected to God's
people.

Abraham's children had an important
place in the covenant established with
Abraham.

Circumcision involved the shedding of blood and this may prefigure Jesus shedding His blood for forgiveness of sins.

Conclusion: if you were a male Old Testament believer you were circumcised and so were your sons.

God's Covenant with Christians and its Sign

Until Jesus' time God's people circumcised their sons & proselytes.

But Jesus gave a new command, *cf.*

Matt. 28:19 ...

... and we must see this in light of the *continuing* Covenant with Abraham, *cf.* Gal. 3:14, 29.

Baptism is a picture of what happens when a person becomes a Christian—person's sins washed away by God, person made clean before God through Christ. *Cf.* Titus 3:5.

So the sign of baptism is associated with salvation in the New Testament just as circumcision is associated with salvation in the Old Testament.

In New Testament baptisms,
anyone having household present
at his conversion had his
household baptised, *cf.* Acts 16:15,
33; 1 Cor. 1:16.

The head of the family represents
the family to God and commits
them to His worship.

For those professing faith in Christ
it was a sign of salvation.

For their children it did not signify
salvation but connection to God's
people.

It was a seal that God would
provide the blessings of His
covenant when the condition of faith
was met.

A Covenant sign involving the shedding of blood is no longer appropriate, *cf.* 1 Pet. 1:18. The new sign of baptism indicates what Jesus accomplished for His people—washing away of their sin, *cf.* Heb. 9:14.

Conclusion: if you were a Christian in the New Testament you were baptised...and also your children.

Who is to be Baptised Today?

- believers who have not been baptised before
- children of Christian parents

Responsibilities to Baptised Children of Believing Parents

Christian parents have responsibility: to teach children the way of salvation; to indulge them in the privileges of a Christian home and involvement in Church life.

The Church has responsibility: to back up the teaching given to the child by his/her parents.

Conclusion – Practice of PCI

The responsibility of Session is to safeguard God's standards and to care for the flock of which the Lord has made us overseers.

It would be wrong of us to baptise the children of non-Christians.

The baptism of Christians' infants is part of the continuing covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. This is why it is only appropriate to baptise the children of Christians.