

The Circumcision

Excerpted from St Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on Luke

For on the eighth day Christ arose from the dead, and gave us the spiritual circumcision. For He commanded the holy Apostles: "Having gone, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" ([Mt 28:19](#)). And we affirm that the spiritual circumcision takes place chiefly in the season of holy baptism, when also Christ makes us partakers of the Holy Ghost.

And of this again, that Jesus [Greek transliteration of Joshua] of old, who was captain after Moses, was a type. For he led all the children of Israel across the Jordan, and then having halted them, immediately circumcised them with knives of stone. So when we have crossed the Jordan, Christ circumcises us with the power of the Holy Spirit, not purifying the flesh, but rather cutting off the defilement that is in our souls.

On the eighth day, therefore, Christ is circumcised, and receives, as I said, His Name: for then, even then we were saved by Him and through Him, "You were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands in the putting off of the fleshly body, with Christ's circumcision, having been buried together with Him in baptism, wherein also you were raised with Him" ([Col 2:11-12](#)).

His death, therefore, was for our sakes, as were also His resurrection and His circumcision. For He died, that we who have died together with Him may no longer live unto sin; for together with Him it is said, "If we have died together with Him, we shall also live together with Him" ([2 Tim 2:11](#)).

And He is said to have died unto sin, not because He had sinned, for "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" ([1 Pt 2:22](#)), but because of our sin. Like as therefore we died together with Him when He died, so shall we also rise together with Him.

Again, when the Son was present among us, though by nature God and the Lord of all, He does not on that account despise our measure, but along with us is subject to the same law, although as God He was Himself the Legislator.

Like the Jews, He is circumcised when eight days old, to prove His descent from their stock, that they may not deny Him. For Christ was expected of the seed of David, and offered them the proof of His relationship.

But if even when He was circumcised they said, "As for this man, we know not where He is" ([Jn 9:29](#)), there would have been a show of reason in their denial, had He not been circumcised in the flesh, and kept the law.

But after His circumcision, the rite was done away by the introduction of that which had been signified by it, baptism, for which reason we are no longer circumcised.

For circumcision seems to me to have effected three several ends:

1. In the first place, it separated the posterity of Abraham by **a sort of sign and seal and distinguished them** from all other nations.

2. In the second, it ***prefigured in itself the grace and efficacy of Divine baptism***: for as in old time he that was circumcised, was reckoned among the people of God by that seal, so also he that is baptized, having formed in himself Christ by that seal, is enrolled into God's adopted family.
3. And, thirdly, it is the symbol of the faithful when established in grace, who ***cut away and mortify the tumultuous risings of carnal pleasures and passions*** by the sharp surgery of faith, and by ascetic labors; not cutting the body, but purifying the heart, and being circumcised in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise, as the divine Paul testifies, needs not the sentence of any human tribunal, but depends upon the decree from above.

Source

[Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke](#)