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Today we celebrate not just New Year's Day, but The Feast of the Circumcision of Christ. It is probably to the modern mind, one of the oddest, and most uncomfortable of Feast Days on our Calendar. This is also a Feast which has largely disappeared from contemporary church calendars. But this feast is important because it teaches us three things about Christ. First that He is truly God and truly man, second, that He is a good Jewish boy and subservient to the Law of Moses and the Covenant of Abraham, which says in Genesis, *Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations.* Third, it is also the Feast of the naming of Jesus Christ, which according to tradition was a part of the circumcision ceremony.

This Christmas, we have heard the familiar scriptures, *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his Name shall be called, Angel of mighty counsel.* We have heard how the angels appeared in the fields to the shepherds saying, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* And even though we hear on Christmas Day, and every Sunday from the Last Gospel, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,* it is easy to forget, with all that Jesus said and did, that the Incarnation means that Jesus was truly born as we are born, was truly and fully man, and truly and fully God. The idea that somehow being truly and fully God overrides Jesus being truly and fully Man, is called Docetism or Apollinarianism, two ancient heresies from the second and fourth centuries. The Church has always taught and believed that Jesus was and is truly and fully God, and truly and fully Man, in body and in mind.

Jesus is truly God and truly man, and so even though He was there when God made the covenant with Abraham and Moses that would require every Jewish Male to be Circumcised, Jesus, on the eighth day after His birth, was circumcised and submitted himself to His own law. If Jesus was not fully man, if He was not fully God in flesh and blood, He would not have undertaken to fulfil His own law. Yet He is God incarnate, and we can add this to His list of humiliations. Jesus Christ, Truly God and Truly Man was born in a barn among animals of the field to a poor teenage mother, who for lack of a crib laid Him in an ordinary feeding trough, and even though His name had been announced by an Angel so many months prior, He was taken on the eighth day to be properly named and circumcised, just like every other Jewish baby boy. He does this for our sakes, just as He does so much for us and for our salvation. He is fully Man and fully God for our sakes, He was born in obscurity and humility for our sakes, He is the infant who was born to die, who will gladly accept and take up His cross and die a cruel death for our sakes. And in order to accomplish all of this for us, He must be made a member of the Old Covenant and place Himself under the Law of Moses. Even at eight days old. This is one of His first steps towards Calvary. For even at one week old, He sheds His Blood for our salvation.

Today's Feast is also the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. It is stated plainly in this morning's Gospel that the Child Jesus was circumcised, and He was then publically named Jesus, even though the Angel Gabriel had announced His Name before he was conceived in the Virgin Mary's womb. His Name, Jesus, is the same as Yeshua, or Joshua, it means *He who saves*, or *God*

saves. It is thought that it was a common name in first century Galilee, as everyone hoped their baby boy would grow up to be the Messiah. It was a heavy Name to give a child, bringing with it the burden of prophecy and expectation, but never was any baby boy given a more fitting name than Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary. We hear in this Morning's Epistle that this Name is not just any Name, but *that God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* And we are promised by the Scriptures, *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

It is fitting that we spend this first day of the New Year in contemplation of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ and how they foreshadow the events that wrought our Salvation. It is fitting that we spend this New Year's Day meditating on the Most Holy Name of Jesus. What better way to spend today, not just on narrowing down our list of New Year's Resolutions, or of remembering how often we have tried and failed at the same old resolutions, but instead in thankfulness for the free salvation that God has sent us. May our New Year's resolutions be to honor the Most Holy Name of Jesus, to live as those who have received the salvation of God, and to spend this year growing closer to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let us pray, *O Saviour of the world, who as on this day wast called Jesus, according to the word of the Angel: Fulfill unto us, we beseech thee, the gracious promise of that holy Name, and, of thy great mercy, save thy people from their sins; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.*