

## 6 CHRIST IS NOT JUST MY “PERSONAL” SAVIOR SERIES SOLID FOOD

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**CHALLENGE:** Why the New Testament never uses our most used words when we evangelize: “Accept Christ as your personal Savior”?

**God promised and swore** that he would keep His promise made to Abraham our father **and to us his descendants**. We should pay more **attention** to this fact because the **promise to Abraham**, the first believer **include you and me as well**.

*Romans 4:16* *New International Version (NIV)* **16** Therefore, the promise comes by **faith**, so that it may be by **grace** and may be guaranteed to **all Abraham’s offspring—not only** to those who are of the law but also to **those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.**

*Hebrews 6:13-20* *New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **13** For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, **14** saying, “**I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.**” **15** And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. **16** For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute. **17** In the same way **God, desiring even more to show to the HEIRS of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, WE who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before US. 19 This hope WE have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for US, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.**

The words in capital letters: **WE, US, WE, US**, are to call our attention to this truth: **WE, US**, (plural), not just “**I**” (singular) are **present and included** in the promise and oath that God did to Abraham and his descendants; **we are his descendants** through Jesus Christ Matthew 1:1. The eternal promise and oath of God to Abraham **includes every believer in Christ Jesus** Hebrews 13:20, Genesis 17:7, 2 Samuel 23:5, 1 Chronicles 16:17. The Eternal Covenant of God with Abraham is called also **New Covenant** because it was revealed to us **when** Jesus made us die in Him to the Old Covenant of the Law of Moses Romans 7:4 Since, the Eternal Covenant was called **New** to differentiate it from the Covenant of the Law which we call now **Old Covenant**.

The eternal Covenant is a covenant of grace and has jurisdiction **from eternity to eternity** (see lesson 1). Abraham was justified by faith under the Eternal Covenant of grace, just like us. The Law of Moses was **added** temporarily as a discipline because of the very bad behavior of the descendants of Abraham and was in force until Jesus died on the cross and made us die in Him to the Law Romans 7:4, 6.

Galatians 3:19 New International Version **19** Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

Wherever and whoever has been saved, from Eternity to Eternity, has been saved by the Eternal Covenant of Grace, because **“no one will be justified by the works of the Law”** Galatians 2:16. David, Solomon and all the “saints” of the Old Testament will be in heaven because they were **forgiven by grace**, not because they kept the Law. How difficult is for some people, to understand grace! Read carefully the next Scripture:

*Romans 4:3-8 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **3** For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham **believed** God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” **4** Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. **5** But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, **6** just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom **God credits righteousness apart from works:** **7** “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, **7** And whose sins have been covered.” **8** “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.”

**“Faith is credited as righteousness”** means exactly that: to the believer, his faith is counted as if he would had never sinned; this is the meaning of justification.

## A. NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT

1. All others covenants were circumstantial and temporary disciplines that did not produce salvation Galatians 2:16. Salvation can only be obtained by God’s grace: the Eternal Covenant of Grace. (To better understand the difference between transitory covenants and the Eternal covenant, please go to my Lesson No. 1. [www.juancarlosortiz.org](http://www.juancarlosortiz.org)) **The eternal Covenant rules from eternity to eternity.** The covenants with Adam, Noah, Moses, David, etc. were disciplinary and temporary. As love is the character of God, his Covenant of Grace is Eternal and was revealed to the first believer: Abraham and surely later also to David Romans 4:6-8, but **sealed with the blood of Christ “from the creation of the world”** Revelation 13:8 NIV and clearly explained to us by the Apostle Paul.

**7** Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. **8** The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” **9** So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. **14** in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the **promise** of the Spirit through faith. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:7-9, 14, 29 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

God’s Covenant or promise is an Eternal Covenant, eternal mean without beginning nor end; an eternal oath made by God before creation by the Father,

the Son and the Holy Spirit, possibly with Seraphs, Cherubs, and the whole angelical Kingdom as witnesses. It was partially revealed to Abraham <sup>Galatians 3:8</sup>, fully revealed by Jesus <sup>John 1:17</sup>, and explained later in details by the Apostle Paul. The “New” Covenant is eternal:

**20** Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the **blood of the eternal covenant**, *even Jesus our Lord, Hebrews 13:20 New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

2. As you see, the blood of Jesus is the blood of the **New and eternal Covenant Eternal** because the “*the Lamb was slain from the creation of the world.*” <sup>Revelation 13:8 NIV</sup> and new for us, not because it was created in our time, but because it was hidden to us for a time <sup>Colossians 1:25-27</sup> to make room for the transitory Old Covenant or strict Law of Moses given as a temporary discipline to the Israelites until Jesus brought the eternal covenant into the open on his time on earth <sup>Mark 14:24</sup>

*Galatians 3:19 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **19** Why the Law then? It was **added because of transgressions**, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, **until the seed would come** to whom the promise had been made.

The Eternal Covenant was continually active in the human history from eternity. All the other so called covenants like the covenant with Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, etc. were temporary, circumstantial and to fill the need of that moment of history, but underneath was always the net of the eternal Covenant <sup>Deuteronomy 33:27</sup>, when they fell from their temporary pact, they fell into the arms of the Eternal Covenant of grace. Abraham and David are examples <sup>Romans 4:3-8</sup>, and it applied both Jews and Gentiles because **when Abraham was revealed that he was justified by grace, he was still a Gentile** <sup>Romans 4:9-10</sup>.

*2 Timothy 1:9-10 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own **purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity**, **10** but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

3. The Holy Trinity did this promise or covenant of Eternal Life before the ages.

*Titus 1:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **2** in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, **promised long ages ago**.

This grace is called by Paul “***mystery hidden in God***” until it was revealed by His Son.

*Ephesians 3:8-10* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **8** To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, **9** and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; **10** so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

The Gospel is not something new that God invented because the Law of Moses failed, NO! The Gospel or Good News is an eternal Gospel,

*Revelation 14:6* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **6** And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an **eternal gospel** to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

The Good News had been in the heart of the Holy Trinity since before the times begun; it was mentioned to Adam and Eve as the “Seed” that would defeat Satan Genesis 3:15, that seed is Jesus Galatians 3:16 but was announced clearly and in detail first to Abraham.

*Galatians 3:8* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **8** The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.”

4. Note the words “all the nations” –not just the Jews- All nations **are we**. Abraham is the father of **all believers**. The preaching of his Eternal Covenant was suspended for a time to discipline the carnal descendants of Abraham with the Law of Moses Galatians 3:19, but still even without knowing it, all of the descendants of Abraham, were saved by grace. The separation between Jews and Gentiles does not exist any longer; but in the heart of God that separation never existed. Jesus sealed the Eternal Covenant with His blood and now we all know that we all are under the New and Eternal covenant:

*Colossians 3:10-11* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **10** and have **put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the **image of the One who created him**— **11** a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

*Ephesians 2:12-16* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **12** remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off **have been brought near by the blood of Christ**. **14** For He Himself is our peace, who **made both groups into one** and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, **15** by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, **16** and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Isn't it very clear? **All the believers today, are under the same Eternal Covenant that God revealed to Abraham the first believer, who is the father**

**of all of us:** Hebrews 13:20, Romans 4:9-12, 16; Galatians 3:7-9, 14, 15, 29. God's Covenant is **eternal and unique** and is over all other transitory covenants, like the Law of Moses. It was covenanted by the Holy Trinity before the time begun: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, practical participants of that covenant and surely the Seraphim, Cherubim and the whole Kingdom of Heaven as witnesses.

5. This is also called **New** Covenant because it had been hidden for a while during the temporary Law of Moses Galatians 3:19 but later it was clearly revealed to the whole world when Jesus came and then the Apostle Paul explained it 2 Timothy 1:9-10, Titus 1:2, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:29. The Gospel or Good News is not something new, it is **Eternal**, Revelation 14:6, because is the revelation of the Eternal Covenant or promise of God; it was in the heart of the Holy Trinity from the beginning of time; it was revealed to Abraham Galatians 3:8, and momentarily made opaque during the punishment to Israel for their transgressions with a very strict Law, the Law of Moses, but restored when the Messiah appeared Galatians 3:19. (see lesson No 1 about the Eternal Covenant) The Eternal Covenant or Gospel is eternal just like Jesus; **Jesus is eternal**, but He was new to the world because though He existed from the beginning John 1:1-2, did not appeared openly during the Old Testament period, but appeared to us when He was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Yes, God's Covenant is eternal, like His Son "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, yes and forever" Hebrews 13:8. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was prepared "**since the creation of the world.**"

Matthew 25:34 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit **the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**"

**As we see, the Kingdom has been prepared from the foundation of the world; this is an New and Eternal covenant. Hebrews 6:13-20** guarantees God's commitment to this Eternal and New Covenant and explains that God did two things to assure us that **He will** keep His promise: one thing is the **promise** itself; God does not lie, therefore with His promise would have been enough; but to add assurance to us, He also **swore**, made a vow, that He would do it, "**so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.**" As you see, the Eternal Covenant made to Abraham, includes **us.**

How were the covenants made in those days? see Jeremiah 34:18-20 together with Genesis 15:7-12, 17-18, God humbled himself to this human ceremony of passing in between the parted animals to show his love and commitment. Note that Abraham was not asked to pass between the animals because humans cannot keep their promise;

so this is a unilateral covenant of grace. It is a gift. We do not have to do anything to have it, only to accept and give thanks! God decides to bless Abraham and his descendants whatever would happen, no strings attached, not asking anything in return. *“God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, **not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time begun**”* 2 Timothy 19-10 Just as our children, after they are born they are our children for life.

## B. YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD

**1. God is much more than our Personal Savior.** We Evangelicals emphasize salvation as a personal individual privilege only, we never see this individualism in the Scriptures. We always use words like: **personal** Savior, **personal** relationship, **personal** faith, **personal** evangelism, **personal** devotions, etc. This word, “personal” so much used by us, is not used so in the Holy Scriptures. We are so used to hear and affirm this language, that when we read Scriptures that say something different we do not see it and do not pay attention to it. The relationship of God with us in the Scriptures is very different. Because He is the Creator and Father of all of us, **He respects the love and ties that unite the family**: parents, spouses, children and grandchildren because **He made it to be so**. He is good and generous, He makes all things perfect and consider all things in His decisions. He admires and understands our attachment to our families. Jesus did not teach us to pray **“My Father** who art in heaven” but **“our Father...”** It wouldn’t be heaven for me if my loved ones: my beloved Martha, my four children and six grandchildren would not be there with me. Part of my comfort in death, is that I am going to be not only with Jesus and the whole Spiritual Kingdom that now is invisible to me, but I will see also my beloved family for which I prayed so much, enjoying together with me the eternal joy. Observe how many tears parents offer in prayer for their unbelieving children! We can’t imagine heaven without them.

God knows and understand this love, that’s why in his Covenant or Promise considers not only husband and wife to be one, but the whole family as a unit, even our servants living under the same roof. As we see, **the relatives of a believer are also benefited by God’s covenant** with us. The following covenant Scriptures of which there are many in the Bible, though some of us, blinded by our traditions, read but neither sees nor understands them nor does pay attention to them. God made a marvelous, just, generous and eternal promise or Covenant. These Scriptures imply that our faith results in blessings not just for the individual who believes, but for ours, his or her loved ones and descendants also, who will

share the same grace as well, because of us, believers. **We are blessed to be a blessing** to the whole family. Let us start to consider this marvelous truth from the beginning, with the father of all of us believers; the first believer, **Abraham**, the first to hear the Gospel, *Galatians 3:8 New American Standard Bible* **8** The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." To him were revealed in detail the terms of the Covenant; in the next reading, pay attention how many times says: "**you and your descendants**".

## **2. God's covenant with Abraham, the first believer and the physical sign of the covenant, circumcision.**

*Genesis 17:7-13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **2** "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." **3** Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, **4** "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. **5** "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. **6** I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. **7** I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. **8** I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." **9** God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. **10** This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. **11** And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. **12** And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. **13** A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

Let me emphasize again the nature of the Eternal Covenant of God, because during all my life I read continually the Holy Scriptures and never stopped to meditate carefully the content of such an important covenant. Not even the friends of my youth did:

**4** you will be **the father of a multitude of nations**. Israel did not exist yet and since its foundation it was just one nation. When God made this Promise to Abraham, he was not a Jew or Israelite, he lived 430 years before Israel was founded. The Covenant or Promise of God includes much more than Israel. The multitude of nations **are non-Jewish nations, these nations are US and all the believers, through Christ**.

**5** For I have made you **the father of a multitude of nations**. He repeats it.

6 I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. He repeats it again.

7 The covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, you and to your descendants after you.

8 to you and to your descendants after you, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

10 between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

11 And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

12 every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.

13 A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

“You and your descendants” is repeated in this passage 7 times! There is not doubt that God meant it. We, non-Jews, are part of the Eternal Covenant with Abraham. The covenant was not just for the nation of Israel, but also for “multitude of nations”. Through Christ we are connected to the first believer, Abraham, he is the father of all the believers and we are part of the same **eternal covenant** Hebrews 13:20, Genesis 17: 7, 13, 19,

*Romans 4:16* For this reason *it is by faith*, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

4. The Gospel is an eternal Gospel Revelation 14:6. It was decided and established before the world begun 2 Timothy 1:9-10. The Eternal Gospel or Eternal Covenant has been preached first to our Father Abraham Galatians 3:8, who became the first to be justified by faith like us because God wanted Him to be the father of all the believers! Christ connected us with Abraham in His covenant of Grace with Abraham, which is an eternal covenant: *Galatians 3:29* And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise. The Gospel was preached first to Abraham our Father and he believed it; He was the first Believer; this is why he is the father of all the believers *Galatians 3:8 NASB* The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying,* “All the nations will be blessed in you.” Evidently also David received the revelation of the Gospel of Grace Romans 4:6-8. Psalms 32:1-2.

Note the words: “All the nations will be blessed in you.” Actually Abraham was not a Jew nor an Israelite when God made the Covenant with him, he was a pagan

**Babylonian Gentile just like us when he was preached the Gospel and believed it.** He believed and was justified, later was circumcised. Abraham was not the founder of the Nation of Israel but Jacob's descendants 430 years later! The grandson of Abraham, whose name was Jacob, his name was changed to Israel; this grandson who was born two generations after Abraham was justified by faith and the nation of Israel was founded 430 years later. God decided this to happen in this order to make him, Abraham, the father of all the believers, Gentiles and Jews, and make clear that all of us are under the same covenant.

**5. Abraham, not Cornelius, is the first converted gentile.** Abraham believed God when he was 75 years old, still a gentile, in Ur, Babylon. He built an altar to God Genesis 12:7 before he was circumcised, being still a gentile he paid tithes to Melchizedek Genesis 14:18-20 being a gentile, and Jesus is a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek Hebrews 6:20 all these happened to Abraham while he was not an Israelite, actually, Israel did not exist yet. The Eternal Covenant **was announced to Abraham 430 years before** the nation of Israel started to exist under Moses:

*Galatians 3:16-18* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. **17** What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. **18** For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Romans 4:9-12 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **9** Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness." **10** How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? **Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;** **11** and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, **12** and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

The point that Paul, and I, want to make is that Abraham is the Father not just of the Israelites but of all believers regardless the nations they belong to. Israel did not exist yet when Abraham was saved by faith. Evidently when God called Abraham, a Babylonian, was thinking in the whole world and not in one nation, and the Covenant of God with Abraham was not only an eternal covenant but a Universal Covenant! Colossians 1:20. Whoever believes God's Promise as Abraham did, becomes under that unique Covenant because the Son is the principal and eternal protagonist of that covenant. As we see, the Holy Trinity had a plan of Grace from eternity, that is why He called Abraham, a pagan gentile, and revealed that plan in clear and repeated terms to him in order that all those who believe God as Abraham did, regardless their ethnicity or nationality, get to know that we are under that same covenant of Grace God made with Abraham, later announced to

the world by Jesus Christ and clearly explained to us by the Apostle Paul. The Gospel preached to Abraham in the eternal covenant was for all humankind that believes God. Abraham was representing **all of us**, not just the Jews Galatians 3:27-29.

## C. THE BAPTISM IN WATER

1. **The physical sign of the Covenant in the New Testament.** Today, we do not confirm the covenant of God with our descendants with the circumcision, cutting a little piece of their bodies; in the New Covenant the sign of the covenant goes very far deeper, the circumcision of our hearts, that is, our inner being:

*Romans 2:28-29 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **28** For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. **29** But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Just as Abraham was justified when he heard and believed God's good news and was then **circumcised as a physical sign** of his faith in God's covenant or promise, our **circumcision of the heart** happens when we believe within us the grace of God revealed by His Son with our hearts and demonstrates that physically in baptism. We unite ourselves in His death, burial and resurrection for us, and the **physical sign** of that identification is **water baptism**. The meaning of baptism is **more radical than the meaning of circumcision** and to understand better it's meaning, is more graphic.

In circumcision, they cut a little bit of the body; indicating that they do not belong any more to the pagan world but become noticeable through circumcision as the People of God; they cut with the pagan race and become different than the rest of the world. After the circumcision, they did not belong any longer to the world, but to a special chosen people, the People of God Exodus 19:5-6.

2. The Christian Baptism, generally made by immersion, exemplifies a death, a **burial** as the person is immersed in water and a **resurrection** as the person rises from the waters. It is not just a little bit of the body who is immersed but the whole body as a sign of death; but is deeper still, because what is really dying is the inner person who renounces the world and is born again to start a different New Life. This is deeper and more expressive because in this ceremony enters the **whole** person, including our whole body, not just a little bit of our foreskin.

The experience of a well understood baptism makes a greater impact in the life of the believer because it expresses and personify something more radical and

intense than circumcision; it implies not just the cutting of a little piece of the body like the physical circumcision of Abraham, but the cutting of the whole old personality, as we identify with the **crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of our entire self with Jesus** Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:3-6, We are not longer ourselves, but Christ's and start from that moment a New Life and experience from that day on a daily transformation 2 Corinthians 3:18. This is what Paul calls the circumcision of the heart or inner being, our conscience Romans 2:28-29; this is what Jesus call a New Birth that happens inside of us and is invisible like the wind John 3:8 but becomes noticed by us immediately and later by our acquaintances because of our transformation.

We die to the domination of Satan and are transferred into the Kingdom of the beloved Son of God Colossians 1:13. The Holy Spirit produces all this by the grace of God and our faith in Him. **Baptism, well understood and made with faith as the faith of Abraham, is not just a ceremony but an escape from the powers of darkness and the entrance into the Kingdom of the beloved Son of God; we cut out connection with the fallen race of Adam, become part of a new creation, the Family of God** 2 Corinthians 5:17, and are **grafted** into the body of Christ Romans 6:3-7. Baptism also connects us with Abraham Galatians 3:29 "And **if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise**" because Jesus is also "**the son of Abraham**" through David Matthew 1:1.

**3. Note the connection between circumcision and Baptism** in the next Scripture:

*Colossians 2:11-12 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **11** and in Him (in Christ) you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

*New Living Translation (NLT)* **11** When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. 12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

I repeat: Note the connection of circumcision with Baptism: "and in Him you were also circumcised in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:13 *New American Standard Bible*.

As you see, circumcision and baptism have the same purpose: to disconnect us from the world of darkness around us and drafts us into the People of God. But in baptism it is as if we, sinners deserving hell, are killed, buried and resurrected in a new creation and New Life, and born again; this is to be “*born of **water** and of the **Spirit***” John 3:5-6. Baptism could be connected with creation: God made Adam out of the clay and breathed life into him; so in baptism, we, who died and are born again, become a **new creation** and get filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Circumcision is a singular cut of men’s reproductive organs that now will produce not pagan people any longer but people of God Exodus 19:5-6. Through baptism, in which our whole person is involved, it’s a death, burial and resurrection. We stop existing for the world John 17:16 become the family of God 1 Peter 2:9-10, and start to produce children of God. Note that these two texts in Exodus 19 and 1 Peter 2, are almost the same. With baptism start **for us and our descendants a New Life, a New People, a New Creation and we are grafted into the lineage of Abraham**; this is the meaning of our Baptism.

As we see, circumcision requires just a sample of our body; but our Christian Baptism requires our whole life to die and start anew. In Baptism we are proclaiming that we believe that we were crucified, died, buried, and resurrected in Christ and receive the Holy Spirit to help us live a New Life “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” The Christian Baptism or circumcision of the heart or new birth means a more radical change than cutting a little bit of our foreskin; it exemplifies **death and new life**.

4. **I prefer baptism by immersion**, because it illustrates all these better than a few drops of water Romans 6:3-8. Though if the water is just symbolic, it does not matter if it is a river or a drop, but total immersion and rising up from the water is more graphical and meaningful, for the candidates and for those who are watching and it is unforgettable when are baptized as adults knowing what it means. Our Reformed Church believes in infant baptism, but we asked permission to immerse them in water at the confirmation of their infant baptism when they became 12 years old. At this age, we ask the candidate to express his/her faith in the Lord as their parents did when them were babies, and we immerse them.

5. **But I believe that Baptism is more than just a symbol**. Let us examine **with honesty** these next Scriptures. When I say with honesty, I mean without twisting them or change their meaning, but accepting it such as it is written, even if it

contradicts our convictions.

*Acts 2:37-39* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **37** Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" **38** Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

Peter says in his first sermon: "**be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.**" I would agree that if baptism is not possible, as the one who was saved at the last minute at the cross, faith in Christ saves any way. But in a normal situation we should not ignore this phrase: "**repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins**" both things go together to "**repent and baptize**". We should not make this ceremony as something not important saying "baptism does not save it is only a sign of obedience to a commandment of Christ" I believe **it is important, if done with faith, it is a connection with the death of Christ, it is sacred! If the candidate knows what baptism is, connecting him directly to the cross, burial and resurrection of Christ will make it very meaningful to those who get baptized.** Thus is the way that Paul understood it:

*Romans 6:3-11* New American Standard Bible (NASB) **3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ** Jesus have been **baptized into His death**? **4** Therefore ***we have been* buried with Him through baptism into death**, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **so we too might walk in newness of life**. **5** For if we have become **united with Him in the likeness of His death**, certainly ***we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection***, **6** knowing this, that **our old self was crucified with Him**, in order that **our body of sin might be done away with**, so that we would **no longer be slaves to sin**; **7** for **he who has died is freed from sin**. **8** Now if ***we have died with Christ***, **we believe that we shall also live with Him**, **9** knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. **10** For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. **11** Even so **consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus**.

I want to emphasize these phrases; because though they are clear, I did not give to it importance for a long time and baptism was done in a very casual way:

Vs. 3 "**baptized into His death**": It does not say, "baptized into water" but **into His death**.

Vs. 4 "**buried with Him through baptism into death**": It does not say, "buried into water" but **into death**.

I don't believe that the water of baptism cleanses our sins, but yes I believe that the act of baptism, made with faith, produces in us what it means. The circumcision was the physical sign of entering into the benefits of the Promise of

God and into the people of God. The same thing is baptism. It is the physical sign of something marvelous, immense, we enter into a state of Grace, we are born again and obtain eternal life...! We cannot ignore the words "be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins".

Ananias said to Paul:

*Acts 22:16 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **16** Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.

It is clear that Ananias unites baptism done calling on Jesus name with the forgiveness of our sins.

**6. I believe that what we do calling on the name of Jesus** has more value than a symbol. Evidently, the baptism in water has to be connected with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and must produce this in the life of the candidate. Baptism done in the Name of Jesus washes away our sins. We do not pronounce the name of Jesus in vain for nothing to happen. This experience must mean that the **sinner becomes a saint!** Baptism is always connected with the **forgiveness** of sins and done with faith in Christ produces a **New Birth** if the candidate believes it. Jesus said that in order to get into the Kingdom of God we have to be born of **water** and of **Spirit**.

*John 3:5 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water** and the **Spirit** he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

To be born of water is what we believe it happens when we rise from the water of baptism to start a new life. To be born of the Spirit is the baptism in the Holy Spirit

Matthew 3:11, John 1:33, Acts 2:3-4, Titus 3:5.

Some say that when Jesus said "water" he meant to be born by the word of God. Which word? The Bible? The New Testament was not written yet. Was it a prophetic word? Others say to be born of water is to get out of the bag of water of the mother's womb (¿?) Oh no! Jesus did not say to be born of "the word and the Spirit" or to be born "of a mother and of the Spirit" but be born of "water and the Spirit". According to Peter: "be baptized (in water)...and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" when we are baptized, we are baptized in both: in water and in the Holy Spirit,

"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." Acts 2:38-39.

According to the Scriptures in baptism the person is buried and resurrected into a New Life. Therefore when the person is immersed in the water is being "buried" and when raised from the water is "resurrected" into a New Life. Romans 6:3-4.

Romans 6:3-4 New International Version (NIV) 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Also the experience in the early Church was that as soon as the person was baptized in water they laid hands on them to be baptized in the Spirit Acts 19:5-6, Hebrews 6:2. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, when we believe and get baptized, both things happen: we are immersed in water and in the Spirit of Christ 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit 2 Corinthians 2:17-18.

It is evident that when we emerge from the Water of Baptism in the Name of Jesus means that we are born of water and our sins are forgiven Colossians 2:13 "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions", this is new birth and forgiveness of sins. And when we are laid hands on we are immerse or baptized in the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 3:21 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, According to Peter baptism is not just a physical experience but an experience of our inner person, our conscience or heart, which is the circumcision of the heart.

7. If you take out the parenthesis, Peter clearly states that **baptism saves us "through the resurrection of Christ"**. This is precisely my point. Baptism with faith in the resurrection of Christ **saves us!** It is not the water that saves us, is our **faith in Christ expressed in Baptism who does** it. Peter affirms that water baptism is not to just wash the dirt of the body as the old washings required by the Law of Moses were, but a request to God for a new conscience, or New Birth that is a new person. Here is my point: Baptism done without faith in Christ **does not save**. But Baptism **made with faith** in the death and resurrection of Christ **for us**, is a plea to God for a new birth with a clean conscience, and **does save us** through the resurrection of Christ, that is, our faith in the resurrected Christ.

Anything that we do **without faith is worthless** <sup>Hebrews 4:2</sup>; but **faith bestows the grace that the sacrament signifies**. This grace is received **not by the water** but by **our faith**. Without faith baptism **does not save**, with faith **it does**. Without faith every thing is worthless <sup>Hebrews 4:2</sup>. Peter makes sure that Baptism does not deal with the fleshly body, but with our inner being, with the true “I”, our spirit or conscience. Circumcision was painful in the flesh; Baptism is not painful for us but for Satan who loses us <sup>Colossians 1:13</sup>. Peter also says that Baptism is a petition to God of a new conscience or clean conscience that is possible because He forgives all our sins <sup>Psalms 51:10</sup>, and maintains us clean <sup>1 John 1:7 - 2:2</sup>.

Hebrews 4:2 **NSBA** “For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard **did not profit them, because it was not united by faith** in those who heard.

**NKJV 2** For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard **did not profit them, not being mixed with faith** in those who heard *it*.

*1 Thessalonians 2:13* **New American Standard Bible** “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also **performs its work in you who believe**.”

This mean that whatever is united or mixed with faith, **do profits us**, and what we do without mixing faith **profits nothing**. For the candidate to have faith, **we have to explain clearly faith in what: faith that Christ sealed with his death our eternal salvation**, satisfying the demands of the Law of Moses <sup>Hebrews 10:28</sup> and delivering us from the slavery of Satan <sup>Colossians 1:13, 2:15, John 12:31; Ephesians 4:8</sup>, paying the ransom that he required <sup>Matthew 20:28, 1 Timothy 2:6</sup>. **“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”** its both things at the same time: believe and be baptized. Let us baptize those who truly believe, let us make sure that they know what they are believing and doing, and what Baptism exemplifies: Baptism = the death and the beginning of new life. We died in Christ and that is our death to our old person, to the fallen race of Adam and a new birth or new creation in Christ.

*2 Corinthians 5:17-21* **GOD’S WORD Translation (GW)** **17** Whoever is a believer in Christ is a **new creation**. The **old way of living has disappeared**. A **new way of living has come into existence**. **18** God has done all this. He has restored our relationship with him through Christ, and has given us this ministry of restoring relationships. **19** In other words, God was using Christ to restore his relationship with humanity. He didn’t hold people’s faults against them, and he has given us this message of restored relationships to tell others. **20** Therefore, we are Christ’s representatives, and through us God is calling you. We beg you on behalf of Christ to become reunited with God. **21** God had Christ, who was sinless, take our sin so that we might receive God’s approval through him.

The sacrament of Baptism without faith **is just a bath in water**, and the sacrament of Communion without faith **is just bread and wine**. But the

Sacrament of Baptism believing that we died, were buried and resurrected with Christ, is precisely that, and **saves us**. Also the sacrament of Communion done with faith **is eating and drinking Christ spiritually** with our spirit, conscience or inner being; **I do not believe in transubstantiation of the bread and wine**, I believe that with our mouths **we eat bread and drink wine** but when **mixed with faith**, with our inner being we **eat and drink Christ** <sup>1 Corinthians 11:27-30; John 6:48-63.</sup> Our Spirit is not nourished with material food as bread and wine, it is nourished with the **Spirit of Christ**. So when we get baptized mixing faith, **we get circumcised** in our hearts or consciences, in our inner being, all our sins are forgiven and as we rise from the water, we are born again. When we mix faith in communion **we are spiritually nourished by the body and blood of Christ**, which done regularly with self-inner examination, **maintains us clean** <sup>1 John 1:7.</sup>

*“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved”* are two things that go together at the same time: to **believe and be baptized**. Do not cheapen the Baptism value saying, “it does not save, it is just a symbol”. Baptism is not a ceremony of bad taste. We have to teach the candidate to believe and say: **“this signifies my death, my burial, my new birth in Christ, the forgiveness of all my sins and eternal life.”** We died in Christ more than 2000 years ago, but we recognize our death, burial and resurrection with Christ when we get baptized with faith in that death, burial and resurrection <sup>Romans 6:3-6.</sup> Peter says: *“baptism now saves you... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”, Ananias said to Paul: “be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”*

8. **Jesus did not say: “he that believed and is saved shall be baptized”** No! He said: *“He that believed and is baptized shall be saved”* <sup>Mark 16:16.</sup> To change the order of these two words is not correct. The order is: **“believe get baptized be saved”**; otherwise Baptism would be an unnecessary ceremony of bad taste, but in this way, it is a very meaningful ceremony and has to be taken much more seriously as a divine commandment, just as the Jews took circumcision. **It is so serious that is done “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”** <sup>Matthew 28:19,</sup> if nothing happens, we are using the name of the Lord in vain. When we do something in His Name, it is as if He would be doing it, **and it’s done.**

Baptism is a sign that we entered into the Covenant of God and us. First the candidate must believe in Christ and believe that **Baptism is the most important moment of his/her life**; it is a burial of his old self and old life and the **beginning of a New Life**. Let us honor this holy ceremony as Jesus and His apostles did.

Jesus himself got baptized without needing it, because it was a baptism of repentance and he had nothing to repent from; but he did it to give importance to that ceremony that later he made more significant by adding more elements to it than just repentance; **He added a death, burial and a resurrection** which made baptism much more important than the Baptism of repentance of John the Baptist. Let us baptize those who believe, let us make sure that they know what they are believing and what baptism exemplifies. Baptism makes the death of Christ to become our death to the old nature, the fallen race of Adam and a new birth or new creation in Christ; **this is very important!**

*2 Corinthians 5:17-21 New American Standard Bible* **17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.* **18** Now all *these things* are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry** of reconciliation, **19** namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has **committed to us** the word of reconciliation. **20** Therefore, **we are ambassadors** for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **21** He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin on our behalf**, so that **we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Peter says: *“baptism now **saves you...** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*; what he is saying is that it is faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ **saves us**; our faith forces us to get baptized and doing so we identify ourselves with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ happened many years ago, but the recognition of **our** death, burial and resurrection happens when Baptism is made with faith in Christ dead and resurrection, this **does save us**; otherwise being immersed dressed and get all wet in water, would be a ceremony of bad taste; but understanding its meaning, it is a very important ceremony and should be taken very seriously as every divine commandment. So teaching candidates for baptism that “baptism does not save, it is just a symbol” is wrong. We should teach that **“as you are immersed in water, believe that your old person was crucified, died to the world and is buried with Christ, then, as you get out of the water, believe that you start a new life and transformation will begin, this is a New Birth and all these will happen to you.”** Let us make this sacrament more significant.

**9. Do baptism in such a way** that people, both pastors, candidates and all believers give importance to this sacrament and **experience what it implies.** Please do not cheapen baptism saying that it has not value at all that is just a symbol. Baptism is not a ceremony of bad taste; for the candidate, this is what it signifies: **“I believe that this baptism, makes the death, burial and resurrection of Christ mine! This means the forgiveness of all my sins, the end of my old life and the beginning of a new life of holiness with the help of**

**the Holy Spirit.**” This is the baptism that Peter says, **“Baptism saves us”** and says: **“be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins”** and Ananias said: **“be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”** The act of baptism is very important **because is connected** with the resurrection of Christ. **Jesus did not say:** “he who has believed and is saved, shall be baptized” but “He who has **believed and has been baptized, shall be saved**” Mark 16:16. To change the order of the words is incorrect and subtracts importance to baptism; that is why baptisms were made the same day of conversion. Baptism is part of salvation unless you want to teach something different.

Please do not cheapen the Sacrament of Baptism! Do not do it after the end of a long service as an appendix, as if that would not be important. The same people that were in suits (pastor and candidates), for baptism they change into too common clothes like jeans, as saying: “this is not too important...” Some get baptized in swimming suits, others with old or stained clothes. If the baptism is in a pool, it has to be elevated, that everybody could see it. If done at a river or beach they have to adequate the program to avoid distraction and concentrate in what is happening, thus giving importance to God who commanded to baptize to the candidates who get baptized and to the sacrament itself.

Why not to make a **special service for baptisms** only and not something at the end of a service when people are tired and start leaving? Make baptism the center of that service where only those who are interested will attend. Instruct the candidates to invite their friends, relatives and neighbors, believers and non-believers to see them being baptized as witnesses. They will not refuse if you tell them I would like you to be a witness of my baptism. Use the service for evangelization. Make it emotional, elegant and sacred. Choose the proper music, lights, enter in procession at the sound of music like when the bride enters in a wedding to start a new life; the visitors should feel that God is there and desire they also to get baptized. Prepare a special liturgy; make it elegant, all the candidates dressed in white, with clothes bright clean and well ironed. The pastor with a nice elegant Christ-like tunic as we imagine Jesus had, not with jeans or in swimming suits.

If the Scriptures are read, don't say “Let us read Romans chapter 6 verses 3 to 6”, because the nonbeliever do not understand neither the word Romans, nor chapter 6 nor verses 3 to 6. Just say: “Saint Paul the apostle said...” Prayers also must be made thinking in the needs of the non-believers: work, family, health, situation of the country, etc. Also the testimonies of those who get baptized would be very

helpful for evangelization. It would be better if they are videotaped so they can be edited and shrink to 2 or 3 minutes at the most. Everything done must be done having baptism in mind (at Andy Stanley church, in Atlanta, they videotape the candidates' testimony, answering the question "why do I get baptized?". Show it before the candidate is baptized and later have the congregation celebrate each person as they get out of the water in an atmosphere of welcoming into the Kingdom, joy and celebration)

Instruct the candidates to prepare a party in their homes after the service to celebrate their baptism, inviting their non-believers friends and give there a testimony of why he or she got baptized, transforming that party into a celebration and opportunity to witness and evangelize. **Baptism is important; it is the start of a New Life**. We do ceremonies and meals for marriages, funerals, birthdays, silver and gold anniversaries, independence day, etc. why not for baptism, which is **the most important experience for a Human being: it is the end of a lost life and the birth of a New life, a New beginning!** It is a funeral and a birth. It is the beginning of Eternal Life! Wow!

10. **The two most important sacraments** of the Old Testament were **Circumcision and Passover** and were transformed by Jesus Christ as Holy **Baptism** Colossians 2:11-12 and Holy **Communion** Lucas 22:15. **Baptism and Communion** became the two sacraments of our faith. Jesus commanded us to practice both: **baptize** everybody who believes and serve **communion** to every believer; these sacraments complement each other. Baptism is the **beginning** and Communion is the **continuation** of our life in Christ with Christ in us. Jesus made **Baptism to replace circumcision** and **Communion to replaces Passover**, both baptism and Lord's supper are signs of the Eternal Covenant. This is why **the promise in the New Covenant is just like the promise to Abraham** because it is the same Eternal Covenant. In future lesson I will give thought to the other sacrament, Communion, which I believe that is also done superficially as an appendix of the service like a duty once a month.

In the case of Abraham, not only his family, but also his **entire household, including, servant, workers and slaves and their children** all were participants of God's covenant **thanks to Abraham's faith**. All of them were circumcised, which was painful and took many days to cure because they entered into the Covenant God made with the head of the household. God was not adopting just Abraham, but his entire household too. Justification and salvation was not just an individual personal gift to Abraham who believed, but was credited to the whole household because he believed, even the servants and slaves, thanks to God's election and **Abraham's faith**.

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*Genesis 17:11-13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **11** And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. **12** And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised **throughout your generations**, a *servant* who is born in the house or **who is bought with money from any foreigner**, who is not of your descendants. **13** **A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.**

## D. THE COVENANT IS “YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD”

**1. It is very interesting and meaningful that the New Testament uses the same language used in the case of Abraham for his family and household: “you and your household”.** See what the angel said to **Cornelius**:

*Acts 11:13-14 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **13** he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; **14** and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ (“Household: Gr. Oikos, (a) a house, the material building, (b) a household, family, lineage, nation. (Biblos lexicon)

This included even the servants. Paul and Silas said to the Jailor at Philippi:

*Acts 16:31-33 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **31** they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” **32** And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. **33** And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and **immediately he was baptized, he and all his household** (A household, English dictionary, noun: a house and its occupants regarded as a unit.)

In both cases the language is alike to the language to Abraham, “*you and your household.*” Notice that as Abraham had to circumcise everybody as the sign of the covenant for his whole household, so it is in the New Testament with baptism. The whole household of Cornelius and the Jailor of Philippi was baptized. This is the way that God works because **He is a God that respects the family and keeps his promise.** “To assure us in a double way that he will do it” Hebrews 6:17-20, though His promise would have been enough because he does not lie, but He also swore or covenanted by Himself that He would keep his promise to you and your household and your descendants. It makes sense that if the father of the family is saved, his very loved ones, the whole family should be saved by the same grace; **heaven would not be heaven without our loved ones**, specially our spouse, children and grandchildren.

**2. There are also some other Scriptures** that together with these makes the meaning of the Covenant more understandable, like these:  
.....

1 Corinthians 7:14 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

**Husband, wife and children are covered under God's Promise or covenant. This is what we celebrate every time we have Communion when the minister says: This is the blood of the New and Eternal Covenant!** This is so logic that it shouldn't be difficult to understand. Husband and wife are one <sup>Ephesians 5:31</sup>, it is normal to believe that if one is saved, the other is too. This sounds strange to some of us, infected by the phrase "*personal Savior*", because all of our life we invited people to "**receive Christ as personal Savior**" instead of telling them "**believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household shall be saved**" but not for Paul who assures us that the one who becomes a believer saves his entire household; the **unbeliever spouse of the believer is sanctified** in the believer spouse and **their children are also holy** or sanctified because of the believer parent; isn't God's grace a great Grace? But isn't it logic? Not separating the family for eternity **makes sense**, now I couldn't imagine it any other way! If I believe and my loved ones go to hell, how could I be happy in heaven? Doesn't this, "*you and your household*" makes sense and makes you happier?

## E. INFANT BAPTISM

1. **Now you will understand why the more ancient denominations:** Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, Orthodox, Catholic etc., baptize the believer's babies, they do it **by faith in the promise or covenant of God with the family of the believer**. But most evangelical denominations that do not baptize babies, they also believe that babies are saved by the faith of their parents. How do I know it? Because I have asked many times to my Pentecostal Brethren: What happens if the baby of a believer dies as an infant before he can believe and get baptized? They all answer: "they are saved by the faith of their parents", of course this is what Paul assures us: the believer parent makes his whole family holy, thanks to the covenant of God.

The blessings and promises that God gave to Abraham the father of all the believers <sup>Romans 4:16</sup>, were not just for him and his carnal descendants <sup>Genesis 17:7-13</sup>, but for all of us believers, his spiritual descendants through Jesus Christ and of course our descendants too, we are all under the same eternal covenant:

*Galatians 3:7-9, 29 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 7* Therefore, be sure that it is **those who are of faith who are sons**

of Abraham. **8** The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." **9** So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise (or covenant).

It is also clear that in the first Passover, the whole household were protected in the house where the blood of the lamb was put over and sides of the door Exodus 12.

**2. The physical sign of the covenant for Abraham** and his descendants was circumcision; Abraham and his entire household were the first to be circumcised so they were circumcised **as adults because they were already adults when they learned about the covenant**; but the fact that they were adults when they believed God's promise and were circumcised, did not mean that their descendants also should wait to be circumcised until they became adults. As this Covenant is a covenant of Grace, that is, God promised unilaterally to bless Abraham and his descendants by grace, they had to do nothing Romans 4:3-5; as they had to do nothing, and the promise was for their children also, children did not have to grow until the age when they could understand the covenant and do something. On the contrary, they surely were already saved by the promise of God, and as they grew, they could ask, why the foreskin of the other children is not cut and ours are? Then they would be told, because we are under a wonderful covenant or Promise of God to our Father Abraham and they are not! They did not have to believe the covenant to enter into it, but to celebrate that they already were in it. God wanted to assure them that He would keep the covenant even with their babies; this is why those who were born had to be circumcised at the 8<sup>th</sup> day. Every time they circumcised a baby, the parents were saying by doing so: **"God promised that even our descendants are under His covenant and we believe it."** Each circumcision day was a remembrance of God's Covenant.

Not like so many parents now-a-days that suffer the uncertainty if a son or spouse would be save or not. God made things perfect! So those who believe in him never experience uncertainty about their children but rejoice in the Lord always:

Hebrews 6:17-20 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

**17** In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, **18** so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. **19** This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, **20** where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

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When Zaccheus repented Jesus said: "*Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham*" Luke 19:9. God commanded them to circumcise their babies **to assure them than He would keep his promise** to all Abraham descendants: and by doing it the eighth day of their birth they did it **as an act of faith in the promise of God**; circumcision was going to be the **physical sign** of the commitment of God with all their descendants. This is why the Jews are called "*the chosen people*" and we are also called the chosen people. Compare what God said to Israel with what he says to us.

God said to Israel through Moses:

*Exodus 19:5-6 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **5** Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; **6** and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

God says to us through Peter:

*1 Peter 2:9-10 New American Standard Bible (NASB)* **9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellences of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; **10** for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

**3. This is what the Historic Churches believe:** because we are under the same covenant with Abraham and we are Abraham's children, this applies to us too. The day of Pentecost and everywhere else after that in the New Testament, when people came to Christ **as adults**, they had to **believe and be baptized at their adult age as Abraham did**. As their babies were born under the promise of God's covenant with their household and descendants, the converted parents confessed their faith in God's covenant baptizing their babies as Abraham circumcised his children, and all the newborn babies since.

Those who are against the infant baptisms base their belief in "*He who has believed and has being baptized, shall be saved*" Mark 16:16; they say: as the child has not the capacity to believe he should not be baptized. But the same Scripture says "*He who has believed and have being be baptized, shall be saved*", then if the Child is not baptized, he is not saved!! If the faith of the parents is enough to save a child, has to be enough to baptize them. The **children's baptism has nothing to do with the faith of the child but with the faith their parents**. It is the **parents and the Church** who demonstrate their faith in God's promise by baptizing their children; it is the faith of the parents what moves the parents and

church to baptize their babies and make the commitment of raising them in the ways of the Lord. Those who baptize children are saying: “because I believe that God is faithful to His promises I baptize my children.” **I am not trying to convince you to start baptizing babies, but I am making the case for those who do so, asking you to be more tolerant.** The Historic Church has their theologians and convictions to do it that way, as we have the convictions and our theology to do it our way. I am a Pentecostal-Reformed, **so I understand both sides.**

Actually **both sides believe that it is the faith of the parents who makes the children safe.** One side manifest their faith by “**presenting**” their babies to God; the others go **all the way in their faith** and baptize them believing that just as God ordained Abraham to circumcise their descendants at the 8<sup>th</sup> day of birth, we should baptize our children also. Circumcision of babies was a demonstration of the faith of parents in God’s promise. They affirmed their belief in God’s promise “*your and your descendants*” circumcising their babies because God ordained them so, and God gets pleased when his people believe his promises. In the same way many Christian denominations baptize their children. Some of us criticize them; but as you see, they have great theological reasons and biblical bases to believe that way as other have reasons and biblical bases to baptize just adults. We shouldn’t criticize but respect each other; anyway, both of us are under the same covenant! Our salvation is by grace, is God’s own initiative before the time begun 2 Timothy 1:9-10, without ours or our babies intervention, with or without baptism, we get the benefits of God’s promise: “***you and your descendants for ever***”. The faith of their parents brought the blessing of God to his entire household. I was born in a Christian home and attended church continually since, I never accepted Christ as my personal Savior because in my church they did not invite people to receive Christ, they asked them to be baptized instead and they did not baptize children, so I do not remember having a day of “conversion” but I do not remember a day that I doubted of my salvation. I always believed that I was saved and was active in the Church until one day that our pastor said to me that I was covered by the faith of my parents only until I was 12 years old, after that age I was responsible for my salvation, so I had to be baptized. When I heard this, I got baptized immediately!! That was the belief of my church; children were covered by the faith of their parents until the 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**4. The sign of the Covenant in Christ is water baptism** Mark 16:16; which if well understood, represents the circumcision of our inner being or our spirit or spiritual heart or conscience; this is also called New Birth and through believing and being baptized, because we are baptize into Christ we become also descendants of

Abraham through Him. This happens when we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and get baptized; we are baptized in water and in the Spirit John 3:5-6.

*Acts 2:38-39 New American Standard Bible: 38* Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** *39* For the promise is for **you and your children** and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

*Romans 6:3 New American Standard Bible: 3* Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

*Galatians 3:27 New American Standard Bible: 27* For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

*Galatians 3:14 New American Standard Bible: 14* in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

*Romans 4:16 New American Standard Bible: 16* For this reason *it is* by **faith**, in order that *it may be* in accordance with **grace**, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but **also to those who are of the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all.

*Romans 2:28-29 New American Standard Bible 28* For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. *29* But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God,

*Romans 6:3-7, 11 New American Standard Bible: 3* Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? *4* Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that **as Christ was raised** from the dead through the glory of the Father, so **we too** might walk in newness of life. *5* For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, *6* knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; *7* for he who has died is freed from sin. *11* Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

As you see, our circumcision in Christ is radical! We are not asked to cut just a little bit of our foreskin but much more! **We die, are buried, baptized into death and raised with Christ. We are united with Him in His death, our old self is crucified with Him, our body of sin is done away with, we are not longer slaves to sin, and we are alive to God in Christ Jesus!** What a circumcision, what a cut! Actually, this was the meaning of Abraham circumcision, to separate a people for Himself out of the pagan world Exodus 19:5-6, only that baptism is far more reaching. The historic churches believed that from then on, the descendants of the baptized would manifest their faith in God's covenant by baptizing also their children into Christ.

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5. Now, I asked those who do not believe in infant baptism, because they believe that the baby needs first to understand what he is doing and believe in Jesus Christ, *“what happens if the baby of a believer dies before he could believe and be baptized?”* They always answered, *“they are saved by the faith of their parents”*. So they still believe that their children are saved by the faith of their parents even when the baby do not understand it. Those who believe in baptizing their babies go further than us in their faith, they not only believe that their babies are saved through their faith in the promise of God to Abraham, but show their faith all the way baptizing them, just as the descendants of Abraham did with circumcision. **So there is no difference, don't fight about it nor criticize each other! Because the ceremony of “presenting” our babies to the Lord is similar to the ceremony used to baptize them, the only different is that we say “we present you to God in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” and the others say “we baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”**. Both believe that their children are saved by the faith in God of their parents, one demonstrates it “presenting” the child to God, and the others go all the way “baptizing” them. The “infant baptism” as the “presentation” of children to God, are both demonstrating the same thing: our children are saved because of our faith in God's promise; “presentation” and “baptism” ties the parents to nurturing in the same faith their “baptized” or “presented” children.

My first son, when he was 6 years old, asked me *“dad, am I baptized?”* I said of course not. He asked *“Why not?”* I said because you have to believe in Jesus Christ first; He said: *“I always believed in Jesus”*. I told this to our cell group of pastors who none of us believed in infant baptism, but they counseled me: *“baptize him because he will think that you do not trust his faith”*. I did baptize him, just to not confuse him and think that I did not trusted his faith. Few years later, he was asked at School to write a paper about the happiest day in his life and he wrote: *“when I was baptized!”*

6. But, the Historic Evangelical churches that baptize children, require first: that at lest one of the parents or tutors be a committed believer. Does not make sense to baptize the baby of an unbeliever family, they are not under the covenant. Second: when the baptized believer's child become 12 years old, has to go through a Bible course of “confirmation” where he is taught the meaning of his baptism and faith in Christ and is asked to “confirm” that baptism with his own faith and mouth in a meaningful ceremony. It is not a rebaptism, but a confirmation of the already received baptism. This is why the historic churches believe that a person that is called, is predestined and saved by Grace, that election includes

their spouses and descendants are participants of the grace of God. I was born in a church that does not baptize infants but they “presented” them to the Lord in a ceremony very similar as that of the infant baptism in the historic churches.

## F. THE CORINTHIANS AND THEIR FAITH IN GOD’S COVENANT

1. In the church at Corinth there were Christians who came to Christ after the death of some beloved husband or wife or children members of their family. They became sad that their beloved died without hearing the message of salvation in Christ and would not be in heaven with them. But evidently they learned through Paul the benefits of the Covenant of God, because he had been at Corinth and surely taught that, actually, later in his epistle confirms this teaching in writing:

*“The unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy”* 1 Corinthians 7:14, as they believed this promise and also believed that for God time is not a problem, for God there is no past or future, He lives in a continual present, so they believed that their close loved ones, members of their families who had already died, were included in the covenant of grace for being family members. To show their faith in the covenant of God, they got baptized retroactively for the dead members of the family. This might have been the reason why at Corinth, all or some got baptized for their beloved dead relatives. Paul found that practice as an argument to defend the truth of the resurrection of the dead.

*1 Corinthians 15:29 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 29* Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

2. **Paul does not say if baptizing for the death was right or wrong**, simple states that **it was happening**. Surely **their leaders** did these baptisms. Why did they do it? The only answer has to be it was based on their belief in the covenant of God ***“you and your household”*** Acts 11:13-14, 16:31-33, ***“you and your descendants for all generations”*** Genesis 17:7, 9. Evidently it was not something considered heretic, otherwise Paul would have condemned it, but he didn’t.

## CONCLUSION

I am not trying to promote infant baptism or baptism for the dead, but yes, I am asking more flexibility of mind, enriched by the Holy Scriptures that never minded to us.

The rules of hermeneutics are that the Scriptures do not contradict each other, but complement each other. So keep on doing what you are doing, but do not judge or despise those who think different, they also have Bible verses as we do... I believe that if the beloved past away family members of a believer will be saved by the promise of God, they will be saved whether I get baptize for them or not, but the Corinthians wanted to show their faith in that promise by doing it. About children, I believe that whether we baptize them or not, they are included in the covenant of God, so I accept both ways.

**SUMMARY:** Jesus is more than our “personal” Savior. God is a Covenant God. Not only saves an individual but his entire household. The physical sign of God’s covenant in the Old Testament was circumcision. In the New Testament Jesus made baptism the physical sign of the Covenant. Revise your criticism on Infant Baptism or soften it up.

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