

Without Hands

Oak Ridge Church of Christ

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REFERENCE

Colossians 2

READING

Colossians 2:8-15

OBJECTIVE

The Jews were marked as God's people with circumcision. We are marked with circumcision of the heart, baptism.

KEY POINTS

The Jews were circumcised in the flesh by hands to be identified as God's people. He has given us a mark.

We are all under the mark of death upon our first sin.

Men have many false marks as answers, but they accomplish nothing.

Jesus gives us baptism as the new circumcision that is made without hands to identify us as His!

I. Introduction

A. Identifying Marks

1. Man has used symbols to identify people as part of a group I guess since the beginning of time.
2. In some cultures tattoos and marks on people are used. We have seen Hindu women with the bindi (red dot) on their foreheads. This would help us identify the person as being of the Hindu religion.
3. Today we have uniforms that help us spot people who are working for the company versus the customer who is walking around.
4. I remember one day I was doing some door-knocking in Georgia where I was preaching. It was a particularly bad day. People were just closing the door in my face over and over. After awhile I realized the problem. I was wearing a white dress shirt with dark slacks. I looked just like a Mormon elder! I changed my clothes the next time I went out and everything was better! Apparently the mormons had just gone through the neighborhood recently and the folks were no longer receptive to them.
5. People are identified as part of a certain group by the symbols worn.

B. Israel

1. The Israelite were given an identifying mark also. Circumcision.
2. All the way back to Abraham, we find this mark being given.
 - a. At Genesis 17, we have Abram, who at this point is 99 years old. His son is soon to be on the way.
 - b. Abram means "exalted father". On this occasion God changes his name to Abraham, meaning "father of a multitude". This 99 year old man whose 90 year old barren wife was with him, has had his name changed to "father of a multitude". It must have sounded ridiculous to him.
 - c. However, God was so serious he gave the mark of this nation to Abraham at Genesis 17:9-14.
 - d. God's people would be circumcised. By this mark the men and their families would be indentified. No circumcision meant that the person was cut off from the nation!

C. Our mark.

1. God's people have always been identified by Him.
2. Just as the Israelites had an identifying mark, so do we!
3. Yet our mark is not external. Our mark is made without hands. Our mark is the removal of the wicked man that is guilty of sin and must therefore be separate from God. Our mark is necessary to be identified as the Lord's and thus attain to all the wealth that comes from Him! (Colossians 2:1-3)
4. I do not know about you, but I want to be identified as His so I can have access to the wealth of wisdom and knowledge that is available through Christ Jesus our Lord.
5. What then is this "mark", and how do we attain it?

II. Without Hands

A. We are all marked by the world to start.

1. Colossians 2:13 tells us that prior to receiving the mark of Christ, we are all dead in our transgressions. We have the curse mark of death upon our heads from the moment that we sin the first time. (Romans 6:23; 3:23)
2. At Genesis 3, God places a curse upon mankind. We will all die. He had given the warning that in the day the fruit was eaten, death would begin, and it did. This is emphasized in the genealogy of Genesis 5 in the words “and he died”. Then at Genesis 8:21 after the flood, God says that he will no longer curse the ground and bring that kind of destruction because man is wicked from his youth. That is, all from a young age begin to sin. We have the mark of death!
3. I Corinthians 1:18 and II Corinthians 2:15 both tell us that those around the saints are perishing. They are under the curse mark of death!
4. I had the curse mark in 8th Grade English GT of “clown”. The teacher pegged me as that from day one I think. I remember one day I was absent and the kids in class told me the next day that the teacher told them that they should learn to care more about class and not be like Eppler! It didn't really bother me, but even though I had good grades, I remember the hopelessness of that mark, of ever being in the good grace of that teacher!
5. Living under the curse mark of death is a hopeless feeling. We look around and see most people living under the same mark. Struggling to overcome. Struggling to see light. How terrible to be dead in transgressions!

B. Men have many false marks as answers.

1. Note Colossians 2:8. Paul warns them to be careful of being deceived by men who use philosophy and tradition to try and give answers. They see the problem of sin, the problem of the curse mark of death, but they try their own remedy!
2. Just think of some of the false marks that people look to and prescribe today.
 - a. People say to just call out the Lord's name to be saved, though no one in the Bible did.
 - b. People say to just accept Him in your heart, though no one in the Bible did.
 - c. People say to wait for the Holy Spirit to baptize you for salvation, though none in Bible did.
 - d. People say to just pray your way through, though non in the Bible did.
3. All these are false marks of salvation that accomplish nothing. It is simply men's philosophy, tradition and wishful thinking! Just as the Jew was either circumcised or not, so is the Christian.
4. Cornelius was a devout, prayerful, alm-giving, god-fearing man (Acts 10:2), but he was not saved! (Acts 11:14) Those may be marks of salvation as far as man is concerned, but not to God!

C. The Christian circumcision is baptism!

1. Notice Paul's progression. 2:6 says that they had received Christ as Lord. How? Read on. 2:9-10 tells us that Jesus was God on earth and we have been made complete through Him. How? Read on. 2:11 says that we were circumcised. However, this was not just any circumcision, it was one made without hands. It was a removal of the wicked, fleshly body. How? Read on. 2:12 tells us that the circumcision took place at the point of baptism. Baptism was when that fleshly, wicked man was cut away and we were raised with Jesus Christ!
2. We escape the curse mark of death and are marked as Christ's by the circumcision made without hands. God knows those who are His just as He did in the Old Testament, he recognizes those circumcised. Under the New Covenant, that is, He recognizes those who have been baptized for the removal of sin and the curse of death, the circumcision made without hands!
3. I remember getting my letter jacket in high school. It was a big deal back then! I now had the mark of the upper-classmen, a mark of distinction. However, those old marks fade away in importance. I couldn't fit into that jacket now if I wanted to, which I don't. There is no mark that comes close to the circumcision made without hands that identifies me as one of His own!

III. Conclusion - An outward sign of an inward grace or the process by which we are marked as His? You decide!

Col. 2:6 ¶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

Col. 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Col. 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Col. 2:10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Col. 2:11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

Col. 2:12 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.

Col. 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,

Col. 2:14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Col. 2:15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Gen. 17:9 ¶ God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

Gen. 17:10 “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

Gen. 17:11 “And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Gen. 17:12 “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.

Gen. 17:13 “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.

Gen. 17:14 “But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

Col. 2:1 ¶ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

Col. 2:2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

Col. 2:3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Gen. 8:21 The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

1Cor. 1:18 ¶ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

2Cor. 2:15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

Acts 10:2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.

Acts 11:14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’