

“The Blood of Jesus”

Christianity is a blood-soaked religion. There is a crimson stream that runs throughout the Bible’s history. It begins in the 3rd chapter of Genesis and courses through every page to the book of Revelation. Though many religions and even so-called churches say very little about it and some of the most popular preachers in America barely mention it, blood is a critical element to not only physical life, but spiritual life. Without it, we simply cannot be saved.

Hebrews 9:11-14 “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Here, the apostle is contrasting the Levitical priesthood and the worship of the tabernacle and the sacrifices that took place in the tabernacle under the old economy, with the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, which was offered once and for all.

Hebrews 9:22 “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

The Hebrew writer unequivocally states that our salvation is the result of the shedding of the blood of Jesus. Without it, there is simply no forgiveness of sin. But have you ever wondered why God made such a demand? Why couldn’t our salvation have been accomplished by some other means that wouldn’t have required ultimately Jesus to die? And how does His blood cleanse us from sin?

For many years, the church has sung a wonderful hymn that goes as follows:

*“There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”*

I submit to you that there has never been a man forgiven by God of His sins who did not have the blood of Jesus Christ applied to His soul. Not one single person.

Colossians 1:23 “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

Ephesians 2:13 “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

I Peter 1:18-19 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”

The word “*redeemed*” means that we were *purchased or bought back*. We were slaves to sin, you see, being sold on hell’s auction block as it were, but God spared no expense. He bought us with the purchase price of His own Son’s precious blood.

There is a crimson cord that runs all throughout the Bible. In every age of the world, men have had to provide the blood of a sacrifice to appease the wrath of God. We’ll talk about why that is in a few moments, but in both the Old and New Testaments, no person has ever been spared the punishment of his sin without shedding the blood of another living thing. In fact, the precedent of a bloody sacrifice for sin was set in the very dawn of man’s existence. It wasn’t long after the creation of Adam and his wife, Eve, until they had violated the commandment of God. God had said that if they broke His law, they would die, and physically, they DID bring death into the world by their sin.

However, God made a provision that would satisfy His demand for justice-eternal justice, and at the same time, delay the spiritual punishment that they had coming to them. He allowed something else to die in their stead, and in this case, it was an animal of some sort. We believe that to be the case because when Adam and Eve sinned, you recall they realized that they were naked and they were ashamed of their condition. So, they made crude garments or aprons out of leaves in a feeble attempt to cover themselves. However, when God sought them and convicted them with the guilt of sin, He wasn’t pleased with their efforts to cover their bodies and rid themselves of their feelings of shame. What they had made was inadequate.

Well, there is a great spiritual parallel in that. The Bible tells us that God made them garments from the skin of an animal. That’s the first occasion of a living thing dying as a result of sin. Man in his own ingenuity and wisdom or his own strength or works could not cover his own shame and sin; it took a sacrifice. God was—right there in the garden—setting up a system of atonement. He was establishing a principle that would remain forever: the only thing that could begin to atone for man’s sin and pay the debt that man incurred by sinning, was the blood of something once alive. We’ll explain why that is a little later.

As we read in **Hebrews 9:22**, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission or forgiveness. That principle was firmly established in the garden. When the sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, came to offer a sacrifice unto the Lord for their sin, you recall that Abel, who was an animal farmer, brought a sacrifice “*of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof*” (**Genesis 4:4**). Cain was a vegetable farmer, and the Bible says that he prepared a sacrifice of the fruit of the ground and offered that to the Lord. I’m sure that both of these men, in their own way of thinking, were bringing the best that they had, but of course God was highly displeased with Cain, because he tried to offer a sacrifice to the Lord that wasn’t bloody in nature. That’s what was wrong with Cain’s sacrifice: it wasn’t done by faith, and it therefore was not done according to what God had said.

Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Cain had circumvented the plan of God and tried to substitute something of his own doing. Well, the scripture says that God had respect unto Abel and his offering (**Genesis 4:4**). That's because Abel's sacrifice met God's requirement. You see, Abel's sacrifice prefigured the blood of Christ that would be shed 4,000 years later. Cain's sacrifice represented man's useless attempts to approach God without the right kind of sacrifice. The sacrifice of grain, even if it were the very best that could be found, could never represent the sacrifice God would one day demand, in the giving of His Son, Jesus, upon the cross of Calvary.

Well, we go on down to the establishment of the Hebrew nation and their enslavement in Egypt and we recall how that Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord and refused to let the people go. So, God sent a series of plagues upon the people of Egypt to display His matchless power and convince Pharaoh to free the Hebrews. Not only did those plagues serve to show Pharaoh what he was up against; they were also designed to destroy the heathen religion of the Egyptians. Those plagues interfered with the practices of their priests and the operation of their religion.

But the last and the worst plague was the death of the firstborn. God promised that He would pass through the land that dreadful night, and kill the firstborn of every family. However, God would spare the Hebrew children by delineating their houses with a special marking: God told Moses to have the Hebrews kill a lamb, and to take the blood of that lamb and sprinkle it on the doorpost of the house and to get inside. They were to *stay under the blood*, as it were. They were to be in the house that was marked by the blood of the Passover lamb. And they dared not leave that house when night fell. God would swiftly ride through Egypt on the **wings** of death, but remember what He said:

Exodus 12:13 "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

Well, God's orders were carried out, and when morning dawned, there was a terrible cry throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house that didn't have a corpse within it, except for those houses that had been marked--per God's instruction--with the blood of the lamb.

That blood that saved the eldest Hebrew child in Egypt represented the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, shed for the sins of all mankind some 1,500 years later.

I Corinthians 5:7 "...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us..."

So, Pharaoh thought that he'd had enough, and he let the Hebrews go free. They crossed the Red Sea, as God defeated the Egyptian army, and they began their trek through the wilderness toward the land that God had promised Abraham many hundreds of years before. So, with the nation that sprang from Abraham formed, God gave a law to govern them. It was now that God established a priesthood among the Levites and He had them construct a tabernacle. He revealed the sacrificial ceremonies that were to take place within it. Two of the items that God placed within it were the *altar* and the *mercy seat*.

Now, there were many blood sacrifices offered upon that altar by the priest day by day, but there was one special sacrifice that was made *one time a year*. It was called on the Israelite calendar *the Day of Atonement*. On that day, the high priest over all the people would make a sacrifice. He would take the blood from that sacrifice into what was called *the Holiest of all*, and that's where the mercy seat was. That's where God dwelt, in the midst of His people. It was through the ministry of that high priest, who alone could enter that sacred chamber that God met His sinful people on the terms of a sacrifice. The high priest would make his annual trek to the holy of holies with the blood of that sacrifice, and he would present it to God before the mercy seat.

The Bible teaches that something very interesting took place at that time: God would *push forward*, or we might say *roll forward* the punishment of man's sin for one year. Well, that took care of all of the sins the people had committed up to that point. In other words, the punishment was delayed and they could be accepted of God. However, the next year, on the Day of Atonement, the same thing happened: a sacrifice was offered. The high priest made his annual trip into that hallowed place to present the atoning blood before God. Every year, they made that remembrance of sin by performing that ritual.

As the years rolled on and generations passed, you can see what was happening: the sins of the people were accumulating into a giant debt that ultimately had to be paid. You see, those animal sacrifices weren't paying the debt of sin. You might say they were merely making the interest payments. You may owe a large debt to a creditor, and that creditor will usually allow you to make a minimum payment. The problem is, if all you do is make the minimum payment, you're not going to pay off the debt. You're essentially appeasing the creditor by paying the interest, but eventually, the debt comes due.

In a sense, that's what God was doing with the sin of man. He provided, under the Old Testament economy, what we call a limited system of atonement, which allowed men to make the minimum payment, so to speak. But Paul tells us that those animal sacrifices back yonder could never take away sin (**Hebrews 10:11**). What was actually occurring was that those high priests were rolling the sins of the people forward, eventually to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, where He, the unblemished Lamb of God, would pay the debt in full. That's why John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus one day, pointed at Him and said:

John 1:29 "...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Look at what Paul would say about the sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews 10:11-12 "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

And some time after His death on the cross, Jesus assumed His role as our High Priest. He entered into the holy of holies, heaven itself, and he offered His blood to God as the full and final atonement—a check, if you please, as payment in full for our sins. What a wonderful and thrilling thing to step back and look at how God, through the ages of time, unfolded His plan of redemption for the fallen human race, and finished it in Jesus Christ!

That brings up a few questions: first, why did God require blood as a payment for sins to begin with? Second, why wouldn't the blood of those animals suffice? In other words, why did it take the blood of Jesus to fully pay for sin?

Well, God requires a bloody sacrifice for sin because sin's debt had to be paid and sin is the transgression of God's law. Since God is righteous and holy, sin could not go unpunished. God's law demanded that man pay with his life for breaking His law. The problem is that God loved the sinner so much that He wanted to allow man to live, and yet pay the debt his sin had incurred. So, a life had to be given in exchange for the sin that man had committed.

Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls..."

First, the word *atonement* can be defined by looking at it in its individual parts. When you divide the word, it literally says *at/one/ment*. In other words, atonement for sin means God and man, who were separated because of sin, can be *one* again. The breached relationship can be repaired. Moses said the thing that makes that possible is the blood, and the reason is because the life of the flesh is IN the blood. Blood is essentially the life that was taken away from another creature, meaning that something died to pay the penalty and the debt for sin.

So, to our second question, why couldn't animals continue to die for man? Why did Jesus have to die? Because of this simple but profoundly important principle: the purchase price has to be equal to or greater than the value of the thing purchased. Well, the life of man is far greater in the sight of God than that of an animal. Man was given dominion over the animals when he was created. The blood of a million animals could never equal the worth of one human soul made in creation in the image of God! They sufficed as a payment of interest to delay the wrath of God and temporarily appease His requirement for justice, but those sacrifices could not pay the principal and cancel the debt.

Now, Jesus' blood was more precious than any other because He was sinless! You see, you're a sinner and I'm a sinner. We've ALL sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus never sinned. He was perfect. He is perfectly righteous, and therefore He became the unblemished Lamb of God that was offered for the sins of the whole world. Paul says exactly that.

Romans 3:23-26 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Now, did you get that? All of those past sins were rolled forward to His cross, thanks to the forbearance of God, and finally Jesus died to cancel that massive debt. And in so doing, He fulfilled the requirements of justice, and at the same time, justified those who had sinned, but had faith in His blood to remedy the problem. What a wonderful scheme! Glory to God for the redemption that He provided us in Christ Jesus, our precious Lord! No wonder Peter would say:

I Peter 1: 18-19 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”

My friend, that is why Jesus had to endure the torture and the humiliation of the cross: so the debt that you and I had racked up with our sinful living could be paid. Surely we see that He paid a debt we could've never paid, and that at the very least, WE owe HIM our lives and all we have in return.

We are saved by being washed in the cleansing blood of Jesus, but how do we do that? How is that blood applied to our sin-stained souls? Remember what Jesus told Saul of Tarsus when He met him on the road to Damascus. Saul, then a sinner, would be visited by Ananias, who would tell him what he was to do, according to **Acts 9**. Well, Saul (who the Lord renamed Paul) later recounted what he was told by Ananias.

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

When does the blood of Jesus wash our sins away? How do we call upon the name of the Lord? When we arise and are baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, Peter told the sinners listening to him on the Day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:38 “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”

They weren't washed in Christ's blood by 'praying through.' They were washed when they, by faith, and in repentance, obeyed Christ in baptism for the remission of their sins. Have you done that? His bloodshed on Calvary is there to wash away every sin you've committed and to cleanse you of all unrighteousness if you'll respond in faith and be baptized into Christ this very day.