

Blood: An Overview

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****COVID-19 SPLIT SERVICE****

It is good to be with you this morning! I hope all of you have the elements for the Lord's Supper, either from home or from the table in the entryway, as we will be partaking of the Supper immediately after our study of the Word. Following the Lord's Supper, we plan on singing one song before we head outside for some Christian fellowship. These times of fellowship have truly been a highlight for me over the past few months, and I hope they have been for you as well.

As you can see, we are starting (as we usually do) with a summary of God's plan for our salvation. God sent his only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He lived a sinless life and was then crucified, he was buried, and he was raised up on the third day. We respond to this good news by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by confessing Jesus as the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to imitate his death, burial, and resurrection, in the act of baptism, an immersion in water. At that point, our sins are forgiven and the Christian life begins.

And once again, we have some examples! We have some good news, starting with Adrina, who was baptized last Sunday, I believe, by Eugene Lawton, at the congregation in Newark, NJ. We rejoice with Adrina and her new Christian family this morning.

We also have another update from John Roe, from the Lord's church in Phoenix, Arizona. David and Sonia were both baptized out there over the past few days. So, we rejoice with David and Sonia this morning.

We also have a post that was made by Debbi, from Texas, regarding the baptism of her granny this past week, 93 years old. I don't have her name, but she was apparently baptized by her son. Her son looks to be around 70 himself, but we are thrilled at her decision to obey the gospel. A week or two ago, we briefly referred to the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, where the landowner hired people at different points throughout the day and paid them all the same. Obviously, we don't know granny's future (she may outlive all of us), but there's a chance (at 93) that she's been born into God's family at the 11th hour, so to speak. What a joy for that family!

And I finally, in a round-about way (through Olivia), got the "okay" to share a few pics of Jesse's baptism from a few weeks ago (on Sunday afternoon, September 6). Jesse has been attending for several months, he's been

studying the Bible with Olivia and with John, and he made the decision to obey the gospel three weeks ago. We are so thankful for his example. And again, we share all of this by way of encouragement. What all of these people have done, you can do this morning. If you have any questions at all, any concerns, any objections, please get in touch.

This morning, I'd like for us to start a brief series of lessons based on a request that came in from two of our members who join us on the phone each week. As you might know, when the pandemic started and we had to go online, one of our young men was concerned about those without any internet access. Most of us could stay at least somewhat connected online – through the Facebook Livestream group, and through the YouTube link that's emailed out every Sunday and Wednesday. However, there are several of us who don't have Internet, and so, one of our young men set up a dedicated phone server, and we've learned so much over the past few months. Basically, we have a dedicated phone line where people can call in and listen live at 10:30 every Sunday and at 7 p.m. every Wednesday. Then, when class or worship are over, the phone repeats over and over and over until the next service, and so on, and this has been going on since March. You know how when you call in to a big company and you end up listening to music while you're on hold? Basically, he set up a phone server, and our classes and worship services are the hold music! So, you call in and are instantly on hold, listening to worship – over, and over, and over! One of our seniors let us know that when she can't sleep, she calls in in the middle of the night, and my preaching apparently cures her insomnia! As a church, we basically pay per minute, but it has been a valuable tool. And we were leading the way on this, providing a way to connect, even for those without internet access. As you can see on the back of the bulletin each week, we usually have around ten people who join us on the phone each week, and we are glad you can be with us.

Well, several weeks ago, I sent an actual piece of paper to most of you joining us on the phone, I mentioned it in class and in the sermon for a few weeks, and I was asking for sermon requests from you, from those of you who join us on the phone. I got two requests. The first was for a sermon on ANXIETY from Philippians 4:4-8. So, several weeks ago, I sat down to study this passage, and as I looked through my books and resources, I suddenly realized: We just covered this in April! I could hardly believe it until I looked at the PowerPoint. It was the visual that reminded me! Some of you might remember: We used an image that was created by Carly. She shared it with me a few months earlier, I took a picture of it, and then I got her permission to use it. So, we have studied anxiety from a Biblical perspective in the recent past, even during the pandemic.

Well, several weeks ago, I got another request from our phone audience, and this one we have not covered for a while. The request was for a study on the importance of BLOOD. There were several subtopics, but that seems to be the gist of it. Since we're streaming and all that, I won't share any names, but the sister who shared the request says that when her husband recently received a blood transfusion, he said that he feels like a new man! And that experience got them thinking about the importance of blood in the Bible.

This morning, then, I want us to do an OVERVIEW of blood in the Bible. Next week I hope we can study the BLOOD OF JESUS. I'll be out of town for two weeks, and when I return, I'm hoping we can study how to APPLY the blood of Jesus in our lives. This morning, though, let's start with something of an OVERVIEW of blood in the Bible. We do a quick search, and we find that the word **"blood"** is found more than 400 times in the Bible. Our study, then, is significant. And as we study, as we try to categorize some of these passages, I want us to look at just three major concepts concerning the importance of blood in the word of God, and to do this, we will not be limiting ourselves to one passage (as we usually do), but we'll be moving around. So, do not lose heart! I hope you can look up each passage. Do not give up.

I. **And the first big idea we need to consider is the basic truth that LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD.**

And this basic concept goes back, almost to the very beginning, to Genesis 4. When Cain kills his brother Abel, God steps in and says to Cain (in Genesis 4:10-11), ***“What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.”*** It’s not explained in depth here, but we start to have a clue (from the very beginning) that blood is associated with life. When blood is shed, a life is taken.

This concept is solidified a bit immediately after the great flood. In Genesis 9, God declares “open season” on animals. Before the flood, we could only eat plants, but after the flood: If you can kill it, you can eat it! But there is a restriction. Notice, please, Genesis 9:3-6, where God says,

Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.

So again, life is in the blood, and this is the first time we read about “bloodshed” as a synonym for murder. Under God’s covenant with Noah and his descendants, if you shed the blood of another human being, another human being has every right to shed your blood, because mankind has been made in the image of God. In other words, life itself is sacred, and life is in the blood.

This is repeated in the Law of Moses. They are not allowed to eat the blood of animals, and God gives the reason in Leviticus 17:11, where he says, ***“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.”*** We’ll get back to the idea of ***“atonement”*** in just a bit, but for now, we have this first big idea, that life is in the blood. Blood is important.

We know this. However, we also know that we have not always known this. Scientifically speaking, just a short time ago, doctors thought they could cure people by bleeding them, by releasing harmful vapors from the human body. And so we had leeches, we had veins cut open in the arms. We think of George Washington and the theories around his death. I would encourage you to look into that. He complained of a sore throat and hoarseness, among other things, his doctor drained 80 ounces of blood in a series of four bloodlettings in a 12-hour period, and then he died. Doctors still can’t agree as to the cause of death, but they do agree (now, anyway) that draining close to 40% of all of the blood in his body did not help his situation.

Because now, we know, as the Bible teaches, that life is in the blood. Blood is not the problem; blood is the solution! Blood carries oxygen to the brain. Blood carries critical nutrients throughout the body. Blood is critical in regulating body temperature. Blood transports carbon dioxide and other waste products back to various organs to be filtered or exchanged. Blood is crucial to fighting infection. Blood has its own amazingly designed way of clotting to plug leaks in the system and not clotting to prevent plugging up the system. Red blood cells do not have a nucleus. And that’s weird, at first, but it allows those red blood cells to carry oxygen as they squeeze through some very tight places. You can see it on the image up here. They are concave, allowing them to squeeze and even fold over to get where they need to go. At rest, our blood circulates throughout our bodies roughly once every minute. With exercise, that can increase to once every ten seconds. Most of us don’t have

any advanced medical training, but even from a few high school or college science classes, we know that what God says back in Genesis and Leviticus is completely true: Life is in the blood.

II. There's a second big idea for us to consider concerning blood in the Bible, and that is: BLOOD CAN BE OFFERED AS A SUBSTITUTE OR AS A KIND OF PAYMENT FOR SIN.

And the idea is: Since life is in the blood, life can be offered for life. A substitute is made: One life for another. And we see this several times in the Old Testament...

A. ...starting with ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

We studied this passage a few months ago, so we won't go in-depth here, and it's not even explained in any great detail, but we do notice something interesting. After the first sin, Adam and Eve realize they are naked, so (in Genesis 3:7) they try to cover themselves with fig leaves. That doesn't quite do it, though, so a bit later in the chapter (in verse 21) God makes "*garments of skin for Adam and his wife*" and he clothes them. Again, we don't have any detail here, but it seems rather safe to assume that when God himself makes Adam and Eve some leather clothing, there is some BLOOD involved. In other words, because of their sin (because they ate of the tree) an animal had to die. An animal died to cover the consequences of their sin. This seems to be the beginning of animal sacrifice. Blood is shed to cover sin.

B. The second example comes in the next chapter, with the SACRIFICES OFFERED BY CAIN AND ABEL.

And once again, we don't have too much detail, but it seems that the need for blood sacrifices continues. Starting in Genesis 4:3, ****PPT**** Cain and Abel bring offerings to the Lord. Cain brings his from the "*fruit of the ground,*" Abel brings his from the "*firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions,*" and we find in this passage that, "*...the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.*" Now, if this is all we had, we might think that God is being a bit random here, that for no reason whatsoever, he just so happened to like one offering more than the other. However, way over in the New Testament, ****PPT**** we come to Hebrews 11:4, where we find that, "*By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.*" So, we find here that Abel's sacrifice is "*by faith.*" His sacrifice was accepted, because it was offered "*through faith.*" That might also seem a bit random, until we come to Romans 10:17, where Paul says, "*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*" An act of faith, then, is something that's been motivated by hearing the word of Christ, the word of God. In my mind, I put all of this together, and it seems rather safe to assume that God must have asked for an animal sacrifice. I wouldn't swear my soul on that conclusion, but I hope you see how I came to it. Abel's sacrifice of an animal was "*by faith,*" motivated by him being told by God to offer that kind of sacrifice. Cain's offering from his crops, on the other hand, was rejected. It was NOT by faith, it was not according to the word of God. I say all of this to point out that the substitution of blood as a kind of payment for sin seems to continue.

C. And the final example I want us to notice from the Old Testament is the PASSOVER.

In Exodus 12, we have the Israelites getting ready to leave Egypt after many years of slavery, and on the night before they leave, God commands the people to kill a perfect lamb, one for each household. And when they kill this lamb, they are to take the blood and basically smear it around the doorway of each house. And by doing this, when the angel of the Lord would come through later that night to kill every first born in Egypt, whenever

the angel sees the blood around a door, he would “*pass over*” that home and would allow the firstborn in that family to live. As we have in verse 13 (on the wall or screen), God says, “*...and when I see the blood I will pass over you.*” By applying the blood to their doorposts, the people were demonstrating their faith in God through their obedience to God’s commands. A substitute was made. A lamb died so they didn’t have to die.

We don’t have the time today, but this basic concept continues on throughout the Old Testament: Sacrifices are offered as a substitute – life for life – as blood is shed as a kind of payment for sin.

III. **Before we move on, there is something else I want us to notice from the Old Testament (in terms of blood), and that is: BLOOD IS SOMETIMES USED TO RATIFY OR SEAL AN AGREEMENT OR A COVENANT.**

There are several examples, but the most famous and most graphic is what happens when God first gives the Law to Moses. Notice, please, Exodus 24:4-8,

⁴ Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. ⁶ Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” ⁸ So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

So, they sacrifice, they collect the blood in basins (or buckets, as we would say today), they have buckets of blood – part they sprinkle on the altar, the people promise to obey, they promise to uphold their end of the covenant, and to signify this Moses sprinkles the rest of the blood on the people, “***Behold the blood of the covenant.***” I’m trying to imagine what this must have looked like. This is a group of maybe 2 million people, and here’s Moses slinging blood all over everybody – buckets and buckets of blood – there’s blood absolutely everywhere. It’s on their faces, and sandals, all over their clothing. This is a sign of the covenant. The Law of Moses was ratified with blood. This is an agreement between God and the people, and it is sealed with blood. “***Behold, the blood of the covenant.***”

Hopefully this is familiar to us, because Jesus uses some very similar language when he institutes the Lord’s Supper, “***...for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins***” (Matthew 26:28). We’ll get back to that next week, but for now, by way of overview, in the Old Testament, blood is sometimes used to seal or ratify an agreement, or covenant.

Conclusion:

Here at the end, as we think about the role of blood in the Old Testament, I hope we start to realize that all of this is merely a shadow of what’s coming in the New Testament. If I were to take a flashlight and shine it on my hand, you could see a shadow on the ceiling – you could recognize it as being a hand, but my actual hand is what’s real. In a similar way, Jesus is real, the church is real, but the Law of Moses is a shadow, a shadow beforehand. In literature, we refer to this as “foreshadowing,” literally, to show or indicate beforehand, to give

clues before something happens. That's what the Old Testament does with Jesus. All of this is foreshadowing. In the Old Testament, God gives clues about what is about to happen. When he explains that life is in the blood, when he sets up this system where blood is used as a substitute, when he seals various covenants with blood, God is preparing his people for the arrival of Jesus. Next week, then, I hope we can take what we've learned today and move forward, from the Old to the New, as we apply all of this to Jesus and his sacrifice.

As we close our study this morning, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

We praise you this morning for making a way for us to be saved when we sin. We are amazed at the design that we see in the human body, and today we are thankful for blood and the role that it plays in your eternal plan. We are thankful for our blood and the life it provides. But more than anything, we are thankful for the blood of your Son.

Thank you for Jesus. We come to you this morning in his name. Lord, come quickly. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com