

THE LION, THE LAMB AND THE BLOOD

By

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Nothing in all history impacts the human race like the death and resurrection of Jesus. But this generation, for the most part, fails to see the heart of the matter, and few people seem to make the connection between the blood of Christ and their own eternal destiny. The Christian who has fathomed the meaning of the blood of Christ has seen the heart of God as He is touched by our sin, in both His judgment and His mercy.

Jesus spoke of His “blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). Paul said that “we have been justified by His blood,” (Rom. 5:9) and John wrote that Christ “loosed us from our sins by his blood” (Rev. 1:5).

In the fifth chapter of Revelation (Verses 1–5) John describes his vision in which no one is able to open the book sealed with seven seals. Then he is told that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has overcome, to open the book, but when John looks for a lion, he sees a lamb (Vs. 6), a lamb that has been slaughtered, to which the four and twenty elders sing a “new song” saying, “You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and with your blood you bought for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation” (Vs. 9).

The blood of the Lamb. When God determined to slay the first born in Egypt, He provided a way of escape for the sons of Israel, who dwelt there as slaves. They were to slay a lamb and put some of its blood around the doorways of their houses. The blood was the evidence that a lamb had been killed, and the first born in those homes would be saved from death.

The issue here was life and death, and the shedding of blood was the means by which the animal was put to death. “The life of the flesh is in the blood, therefore I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the life” (Lev. 17:11).

Wherever blood was used in sacrificial offerings, it signified that death had taken place. However, the death of animals was not sufficient for meeting the penalty of man’s sins, as is explained in Hebrews. “For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). The needed sacrifice was found in Jesus. “Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime in bondage” (Heb. 2:14–15).

When the prophet Isaiah described the coming of a suffering servant to redeem God’s people, he pictured Jesus as a lamb, led to the slaughter, dying for the people “to whom the stroke was due” (Isa 53:7–8). Just as the lamb was put to death to save the first born Israelites from death, Jesus was slain that we might be saved from death in the day of judgment. John the Baptist, therefore, introduced Jesus by saying, “Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Expressions such as “the cross of Christ” and “the blood of Christ” are euphemisms that always signify Christ’s death. We are cleansed, washed, sanctified, and justified by His blood only in that His blood means

His death. Paul could write that “we have been justified by his blood” because when Jesus shed His blood He was dying for us under the penalty of sin. “Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21).

He underwent God’s judgment on our behalf, so that in the day of judgment we might receive a favorable verdict, and thus be justified. In effect, the judgment has already taken place on the cross for believers, who “by faith” are “justified by His blood” (Rom. 5:1, 9).

Some Twisted Ideas. The principle of Jesus undergoing judgment on our behalf by dying our death is simple enough, but many kinky ideas have been derived from expressions referring to His blood.

Some hold that the blood of Jesus saves us because it was special and divine. A gospel song has as its theme the idea that “just one drop of His blood” will cleanse you from all sin. If that were true, there would have been no need of Jesus’ death. One can lose a lot of blood without dying!

The fact is, the blood of Christ was ordinary human blood, as stated in Hebrews 2:14, that He shared the same kind of flesh and blood as those He came to save. There was nothing magic about His blood; it served the same purpose for Him as it does for all mankind. The giving of His blood meant the giving of His life. It was not the blood that was different, but the person. Jesus was the sinless Son of God, thus He could pay our penalty for sin.

Sometimes heard is the statement that we are baptized in order to “meet the blood of Christ.” Scripture does not suggest this, but does say that we are “baptized into His death” (Rom. 6:3). Baptism (immersion) is somewhat similar to a death, burial and a resurrection, as Paul writes: “We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). The significance here is not in “meeting the blood” but in being united with Christ in His death (Vs. 5).

Others misunderstand Jesus’ statement that we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:53), interpreting this to mean that in the communion the wine (or grape juice) actually becomes His blood. Of course, it doesn’t. Jesus explained, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). It is in a spiritual sense that we fill ourselves with the body and blood — the very life — of Jesus, as expressed by Paul: “Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

Some of the most popular hymns give praise to the blood of Christ. We sing of being “washed in the blood of the Lamb,” of the One “whose blood can cleanse each spot,” and “There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the lamb.” Such expressions would be ridiculous were they meant in the natural sense. But when taken in spiritual and Biblical sense, they express wonderful and mighty truth. By His death Jesus cleanses us and performs the wondrous work of redeeming us from sin and thus from death at the final judgment day.

The Lion. Like a lamb being led to the slaughter, Jesus willingly submitted to crucifixion that the final penalty for our sins might be met. His death demonstrates that God’s laws are important — a life and death matter. While it may be politically correct to make no discrimination between moral values, and even ignore Biblical standards altogether, the fact is that Christ died because God takes His laws very seriously. His

death also demonstrates God's tremendous love and mercy, in that He would give His Son that we might not suffer the final death at judgment (for our sins), but might have life and immortality.

By sacrificing himself Jesus gained a great victory over the world, sin and death, making Him worthy to "take the book and open the seals thereof" (Rev. 5:9).

But in John's vision Jesus is also identified as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5.5). After Jesus, the Lamb, was obedient even unto death, God raised him up, exalted him, and gave him all authority in heaven and on earth. No longer is he the lowly lamb, submitting to the abuse of evil men who oppose God. Now He is the King, reigning on the throne of David, and will return to judge the world in righteous judgment (Acts 2:30-31, 17:31).

It is fitting for us to sing about the blood of Christ, if by this we have in mind that value of His death for us. To acknowledge His death is also to acknowledge our debt to Him. Following the example of Jesus, Christians are to humbly obey the Father, and be willing to suffer tribulation and the persecution of the oppressors in patience.

"He died for all that they that live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again" (II Cor. 5:17). To glory in His death is a sham unless we put ourselves at God's disposal, to be used as His servants to please Him.

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