

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

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First edition published 1972. Fifth edition published 2002.
Third impression 2015.

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 1-55764-036-X

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Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all [unknown, or forgotten sins] unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

THE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

THE BLOOD METAPHOR

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST symbolizes the most important event ever to occur throughout the ages of angelic and human history. The phrase, “the blood of Christ,” is a metaphor for the saving work of Christ on the cross. The cross was the terrible price Jesus Christ paid for our so-great salvation. Unless believers understand the true connotation of this figurative phrase, they cannot fully appreciate what Christ has done for them.

This is a sensitive subject for many believers. For some the blood of Christ has been associated with a lifetime of emotional experiences. Since childhood they have heard the blood mentioned in hushed, reverent tones; they have vigorously sung the hymns about the “wonder-working power in the blood”; or they have grown up with the idea that there was a special power in the red liquid that circulated through Jesus’ mortal body. Without even knowing its source, some believers cling to the old dogma that Christ carried His blood with Him to heaven in a bowl. This specious idea from the Dark Ages continues to perpetuate a form of mysticism around the physical blood of our Lord.

While some believers are ignorant of the doctrine of the blood of Christ from a simple lack of expository teaching, others are ignorant as part of a devastating system of hidden arrogance in their souls. The first category of individual has enough objectivity to listen and learn; he simply needs biblical information. The other type, however, is affected by a much more serious and complicated malady. Instead of being interested in what the Bible has to say, he considers his own view of the blood to be more important than God's view. He would rather resist divine viewpoint than permit his pride to be deflated. To such a believer, the true doctrine of the blood is not simply a matter of learning something new and important; it is a challenge to his colossal arrogance. As the old saying goes, "Do not confuse me with the facts!" The only antidote is humility—recognition of the authority of the pastor-teacher who consistently teaches the Word of God. Bible doctrine will deflate pride and establish true spiritual growth on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ.

There is no biblical basis for attributing mystical or unusual properties to the physical blood of Christ. The term, blood of Christ, is far more significant than any magical power falsely ascribed to His bodily fluids. We will see in great detail that His physical blood has absolutely nothing whatever to do with substitutionary atonement.¹

In the Bible, αἷμα (*haima*), "blood," can have several literal meanings which include human blood and animal blood. However, when the New Testament speaks of the blood in relation to the sacrifice of Christ, it *does not* refer to literal blood. "The blood of Christ" is always a figure of speech. The Greek lexicographer, Walter Bauer, devotes an entire paragraph to the figurative use of the word in relation to Christ. He describes "the blood and life as an expiatory sacrifice . . . especially the blood of Jesus as a means of expiation."² Likewise, Vine states, "the 'blood' of Christ . . . betokens His death by the shedding of His 'blood' in expiatory sacrifice."³ Bullinger categorizes phrases such as "justified

1. That Christ died as a substitute for all mankind is the doctrine of unlimited atonement (John 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:10; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2).

2. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 22.

3. W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1985), 70.

by His blood” (Rom. 5:9), “redemption through His blood” (Eph. 1:7), “brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13), and “released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev. 1:5) as double metonymy referring to the “merits of His atoning death.”⁴ Further, Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary* confirms that the blood of Christ in the New Testament is “simply a pregnant verbal symbol for the saving work of Christ.”⁵ “Pregnant verbal symbol” means figurative language. In other words, Christ did not bleed to death to pay the penalty of sin. The term, blood of Christ, is a metaphor for His expiatory death in which He received the judgment that removed the penalty of sin.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

The blood of Christ is the supremely valuable coin of the realm that purchased our salvation. As such, the blood of Christ has permanent, eternal results toward Satan, toward man, toward sin, and toward God.

The blood of Christ combined with His resurrection, ascension, and session won the strategic victory over Satan in the angelic conflict.⁶ We know that in eternity past, before the creation of man, Satan and one third of all the angels revolted against God (Isa. 14:13–14; Ezek. 28:12–15). A trial was held in which God sentenced Satan and all of the fallen angels to the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20). Upon his sentencing Satan appealed his case, blasphemously charging that a *loving* God could not condemn His own creatures to eternal judgment. Ignoring his own culpability, Satan impugned the character of God.

However, God can never violate His own perfect character. His righteousness and justice prevent all of His attributes from being compromised including His love. Satan’s appeal attempted to make God’s love the only issue in condemnation. But God’s love cannot be separated from His righteousness and justice.

4. Metonymy is a figure of speech by which one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 610–11.

5. Johannes Behm, “αἷμα” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel; trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:175.

6. R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Angelic Conflict* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2012). See also *Anti-Semitism* (2003). Hereafter, cross-references to my books will cite only author, title, date of publication (in the first reference), and page(s).

To resolve the appeal once and for all, God created mankind. Just as with Satan and the angels, God provided man with free will. Man could accept or reject the Lord Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. Man rejected His plan and thereby duplicated the conditions of the prehistoric rebellion. God the Father demonstrated His perfect love by sending His Son on behalf of fallen mankind.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us. (Rom. 5:8)⁷

Whenever anyone expresses positive volition and believes in Christ by faith alone, he becomes a witness to God's unfailing love, the perfection of His character, and the righteousness of His judgments (Rev. 16:7). Man being free to believe or not to believe underscores volition as the issue in the angelic conflict and demonstrates to Satan that he alone is responsible for his own condemnation. Satan's doom is sealed; the blood of Christ secures God's final triumph in the angelic conflict.

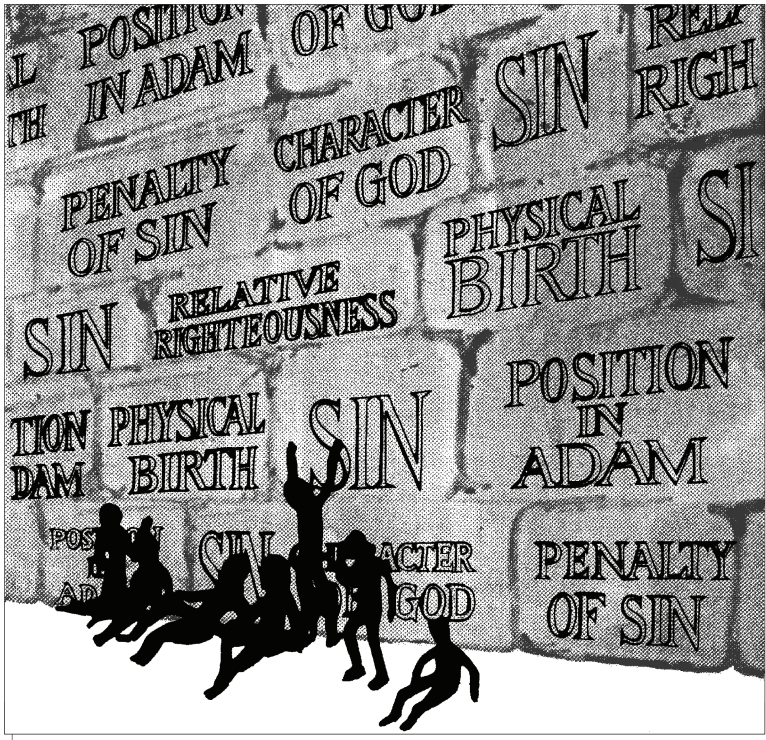
Directed toward man, the blood of Christ destroys the barrier that separates man from God.⁸ The enmity between God and man is replaced with "peace."

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood [*haima*] of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. (Eph. 2:13–14)

This is the doctrine of reconciliation (Col. 1:20). Removed forever is the impassable barrier constructed of the bricks of sin, the penalty of sin, physical birth, man's relative righteousness, the perfect character of God, and man's position in Adam.

7. All Scriptures in this book are quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Bracketed commentary reflects amplification of the NASB translation taught in Bible class lectures (available on MP3 CD from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, Houston, Texas).

8. Thieme, *The Barrier* (2003).



THE INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIER

Never again are any of these problems an issue for man seeking a relationship with God; the only issue is, What do you think of Christ?

At the moment of faith in Christ the believer ceases to be God's enemy and immediately becomes a member of the royal family of God forever (Rom. 5:10).⁹ Standing entirely upon the merit of the Living

9. A unique title, King of kings and Lord of lords, and a position of royalty were awarded to Jesus Christ upon the completion of His strategic victory on the cross over Satan and His ascension and session at the right hand of God the Father. In order to complement Christ's new "battlefield royalty," the Father is preparing a royal family on earth during the Church Age that is distinct from the rest of the family of God and will accompany and glorify Christ forever. Also called the Church, the Body of Christ, and the Bride of Christ, the royal family includes every Church Age believer (1 Cor. 12:27; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 19:7). See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History: Dispensations and the Church* (1999), 64–66.

Word who is Jesus Christ (John 1:1–2, 14), the believer enters the plan of God in which the written Word, or “mind of Christ,” becomes his spiritual food (Matt. 4:4; 1 Cor. 2:16). By his continued positive volition to Bible doctrine the believer will, in time, grow to spiritual maturity and receive and enjoy the special blessings that God designed for him in eternity past (Eph. 1:3–6). The mature believer’s life becomes one of meaning, purpose, and definition; even death holds the promise of greater blessings in eternity (Phil. 1:21).

With reference to sin, the doctrine of redemption teaches that on the cross the blood of Christ purchased our freedom from the slave market of sin.¹⁰

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood [haima]* of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:18–19)

In Him we have redemption through His blood [*haima*], the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. (Eph. 1:7)

Jesus Christ paid the penalty which had already been charged against each one of us (Col. 1:14; 2:14). Now, as believers, even though we will continue to sin as long as we live (1 John 1:8, 10), we are nevertheless delivered from the power of sin which is the control of the sin nature.¹¹ Since all sins were judged on the cross, we can simply name, or cite, our postsalvation sins privately to God the Father, and be immediately restored to fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9).¹²

10. Thieme, *Slave Market of Sin* (1994).

11. Except for Jesus Christ, the sin nature is an integral part of every human being, the center of man’s rebellion toward God. Synonyms for the sin nature include: the “old man” of Ephesians 4:22 (KJV); the Adamic nature of “flesh” of Romans 8:3–4; the principle of “sin” of Romans 7:8–20; and the genetic perpetuation of the sin nature and spiritual death “in Adam” of 1 Corinthians 15:22. The sin nature resides in the cell structure of the body and is the source of temptation, lust, and human good, but man’s volition is the source of sin. See Thieme, *God the Holy Spirit vs. The Sin Nature* (2013), 1–4; *Rebound and Keep Moving!* (1993), 3–9; *Reversionism* (2000).

12. This is called the rebound technique. When the believer privately acknowledges his sins to God the Father, the judge of the Supreme Court of Heaven, He does the same thing every time; He forgives those sins and purifies the believer from all wrongdoing (1 John 1:9). See Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!*

Directed toward God, the doctrine of propitiation teaches that the blood of Christ satisfied the perfect righteousness and justice of God with reference to man (Rom. 3:25–26; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood [*haima*]. (Rev. 1:5b)

Man's imperfection and total unworthiness no longer present an obstacle to relationship with God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy, and His propitious sacrifice on behalf of mankind brings everyone under God's plan of grace. In fact, the Father's entire grace plan consists of all that He is free to do for man on the basis of the cross.

Because of propitiation through the blood of Christ, God the Father is now free to justify or vindicate anyone who believes in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Justification is a legal, or forensic, act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous because He has imputed His own perfect righteousness to him. Justification and imputation resolve the problem of man's relative righteousness (Rom. 4:3).

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Rom. 5:8–9)

The blood of Christ also establishes the doctrine of positional sanctification which demands that God be propitiated before being free to place the believer in union with Christ where he becomes qualified to live with Him forever (1 Pet. 1:2).¹³

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood [*haima*], suffered outside the gate. (Heb. 13:12)

13. At the moment of salvation every Church Age believer is entered into union with Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The believer shares all that Christ is and has, including eternal life (1 John 5:11–12); righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21); election (Eph. 1:3–4); predestination (Eph. 1:5–6); adoption (Gal. 3:26); heirship (Rom. 8:16–17); priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9); sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2); royalty (2 Tim. 2:11–12). See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 85–88.

THE PENALTY OF SIN

Jesus Christ had to experience the cross in order to redeem the human race from the slave market of sin. But what kind of death would He have to die that could pay the price God required? Christ had to die in the same way that Adam died. The death that Adam would die was stated even before he fell.

“But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [representing Satan’s plan as opposed to God’s plan] you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die [spiritually].” (Gen. 2:17)

The verb מוּת (*mut*), “to die,” actually occurs twice in the Hebrew text of Genesis 2:17 and is literally translated “dying you shall surely die.” But when Adam bit into the fruit, disregarding the Lord’s gracious warning and rejecting His plan, he did not suddenly keel over and die. In fact, Adam lived for 930 years after his original sin (Gen. 5:5). Thus, it is obvious that God’s warning of Genesis 2:17 did not refer to physical death. Instead, the grammatical structure of this phrase emphasizes the intensity of the death declared by God.¹⁴ If Adam or the woman disobeyed the Lord’s prohibition, the penalty would be immediate and severe: spiritual death—total separation from God. The wages of sin is not physical death; the wages of sin is spiritual death.¹⁵ Adam and the woman died spiritually the moment that they ate of the forbidden fruit (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 6:23). Therefore, Jesus Christ had to pay the price of spiritual death.

After Adam and the woman lost their relationship with God, out of fear they tried to hide from the One with whom they had enjoyed great rapport and daily fellowship. In an attempt to compensate for their loss and disobedience of God’s prohibition, they originated Operation Fig

14. The grammatical structure that indicates emphasis is the absolute infinitive of *mut* preceding the finite form of *mut*. See Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 37–38.

15. Physical death is an eventual result of spiritual death, but physical death is never the same as spiritual death. If physical death were the same as spiritual death, members of the human race would all die physically at birth since we are all born spiritually dead.

Leaves—a system of human good (Gen. 2:25; 3:7).¹⁶ They covered their nakedness in an attempt to adjust to His righteousness and justice. But their human solution was totally rejected by God.

God's absolute righteousness can have nothing to do with man's relative righteousness; even man's finest and noblest efforts can never impress God (Isa. 64:6; Titus 3:5). Because God cannot compromise His character, He can only reject spiritually dead mankind. God's policy permits a relationship between creature and Creator on His terms only.

Adam and the woman had both exercised negative volition, had both acquired a sin nature, and were both sinners. Yet there was a difference in the way in which they had sinned: the woman was deceived, while the man sinned knowingly and deliberately.

And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. (1 Tim. 2:14)

Adam's sin of cognizance made the male the genetic transmitter of the sin nature in procreation (Rom. 5:12). Adam's sin nature becomes our sin nature. That Adam's sin nature is passed down through the man and not the woman is substantiated by the prophecy and fact of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:26–37).

As the ruler of the world and the representative, or federal head, of the human race, Adam's decision to sin was a decision to sin for all of us. He secured the condemnation of the entire human race because the entire human race was seminally in him (Rom. 5:12, 14–15).¹⁷ At the moment of our physical birth, Adam's original sin is imputed to the genetically formed sin nature in us. Adam's sin becomes our sin. We are condemned not because of our own personal sins, but because of Adam's original transgression.

We are therefore born physically alive, but spiritually dead—incapable of having a relationship with God. We are born into what is

16. Human good is any benevolent deed produced by an unbeliever or a believer under the control of the sin nature and in Satan's cosmic system. Human good and evil are characteristics of spiritual death or carnality. Human good is Satan's *modus operandi*; evil, his *modus vivendi*. See Thieme, *The Integrity of God* (2005), 82–83.

17. Seminally in Adam means the entire human race was effectively present with Adam when he sinned because all are derived genetically from him; this resulted in man's total depravity. We are Adam's seed and share his corrupted nature.

tantamount to a slave market of sin. Spiritually dead and totally depraved, we are in no position to buy our own freedom, let alone purchase the freedom of others. Only a free man can redeem a slave, and there is only one person who ever was or ever will be born outside the slave market of sin—Jesus Christ!

The Virgin Birth and the Impeccable Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was the “seed” of the woman, not of the man (Gen. 3:15).¹⁸ God made a miraculous provision in the reproductive biological process to fulfill the promise that Christ, the seed of the woman, would become the sinless Savior.¹⁹ In order to be born without a sin nature and outside the slave market of sin, the Savior could not have a human father. Thus, the virgin birth becomes extremely important. Both Joseph and Mary possessed sin natures, but because there was no male involvement in Jesus Christ’s conception, there was no genetically formed sin nature (Luke 1:26–37).

Therefore Jesus Christ was born true humanity, but without the sin nature and the imputation of Adam’s sin. He was born spiritually alive—a *unique birth*! In addition, Christ had volition just as we do, and the free will of His humanity was put to the test time and time again (Matt. 4:1–11). Yet for the entire thirty-three years of His life, He did not commit a single act of personal sin—a *unique life*! Adam was *created* spiritually alive and through his volition became spiritually dead. Jesus Christ, the Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), was the only person ever *born* spiritually alive and to have lived without personal sin, yet He deliberately chose to go to the cross and die spiritually on behalf of all mankind.

Because of His virgin birth and impeccable life, Jesus Christ was the only one qualified to purchase our salvation. When the Father evaluated His own Son, in effect, He pronounced Him, “Acceptable!”

18. Thieme, *Heathenism* (2001), 11–12.

19. Throughout the reproductive process of meiosis in the male, the twenty-three chromosomes of the sperm remain contaminated by the sin nature. However, in the reproductive process of meiosis in the female, the sin nature is thrown off in polar bodies so that the ovum is free from the sin nature. When the ovum is fertilized by the sperm, the ovum becomes contaminated with the sin nature. Thus, beginning with the fertilized ovum, every cell of biological life possesses the sin nature, except for Jesus Christ. See Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 65–70.

The perfect person of Christ and His substitutionary sacrifice satisfied the righteousness and justice of God. Now, salvation for all mankind was possible through faith alone in Christ alone.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST PRIOR TO THE CROSS

Throughout all of human history, from the fall of Adam to the end of the Millennium, there is only one way of salvation—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).²⁰ Believers who lived before the death of Christ looked ahead through faith to the coming Savior, just as believers after the death of Christ look back through faith to the historical cross. But how could those who lived before Christ died on the cross be saved by an event that had not yet happened?

Whom God [the Father] displayed publicly [Jesus Christ] as a propitiation in [by means of] His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His [the Father's] righteousness, because in the forbearance [delay in judgment] of God He passed over the sins previously committed [before the cross]. (Rom. 3:25)

Romans 3:25 reveals that God suspended judgment of sin until the cross occurred. He “passed over” all previously committed sins, waiting until the fullness of time when He would judge all the sins of the world in His own perfect Son (Rom. 5:6). During the three-hour period in which Christ was judged, salvation was accomplished for all mankind whether they lived in the past, in the present, or in the future.

In the entire history of the human race there has never been a single individual who did not have the opportunity to express faith in the Savior.²¹ The Scripture says of Abraham, “Then he believed [by faith alone] in the LORD [*Yahweh*, the Second Person of the Trinity],²² and

20. The Millennium designates a literal period of one thousand years beginning after the Second Advent of Christ in which He will fulfill all unconditional covenants to Israel, reign on the throne of David, and establish worldwide peace and perfect environment on the earth (Isa. 11; 35; 65:17–25).

21. Thieme, *Heathenism*.

22. The Lord was revealed in the Old Testament under the sacred Tetragrammaton יהוה. *Yahweh* was the name by which Israel identified the Second Person of the Trinity. In other contexts, *Yahweh* refers to God the Father or the Holy Spirit. Out of reverence the Jews never pronounced this name; instead, the Lord was called אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*).

He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3). God always provides Gospel information whenever and wherever positive volition exists.

Throughout the centuries before the cross, Jesus Christ was revealed in the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. The sacrifices were used to teach the doctrines of salvation and rebound. Even before His first advent, blood illustrated the work of the Savior.

Animal Sacrifices

Prior to the cross and the completion of the canon of Scripture, God ordained specific rituals as expressions of worship and as training aids for communicating His grace plan to people who were mostly illiterate. Beginning with the very first sacrifice immediately after the fall of man (Gen. 3:21), continuing through the family offerings (Gen. 4:4; 8:20; 22:1–14), and finally taking the form of the Levitical offerings (Lev. 1–5) and special holy-day offerings in Israel (Lev. 23), the shedding of animal blood portrayed the future, substitutionary sacrifice of the coming Savior.²³

The innocent animal’s blood was an apt representation of a life given on behalf of others because the animal’s blood is its life. When the Scripture states that “the life [נֶפֶשׁ, *nephesh*] of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:10–14), the context is referring to the physical life of the sacrificial animal. The Hebrew word *nephesh* sometimes means “life” and sometimes “soul,” but when used of animals, it means life. When referring to man, *nephesh* may be translated “soul” or “the inner being” (Gen. 2:7). Because animals do not possess a soul, the seat of animal life is in its physical blood.²⁴

However, the seat of man’s life is the soul resident in his body. While it is true that a person can ‘bleed to death,’ he actually dies

23. Thieme, *Levitical Offerings* (2004).

24. The soul is the image of God in mankind (Gen. 1:26–27; cf. 2:7). Of all God’s creatures no other is said to be made in the image of God. Therefore, man is unique in his possession of a soul. See Thieme, *The Origin of Human Life* (1994), 3–7.

For further information on the term *nephesh* as “life” and “soul,” see Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 659; U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1961), 1:106; Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 237–38.

physically when his soul is forced out of his body through a greater loss of blood than his body can sustain. Therefore, the end of human life is the separation of the soul (and, in the case of a believer, his human spirit) from the body.²⁵

The immaterial soul, composed of mentality, volition, self-consciousness, and conscience, expresses itself through the thinking process of the corporeal brain.²⁶ When the brain ceases to function, the soul is no longer in residence. Therefore, the electroencephalogram (EEG), which measures the electrical impulses generated in the brain, not the electrocardiogram (EKG), which measures heartbeat, is the true indicator of human life or death. The heart can stop completely, and the soul may still be in the body. Often physicians can restart the heart and reactivate the pulse through electric shock, heart massage, or some other technique. But once the EEG registers negative the brain is dead, and even though the heart may continue to beat, the soul has vacated the body and the person is dead.

But in the animal, life terminates when the blood separates from the body and all physical function is destroyed. The blood of the bulls, goats, lambs, turtledoves, and young pigeons used in the offerings was therefore the literal, red liquid that constituted the life of the animal poured out in its death. The animal's throat was cut so as to shed its literal blood. When the blood pumped out of the severed carotid artery and the animal's heart ceased to beat, that was a true indication of the animal's death. Then, the animal's lifeblood was collected and carried through the detailed rituals that pictured Christ's salvation work. Accompanied by the priest's explanation, these rituals were lucid analogies depicting the real meaning of events that would occur on the cross. The animal's blood was a perfect, visual, training aid.

While the people could not visualize God's actual future judgment of sins, the animal's death was a vivid sight! The animal on the altar represented Christ on the cross. The physical death of the animal portrayed the spiritual death of Christ. The blood sacrifices were the shadow, the analogy representing the reality of the events on the cross.

25. The believer is trichotomous—he has body, soul, and human spirit (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). The human spirit was designed by God to make spiritual phenomena understandable (1 Cor. 2:12). It is given to every believer at the moment of salvation and is the home for the imputation of eternal life. See Thieme, *The Barrier*, 8–10.

26. Thieme, *The Plan of God* (2003), 5–7.

For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. (Heb. 10:1)

Established as part of the Mosaic Law, animal sacrifices themselves were never able to provide salvation. No one ever gained salvation by keeping any part of the Law, whether it be the Ten Commandments of the Freedom Code (Codex I), the social and political rules of the Establishment Code (Codex III), or the rituals of the Spiritual Code (Codex II).²⁷ Instead of providing salvation, these rituals formed a complete shadow Christology. Through repetition, rituals reminded the Jews that they were sinners and taught them to appreciate the matchless Savior and His work on their behalf.

Why all the blood? Why did God institute such a sanguinary system of ritual? The answer: to illustrate the price of propitiation. The violence and bloodshed involved in the Levitical offerings were designed to shock the observers into recognizing the reality of God's immovable character.

The righteousness and justice of God must be satisfied. God in His awesome glory can never compromise any attribute of His character, not even in the smallest point. If He did, He would not be God. Everything that God does must be just in every detail and in keeping with the perfect standards of His righteousness. Because man's sinfulness is maladjustment to divine standards, God's righteousness demands judgment.

The death struggle of an innocent animal tore away all sweetness and sentimentality and cast a stark light on the absolute standards of God. The animal's death gave the observers a glimpse of the appalling cost of satisfying the demands of God's inviolable righteousness and justice. Jesus Christ would pay the price that divine justice demanded. He would suffer as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS

"Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When any man of you brings [קָרַב, *qarab*] an offering [קָרְבָּן,

27. Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 32–34, 40, 61–63.

qorban] to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock.’” (Lev. 1:2)

While all Israel could watch and learn from the sacrifices brought by others, every Jew was required to bring a personal offering to the Lord. The Hebrew verb for “bring” is *qarab* meaning “to come near, to approach.” The Hebrew noun *qorban*, “offering,” is from the same root as the verb. The Greek equivalent is κορβάν (*corban*), a transliteration from *qorban* (Mark 7:11). Both *qorban* in the Hebrew and *corban* in the Greek were the means to approach God. Thus the Levitical offerings represented the love and grace of God that provided the means by which sinful, fallen man could come to Him through the substitutionary spiritual death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

Four out of the five Levitical offerings authorized by the Mosaic Law required the shedding of animal blood (Lev. 1—6). Two of the five, the sin offering (Lev. 4:2–25) and the trespass offering (Lev. 5:1–6:7), depicted the work of Christ related to rebound (1 John 1:7–10). The remaining three ceremonies taught specific doctrines of salvation. The burnt offering (Lev. 1) emphasized the work of Christ in propitiation. The gift offering (Lev. 2) also taught propitiation, but this bloodless offering portrayed the perfect person of Jesus Christ. The peace offering (Lev. 3) also called for the shedding of blood, but this time with emphasis on the doctrine of reconciliation.²⁸

OFFERING BROUGHT	TO REPRESENT	
BURNT	SALVATION	Propitiation: Work of Christ
GIFT (no blood)	SALVATION	Propitiation: Person of Christ
PEACE	SALVATION	Reconciliation
SIN	REBOUND	
TRESPASS	REBOUND	

LEVITICAL OFFERINGS

28. Thieme, *Levitical Offerings*.

THE BURNT OFFERING

The burnt offering, which illustrated salvation by the shedding of blood, could come from any of three sources: “from the herd” (Lev. 1:2–9), “from the flock” (Lev. 1:10–13), or “of birds” (Lev. 1:14–17). Each type of animal emphasized some aspect of propitiation. In all cases the animal had to be “a male without defect,” just like Christ was without defect (Lev. 1:3, 10). The various animals that were acceptable allowed believers of any economic status to bring an offering to the Lord. Even the poorest could afford a pigeon or a turtledove. This provision illustrated God’s grace in the availability of salvation to all.

The Jewish believer who brought the offering did so from his own free will (Lev. 1:2) as an expression of his nonmeritorious positive volition toward the Savior. They looked forward to the coming Messiah; they understood that the animal blood was “*only* a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb. 10:1). However, the ceremony held no true significance for the unbeliever because ritual without reality is meaningless.

The young bull “from the herd” was a picture of Jesus Christ as a servant. The Lord would become true humanity, “taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7b). The “bull without defect” (Lev. 4:3) illustrated that the perfection of the incarnate person of Christ satisfied the righteousness of the Father. On the cross the Lord Jesus Christ would offer Himself to be judged for the sins of the world in order to satisfy the justice of the Father (Isa. 53:9; cf. Matt. 26:39, 42; Heb. 9:14; 10:1–14).

The vigorous, perfectly healthy, young bull was taken to “the doorway of the tent of meeting.” The symbolic transfer of sins from the sinner to the sinless animal was performed in the ritual when the offerer’s hand was placed on the bull’s head (Lev. 1:3–4). The sins of the offerer were identified with the animal to be slain on his behalf, just as He “who knew no sin” was made “sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

“And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted [רָצָה, *ra’ah*] for him to make atonement [כִּפָּר, *kapar*] on his behalf.” (Lev. 1:4)

“It may be accepted” is from the Hebrew verb *ra’ah*, meaning “to take pleasure in, to delight in.” In the *niphal* stem it means “to graciously receive,” and thus, “the burnt offering shall be graciously

received by God.” The burnt offering illustrated the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father, accepting the propitiatory work of His Son on the cross. The verb *kapar* means “to cover, to overlay, to make an atonement.” Found here in the piel (intensive) infinitive, it reveals the intensity of Christ’s future sacrifice. By His spiritual death Jesus Christ would cover, or make atonement for, our sins.

After the bull was identified with the offerer’s sins, a sharp knife severed the bull’s carotid artery causing the powerful, struggling beast to pump the blood out of his own body. The spurting blood that soon covered the offerer, the priest, the altar, and the ground was a spectacular demonstration to the Jews of the cost of substitutionary atonement—the spiritual death of Christ on the cross. When Hebrews 9:22 states that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness,” the writer had the animal blood required by the Law in view (Matt. 26:28). The context of the passage relates the blood sacrifices to their fulfillment in the reality of Christ.

As the ritual continued, the bullock was burned.²⁹

“He shall then skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. Then Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the suet over the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar. Its entrails, however, and its legs he shall wash with water.” (Lev. 1:6–9a)

Special instructions for the additional parts of the bull, “its entrails” and “its legs,” are dealt with in verse 9a. First, they were washed in water brought from the brazen laver. The laver furnished water for the ceremonial cleansing of the priests in keeping with God’s command that “Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it” (Ex. 30:19). All who “carry the vessels of the Lord” must be clean (Isa. 52:11; cf. Eph. 5:18, 26; Heb. 10:22); that is, they must be in fellowship with God. Symbolically this taught the importance of confession of sin. Rebound must always precede worship.

Then, the additional parts of the bull were also burned.

29. Thieme, *Levitical Offerings*, 19–30.

“And the priest shall offer up in smoke all of it on the altar for a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.” (Lev. 1:9b)

Burning was a picture of the divine judgment of sins in Christ. Out of the fire of judgment, the gaseous smoke was a “soothing aroma” to God the Father, indicating His satisfaction with the work of the Son.

The offerings “from the flock” also taught soteriology. All these animals were identified with the offerer’s sins and slain to depict the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. The sheep or goat (Lev. 1:10) presented Christ as the qualified sin-bearer (John 1:29). The goat emphasized the sins to be borne by Messiah on the cross, while the sheep was yet another picture of the substitutionary sacrifice of perfect, sinless humanity for imperfect, sinful humanity. The birds focused attention on Christ as the resurrected God-man.

The turtledove represented the ultimate in perfection, the deity of the Messiah, but since it was brought as a sacrifice, more than His deity was in view. The burnt offering from the birds pictured the hypostatic union: Jesus Christ is undiminished deity and true humanity united in one person forever.³⁰ The dove would shed its blood and be burned, but this offering focused attention on what would occur after salvation had become an accomplished fact. Jesus Christ alone was resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven, and was seated in highest glory and honor at the right hand of the Father.³¹

By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. (Heb. 10:10–12)

Our Savior’s acceptance into heaven is the final proof that His work on the cross was totally efficacious, that God the Father was propitiated once and for all, and that believers are guaranteed bodily resurrection (John 11:25).

30. Thieme, *Christian Integrity* (2002), 212–16; *The Divine Outline of History*, 37–39.

31. All believers who died before Christ’s resurrection and ascension accompanied Him to heaven, but they will not receive their resurrection bodies until the time of His second advent.

God's awful wrath against your sins and mine along with those of the entire world, including the sins of every Jew who ever approached with an offering, was received by the Lord Jesus Christ during His last three hours on the cross. His excruciating pain of separation from the Father, a pain more intense than anything that could be imagined, was dramatized by the violent, cruel deaths of these valuable, innocent, and flawless animals. No Jewish believer could forget these grisly scenes that were repeated time and time again. The shedding of blood, both in the detail of the ceremony and in the shock of the execution, was designed to permanently imprint the doctrine of atonement on the souls of offerers and observers alike.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

In addition to the daily offerings and the sacrifices that were offered at the time of the new moon, the Jews brought special offerings on the holy days. These feast days included the Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles (Lev. 23). Each feast possessed great doctrinal significance, but more than all of them, the Day of Atonement was the most solemn (Lev. 16; 23:26–32).

יום הכִּפּוּרִים, *yom hakkippurim*, or more commonly *Yom Kippur*, literally means “the Day of Covering.” This was the only day on which the high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle or the Temple after it had been constructed. Even on the Day of Atonement, he could enter only after he had brought an offering on behalf of his own sins (Lev. 16:13).

Two sacrifices were required on this high holy day: a young bull as a sin, or rebound, offering for the high priest and one of two goats as a rebound offering for the people. First, the high priest sacrificed the bull on the brass altar as an offering for himself. The blood was collected in a basin and carried past the huge curtain into the Holy of Holies. There it was sprinkled on the mercy seat (Lev. 16:6–14).³²

[Jesus Christ] Whom God [the Father] displayed publicly as a propitiation [ἱλαστήριον, *hilasterion*, “mercy seat”] in His blood. (Rom. 3:25a)

32. Thieme, *Levitical Offerings*, 71–78.

The Greek word for propitiation, *hilasterion*, in Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5 and the Hebrew word, כַּפֹּרֶת (*kapporet*), in Exodus 25 and Leviticus 16, both literally mean “lid,” or “cover,” and refer to the mercy seat over the ark of the covenant.³³ The ark was a wooden box overlaid with gold that stood in the Holy of Holies. The acacia wood symbolized Christ’s humanity; the gold, His deity. Together these materials represented the hypostatic union of the God-man.

The ark contained three items: a pot of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the Law (Heb. 9:4). Each of these items depicted sin: the tables of the Law were a reminder of Israel’s violations of the Mosaic Law and transgression against God’s authority; Aaron’s rod exhibited rejection of God’s plan regarding the authority of the Levitical priesthood; and the pot of manna was a reminder of man’s rejection of divine provision.

The mercy seat covered the emblems of sin in the ark. On each end of the mercy seat stood the golden figure of a cherub. One represented God’s perfect righteousness; the other, His absolute justice. Righteousness and justice looked down on sin and condemned it. But once a year on the Day of Atonement, the blood of a young bull was sprinkled on top of the mercy seat as a covering for sin. When the righteousness and justice of God looked down on the mercy seat, He saw not the sinfulness of man represented in the contents of the box, but the atoning blood which had been sprinkled over the golden lid. The blood symbolized the completed work of Christ covering the sins of the high priest. This ceremonial blood sacrifice depicted the satisfaction of God’s righteousness and justice.

The high priest then went out and sacrificed one of the goats as an offering for the people. Bringing the goat’s blood in a bowl, he entered the Holy of Holies a second time and again sprinkled the blood over the mercy seat (Lev. 16:15–16). The blood-covered mercy seat depicted the blood of Christ as the real covering for the sins of all of Israel, and, indeed, for all mankind.

Only by way of the symbolic blood of the animals could the high priest even enter the Holy of Holies. But when Jesus Christ was judged on the cross, the great veil that blocked entry to the Holy of Holies was ripped by God from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mark

33. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 10, 405.

15:38; Luke 23:45). The rent curtain symbolized the removal of the barrier between God and man through the blood of Christ.

And not through the blood of goats and calves [the Day of Atonement sacrifices], but through His own blood, He [Christ] entered the holy place [the presence of the Father] once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (Heb. 9:12)

During the Incarnation, Jesus Christ never entered the shadow Holy of Holies in the Temple. But when He ascended, He entered the real Holy of Holies, the presence of God in heaven (Heb. 9:24). Unlike the Levitical high priest who upon entering the Holy of Holies had to first offer a sacrifice for himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, required no special offering on His own behalf. Instead, the perfect Savior offered Himself as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of all mankind. He entered heaven one time and sat down. That was all that was required.

The dramatic and familiar rituals that communicated salvation and rebound throughout the Old Testament centuries were fulfilled by the blood of Christ. Once the reality arrived, there was no longer any need for the shadows. The animal sacrifices ceased to be valid the moment they were fulfilled on the cross.

Yet, apostate Jewish believers in Jerusalem around A.D. 60 were denounced in the epistle to the Hebrews for continuing to offer sacrifices in the Temple. By their offerings, they were said to “again crucify to themselves the Son of God” (Heb. 6:6), making a mockery of His work on the cross. Since the Lord Jesus Christ had entered heaven, it was the height of stupidity and blasphemy for them to prefer a dead animal over the living Son of God. Animal sacrifices will not be authorized again until the Millennium (Ezek. 39:17, 19; 40:42; 44:11). Then, with Jesus Christ present on earth, they will serve as a memorial to the cross, glorifying the reigning King of kings and Lord of lords for His matchless accomplishment.

THE TWO DEATHS OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ died twice on the cross; He died spiritually in separation from the Father and then He died physically by dismissing His soul and

spirit. The fact that Christ died both spiritually and physically is confirmed by the context of a number of passages. For example:

For if while we were enemies [unbelievers], we were reconciled to God through the [spiritual] death [θάνατος, *thanatos*] of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:10)

This verse connects reconciliation with *thanatos*. Reconciliation, as part of the work of salvation of Christ on the cross, was completed before Christ died physically. Therefore, *thanatos* here can only refer to spiritual death. In Colossians 1:22 *thanatos* is also used in connection to reconciliation and again refers to Christ's substitutionary spiritual death.

Yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through [His spiritual] death [*thanatos*], in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach. (Col. 1:22)

However, Christ's physical death is the subject of Romans 1:4.

Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead [νεκρός, *nekros*], according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 1:4)

When the Bible speaks of "resurrection from the dead," the Greek word used for "dead" is always *nekros* and always refers to physical death. Therefore, when Christ was resurrected from *nekros*, as in Romans 1:4, He was resurrected from physical death. Christ's resurrection provides the believer with confidence that physical death is defeated by the promise of our resurrection to eternal life.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [*nekros*]. (1 Pet. 1:3)

The difference between the two deaths of Christ cannot be emphasized too strongly. Although His physical death has great significance, it was not efficacious for salvation. The difference between the two deaths can be best understood by studying the chronology of the cross.³⁴

34. Thieme, *King of Kings and Lord of Lords* (2004), 37–49.

Spiritual Death on the Cross

Our Lord was on the cross for six hours, from approximately nine o'clock in the morning until about three o'clock in the afternoon. He was physically alive during the entire period, but He suffered spiritual death during the final three hours, when the sins of the entire world were poured out on Him (Mark 15:33–34; cf. 1 Pet. 2:24).

As the Lord Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin, He revealed His spiritual death to the world by screaming, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?” (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; cf. Ps. 22:1). He was forsaken because

He [the Father] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf. (2 Cor. 5:21a)

Since the righteousness of God the Father could have nothing to do with sin, He had to separate Himself from the humanity of Christ while those sins were imputed and judged on the cross. Jesus Christ's separation from God the Father—His spiritual death, the most excruciating pain that will ever occur—was *the judgment* for sin, *the cost* of atonement.

After the judgment of sin was completed Jesus Christ shouted, “τετέλεσται” (*tetelestai*), “It is finished!” In the perfect tense *tetelestai* means “finished in the past with results that go on forever.” What had Christ finished that would have eternal results? *The work of salvation!*

When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, “It [atonement for sin] is finished!” And [then] He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit [physical death]. (John 19:30)

Our Lord said, “It is finished,” to indicate that His work was completed. Note that He spoke these words *before* He died physically. Since He was still alive on the cross *after* the work of salvation was completed, His subsequent physical death could not be the payment for sin. Therefore, it is Jesus Christ's *substitutionary spiritual death* alone that is efficacious for our salvation.

The Physical Death of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ remained physically alive until after His salvation work was finished (John 19:30). Once His mission for the First

Advent was accomplished, He died in a magnificent and honorable way. Jesus Christ was fully in command of Himself on the cross. In spite of all that He had endured there was no last-moment panic or regret by our Lord. His physical death was worthy of His true royalty and of the resounding strategic victory in the angelic conflict that He had just won.

First, with a powerful voice, He stated in His dying words the spiritual legacy that He was leaving to believers on earth. Second, at the end of this ‘last will and testament,’ He died physically by His own volition—no one took His life, nor did He bleed to death. With His work on earth finished, the Father’s plan called for Him to depart, so He dismissed His own spirit. Just as His birth, His life, and His spiritual death were unique, so His physical death was also unique. Jesus Christ was the only person authorized to dismiss His own life.

“I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” (John 10:17b–18a)

He died physically in fulfillment of His own words. By an act of His own volition, His soul and human spirit left His body, and only then was He physically dead.

Matthew records the fact that Christ made a final statement before He released His soul and spirit.

And Jesus cried out [shouted] again with a loud voice, and yielded up *His* spirit. (Matt. 27:50)

While Matthew makes no mention of the content, he emphasizes the strength and self-control necessary for Christ to shout His last words. Mark relates another aspect of this event.

And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed [exhaled] His last. (Mark 15:37)

By using the verb ἐκπνέω (*ekpneo*), “to exhale,” Mark focuses attention on the Lord’s fantastic breath control—Christ exhaled a final statement and did not inhale again.

In Luke’s account, we finally come to the content of our Lord’s final words.

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father [indicating Christ’s restoration to fellowship with God

after salvation was complete], INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” And having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46)

However, Luke does not record the entire statement. Instead, he provides us with a reference to the passage of Scripture that Jesus quoted from the Old Testament. The complete text is found in Psalm 31:5.

Into Thy hand I commit my spirit;
Thou hast ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth [doctrine].
(Ps. 31:5)

Jesus quoted the words of David. At a time when David desperately needed deliverance from his enemies, he had taken refuge in the God of “truth” or “doctrine.” So, too, the strength, inner resources, and spiritual assets on which Jesus Christ relied on the cross were also provided by the doctrine resident in His soul. Thus, our Lord revealed the momentum of the spiritual life—the perception and application of Bible doctrine.

In His dying breath the Lord Jesus Christ made Bible doctrine the spiritual heritage of the royal family of God. In fact, He exalted His Word above His own person and reputation (Ps. 138:2). Just as the legacy of His spiritual death is salvation, so the legacy of His physical death is Bible doctrine. Just as salvation is the basis for relationship with God, so Bible doctrine is the basis for spiritual growth.

After Christ announced His legacy of doctrine, His soul departed for Hades (Ps. 16:10; Luke 23:43; Acts 2:27; Eph. 4:9);³⁵ His human spirit went into the presence of the Father (Ps. 31:5; Luke 23:46); and His body went into the grave (Luke 23:53). This was His physical death.

The Importance of His Physical Death

Physical death is a consequence of spiritual death; it is not the penalty for sin but a result of sin. Yet our Lord’s physical death was *not* a consequence of His spiritual death. He did not suffer spiritual death as a fallen man but as perfect, sinless man. He was still perfect after paying

35. All believers who died before the resurrection of Christ waited in that area of Hades (or Sheol, to the Jews) called Paradise or Abraham’s Bosom. No human being was acceptable in heaven until Christ had propitiated the Father. See Thieme, *Victorious Proclamation* (2002), 19–21.

the penalty for our sins and being restored to fellowship with the Father. Therefore, our Lord did not die physically as a result of His temporary separation from the Father, but because His ministry and work of the First Advent were completed.

More importantly, His physical death was absolutely essential for His resurrection and is an indispensable part of the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1–4). Without the resurrection our “faith is worthless.”

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (1 Cor. 15:14–17)

Physical death prepared the way for Jesus Christ to become the “first fruits” of those raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20–23). Furthermore, His physical death, resurrection, and eventual Second Advent lead to the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant—the resurrected Jesus Christ in hypostatic union will reign forever as the Son of David (2 Sam. 7:13). Thus Christ’s physical death is related to resurrection and glorification, rather than being the mechanics of atonement for sin.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE CRUCIFIXION

The Hypocrisy of Religion

Typical of the evil of religion, the zealous Jews were very particular about the superficialities of religious life while ignoring, avoiding, and rejecting the things of eternal importance.³⁶ Outwardly they were pompous and self-righteous in their strict observance of ritual; inwardly they were arrogant, jealous, filled with pettiness and hatred, always ready to retaliate against anyone who dared challenge their in-

36. Religion is an antigrace system whereby man by his own human good works, effort, and merit seeks to gain salvation or the approbation of God. Antithetical to Christianity, which is not a religion but a relationship with Jesus Christ by grace through faith alone, religion is the devil’s ace trump in deceiving the human race. See Thieme, *Satan and Demonism* (1996), 4–6.

flated self-importance (Matt. 23). These religious Jews had destroyed their own souls with mental attitude sins of hypocrisy. They maintained their strict adherence to the Mosaic Law even though they had just demanded and secured the execution of the only perfect man who ever lived, their own Messiah. In effect, they had become little better than animals (Ps. 73:22).³⁷

The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation [*παρασκευή*, *paraskeue*], so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high *day*), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. (John 19:31)

What is meant by “preparation”? The Greek word *paraskeue* refers to the day when the Jews carried out all preparations for the ritual of the Saturday Sabbath or special feast days. Several Sabbaths and feast days were observed nearly one after another during the month of Nisan.³⁸ In this special time of the year, the Jews celebrated the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These feasts taught every generation of Jews to remember their deliverance from Egypt, which had been provided in grace by the power of the Second Person of the Trinity (Ex. 12:17). According to the Mosaic Law, all preparations for the Passover meal including slaughtering the lamb had to be completed on 14 Nisan before twilight (Ex. 12; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:5).

In the time of Christ, however, there was a difference between the Judeans and Galileans as to the start of 14 Nisan. The Galilean Jews measured their days from sunrise-to-sunrise; the Judean Jews from sundown-to-sundown. So 14 Nisan, or Passover, began for the Galileans at sunrise, or 6:00 A.M., and for the Judeans at sunset, or 6:00 P.M. The variance in the Galilean and Judean calendars means that the Galilean Jews, along with Jesus and His disciples, killed the Passover lamb in the afternoon and ate the Passover meal later that evening on their 14 Nisan. On the other hand, the Judean Jews killed the Passover lamb in the afternoon of their 14 Nisan, but they ate the celebratory meal on 15 Nisan—the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a high holy day and Sabbath.

37. Thieme, *Reversionism*, 27, 76–77.

38. Nisan is the first month of the sacred year in the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to March/April.

When Jesus was arrested sometime after midnight, He and His disciples had already eaten their Passover meal, the Last Supper, well before the Judean Passover lamb would be slaughtered by His enemies.³⁹ After His trials by the Sanhedrin and the Romans, Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross at 9 A.M., 14 Nisan, Judean time. Between 12 and 3 P.M., Christ died spiritually for the sins of the world—the very same time the lambs “without defect” were being slain by the Judean Jews for their Passover: “Christ our Passover . . . [who] has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7b).

The religious Jews, who were so exacting in observing all of this detailed ceremony and ritual which spoke of Christ, had just witnessed the Passover being fulfilled right before their eyes. But did they believe? They did not! Instead of accepting the Messiah, they merely wanted to get on with their hollow rituals. Blinded by religion, the Jews had failed to understand the real significance of the Mosaic Law or the holy days. Their ritual was without reality and it was meaningless. In fact, these religious leaders had just perpetrated the greatest crime in history, yet without batting an eye they proceeded with preparations for their religious observance. Today it would be like committing some heinous atrocity and then piously going straight to church.

Not a Bone Will Be Broken

Usually, the Romans left a body nailed to the cross until the flesh rotted away; they liked to make a lasting impression! But according to the Mosaic Law, a body could not remain on the cross during the Sabbath (Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54). Jesus Christ who was crucified “on a tree” was under God’s curse of spiritual death, and if left hanging on the cross overnight would defile the Land (Deut. 21:23; cf. Gal. 3:13). The religious Jews certainly did not want their victim, whom they had railroaded through the courts, to be left on the cross and defile their Sabbath. They demanded that Christ be in the grave before sunset—the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread Sabbath. Therefore, Pilate ordered that the legs of those on the cross be broken (John 19:31).

39. Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 85–89; J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 415–24.

“Leg-breaking,” from the Latin *crurifragium*, was a Roman technique to expedite the death of those being crucified. It consisted of shattering the leg bones with a heavy mallet.

The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him. (John 19:32)

In order to be able to take the bodies down by nightfall, the Roman soldiers went up to the two thieves, one on either side of Jesus, and pounded their legs until the bones were crushed. Thrown into deeper shock and unable to force themselves up to relieve the pressure on their intercostal muscles, the thieves could not exhale the rising concentration of carbon dioxide in their lungs and died of suffocation.

The Jews were waiting for the same leg-breaking to occur at the center cross.

But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. (John 19:33)

The soldiers on the execution detail that day, undoubtedly experts at recognizing physical death, saw that He was “already dead.” This conclusive testimony to Jesus’ physical death reiterated the supreme importance and infallibility of the Word of God that He bequeathed as our legacy.

The fact that the soldiers did not break His legs was a fulfillment of specific promises in the Old Testament Scriptures (Ps. 34:20; cf. John 19:36). Passover after Passover through nearly fifteen centuries, the Jews in obedience to the Law had carefully prepared the Passover lamb in such a way as never to break even one of its bones (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12). Every time they went through the ritual, they were saying in effect, “God keeps His Word. He never fails!” The aftermath of the Crucifixion revealed God’s absolute veracity. Despite the insidiously evil demands of the religious Jews, despite Pontius Pilate’s orders, despite the entire Roman army, not one bone of the true Passover, Jesus Christ, was broken. God keeps His Word in every way and to all generations.

Blood Clots and Serum

But one of the soldiers pierced His side [πλευράν, *pleuran*] with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water [ὕδωρ, *hudos*]. (John 19:34)

There was nothing accidental or incidental in anything that happened to Christ on the cross. When the soldiers had laid down their mallets, one of them picked up his spear and hurled it into Jesus' side. In doing so he fulfilled Zechariah 12:10, "they will look on Me [the Lord] whom they have pierced" (cf. John 19:37).

In order to fully understand John 19:34, it is necessary to review some of the principles related to somatic death. When the body has died after cessation of breathing and cardiac motion, irreversible changes begin to occur at various rates. These changes include cooling of the body, development of muscular rigidity, putrefaction (production of gases), autolysis (breakdown of cells), and of particular interest to us, the clotting of blood and its gravitation to dependent parts of the body.

On the cross everything Jesus Christ did and said had a purpose. Thus, He had good reason for bowing or pushing His head forward (John 19:30). It was essential that when He died physically, His body should be leaning in a specific forward position so that when the spear pierced His side, it would enter above the solar plexus and diaphragm, piercing the heart. In this forward position the blood would pour forth and establish His physical death.

At the moment of cessation of heart and lung action, Christ's blood began to sink into the dependent parts of His body and His internal organs. His forward position and the arrangement of His aorta, pulmonary artery, diaphragm, and various veins was such that a large amount of blood remained and settled in the left and right ventricles. Here the blood coagulated, and components of the blood then separated on the basis of their respective weights and the influence of gravity with the red blood cells clotting on the bottom and the platelets, white blood cells, and plasma forming a grayish-yellow layer on the top. The word *hudos*, "water," is used in the medical sense for the grayish-yellow fluid that separates from the clots in the coagulation of blood. Thus instead of "blood and water," a more accurate translation would be "blood clots and serum."

The Greek word *pleuran*, translated "side," refers specifically to the chest cavity. When the soldier's javelin penetrated upward through Christ's rib cage and chest wall without breaking any bones, it lacerated the right and left ventricles. Immediately "blood and water" gushed forth. To those like John who were watching the Crucifixion from a distance, the clots and serum flowing from Christ's body was positive proof that physical death had occurred only a short time before.

When someone dies immediately from excessive loss of blood, like decapitation or a severe wound, or has been dead for some time and in a stage of decomposition, clots and serum are not present. In the first case the blood simply exits the body as whole red blood, the same form that you see if you cut your finger. In the second case, blood does not flow at all.

Despite prolonged physical torture during His trials, nails in His hands, and physical suffering on the cross, Jesus Christ's death came without massive internal or external bleeding. As true humanity, His mortal body functioned as any normal human body would function. Although He *did* bleed from His flogged back, from His hands and feet, and from the thorns that were forced into His scalp, all these lacerations and puncture wounds *did not* kill our Lord. How do we know? If extensive hemorrhaging had been the cause of death, the result would have been very little blood remaining in the heart. The very sight of blood clots and serum pouring out is forensic medical proof not only that Jesus was physically dead, but that *He did not bleed to death*.

The literal blood of Jesus Christ was not a factor in either His spiritual or physical death. Christ anticipated that Satan would attack the cross by perverting the meaning of the blood in an attempt to obscure the importance of His substitutionary spiritual death. Thus, while still on the cross, our Lord provided proof that He did not die from loss of blood and that His literal blood was not efficacious for substitutionary atonement.

The biblical and medical evidence are conclusive. Christ's body, thrust forward, remained in the perfect position for the maximum amount of blood to settle in the dependent portion of the heart. Recorded forever in the Word of God, the soldier's spear would not only provide evidence to all who witnessed the Crucifixion as to the exact manner of His physical death, but also to those in the future who would study this verse.

THE COMMUNION TABLE AND THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

While the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were designed to communicate Bible doctrine to the Jews and to provide a ritual means of worship by which they could express their occupation with Christ,

only one form of ritual is authorized in the New Testament for the Church Age: the Eucharist or Communion.⁴⁰ Once the Old Testament rituals were fulfilled by Christ on the cross, there was no longer a need for animal sacrifices.

After saying above [verses 5–6], “SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN THOU [God the Father] HAST NOT DESIRED, NOR HAST THOU TAKEN PLEASURE *in them*” (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, “BEHOLD, I [Jesus Christ] HAVE COME TO DO THY WILL.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. (Heb. 10:8–9)

God the Father abolished the animal sacrifices “in order to establish” Christ as *the one* sacrifice for sin. The Eucharist is now the memorial to the person and work of Christ.

Communion has its origin in the Passover Feast of Israel, a feast different from the others in that it was a celebration of nationhood like our Fourth of July. On 14 Nisan in approximately 1440 B.C., the emergence of God’s chosen people out of slavery in Egypt was accompanied by an offering that commemorated both individual regeneration and the formation of Israel as a client nation to God.⁴¹

In order to avoid the devastating divine judgment of the tenth plague that was coming to Egypt—the death of all firstborn children and cattle—the Jews were ordered to sacrifice a male, yearling lamb without blemish (Ex. 12:5). “Some of the blood” of the lamb was to be painted on the sides and tops of the doors by the offerers (Ex. 12:7). When God saw the blood, He would pass over those houses and spare

40. Water baptism was an authorized ritual in the time of Christ, and for the first few years of the Church Age. In the early church it served as a training aid in teaching the baptism of the Holy Spirit before the completed Canon (A.D. 96) was in circulation. With the exception of 1 Corinthians 1:14–17 where it is mentioned negatively, there are no acts of water baptism recorded in the epistles. See Thieme, *Tongues* (2000), 30–36, 82–84.

41. Regeneration, or being “born again,” is spiritual birth at the moment of salvation when the Holy Spirit creates a human spirit in the believer for the imputation of eternal life (Titus 3:5).

A client nation is a national entity in which a certain number of spiritually mature believers have formed a pivot sufficient to sustain the nation and through which God furthers His plan for mankind. God specifically blesses and protects this representative nation so believers can fulfill the divine mandates of evangelism, custodianship and communication of Bible doctrine, providing a haven for the Jews, and sending missionaries abroad.

the firstborn. For those behind the blood, the judgment of the plague would be averted. God was depicted as being propitiated by the blood on the doorposts, just as the blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement also illustrated propitiation. In both cases the lamb represented the perfect, unique person of Jesus Christ who would bear divine judgment for sins.

The lamb was then to be eaten as a picture of faith in Christ. Just as anyone can eat regardless of whether he is moral, immoral, amoral, religious, irreligious, or nonreligious, so also appropriating the work of Christ does not depend on the merit of the one who believes. All the merit is in the object of faith. Anyone can eat and anyone can believe in Christ. Eating the Passover lamb, therefore, is a perfect picture of nonmeritorious positive volition toward the Savior.

After the first observance in Egypt, the Passover ritual changed slightly. For at least the next forty years in the desert the Jews did not have permanent doors. Instead, four successive cups of wine mixed with water were substituted for blood on the doorposts.⁴² As with the eating of the lamb, drinking from these cups of wine illustrated faith in Christ.

Passover Feast to Communion Table

The true Passover, the Lord Jesus Christ who was represented for nearly two thousand years by a spotless lamb, died as “the Lamb of God” fulfilling the shadow feast in every detail. Therefore, the night before His death, at the Passover meal or Last Supper, Jesus instituted several changes to the ancient ritual. He converted the traditional Passover meal into a memorial ceremony to His atoning work.

And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”
(Luke 22:19)

“Given thanks” is the Greek verb ευχαριστέω (*eucharisteo*) from which is derived the term “Eucharist.” Jesus said grace before the meal. Then, instead of presenting a portion of the Passover lamb, He

42. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1984, s.v. “Passover,” by C. F. Pfeiffer.

took bread, broke it, and said, “This is My body.”⁴³ Jesus was declaring to all present that He would bear the sins of the world in His body (1 Pet. 2:24). As with the Passover lamb in Israel, eating the bread, hereby instituted for the Church, is the picture of faith in Christ.

And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” (Luke 22:20)

The old covenant of the Mosaic Law, which had been ratified with the symbolic blood of animals, was now set aside. The images of lamb’s blood on the doorposts, or of the spurting blood of the burnt offerings, or of the blood of bulls and goats on the mercy seat, are replaced by the cup which speaks of the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ now ratifies the new covenant to the Church—the provisions and blessings for the Body of Christ.

The way people think about the Eucharist can dramatically reveal misconceptions about the blood of Christ. The Communion elements and the Passover lamb represent the same thing—the person and saving work of Christ. But when believers do not see the true connection between the symbolic blood of Christ on the cross and the literal blood of the animal sacrifices, they are liable to reach erroneous conclusions about the body and blood of Christ in relation to the wafer and wine of the Eucharist.

One extreme example comes from Roman Catholicism and teaches that in the Mass, the consecrated bread transforms into Christ’s actual flesh and the wine becomes His literal blood. This ‘oft-repeated miracle’ is strange indeed, but it is no more bizarre than the idea that the phrase “blood of Christ” refers to His literal plasma, red blood cells, and platelets.

There is a resemblance between participating in the ritual of the Eucharist and participating in the old and honorable New Year’s custom of Scotland, *auld lang syne*. “Old long ago” is a time to remember departed loved ones and old friends and to examine the capacity for love in one’s soul. Likewise, the mandate of Christ initiating the

43. When He made this statement, our Lord was already looking ahead to His resurrection. He needed a body in order to go to the cross, and in His resurrection body He would continue to be the God-man, return at the Second Advent, rule on the millennial throne, and be the celebrity of the universe forever.

Communion service, “do this in remembrance of Me,” requires a time of intense concentration for believers to focus on His person and the true meaning of His blood. However no believer can remember, love, or appreciate Him or His work unless he has the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16), Bible doctrine in the mentality of his soul.

Communion is not only a time of worship and remembrance, but also an opportunity to evaluate your own level of spiritual growth and occupation with Christ. Your heritage and knowledge of Bible doctrine comes into sharp focus. Doctrine resident in your soul is absolutely necessary for having the capacity to remember and love the Lord. The Communion ritual is meaningless where there is no understanding of the reality it represents. If you can concentrate on the Lord without your mind wandering for the duration of the service, you are maturing in the spiritual life.

No believer is ever to be excluded from the Communion Table. In fact, every believer is commanded to partake periodically. Local church membership or any other special qualification is not a requirement. To commemorate the blood of Christ, a person need only be a believer. But before participating in the service, he must make sure that he is filled with the Holy Spirit through the utilization of the rebound technique (1 Cor. 11:30–31).

THE ANALOGY IN REVIEW

Rather than obscuring Christ in mysticism, the Bible always reveals Him with clarity. Yet there is so much emotionalism and ignorance about this important area of doctrine that we must tie our study together in a brief summary.

Our Lord died twice on the cross. His first death is called “the blood of Christ,” a phrase which expresses the fact that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Levitical offerings. This frequently encountered phrase sets up an analogy between the physical death of sacrificial animals and the spiritual death of Christ on the cross. The blood of animals in the Levitical offerings was literal, but the judgment was symbolic. On the cross the term “the blood” was symbolic, but the substitutionary spiritual death of Christ and judgment of sin was literal.

The blood of the animal was the “shadow of the good things to come” (Heb. 9:11; 10:1). The animal’s physical blood graphically illus-

trated the spiritual event that took place during Christ's last three hours on the cross when the sins of the world were poured out on Him and judged. Christ's relationship with God the Father, which He had always enjoyed by virtue of His virgin birth and impeccable life, was severed on the cross while He paid for the sins of the world. Therefore, "the blood of Christ" is a metaphor for His spiritual death, a 'shorthand' title for the saving work of our Lord. The spiritual death of Christ was the reality that fulfilled the shadows.

Only after the completion of His spiritual death did Christ die physically. In this second death, Christ dismissed His soul and spirit; He did not bleed to death. In fact, after His physical death, most of His blood was still in His body. When the soldier threw the spear into His chest cavity, out poured blood clots and serum. This confirmation of Jesus Christ's physical death simply indicated that His work was completed.

On the cross Jesus Christ conquered sin, spiritual death, and physical death (1 Cor. 15:55–57). He won the strategic victory over the evil ruler of this world (Heb. 2:14–15). He redeemed man from the slave market of sin, reconciled man to God with the destruction of the barrier, propitiated God on behalf of man, and laid the foundation for forgiving all post-salvation sins through rebound. He fulfilled the Law (Rom. 10:4) and left a legacy of doctrine for believers on earth. As the celebrity of the universe, He ascended and was seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

When Christ entered heaven, He did not transport a bowl or a bucket of His literal blood. He entered in His resurrection body with a triumphant "Mission accomplished!" His salvation work was finished, *tetelestai*, "completed in the past with results that go on forever!"

As a result, when anyone believes in Christ, he instantly receives a permanent relationship with God through regeneration and the imputation of divine righteousness. Furthermore, as a believer in union with Christ, he becomes a beneficiary of grace. God has done all the work through the sacrifice of Christ and the believer receives all the benefit. In the accomplishment of salvation, all the merit and the credit belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that [salvation] not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Eph. 2:8–9)

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