

Doctrine of the Blood of Jesus Christ

I. Definition and Description

A. While our Lord did some bleeding on the cross, He didn't bleed to death, nor does His literal human blood have anything to do with the phrase found throughout the New Testament, "The Blood of Christ."

B. In seminary there was quite a conflict on "the blood of Christ." But I simply went to the study in Greek lexicons to cause them to recognize this important understanding of "the blood of Christ." When defining the Greek on the blood of Christ we must go to the Greek word for blood: *αἷμα* (transliterated into English as *haima*).

1. Arndt and Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon, (Walter Bauer) page 22, under *haima*:

a) Literally:

- (1) Of human blood
- (2) Of the blood of animals

b) Figuratively

- (1) As the seat of life
- (2) "Blood and life as an expiatory sacrifice, especially of the blood of Jesus as the means of expiation."

There is a great deal involved in this brief statement. There is so much involved from the Old Testament sacrifices that impact the understanding of the 'blood of Christ'. We will go through a great deal of this by looking at some verses in Leviticus. But, let's first summarize some of the important concepts to grasp an understanding of the 'blood of Christ'.

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Let's begin with "...the blood of Jesus as the means of expiation."

According to the on-line Merriam-Webster, expiation means "the act of extinguishing the guilt incurred by something," or "the act or process of making atonement for something." Another possible meaning of the word "to expiate" is "to put an end to something."

The word expiation means more than the act of making atonement and means more than that of which atonement is made. According to Chafer in Vol III, page 127, "in general the term *expiation* is more inclusive and definite than *atonement*."

Now, let's look again through our short definition of the 'figurative' use of the word blood in our lexicon, "Blood and life as an expiatory sacrifice, especially of the blood of Christ as the means of expiation."

What does this mean? What is this saying?

To simply understand you will recall that the Arndt and Gingrich Greek Lexicon speaks of 'expiatory sacrifice' as vital to understanding the 'figurative' concept of the blood of Christ. Expiation-put an end to guilt – the blotting out or removal of sin, this means that the blood or the life of Jesus Christ blotted out the sins of mankind by the spiritual death of Jesus Christ. The life of Christ, in this study, comes from the understanding of the death of the animal in the Levitical offerings. The life of the animal is in the life of their blood.

The life of an animal is in its blood; the life of a man is in his soul. When the soul leaves the body, the man dies. A believer has both a soul and a human spirit. Christ's work on the cross, the blood of Christ, is related to his spiritual death, the death of his human spirit.

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2. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament edited by Gerhard Kittel, 9 volumes of Greek word studies; in volume 1, page 175, “The ideas which the New Testament links with the blood of Christ, since the latter (New Testament), is simply a pregnant verbal symbol of the saving work of Christ.”
3. Biblical-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek by Hermann Cremer; chapter 1868 page 71 “where the blood of Christ is spoken of, the reference is not to the substance (of His blood) but to the life offered for atonement.”
4. Abridged in One Volume: of the Theological Dictionary of the N.T. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, pg 26. “ 4. The Blood of Christ is supremely significant in the NT (1 Cor. 10:16; Eph. 2:13) ---**not his material blood**” (underlined and boldness is from me).
5. New Illustrated Bible Dictionary page 221 under the study of the word ‘Blood.’ “In the N.T., this OT idea of sacrifice is applied to Christ’s blood. References to the ‘blood of Christ’ always mean the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.”

Here we find in five of the top biblical dictionaries that ‘the blood of Christ’ does not refer to the literal blood of Jesus Christ but to the Spiritual death of Jesus Christ.

C. Since the symbolism of the blood is death, two categories of death experienced by Christ on the cross will be examined in this doctrine:

His *somatic* (physical body) death refers to what happened to His *literal blood*;

His *spiritual death* refers to what happened to His *figurative death*.

The somatic death of Christ looks forward to the resurrection,

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whereas the spiritual death of Christ looks back to our sins which resulted in spiritual death. It is His figurative blood that has to do with salvation. It is the literal death of Jesus Christ that has to do with our resurrection.

D. In this battle of “figurative blood” versus “literal blood” of Jesus Christ, D. A. Carson in his response to an article in Christianity Today page 33-34, says: “A third level of the problem was painfully exemplified in three recent articles about the blood of Christ in Christianity Today. The author did an admirable job of explaining the wonderful things that science has discovered that the blood can do. What a wonderful picture, we are told, of how the blood of Jesus purifies every sin.”

Carson responds: “in fact it is nothing of the kind! Worse, it is irresponsible, mystical and theologically misleading. The phrase “THE BLOOD OF JESUS” refers to our Lord’s violent, sacrificial death. In general, the blessings that the Scripture shows to be accomplished or achieved by the blood of Jesus are equally said to be accomplished or achieved by the death on the cross.”

E. In our study of the BLOOD OF JESUS, we will note a place for His literal blood in our Lord’s somatic death on the cross. However, we will note and emphasize figurative use of the blood in His spiritual death on the cross, His saving work. Haima in Christ: blood of Christ.

F. It is so important in correctly understanding the Spiritual Death of Jesus Christ for the payment of our sins. While it may sound admirable that Jesus died physically for us, remember that many people have died for others in their physical death. Many mothers have given their physical death for their child. Many have died for others in battle.

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But the death that Jesus died on the cross was totally unique. Only two people have died spiritually in the history of mankind. Let's look at these two records of spiritual death. The first was Adam which is recorded in Genesis 2:16-17

Genesis 2:16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may freely eat;

Genesis 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat from it you will certainly die."

First note the translation *will certainly die*.

This should be 'dying you will die'. Now, we know that Adam and Eve did not die physically the day they ate of the forbidden tree. In fact, they died twice in regards to this judgment. First, they died the second they sinned. They died spiritually on that day.

They died physically many years later. We are interested in their first death, their spiritual death. Adam and Eve died spiritually. There was nothing they could do about their spiritual death. They could not die spiritually again. But believing on the person of the coming death of Jesus Christ they could be born again, this time spiritual birth.

Now as to Jesus Christ: He was born spiritually alive as well as physically alive that day in Bethlehem. But Jesus made the free choice to die spiritually for all mankind. By His dying spiritually all members of the human race, including Adam and Eve, were set free of their sins before God. But what about Jesus, what happened

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to Jesus? He died spiritually for the judgment of all the sins of the world.

Here my friend is the greatness of the death of Jesus Christ. He did not have to die spiritually, but He chose to die spiritually for all members of the human race. Then upon dying spiritually, He immediately died physically and then three days and three nights later He rose again from the physical death to never die again.

So, while we are most thankful when one human dies for another only Jesus died spiritually for all of us. We should give thanks daily for the death He died for us.

II. The Animal Blood of the Old Testament (This is so important in correctly understanding the blood of Jesus.)

A. The Hebrew word for blood is *dam*. It occurs several times in the Old Testament; 203 times it refers to death and violence; 103 times it refers to animal sacrifices.

B. Animal blood was shed in four out of the five Levitical Sacrifices.

1. The burnt offering taught propitiation or expiation with emphasis on the work of Christ. Therefore, animal blood was used to teach His propitiation.
2. The food offering taught the giving of a gift to God. It taught that the perfect gift of Jesus Christ was from God, and to God. The food offering could not be fulfilled without the burnt offerings.

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3. The peace offering represented the teaching of reconciliation based on the work of the coming Messiah. This symbolizes fellowship with God. It involves thanksgiving to His blessings, and offers the giving of a vow to God.
4. The sin offering taught spiritual recovery from sin, emphasizing the forgiveness of unknown sins in life. Therefore, animal blood was shed. So, the blood of Christ is related to faith recovery from sins just as it is related to being eternally saved.
5. The trespass offering taught spiritual recovery, emphasizing forgiveness of known sins. And again, animal blood was shed.

III. Animal blood therefore becomes a major issue in understanding the blood of Christ in the New Testament.

Hebrews 9:22 and according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, (animal blood) and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

This is a New Testament commentary on the use of animal blood in the Old Testament. There can be no forgiveness of sins apart from the work of Christ on the cross. The animal sacrifices simply depicted that work in anticipation. So, the shedding of animal blood represented the efficacious, saving work of Christ on the cross in the ritual plan of God for the dispensation of Israel.

IV. The blood of the animal contains the soul or the life of the animal.

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Whatever soul the animal has, it is the consciousness of animals that corresponds to human beings. But no animal has God consciousness in his soul. Therefore, in the ritual plan of God during the Age of Israel, the blood of the animal sacrifice portrayed the saving work of Christ on the cross. This is the Doctrine of Soteriology. So, the shedding of animal blood was used to illustrate the various points of soteriology—Salvation.

V. In the New Testament, four doctrines related to soteriology are included in the phrase, “the blood of Christ” or “through His blood.”

A. Redemption. Man being redeemed out from the slave market of sin and the price is the blood of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19. Again, this refers to the spiritual death of Jesus Christ.

B. Reconciliation. Where man is reconciled with God and reconciliation required the blood of Christ or the spiritual blood of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:13 and Colossians 1:20.

C. Propitiation (or expiation) is the God-ward side of cross where God is propitiated—removal of guilt of sin, freeing God to save all who will believe in Jesus Christ and is related to the blood of Christ [Romans 3:25] where Jesus Christ is said to be our Mercy Seat.

D. Justification is related to the blood of Christ.

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more than being now justified by His blood.

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VI. Bringing in the understanding of the Spiritual death of Jesus Christ is well presented in the Greek language. Greek conveys the thought in the use of language. However, beginning in the teaching of a multitude of Spiritual concepts was best done in the concrete language of the Hebrew.

And important, is the use of sacrificial animals to teach what was to happen in the history of the spiritual death of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament sacrifices, animal blood was literally and actually shed on the altar, causing the physical death of the animal. The physical death of the animal on the altar, was a shadow portraying the spiritual death of Christ on the cross for our sins.

Therefore, a representative analogy is established. The physical death of the animal was not efficacious. It is the saving work of Christ on the cross that is efficacious. Efficacious means that the death of Jesus Christ was ‘effective’ of God’s design or intended result of the ‘spiritual death’ of Jesus Christ on the cross. The death of a sacrificial animal was ineffective to provide salvation. Therefore, the physical death of the animal pointed toward the reality. Animals cannot die spiritually so their physical death was used to teach of the coming spiritual death of the Messiah.

A. The Levitical priest would receive the animal at the brazen altar and tie it to the horns of the altar.

B. The priest would place one hand on the animal and the other hand on the kneeling person who brought the animal. His guilt is transferred to the lamb.

C. Once the person’s sins are transferred to the lamb, the priest would lift up the animal’s muzzle and cut his carotid artery, the chief artery connecting the neck with the head, with a sharp knife. And every time the animal tries to breathe, blood pumps out of his

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body. It was an extremely violent death. That's why the animal was tied to the altar, and it was meant to be a violent death picturing the death of JESUS CHRIST on the cross.

D. Likewise, the violent death of our Lord on the cross was not His physical death, but HIS SPIRITUAL DEATH, which caused Him to scream out time and time again, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?" His physical death was peaceful and easy when compared to the violence of His spiritual death. In coming into contact with all the sins of the world and being judged for them, He experienced the worst violence the world has ever known: Not His physical death but His Spiritual death.

E. Here is where the issue of the Spiritual death of Jesus Christ comes in this study of the death of Jesus Christ. The life of an animal is pictured in his physical death. But the life of Jesus Christ is not pictured in His physical life but in His Spiritual life. So Jesus died a Spiritual death for the sins of the world. This was far worse than the physical death of a human being. While we can die physically, we cannot die spiritually because we are born spiritually dead. This is what is meant by the 'figurative' use of the blood of Jesus Christ in our definition section. The blood of Jesus Christ is 'figurative' of the blood of Christ while referring to His Spiritual death.