

The Blood of the Covenant

Intro: When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, Matthew alone records Jesus' unique way of describing the fruit of the vine:

*And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."
(Matthew 26:27-29)*

Notice the expression that Jesus used "my blood of the covenant." What did Jesus mean by that?

Interestingly, this expression is found in only two other places in Scripture (Exodus & Hebrews). And when we reflect upon them, we are able to see an important message that that expression reveals to us. First let's notice:

The Blood of the Covenant in Type

In our study of Exodus we have seen that God redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage in order to make them His people and to enter into a covenant with them at Mt. Sinai. Moses records God's offer of the covenant to Israel in Exodus 19.

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Exodus 19:3-6)

Israel did not yet know the laws of God's covenant; but they did know the God who had delivered them; and they agreed that they wanted Him to be their God and them to be His people.

*And all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.
(Exodus 19:8)*

With that agreement in mind, God announced that He would come down upon the mountain and give the terms of His covenant to the people. And so as we saw in an earlier lesson that God spoke to them from Mt. Sinai the Ten Words (Commandments) which He wrote on tablets of stone; and then at the peoples' request, He revealed through Moses all of His other laws which Moses wrote upon a scroll to be read to the people.

And now the time had come for the covenant ceremony. Exodus 24 reveals the details of this formal ratification of Israel's covenant with God.

First, God invited Moses, Aaron and his two sons, Nadab and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel to come before Him and worship (Ex. 24:1). However, only Moses was allowed to go up once more up to God upon the mountain.

When Moses returned, he read to the people all of the words of God's covenant law; and the people once more gave their consent to do all that the Lord had commanded them:

Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 24:3)

Moses at this time wrote down on a scroll all the words the Lord had spoken to preserve documentary proof of the terms of the covenant. And now that the two parties had agreed to the terms, it was time to confirm the covenant by a sacrifice:

Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. (Exodus 24:4-5)

These were sacrifices for atonement and the acknowledgement of the peace that they made with the Lord. These offerings were a way of saying, "We give ourselves wholly to you; and seek your forgiveness. We're at peace with one another; and now we are on the basis of this sacrifice making a covenant with one another."

Do you remember Abraham's covenant with God recorded in Gen. 15? It was a similar covenant ceremony. He took animals and cut them in half (and the Lord passed between them in the form of a smoking firepot.) In effect, when two parties made a covenant, something had to die; and that death symbolized the solemn promise that the two parties were making to one another to be one; and that if either violated their promises to one another, then let them die as these animals had died!

Now that the sacrifices had been made, Moses then took some of the blood and used it to ratify the covenant between Israel and the Lord: *And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." (Exodus 24:6-8)*

In order for the covenant to be ratified there were these essentials:

Blood must be shed for atonement.

There must be willing consent to God's terms.

The blood must be sprinkled upon the people entering the covenant with God.

Only under these conditions could Israel enter into covenant with God to be His people, a holy nation, a people for His possession, a kingdom of priests, as He had proposed to them a few days before.

Having then been cleansed Moses and the leaders of Israel as representatives of the people were allowed to see a manifestation of the Lord and to eat a meal in His presence acknowledging their new relationship with Him.

Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they beheld God, and they ate and drank. (Exodus 24:9-11)

The covenant between Israel and God had been confirmed by these activities.

The Blood of the covenant in reality.

All that Israel did on this occasion was a foreshadowing of the new covenant the Lord would make with us, the new Israel of God. God was establishing the principles upon which that covenant could be entered. The Hebrew writer uses these principles to describe the mediatorial and high priestly of our Savior, Jesus:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed

with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:11-22)

Jesus by His sacrifice fulfills two types of the old covenant at once--the covenant ceremony of Exodus 24 and the Day of Atonement of Leviticus

16. Let's focus on the covenant ceremony of the NT.

In order for God to make His new covenant with His people, the terms of the covenant had to be revealed. This new covenant was mediated by Jesus Christ. He is the new Moses who reveals God's law to His new covenant people.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

In order for a covenant to take place a death must take place.

The Hebrew writer takes advantage of the fact that gospel is both a last will and testament and also a covenant.

As a last will and testament the death of the testator is required in order for the will to be put into force.

But in addition, since it is a covenant, there must be a covenant sacrifice.

In this case Jesus is not only the mediator of the covenant; he is also the sacrifice that ratifies it! Jesus gave His own blood to ratify the covenant. Thus, Jesus in the Lord's Supper anticipated His role as the covenant sacrifice:

"This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." (Mt. 26:27)

In order to enter into this covenant of forgiveness we must give our consent.

The new covenant is consensual. Those who enter it must willingly indicate their acceptance of the covenant by obeying the covenant terms of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.

When we accept the terms of God's covenant of forgiveness we are saying two important things:

That we agree to enter into covenant with God by receiving the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ.

That we intend to be obedient to all that the Lord has commanded of us to be His people.

Ironically, those who want to enter the covenant sometimes seem quite unaware of the agreement they are making with the Lord. To receive His forgiveness is to commit ourselves to serving and obeying Him our whole lives! The agreement that Israel made corporately by saying, "All that the Lord

has promised we will do" is made by each of us individually as we obey the gospel.

In order to enter God's covenant we must be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

Just as Moses applied the blood of the animals that had been sacrificed to the people by sprinkling it upon them, so we are "sprinkled with blood of Jesus."

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. (1 Peter 1:1-2)

This takes place when we in faith are baptized into His death, burial, and resurrection.

When we enter into the new covenant with God we become a member of God's new Israel.

Peter takes the language that God had spoken to Israel in the OT and applies it to the church of the NT--those sprinkled with the blood of Jesus:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

What a great privilege is laid upon us to be God's people and to represent Him in this world.

As God's new covenant people we eat a meal in His presence to acknowledge our new relationship with Him.

It is not surprising that the Lord should call us together to remember how we have been made his covenant people. As you eat the Lord's Supper remember these words, "This is my blood of the covenant."

Each Lord's Day as we gather to break bread and drink of the fruit of the vine, we are being reminded of the covenant of forgiveness he made with us.

At the same time we are reminded of the covenant responsibility to be loyal to the Lord and to obey His will.

To fail to keep the covenant of God is a very serious matter.

Most of us are appalled when we read how so quickly the people who had just entered into covenant with God, turned away from Him to worship Aaron's golden calf; but we should be similarly horrified by those do the same today.

The Hebrew writer in chapter ten speaks about those who "sin wilfully," that is, those who abandon their covenant

responsibilities to worship and serve the Lord in keeping with their covenant pledge. Notice how he describes what they have done:

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:29-31)

When we leave the Lord and become unfaithful, we have just bowed before our own golden calf!

Conclusion: Let us appreciate the meaning of the blood of the covenant and respect the responsibilities it brings.

If you are not a Christian, come and make your covenant with God.