

## **Biblical Theology of Blood: Its Meaning and Significance**

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### **Abstract**

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This paper explores the biblical theology of blood and its significance in the salvation history. Tracing it from Genesis, blood plays a significant role in redemption and the judgment of humankind. The concept of blood is central in bridging the New and Old covenants in Christian theology. Jesus's sacrificial death on the cross is viewed as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant promises, and his blood shed on the cross is regarded as the seal of the New Covenant between God and humanity, signifying forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life. This idea is also embodied in the Last Supper, where Jesus speaks of the wine as "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28, ESV). The blood of Jesus purchased believers and reconciled them to God and to one another. Thus, understanding Christ's perfect sacrifice within biblical theology serves as a foundation for building deep faith in Christ and for witness.

**Keywords:** Blood of Jesus, Animal Sacrifices, Blood Sacrifice, Covenant, Atonement, Redemption, Power in the Blood

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### **Introduction**

In African traditional religion, blood sacrifice was deeply symbolic and varied across cultures. Animal blood played a key role in the sacrificial system, and was offered to the supreme deity(s), spirits, or the living-dead.<sup>1</sup> The shedding of blood in ritual sacrifice, believed to release the vital force that sustains life, precedes most ceremonies seeking blessings from ancestors or divinities.<sup>2</sup> Blood is viewed, and many people still hold to their belief in ATR as a powerful tool, especially for connecting the physical and spiritual realms

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<sup>1</sup> Britannica, "African Religions, Traditional Beliefs & Practices," accessed June 4, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-religions>.

<sup>2</sup> Britannica, "African Religions, Traditional Beliefs & Practices," 2025.



to seek blessings, protection, or even atonement. Furthermore, blood was used to validate covenants, bring about reconciliation, cancel curses, and in cleansing ceremonies.<sup>3</sup>

In the OT, blood is mentioned numerous times, and this theme continues into the New Testament, where the death of Jesus and his shed blood on the cross become central to the Christian faith. Many Christians tend to focus on the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, but it's of great significance to trace back through the entire Bible to grasp the biblical usage of blood. In the OT, blood significantly played a ritual role because God had ordained that it be used for cleansing and a means of atonement (Lev 17:11). Just as shed blood marks the transition from life to death, so blood is ritually used to effect the transition from the realm of death to a realm of life.<sup>4</sup> By and large, blood serves as a substitute, being able to ransom the life of the sinful worshipper from the wrath of God.

In the New Testament, Jesus' blood is referred to as the sacrificial death of Jesus, which is the basis for the forgiveness of sins and the establishment of the New Covenant between God and humanity (Matt 26:27–28). The blood of Jesus is portrayed in scriptures as having the power to cleanse (Heb 9:14), sanctify (Heb 13:12), and bring reconciliation with God (2 Cor 5:18–19). James Boice notes that Jesus, by his death and shedding of his blood at Calvary, propitiated the wrath of God against sin and thus made it possible for God to be propitious to his people.<sup>5</sup> MacArthur argues that the human condition is a profound state of total depravity, driven by “the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes and boastful pride of life” (1 John 2:26).<sup>6</sup> However, God shows his love to humanity through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 5:8–9)

In the early centuries, some Romans erroneously believed that Christians were practicing cannibalism. They probably thought so because they heard about Christ's followers eating his flesh and drinking his blood (Eucharist celebrations). This negative attitude towards Christians was largely fueled by Romans professing traditional deities, who were primarily suspicious of Christians because Christians refused to pay sacrifices to the traditional Roman deities and the emperor. In their opinion, this was a great insult to the empire and the emperor.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Christians were subjected to the bloodiest persecution.

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<sup>3</sup> Elkanah K. Cheboi, “*Colossians*,” in *An African Introduction to the New Testament*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. Abeanezer Urga, et al. eds. (Augsburg: Fortress, 2026), 24–26.

<sup>4</sup> Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Leicester, England: Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 402.

<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology*, Rev. in 1 vol., [4. pr.] (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1987), 312.

<sup>6</sup> Mark E. Dever, *Proclaiming a Cross-Centered Theology*, Repr (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2011), 88.

<sup>7</sup> Jakub Jasiński, “Romans Accused Christians of Many Crime, Imperium Romanum,” accessed June 5, 2025.



## The Use of “blood” from the Creation to the Fall

The word “blood” is translated in Hebrew as דָּם, pronounced, and occurs 361 times in the Bible. ‘Blood’ is not mentioned in the creation story of Genesis 1—2 because, at this point, the state of the world was described by God as “very good” (Gen 1:31), meaning there was no sin or any form of violence, often associated with the shedding of blood, whether for sacrifice or death.

However, the entrance of sin in Genesis 3 opened the possibility of blood being shed in error, as well as the need to punish sin, which entails spilling blood. Blood is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 4:10, when sin was advancing. Cain killed his innocent brother Abel, and God stated that “The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground” (Gen 4:10). It was believed that uncovered human blood was crying for vengeance against the murderer. God was obligated to redress the wrong.<sup>8</sup> This signified the consequences of shedding innocent blood, the divine recognition of injustice, and the beginning of God’s concern for justice and mercy.

It explicitly indicates that God hates murder; one who ends someone’s life by pouring his blood had to pay by losing his own blood in the vendetta killing described in Genesis 9:5–6. Human beings are in the image of God; hence, their lives are not to be taken or taken away lightly. Murderers paid the highest sacrifice by forfeiting their lives. There was no sacrifice acceptable for the murderer to be forgiven or justified from their sin (Num 35:31). It was so serious that a murderer would be taken before the altar of God for execution (Exod 21:14). Derek Tidball states that God’s image and likeness in humanity is beyond affirming that all humans have dignity. It also means that all humans belong to God and are his possession. When a person messes up with human life, such a person has both desecrated God’s image and fatally damaged God’s property.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, life should be held as a sacred trust from God.

The Israelites regarded blood with sanctity and awe because they understood it as the life or soul of an animal (Lev 17:14), and they believed it belonged only to God. Therefore, though animals may be slaughtered for human food by the Noahic covenant, the blood is not to be consumed; the blood goes to God at the altar. Otherwise, it is poured out “you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (Gen 9:4, ESV). In Leviticus, blood is prescribed as a divine means of atonement through animal sacrifice (Lev 17:11). The blood of an animal,

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<sup>8</sup>John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, New International Biblical Commentary 1 (Peabody, Mass.: Carlisle, Cumbria: Hendrickson Publishers ; Paternoster Press, 2000), 83.

<sup>9</sup>Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus: Free to Be Holy* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 211.



either from the herd or the flock or some fowl, was to be shed and then sprinkled on the altar by the priest, after which the sacrifice was entirely consumed upon the altar as a sacred offering to God (Lev 3:1-17; 7:11-21).

In Exodus, blood functioned as a sign and an affirmation before the elders and the people of Israel, led by Moses and Aaron, that Yahweh had met with them. The people responded with humility and worshipped God (Exod 4:29-31). The sign was performed by scooping up some water from the Nile and pouring it on the ground before the people and elders. The water turned into blood (Exod 7:19). This later served as judgment against Pharaoh and the Egyptians, when God commanded Moses and Aaron to strike the water of the Nile again. It eventually turned into blood for seven full days, and all the fish in the Nile died.

Pharaoh later lost his firstborn, whose blood was shed by the destroyer, and all the firstborn male children of the Egyptians, as part of their judgment, were killed. However, to the Israelites, the blood carried a substitutionary idea by serving as a sign of life rather than death: “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exod 12:13, ESV). Blood served as protection from the angel of death; it was sprinkled on the doorframes, and the destroyer spared them: “For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you” (Exod 12:23, ESV).

Blood was also used as a ritual in Israel’s history. For instance, it is recorded that when people had finished eating fellowship offerings as the sign of communion with the Lord and the acceptance of the covenant, Moses saved half of the blood in the bowls for the ritual sprinkling upon the people (Exod 24:8).<sup>10</sup> This signified covenant ratification, purification, and identification as God’s people before the watching world.

Further, blood lost through childbirth and women’s menstrual period (Lev 15:19-23) were considered to have a contaminating effect. And women were to be purified after giving birth (Lev 12:1-8). Sexual intercourse during the menstrual period was also pronounced as unclean (Lev 15:24).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, New International Biblical Commentary 2 (Peabody, Mass. : Milton Keynes, UK: Hendrickson Publishers ; Paternoster, 2008), 225.

<sup>11</sup>T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 89.



## Key Theological Themes

### Atonement and Redemption by Blood Sacrifices in the Old Testament

Although blood was used to perform many rituals in the Old Testament world, God had ordained it for sin atonement. When Adam and Eve sinned, God did not strike them dead immediately, as his holiness would have required. Instead, God, in his mercy, clothed them with an animal skin (i.e. presuming a killing or shedding of blood of an animal) which goes far beyond covering their physical nakedness but also covering their sin through the blood of animals (Gen 3:21). Adam responded with great faith in God's promise, by calling his wife "Eve" literary means "life"(Gen 3:20)" Adam named her "Eve," as the mother of all living. The promise of the coming of the seed of a woman who crushes the serpent's head is also given in Genesis 3:15. The Westminster Confession of Faith summarizes the effect of the human fall on humanity,

Our first parents (i.e., Adam and Eve), being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. And by this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all faculty and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all humankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature was conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.<sup>12</sup>

Before examining key theological themes such as atonement and redemption, it is essential to investigate the understanding of sin in the OT and the rationale behind the need for atonement. Sin is inconsistent with God's righteous demands. It is only God, who alone is righteous and can define sin. Sin consists not only of individual acts, such as stealing or lying or committing murder, but also in attitudes that are contrary to the attitudes God requires of us.<sup>13</sup> Leviticus instructs that sin is that which is contrary to God's revealed word, it can be intentional or unintentional: "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a person sins unintentionally in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them'" (Lev 4:2). Even the unintentional sin doesn't exempt human beings from its consequences, nor does it mean God overlooks it.

In Genesis 4, God warns Cain before he takes the tragic step of killing his brother Abel. He cautions him that if he fails to do what is right, "sin is crouching at the door," ready to seize him (Gen 4:7, ESV). The Hebrew verb: קָרַךְ translates as "crouch" or "lie down." Hartley remarks that while "lie down or crouch" has a restful connotation like (Ps 23:2), it describes an animal, the lurking of a wild animal poised to pounce on its prey. At the door

<sup>12</sup>*The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1997), 39.

<sup>13</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2010), 210.



means that sin was so close that Cain had to deal with it, and its desire was for him. However, God offers Cain hope that he can control this impulse to sin if he chooses to do what is right, even though his desire is strong.<sup>14</sup> Sin is rendered like a demonic spirit ready to pounce on Cain once he opens the “door” of opportunity. Wrong choices can also stir up sin.<sup>15</sup>

The Old Testament portrays sin as carrying a profound cost, with its guilt requiring a significant price to be paid to be removed. Blood atonement was seen as the sole means of redemption for those burdened by sin. It was only through the ritual of blood sacrifice that a sinner received forgiveness, was purified, and was fully restored to fellowship with God (Lev 4:1-6:7).

Exodus 29 describes the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests, detailing the sacred rituals and sacrifices necessary for their ordination. As part of the ceremony, one bull and two rams were to be slaughtered, with their blood sprinkled on Aaron, his sons, and their garments (Exod 29:21). This act symbolized God’s holiness and his call for purity and obedience from his priests, who served as mediators between him and his people. Additionally, the animal sacrifices foreshadowed Christ’s ultimate atonement, pointing to the redemption that would come through his sacrifice. Blood was also used in the consecration of the priest, symbolizing a close connection between the priesthood, the altar, and the sacrifices (Ezek. 43:20).

Still, in the OT, some sins were considered to be beyond atonement, like the shedding of innocent blood, adultery, worship of other gods, and child sacrifice (Lev 20:2,10). In such cases, blood sacrifice was not recognized for the culprits to be spared from their just punishment, but they would be put to death before the public as an example for the public to be restrained from doing evil. Rooker states that although the reason behind these offenses is not clearly stated, it may be assumed that death by stoning would accentuate the community’s intolerance of these offenses and serve as a deterrent for future crimes.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it would be carried out by the congregation (Lev 24:14; Num 15:32-36; Josh 7:22), demonstrating the solidarity of a covenant community in response to sin.<sup>17</sup>

Although blood sacrifices were the recognizable rituals for purification, David made it clear that God was not so much interested in the blood sacrifices but the contrite heart of the

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<sup>14</sup>John E. Hartley, *New International Biblical Commentary: Based on the New International Version* (Peabody (Mass.): Hendrickson, 2000), 82.

<sup>15</sup>Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary 1A (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 270.

<sup>16</sup>Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, The New American Commentary, v. 3A (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 266.

<sup>17</sup>Rooker, *Leviticus*, 267.



worshipper (Ps 51:16). Although God provided the sacrifices as a temporary way for atonement for sin (Lev 17:11), he also emphasized to his chosen people that sacrifices without genuine repentance were meaningless. Obedience is more valued than the multitude of sacrifices, “To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). Therefore, God never tolerated empty ritualism and hypocrisy; instead, those rituals were to be marked by true repentance on the part of the people.

The ritual of blood sacrifice in the OT was the shadow of the perfect sacrifice to be made in the new covenant once and for all. The author of Hebrews writes, “For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself” (Heb10:1 cf.7:27, ESV). For the Levitical priests, sacrifice was made year after year, which is evidence of its ineffectiveness and incompleteness. However, this perfect sacrifice was made once and for all for the purification of sins (Heb1:3).<sup>18</sup>

The author of Hebrews quotes Psalms 40 and states that, although these sacrifices were divinely ordained as the law required, that was not what God ultimately required (Heb 10:5-7). Their sins were covered by what God had already predetermined: that the Messiah was to come and die on the cross [the blood of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the earth] (Rev13:8), but not by just the blood of bulls and lambs.

The sacrifice of the old covenant and the perfect sacrifice of Christ under the new covenant are closely related, and he writes, “to understand the cross, we need to understand the Bible’s story of sacrifice. Though Christ’s was the most important sacrifice ever made, it was not the first in the Bible.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the Levitical system looked forward to its fulfillment in Christ.

### **Atonement and Redemption by the Blood of Jesus**

In the New Testament, the Greek αἷμα (*haima*) for blood occurs 97 times. Just as the OT gave typological expression to the power of blood to remove sin and save, the New Testament sees in the death of Christ the ultimate significance and fulfillment of the idea.<sup>20</sup> The blood of Jesus occupies a central position in the NT.

The Gospel according to Mark describes the Son of Man as the ultimate servant who gave “his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Hurtado comments on this verse that

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<sup>18</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews: Based on the New International Version*, 5th Printing, New International Biblical Commentary New Testament Series 14 (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2005), 155.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence, Michael, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2010), 154.

<sup>20</sup> Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 2nd ed (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980), 223.



“Jesus’ humble path of service and his sufferings, which involve his death, are both an example to his followers and redemption for them.”<sup>21</sup> Apostle John writes that God has purchased for believers true freedom from the dominion of darkness to His marvelous light and adds that, “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7, ESV). Paul writes, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph 1:7, ESV). By the shedding of his blood, Christ grants believers freedom from God’s just punishment and the power of Satan.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus as “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He presents an analogy of a sacrificial lamb whose shed blood delivers God’s people from the destroyer. The Lamb of God came to take away the sin of the world by taking it upon himself and becoming the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.<sup>22</sup> The Apostle Paul used this same image when he speaks of Christ as “our Passover Lamb” (1 Cor 5:7). Further, the author of Hebrews writes, “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb 9:22, ESV). The author’s point is that the readers have an eternal inheritance because they have made a better sacrifice. The blood of Jesus avails far better than the blood of any animal. Still, the sacrificial ritual of the Old Covenant forecasts and anticipates the death of Christ, demonstrating that death is necessary for sins to be forgiven.<sup>23</sup> The New Testament is taken up by how Christ fulfilled the hopes and aspirations of the OT regarding the sacrificial system of ancient Israel.

Paul writes, “we have now been justified by his blood” (Rom 5:9). The shedding of his blood to remove human sins made it possible for believers to share in his righteousness through faith. This means that without his blood, our unrighteousness would remain unaddressed. However, it was Jesus, who knew no sin, who became sin for us so that His righteousness may be imputed to those who believe in him (2 Cor 5:21). It is therefore through his shed blood on the cross that believers attain justification and are counted as righteous.

Sin had created enmity with God. However, as Paul writes to Ephesians, “now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). Although most Jewish people in Paul’s day apparently believed in the principle that they were saved by God’s grace in the covenant, they did not extend the idea to the gentiles

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<sup>21</sup>Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, New International Biblical Commentary New Testament Series 2 (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1995), 172.

<sup>22</sup>Matthew Henry and Leslie F. Church, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary in One Volume: Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1999), 1511.

<sup>23</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and T. Desmond Alexander (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 235.



who could not inherit the covenant by virtue of birthright (Eph 2:12). Under the new covenant, God draws people to through the blood of Christ. The Apostle Peter uses this image and writes, “Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18).

The blood of Jesus shed for us on the cross reveals God’s infinite love for humanity. In expanding this immeasurable love of God toward humanity, biblical theology gives meaning to the fact that the death of Christ was not an isolated event in history. Rather, it is part of what was promised in the Old Testament. God promised to Abraham that his seed would be a blessing to all nations. Christ fulfilled this promise, not just through his genealogy and birth, but also through his death and the shedding of his blood on the cross. Therefore, the cross of Christ is a blessing to all nations and is the centrality of the gospel “as of first importance” (1 Cor 15:3, ESV). It is reiterated in Scripture that the death of Jesus is beneficial to all who believe in him; Paul writes, Jesus “died for us” (1 Thess 5:9, ESV), and “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8, ESV). Jesus was delivered up “for us all” (Rom 8:32), and became a curse “for us” (Gal 3:13). Ladd states, “the blood separated from his flesh does not mean life but death, whereas life surrendered in sacrifice for us.”<sup>24</sup>

Jesus’s blood sacrifice gives the full assurance of salvation. Unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, which were offered repeatedly, his once-and-for-all sacrifice is enough for all who believe. Believer’s security from divine judgment does not depend on living a perfect life but on the efficacy of the work of Christ on the cross. The resurrection event demonstrates that the Lord’s work on the cross brought about an eternally secure salvation (1 Cor 15:17). Paul instructs that those he predestines he also justifies with his own blood and glorifies.

It is through the blood of Jesus that believers overcome trials and sufferings. In Revelation 6:9–11, believers are slain for their genuine faith in Christ, for holding fast to their faith and eternal hope. Their perseverance was built on the continued trust in Lamb who bought them by his blood (Rev 7:14), “they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. Jesus’s blood sacrifice gives believers eternal life. Revelation 22:14–15, points out that those who “wash their robes” in the blood of the Lamb will enter the new Jerusalem (Rev 22:15). Jesus uses the expression of ‘a cup of wine’ to denote the blood of the covenant: “this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28, ESV). Whereas the Passover meal related the signs of bread and wine to the events surrounding the Exodus

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<sup>24</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1993), 467.



of Israel from Egypt, it relates to a much greater act of redemption and Salvation, according to Jesus. For him, it relates to the forgiveness of sins. Paul declares, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor 11:27, ESV). However, the Eucharistic symbolism does not suggest that partaking in the Lord’s Supper is essential for salvation. Instead, it signifies the profound, life-giving impact of receiving by faith the sacrificial death of the One who came from above.

Finally, blood symbolizes judgment: “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God” (Rev 19:13, ESV). The rider on the white horse is identified as Jesus, who is described as wearing a robe dipped in blood. This imagery signifies his role as a divine warrior executing judgment on his second coming.

### **The Blood of Jesus as a Bridge to Enter New Creation**

John records that only those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb shall enter to reign with him in his glory in the New Creation (Rev 22:14). It is not the saints worthiness that makes them fit for the heavenly city, but Christ’s worthiness that qualified him to suffer on our behalf and pay the price we could not pay so that in the end we may stand before God in white linens well imputed in the righteousness of Christ to be part of God’s New Creation.

The blood of Jesus is the blood of the eternal covenant (Heb13:20), and it will never lose its power; day by day, it gives strength. The old hymn titled *The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power* highlights that “it reaches to the highest mountains, and it flows to the lowest valleys. The blood that gives me strength from day to day will never lose its power.” John writes that “The Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Jesus is an eternal God, and those he redeems will also live with him in his New Creation.

The New Creation is the final goal of redemption: “behold, the dwelling place of God is with men [the redeemed]. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself will be with them” (Rev 21:3, ESV). Jesus prayed in John 17, “Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me, may be with me where I am going, to see my glory that you have given me before the foundation of the world” (V24). This makes it clear that the ultimate goal of redemption by the blood of Jesus is not justification or sanctification, but to be glorified and to enter God’s New Creation.

As the redeemed of the Lord, we are called to express our deepest longing to enter God’s New Creation. In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus mentioned this longing as the character of kingdom citizens: “your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt



6:10). In this kingdom, Jesus is the king who rules with peace and justice. Sin will no longer prevail (2Cor 4:4). Such a perfect kingdom is worth our deepest longing to be redeemed from this world of sin and Satan and to be completely saved from the presence of sin.

### **The Blood of Jesus in the Gospel Proclamation**

At the heart of the gospel is the blood of Jesus that makes sinners free. Although the gospel has been compromised in the modern context by removing the cross and reducing Jesus to a mere provider of comfort and a good life, the true gospel remains unchanged. Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,” (1 Cor 15:3-4). This means that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

As the gospel transforms a human being into a new being in Christ Jesus, the blood of Jesus also changes a person by granting them redemption and forgiveness of all his “trespasses according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). This change is the manifestation of receiving new hearts and minds that have been set on fire by God. It is having our minds renewed (Rom 12:2) even as we are being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). The author of Hebrews writes: “So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” (Heb 13:12). The gospel is the call to holiness, but it’s the blood of Jesus that secures for us the holiness before God.

### **Practical Application**

The biblical theology of blood is deeply woven into themes of sacrifice, atonement, covenant, and redemption throughout the Bible. In all these themes, God is explicitly revealed as the main actor of human salvation. Key practical application points for believers and the church include: first, believers should recognize the profound significance of Jesus’ sacrifice, as his blood serves as the ultimate atonement for sin. Embracing Christ’s perfect offering strengthens faith, cultivating a spirit of gratitude and humility in the life of every believer. Second, since the blood of Jesus establishes a new covenant (Luke 22:20), they are entrusted with the responsibility to live faithfully and obediently, demonstrating their commitment to this sacred relationship with God. Third, the biblical theology of blood underscores that our sins are forgiven through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. In light of this profound truth, believers are called to embody grace and forgiveness, extending mercy to those who have wronged them in their relationships. Lastly, the biblical theology of blood fosters mission and evangelism. As the redeemed of the Lord, purchased with his blood shed on the cross,



believers are to incorporate into their mission the mandate of sharing the gospel that offers hope and redemption in Christ to those who have not come to this knowledge of truth for the salvation of their souls.

## Conclusion

In the OT, blood represents life and is offered to God as a means of atonement for sin. It also plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining covenants between God and His people. However, in the New Testament, Jesus is presented as the ultimate blood sacrifice—giving His own life to atone for humanity’s sins. His blood becomes the foundation of the New Covenant, providing forgiveness and reconciliation to all who put their faith in Him. The understanding of Christ’s perfect sacrifice is noticeably lacking in many pulpits today, especially in Africa. Instead of being proclaimed as the Savior who secures eternal life, Christ is often reduced to a mere provider of earthly blessings. As a result, the vital message of the cross is absent, leaving the church filled with believers who are uncertain about their own faith. Without a firm grasp of their beliefs, they struggle to fulfill their God-given mission of making him known beyond the church walls.

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