

Bloodshed

by G.W. North

The original idea of the Blood is that it must be drunk, but God adapted this idea to fit the needs of humanity, using the blood outwardly in the Old Testament to signify obedience and faith.

Scripture: Genesis 4:10, Exodus 12:7, Leviticus 17:11, Matthew 19:8, Romans 4:7, Hebrews 9:22

Topics: "The Significance of the Blood", "God's Redemptive Plan"

Description

G.W. North explores the profound significance of 'the Blood' as introduced in Genesis, emphasizing its foundational role in the biblical narrative of salvation. He illustrates how the original concept of blood, symbolizing life and atonement, evolves through scripture, particularly in the context of the Passover and the Old Covenant. North highlights that while God adapted His commands to humanity's sinfulness, the essence of His original intention regarding blood remains unchanged. He contrasts the outward application of blood in the Old Testament with the deeper spiritual truths that would later be fulfilled in Christ. Ultimately, North calls for a deeper understanding of the blood's power and its ultimate purpose in God's redemptive plan.

Transcript

The book of Genesis is sometimes called the seed-plot of the Bible. This is because thoughts and ideas and truths which are later to be developed to their ultimate fullness in the following books are originally to be found in seed, or genus form, in this first book of the sacred scriptures. No less than with many other similar truths fundamental to the revelation of salvation in the Bible, the basic idea concerning all that we mean by and associate with 'the Blood' is to be found in Genesis.

Perhaps to those who love and glory in the gospel there is hardly a theme more sacred than this, and the pursuit of it is ever a delight to the heart. We need therefore to grasp and to treasure the clearest possible understanding of its preciousness and place and power. It is therefore proper that we see first of all the original idea implanted by God concerning the Blood in the Bible, and for this we must go back to the book of the beginning(s). Other things are said later as truth is revealed about it in the story of mankind and sin unfolding before our eyes. All of these are important as they are God's adaptations or applications or amplifications of the original idea, but the fundamental and most important truth is the first one. Though much may intervene before that which is seen in Genesis comes to perfection, nevertheless it will eventually arrive at its fullness and ultimate glory according to that which is spoken originally in Genesis, rather than that which is spoken in the other books that intervene between the beginning and the end. This

is not to say that the same truth or allusions to and hints of it are missing from the later writings, but that God has to adapt and condition truth to men because they go away from His original intention. Because of this He graciously allows changes and deals with things as He finds them. Nevertheless the first revealed idea remains steadfast, and with inflexible will He moves through time and waits and works to bring men back to it.

As an illustration of this we may take the subject of divorce referred to in Matthew 19: 3-9, where we find the Pharisees tempting Jesus saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' In the answer of Jesus lies the point we seek to make, 'Moses ... suffered you..., but from the beginning it was not so.' What God suffered or allowed in this case was not His original intention. Yet we read He gave it in commandment. Which shows that what God sometimes commanded under law, was not always what He basically desired (or originally intended for mankind) in a free relationship based on obedience to and acceptance of the perfect intention. In this instance we see that the Lord recognised sin, and because of it allowed certain adaptations to His original desires concerning marriage. The word 'suffered' is a most expressive one. In the beginning God made them male and female to become one flesh -- Man; and He said, 'What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.' That is the original idea and truth expressed in scripture, and it is (in turn) based upon another and still greater spiritual truth, that of the unique unity in the Godhead, which is the great spiritual mystery of God Himself.

Returning to our theme, we will therefore remember that although later in the Old Testament further facts are revealed and specific commands are given concerning it, the original ideas and intentions for and about 'the Blood' are not thereby outworked. Instead, recognition of failure is implicit in them, and adaptations are made to tide men over a period of time, and dispensations graciously granted to them by God.

God first introduces us to the great subject of 'the Blood' in Genesis 4. Reading the chapter we see that Cain and Abel, Adam's two sons, bring an offering to God; Abel's, because it was a blood offering, was acceptable; Cain's, because it was vegetarian, was not. Consequently Cain in anger and jealousy slew Abel, and God said of his blood that (a) its voice cried unto Him from the ground, and (b) 'the earth hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood.' Now that is the original idea revealed in scripture concerning the blood -- it was drunk; the earth opened her mouth and drank it in; received it. Here then is the primary truth -- 'the Blood' must be drunk. Yet we do not find in the whole of the Old Testament canon one instance of man being commanded of God to drink blood. In fact it was later strictly forbidden; all we note here is that in this seed-plot of the Bible God has sown an idea, and a perfectly natural idea at that. It could not be otherwise.

Turning from this fact of history wherein truth is deliberately sown to await germination millenniums later by commandment and faith unto spiritual life, we will examine the story of the Passover in the twelfth chapter of Exodus. Here we shall notice quite a different idea concerning 'the Blood.' As we read down the relevant verses we see that the blood of the lamb was to be struck upon the two side posts and on the upper door posts of the houses wherein the people were eating the flesh of the lamb in which it had formerly flowed. The striking of the blood was important only in association with the eating of the lamb. It had no power at all of itself; it had to be in the right place at the right time for the right purpose, that is all. It was but a token of the people's obedience, bespeaking the fact that they were all inside their houses eating the lamb and ready to depart for Canaan as they were commanded. The blood would have meant nothing and afforded no protection at all from the death that was passing through Egypt that night except it was the token God required of them upon that occasion. Its application was entirely external. Moreover,

although this fact is not generally recognised or the underlying truth of it sufficiently, if at all emphasised, this is the only time that the blood of the Passover lamb was ever so used. Never again were the children of Israel commanded to strike the blood on door post or lintel. Its token use was only demanded once by God. So we pass from the original idea which implies the thought of indrinking to the new fact of outward application.

This new idea of outward application is taken up and further strengthened by God into commandment in Leviticus 17. Commencing to read this chapter at verse 10, we find the basic concept of 'the Blood' and its place and power under Law in the Old Covenant. The central truth is contained in the words, 'the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.' The Hebrew word translated 'life' throughout the whole of this section is the word for 'soul.' Selecting a few phrases as instances we may say, 'the soul of the flesh is in the blood,' 'it is the soul of all flesh,' 'the blood of it is for the soul thereof.' Here the thought of atonement is introduced because with the giving of the law, God, by prohibiting or authorising certain activities and behaviour, had communicated to the people the knowledge of sin. Gracious as God was to forgive sin, He had to do it under a complicated legal system that only dealt with outwardly committed sin. Internal sin and its cause(s) could not yet be atoned for, for no-one had then been found who could atone for it. This is the reason we find great men like David crying out in Psalm 51 for inward purging, to a God who required truth in the inward parts. It was simply because the blood they knew and used could not take away sins, neither from before God nor from their consciences; all such blood was intrinsically valueless and only implicitly typical. Because of this it could only be used outwardly. Which left God with no other thing to do as an alternative but to impute forgiveness and cleansing to His people upon the obedience of faith to His commands. They could never feel what they believed.

The Lord had to move from the original idea. He wished drinking to be the method, but not yet and not that blood. So having caused the idea to be introduced in the beginning, He disallowed the action because of sin until the time appointed. It was not that the entrance of sin into the world took God by surprise or created an emergency. It was that He could not yet bring in what He wanted, so He stayed in the medium but changed the method.

This introduction of the inferior method of outward application is demonstrated to us most fully in Exodus 24. There we see Moses sprinkling the blood in great profusion: on the altar, on the book, on the people. As it says in Hebrews 9:16-22, it was the blood of the testament which God had enjoined unto them. He sprinkled with blood nearly everything that belonged under that Old Testament arrangement, and we are told that 'without shedding of blood is no remission.' The application of blood was a fixed law unto the people, and we find it much in evidence on that day of dedication and subsequently right throughout the Old Testament period. But nothing was done haphazardly. There was no application of that blood, inferior and external and symbolical as it was, until they all had confessed and promised that 'all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.' Only when they had said that did Moses sprinkle the blood upon them, not before; it was 'the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words,' he said. Not concerning eternal life: 'concerning all these words.'

So we see that the blood of the Old Covenant was never to be taken internally. It was given upon an outward altar and sprinkled upon all kinds of people and things to hallow, and dedicate, and sanctify, or signify. It was ever only a token, having no power in or of itself to do any of the things for which it was used by commandment of God. Everything was by imputation only. The blood of that Covenant had no virtue to impart, no value to atone, no goodness to bestow; all righteousness and holiness and blessing was

reckoned over to its users by God from Himself sheerly upon obedience by faith. David, who of all men wrote of the glories of that ancient Covenant, said, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' (Quoted in Romans 4 : 7, 8). But God had something better in mind and hand for us, as we shall see.

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