

Rev 26-04-01b

We are looking on this Wednesday evening at the blood of Christ in particular, and the role of blood in biblical revelation in general, and specifically the summation of those uses in the book of Revelation itself. So we have seen that the blood of Jesus Christ is protective. It is like the blood of the Passover lamb.

When I see the blood, I will pass over, God says, and there will not be judgment on that household, the death of the firstborn in Exodus. It is purifying. You see this in Leviticus, in sacrificial blood, the blood that is applied in sanctification for service and so on.

There is power in the blood for purification, for dedication. Interestingly, we just saw these concepts in the description of the 144,000 in the preceding chapter as those who are not defiled, who are faultless before the throne. You remember the threefold aspect of that, where there is sanctification, there is purification, and there is dedication.

All of those are wrapped up in the blood. These individuals are those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. So there is victory, Revelation 12, 11.

They overcome by the blood of the lamb. All of those things are preconditions. We ourselves can live a life of genuine victory.

We can be overcomers, which is how we term that kind of victory, through faith and availing ourselves of the power in the blood of Christ. So when you think about the upper room, the Lord Jesus combines the typology and the symbolism of a blood and sacrifice in the bread and the cup, and He creates a new thing. There is a new covenant in His blood, and there is a remembrance of Him that is established.

The bread, this is my body. The cup, this is my blood. I recently was disappointed to see a friend of mine and a prominent Christian leader, you might say, convert to Catholicism.

And the main reason, it surprised and shocked everyone, but the main reason that he gave, and he's got an hour-long video where he explains why he felt the need to go from being a prominent Southern Baptist to becoming a Catholic, centers on this typology, this occasion that we celebrate this week, the upper room meal and the bread and the cup. And he goes to the words of the Lord Jesus when Jesus says, this is my body, and this is my blood. And he has decided that transubstantiation, the Catholic doctrine, that these elements in the hands of the priest at the moment of reception in communion, actually become the body and blood, not just in a grisly cannibalistic fashion, but his contention is that the purpose of all of this is to communicate the presence of Christ, that He becomes present through the elements.

His body and His blood in that moment of receiving reflect His presence. It's a thought that might be persuasive if you didn't actually read the text. Jesus didn't say as often, well, actually it's Paul in Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11.

You remember, Paul says, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show forth the Lord's death until He comes. It is a memorial. It is a testimony.

What is the nature of it? We will get there. But Jesus didn't say, this is my body, and once you eat it, I will be present with you from now on. Jesus says in another place, that which you take in is eventually going to be processed and leave your body.

And He talks about that, that it's not what you take in that defiles you. It's what comes forth from you that can defile you. Out of the heart proceed these things.

But He said, this is my body, which is broken for you. Remember His self-sacrifice. It is not, I am suddenly present with you in a mystical sense because you are partaking of the cracker and the Kool-Aid.

It is a memorial. That's what it was designed to be initially. This is my blood of the covenant.

It's a new covenant in my blood. Well, we've just spent a session looking at the application of that truth. The covenant that God makes with us in the blood of Christ is He will wash us and make us clean.

He will sanctify and purify us for service. And He has redeemed us to Himself. And we are now a possession, a gift from the Father to the Son, a reward for His faithfulness in not performing His own will, not giving into the temptations in the wilderness to take the kingdoms of the world without the cross.

But for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame. He is an expression of God's love. John 3.16 makes it abundantly clear.

And that covenant is, if you accept the substitutionary atoning work of the Lord Jesus, that's what His blood represents. That truth is under such attack today. You can't believe the undermining and the dismissing and the arguing against any notion of substitutionary atonement.

It is central. That is what the blood of the Lamb means. That's what it is.

And Satan is laying the foundation for the 70th week in the time of Jacob's trouble in the Great Tribulation by seeking to extinguish the truth of the blood of Jesus Christ. That is central. That's what defines the Lord Jesus in the early chapters of Revelation.

He is the Lamb as it had been slain. His blood cleanses. His blood purifies.

His blood enables and provides victory. His is a work of sacrifice. His body is broken.

His blood is shed. And in so doing, those that know their Old Testament see a bringing together of the truths contained in Passover, the Passover meal, the blood of the Passover Lamb. Remember, the Passover, they didn't drink the blood of the Passover Lamb.

They partook of the Passover Lamb's body. This is my body, which is made into pieces so that you can eat it. This is my body, broken for you.

None of the Lamb's bones were broken, but the Lamb was consumed in Passover. Bitter herbs and so on. The blood is on the doorpost.

And because the evidence that the Lamb has given its life satisfies the justice of God, the destroying angel passes by. And that is not judged. Judgment has already been shouldered, as you might think, by the Lamb.

And partaking of the Lamb, remember, the firstborn was protected on the original Passover, but the entire family ate the Passover meal. Because the firstborn is representative, just as God's firstborn and only born Son is representative of everyone related to Him. By partaking of that covenant.

So there is both the Passover, the substitutionary atonement, and the atoning sacrifice proper that is represented on the day of atonement. So you have the first of the spring feasts, which is Passover. Then in the fall feasts, you have Rosh Hashanah, the blowing of the trumpets, get ready.

You've got 10 days to get ready for the day of atonement. Smyrna is told, you will have tribulation 10 days. It's a time of testing.

It is a time of opportunity. It is a time of decision. And Smyrna's 10 days, I think, correspond very nicely to the interval between the feast of trumpets and the day of atonement.

10 days. All of which precedes the feast of booths. The dwelling in the archetypal conditions of tabernacling.

So we have three kinds of blood. And here's the summary. If you feel like it's getting a little hard to track, there are three primary symbolic values for blood.

There is the blood of the covenant. This is the blood that is sprinkled, starting at Mount Sinai. The blood of dedication with which the people are sprinkled.

The book of the law is sprinkled. The covenant, nothing is dedicated without blood. And Hebrews sums this up very nicely.

That's covenant blood. And you enter into relationship through the blood of the covenant. There are loose parallels to that when someone signs their name in blood on a contract.

It means we pledge our lives to this agreement. God pledges the life of his son. We pledge our lives.

And it is blood of the covenant. That's first and foremost. There is the sacrificial blood.

This is Leviticus. This is the cleansing and sanctifying aspect of blood that sets judgment aside in a substitutionary fashion. Someone, something else has taken the judgment upon itself or upon himself.

And we are now cleansed, purified, and entered into a realm of redemption. And the third aspect is deliverance. It delivers us out from in Exodus, the Passover blood, that was ultimately the means of getting them out of slavery in Egypt.

So when Jesus says in John chapter six, and this is relatively early in his ministry, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, we might just turn back there. This is central to our thought for resurrection Sunday week, John chapter six. You remember that this is going to be the occasion for many to turn back from following him.

And he talks about Moses and bread in verse 32, the bread from heaven. You seek me because you ate of the loaves and were filled in verse 26. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the son of man will give you because God the father has set his seal on him.

Do not labor for the food which perishes. There is a different kind of food, a different kind of bread. And this is the context.

You have eaten physical loaves. This is after the feeding of the group. And give us this bread always.

We'll make you king. You're the goose that lays golden eggs, as it were. You're an unending source of provision.

He says, the work of God is that you believe in him whom he sent. Verse 35, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger.

He who believes in me shall never thirst. Jesus gives his disciples in the upper room, the bread and the cup. There is a shift from the water of life, the fountain of living water, which is life.

But it is the blood of Christ that is symbolically partaken of in the upper room meal. Here is the bread. This is my broken body.

Here is the cup. This is not a cup of water. It represents the new covenant in my blood.

And so you have seen me and you do not believe. Verse 36, we're in John chapter six, verse 37. All that the father gives me will come to me.

And the one who comes to me, I will by no means cast out. I've come down from heaven like the manna, not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me.

Verse 40, everyone who sees the son and believes in him may have everlasting life. And I will

raise him up at the last day. The Jews complained about him because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

They said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it that he says I have come down from heaven? Jesus said to them, do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day. People misunderstand this, that God has to actively wrap a rope around someone and drag them across the line.

No one puts plants in their house unless flowering plants and the beauty of vegetation draws them. Meaning you are attracted by it and you are attracted to it. No one eats a particular kind of food unless that kind of food draws them.

This is drawing in the sense of, I am attracted by it. This is the character of God. There are people on this planet, and I know some and you probably know some as well.

The very thought of an overarching sovereign God is anathema. They are not drawn by God, by his love, by his sacrificial sending of his son. They think he is a grisly, glory-hounding kind of God that demands people grovel in front of him and has to have blood or he is not happy.

You have heard these awful caricatures and mischaracterizations of God. These are people who are not drawn by God. You do not even get to the point of Christ.

The idea of a sovereign creator who has the explicit right to judge his creation and to set standards of right and wrong is reprehensible. It is off-putting. It is completely rejected and pushed away.

Only those will come to Christ who are drawn by the Father. If you do not like the Father, you are not going to get to Christ. You will never get that far.

God has revealed himself. He is a God of order. He is a God of design.

He is a God of justice. He is a God of mercy. He is a God who knows where every sparrow currently is.

He knows how many hairs there are on your head. He knows what you need before you ask him. There are people that find that entire thing disgusting.

They are not drawn. Only those that the Father draws. I love the kind of God that is revealed in nature and revealed in Scripture.

I love the beauty and the design and the self-revelation of God. It draws you and it draws me. We are drawn to it because we choose to be.

I do not want a world run by me or the likes of me. I know what I am like. I am drawn to a world and a coming kingdom and a future and eternity that is ordered and ruled by God as he is

revealed in Scripture and as he is revealed in nature and as he is revealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We are drawn by that. No one can come to me, Jesus says, unless the Father who sent me draws him. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.

If you do not like the Father, you are not going to like me. Jesus told the Pharisees, you do not receive my words because you do not receive the words of the Father. You reject his words, of course you are going to reject mine.

It begins with Hebrews 11.6. He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he rewards those who seek him. This is belief in the sense of positive response. I like the idea that there is a God who will bless and benefit, save, deliver, embrace, enfold, grant a future and a purpose and opportunities to me if I diligently seek him.

I do not have to pay him. I do not have to climb mountains or swim seas. I just have to seek him.

Seek him while he may yet be found. Call upon him while he is near. Ask, it will be given.

Seek and you will find. Knock, he will open the door. I love that God.

Many of us do, some do not. If the Father does not draw you, if the Father does not attract you, if that is not something to which, like the demon-possessed man, we want to run and fall at the feet of, you are never going to get to Jesus Christ. And those who do like Jesus, they like him as a moral philosopher and a non-violent pacifist, and they caricature him as well.

So, I am the bread of life, verse 48, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead. Remember, this is not about physical bread. Simply eating manna or eating the five loaves and two fish miraculously multiplied.

That's not what this is about. Your fathers ate manna. This is the bread which comes down from heaven that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.

To symbolically partake of the bread is just that, symbolic. It is emblematic. It's got nothing to do with the bread or transubstantiation, and it has nothing to do with how present Jesus is in that moment.

It has everything to do with being drawn to the Father, drawn by the Father, and therefore drawn by his Son. If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. Not everyone responds to that drawing in that active sense.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying,

how can this man give us his flesh to eat? These are the people that when God says, bind my word on your forehead and on your hand, they put it in a pouch and strap it to themselves. When he says, affix it to the doorpost of your house, they get a mezuzah, and they nail a little copy of a verse to the doorpost of their house.

Because when Jesus speaks in parables, it's a complete riddle. They're not thinking in spiritual terms. They don't understand symbolism.

They don't understand what is being said, because their hearts are hard, and they are not seeking, and they are not drawn by the Father. So how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Most assuredly, I say to you, verse 53, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He is manifestly not talking about carving his physical body up and having people dine on it. Why would Catholicism and anyone else who believes in some kind of transubstantiation dumb down the scriptures when Jesus makes it so plain? He is not talking about the physical world in any sense here.

It is spiritual life, spiritual partaking, spiritual approach, spiritual relationship, spiritual nourishment, nothing to do with corpuscles and bread or blood cells or any of that. In verse 56, he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will bear much fruit, spiritual fruit, fruit of the Spirit.

And many, when they heard this, said, it's a hard saying, who can understand it? Does this offend you? Verse 62, what if then you should see the Son of Man ascend where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. I'm not talking about actual flesh.

I'm talking about the Spirit. The Spirit gives life. It's not the flesh.

You don't need transubstantiation to enter into some sort of mystical relationship or presence of God. It's the Spirit. Jesus explains it right here in John 6. The words that I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life.

He just said above, the flesh, my flesh, the bread of life. This is what gives life. It is the bread of life.

It is the Spirit that gives life, not the flesh. There are some of you who do not believe, and because you don't believe, you can't enter into these things. Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father.

It is granted when we approach in faith, in humility, in recognition that we have a need that we can't fix or solve or meet on our own. One other thing I wanted to mention, by way of a bonus perhaps, is the John 6 discourse is very emphatic about the symbolic nature of the body and blood of the Lord. And it is interesting to me because John wrote his gospel after the other

gospels, well after.

And we saw in our introduction to Revelation that when he is encouraged to write the things which he has seen, I think this may have been the occasion on which he wrote his gospel, which means it is decades later than the setting of the other gospels. And I find this significant because John does not include the upper room bread and cup scene in his gospel at all. His coverage of the cup is, or bread and blood, if you will, flesh and blood, is in John 6, not on the night before he was crucified.

You have the upper room discourse, you have John 14, 15, 16, high priestly prayer, but there is no mention of that as an ordinance, this due in remembrance of me and so on. And I speculate that John may have had reasons for that in that by the time he wrote his gospel, there had already been a misunderstanding of this as being an ordinance and a ritual that had some sort of mystical significance, and that he purposely did not record that in his gospel under the inspiration of the Spirit, but instead gave the explanation for what the true bread and the true cup represent much earlier in John 6. And I think there is intentionality. If it was supposed to be an ordinance and one of the centerpieces of Christian worship, it is passing strange that John omits it completely from his gospel.

So I find that something to chew on as well, if you will. Well, all of this plays into the use of blood in particular, as we see it in the Revelation. And we have to participate in the life of God in and through the blood of Christ that cleanses us.

It isn't an actual liquid. It is recognizing, placing our faith in the work of Jesus Christ, the person of Jesus Christ, the Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in that faith on a daily basis, anybody can live a life.

Anybody can look at their phone. Anybody can do a job. Anybody can drive a car.

Anybody can wash their clothes and brush their teeth and watch TV and let the dog out. Anybody can live an earthly life. It takes nothing special.

You and I have a different calling. We are called to live on a spiritual plane where there is spiritual food to partake of, spiritual nourishment, water of life, the blood of Jesus Christ to enable us, to purify us, to dedicate us, to enable us to live as those who belong to God through Jesus Christ. And in this age, His body.

We are His body. And that's why when you get to 1 Corinthians 11, and we've seen this before, I will just give it a very light touch. But if you turn to 1 Corinthians 11, Paul calls this out.

He mentions the upper room. Again, an event that is memorialized this week. And he says in verse 17, 1 Corinthians 11, in giving these instructions, I do not praise you since you come together, not for the better, but for the worse.

He says, I am criticizing the nature of your Christian fellowship. You are not doing it right. And

his theme, the subject, the occasion for everything that is said here is, this is what is going on in your interactions with your fellow believers, where there ought to be the operation of one another love, it's not happening.

That is the context. And you have to keep the context in mind, or like the vast majority of Christianity, you mess up this passage. The context is verse 18.

First of all, when you come together as a fellowship, as an ecclesia, as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And in part, I believe it. Remember, that's how 1 Corinthians begins.

I hear there are wars and divisions among you. I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Christ. You're taking each other to court.

There are divisions among you. And he says, the only division that I believe in, there must be differences among you so that those who are approved can be recognized among you. There are differences.

And there are a few who have not soiled their robes in Corinth. And if you want to make a division, look for the people who aren't screwing up. Because most of you are.

And the only division that is legitimate is to tell the difference, discern the difference between faithful, loving believers and those that are doing it wrong. That's what those verses signify. Therefore, when you come together in it is not to eat the Lord's supper.

And he is going to use the upper room meal as an example of contrast. Your meal isn't like the meal that is most fully described that Jesus shared with his disciples. Paul says, you want to know what a meal should be like? Look at the meal that that personifies and makes emblematic self-sacrifice and looking out not for one's own interest, but the interest of others.

The Lord Jesus said, this is my body broken for you. This is the covenant of my blood, which is shed for you. I am giving up my life for your benefit.

And these elements reflect that. To the extent that there are elements of a meal, they are employed to teach principles of love and self-sacrifice, of the redeeming, purifying and cleansing aspects of blood and the life giving spirit that is reflected in and through the broken body of the Lord. So you don't do the Lord's supper.

In eating, notice he doesn't say in eating you haven't given sufficient attention to your sins. You haven't done enough confession. You haven't been sorrowful enough.

You haven't been picturing Jesus on the cross throughout the whole process of doing communion. It's improper because you're not entering into, you're not visualizing yourself at the foot of the cross and entering into the agony and the sorrow and the shame of it all. You're partaking in an indecent manner.

You're not doing communion right. This is what I was taught as a kid. That is not what Paul is saying here.

Notice, when you come together, you're not eating the kind of supper that the Lord Jesus shared with his disciples. One that reflects concern for others, exemplified by the Lord Jesus himself. Teaching, using it as an occasion to communicate spiritual truth and the primary truth being sacrificial love.

That's not what you do in eating. Each one takes his own supper ahead of others. So one person is hungry and another is drunk.

You are oblivious to your fellow believers who are body of Christ. You are disrespecting the body of Christ, which is symbolized. It's symbolically employed by the Lord Jesus with the broken bread.

My body is broken for you. Here, all you can do is grab the bread and cram it down your throat. And there are people standing around that are poor.

And this is supposed to be a fellowship meal. It's supposed to be a time that reflects care and concern for one another, widows and orphans and those who are in need and those who have less. People are coming and grabbing all of the food.

And there are people who are genuinely short on provisions. And they're standing around hungry because the poor are not elbowing their way to the table and pushing the rich out of the way so that they can get to the chow. In eating, you take your own supper ahead of others.

One is hungry and another is drunk. What? Do you not have houses where you can eat and drink? Is that your purpose is just to have another meal to just get nourishment down your gullet? This is a fellowship meal. The point is fellowship, not nutrition.

And to the extent that there is food present, it ought to be an opportunity to express love and concern and an outward view, sacrificial to the self and beneficial to others. It's a church meal. It's not a meal at your house.

You want to glutton yourself, go home, clean out your own larder. But you are disrespecting the body of Christ and you are shaming those who have nothing. You're despising the church of God.

Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. Then he describes the Lord's Supper and it says in my New King James, institution of the Lord's Supper. This isn't an institution.

Jesus said, when you share a fellowship meal, remember me. That's what they weren't doing in Corinth. Remember me.

Remember my wrapping the towel around the waist and washing your feet. Remember me expressing concern for you and telling you what's going to happen so that you won't be

gripped with fear and fail. Satan wants to sift you like wheat.

I'm praying for you that your faith won't fail. I'm reminding you of the lyrics of a hymn as we head out to the Mount of Olives. They're singing a hymn.

Jesus is about to go to the cross and all of his actions and words center on the benefit of his disciples. Therefore, whoever drinks bread or drinks a cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body of the Lord and blood is not there. Guilty of the body of the Lord because you're disrespecting the body, your fellow believers.

This is not everybody get together and figure out how often you're going to break up crackers and have grape juice. It was never intended to be an ordinance. Paul is using the upper room meal as an example because it is so well described and so perfect an illustration of his point.

You are not self-sacrificial. You are not loving your fellow believer. Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

He who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself if he is not discerning the body. You can line out everything else in that verse. Look at your text notes.

Verse 29 reads, he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself not discerning the body. If you're not looking out for your fellow believers, your meal is a judgment on you because you are personifying selfishness and ingratitude. This is the reason many are weakened sick among you and many sleep.

If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. When we are judged, we're chastened by the Lord that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, verse 33, when you come together to eat, welcome one another, receive one another.

If anyone's hungry, eat at home. Don't come together for judgment and the rest I will set in order when I come. So this is a reminder that the Lord Jesus, even in his final week before the cross, was teaching, encouraging, reasoning with, pleading with his disciples to remember, who are you? Why are you here? And it's an opportunity for us to do the same.

And not so much looking at some sort of ritual observance, but the purpose of the ritual, the meaning of the emblems, the metaphors, the symbols. How should we then live? This is our opportunity. And we see it reflected throughout the book of Revelation, as you see both blood of sacrifice, blood of deliverance, blood of victory and power, and blood of judgment.

Anytime you see blood in scripture, you can find it in one of those categories. And it's very helpful. And you see how it illuminates the context and what is being said in the passage at large.

So it's a helpful review, helpful study, I think, for us in this week. We will resume our investigations this coming Sunday, Resurrection Sunday, but we'll close here in a word of

prayer. Father, thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for how beautifully he embodies your love and grace, your faithfulness, your redemptive interest in us, your sacrificial concern and care for us in taking we who have no redeeming qualities, no worthwhile virtue of any kind. We are hopeless and helpless and useless, yet if we will simply seek and be drawn to you and your righteousness, we are delivered, we are cleansed, we are given clean white robes and given so many opportunities, blessings and provisions. We pray that we can remember that as we proceed through this week.

And we look forward to the day when the Lord Jesus appears with the shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump that belongs to you yourself. And we are taken to the skies to be reunited with him and presented before your throne. We thank you for these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.