

The Blood of Christ

Matthew 27:1-10

Because we are a sinful people made in the image of a righteous God, we have an inescapable need for atonement—to be right with Him. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and if men will not receive Christ's atonement which is offered by grace, they will try to find a substitute to deal with their guilt. But only His blood can cover our sins and restore us to fellowship with the living God.

Summary of the Text

Morning comes, so the Sanhedrin plot to execute Jesus whom they falsely accused and abused (v. 1; 26:57). They condemned Him under the law of Moses, but now they need Pontius Pilate to convict Him of a capital crime against Rome (v. 2). Before the next trial, Matthew describes the remorse and despairing suicide of Judas who brings back the thirty pieces of silver to the priests and elders, confessing, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (vv. 3-4). Blood is mentioned three times in this passage: Jesus' innocent blood, the blood money exchanged to betray Him, and the field of blood purchased with it (vv. 4, 6, 8). Soon Pilate will wash his hands to be "innocent of the blood" and the people will call for "His blood [to] be on us and our children" (vv. 24-25). The chief priests and elders, the guys who are supposed to minister to God's people, can't do anything for Judas: "What is that to us? You see to it!" (v. 4). So, he goes and hangs himself (v. 5). They are super religious, concerned about what is lawful. It would be bad to put the money used to murder the Messiah into the treasury, so they use the unclean money pieces to buy an unclean place, a graveyard called the Field of Blood to bury foreigners (vv. 6-8). Matthew says this fulfills Jeremiah's prophecy, which is a combination of his and Zechariah's, but he follows the custom of naming the major prophet when multiple prophets are referred to. In Zechariah 11, Israel rejects the shepherding prophet who breaks one staff, Beauty, to represent a broken covenant, and throws his lousy wages of thirty pieces of silver into the temple: "Then I cut in two my other staff, Bonds, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel" (11:14, 10). Judas, like Israel, is coming apart. Jeremiah buys a field with shekels of silver, puts the deed into a pot, and prophesies that the land would be given into the hand of the Chaldeans because Israel did nothing of all He commanded them to do (Jer. 32:9, 14, 23). It does not look good for Israel.

Guilt & Shame

Judas is overwhelmed by guilt and shame. Guilt is what we ought to feel when we have sinned and broken the law of God: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). There are objective and subjective aspects, what is true whether we know it or not and what we experience which ought to line up with the truth. Shame is the painful feeling that comes from others seeing or knowing about something dishonorable we did. Adam and Eve disobey God and hide in the garden. They are driven by guilt and cover themselves in fig leaves to hide their shame. People with seared consciences don't feel guilt or shame. They are shameless, usually as a result of repeated sins without repentance. This is how Judas got to this point. He always stole from the money bag and every time justified it in his own mind. Who was a better steward than him among the disciples? Who does it hurt? Why can't he be in charge? But when judgment falls, guilt floods back and overwhelms him. He betrayed the best man he ever knew and can't deal with the weight of it. Rather than seek God's mercy for his sin, he chooses to kill himself: "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Guilt, shame, and sorrow for sin ought to lead us to confession and

The Blood of Christ

Matthew 27:1-10

freedom. But outside of Christ we would rather die. Judas' sorrow contrasts with Peter's who wept bitterly and owned his betrayal. Peter submitted to Christ, received forgiveness, and took up his cross. Judas looked to himself as god, and said, "I cannot be saved." We must be clear-headed and clean-hearted not to empathize with Judas. Satan entered his heart because he welcomed him. He is not the victim; Jesus is. To feel bad for the devil and the person in the act of betrayal is to make sin seem reasonable and therefore be on your way to justify your own. But if you want to be free of guilt and shame, you have to deal honestly with your sin through the word of God (cf. Ps. 19:7).

The Necessity of Blood

The wages of sin is death, and therefore there will be blood sacrifice (cf. Heb. 9:22). This is why the Aztecs sacrificed people daily and over 80,000 at the dedication of the temple in Tenochtitlan, and why communists killed 94 million people in the 20th century. This is why over 800,000 babies a year in the US are aborted to serve *Demos*, the god of our democracy. There's a lot of blood money involved, but people don't defend it by saying, "We can all make money from this." It's all about our way of life—a woman's "right" to choose, a man's right to not take responsibility and provide for the person he fathered, and our autonomous right to do what we want even when it takes a human life. The point here is not that people who don't know God are individually going to murder. It's that all people, including groups of them, need their sins atoned for, and therefore they will either meet that need in Christ or find other sacrificial victims to offer. We see this at work in the Mosaic law: "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect" (Heb. 10:1). This worked because they forward to Christ by faith. But the high priests and elders in Jesus' time reject Him, and therefore He must go. His blood will be upon them. They didn't want to put the blood money in the treasury because that would be unlawful (v. 6), demonstrating the desperate self-righteousness of the guilty heart. You can get rid of your fetus, but you face up to a year in jail and \$100,000 fine if you "take, harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, or capture any marine turtle, turtle nest, and/or eggs, or attempt to engage in any such conduct." The more we try to assuage our guilt without Christ, the worse it gets.

The Field of Blood

Jesus is the greater Jeremiah, prophesying the destruction of the temple in that generation, not one stone left upon another (Matt. 24:2, 34). His body will be broken on the cross and the curtain in the temple torn (27:51). But Jeremiah also says that the Lord will gather His people from afar, bring them back to the land, and "give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them" (Jer. 32:39). They will buy fields again and all will be restored (32:44). Jesus' blood paid for the Field of Blood, where foreigners, having come to Jerusalem to worship the God of all nations, would be buried. Because Jesus died and rose, graveyards are no longer unclean places. Graveyards are gardens where the seeds of our bodies will burst out, blooming in the resurrection (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13). His blood didn't purchase just one, but countless graveyards across the earth. The old Jerusalem went up in flames, but the new Jerusalem rose with Jesus, and now comes to us out of heaven, the church and bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2; cf. Gal. 4:26). Strangers and foreigners come here to worship Him, and through His blood have their sins forgiven, their guilt and shame taken away.