

Greetings to each of you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered what someone new to Christianity might think upon entering the church and hearing songs about the blood of Christ or sermons filled with terms that seem strange or archaic? Sometimes it's good to pause and consider what our biblical words and concepts sound like to those who don't know Jesus Christ. At first glance, it may seem like the answer is to stop using these terms, but is that really the best option?

The truth is that many Christians don't fully understand what the Bible means regarding words like redemption, justification, or sanctification. Although they have become accustomed to reading or hearing them, they have never really considered what they mean or why they are important. If no one ever explains these concepts to them, the Bible will not make much sense, and they may give up reading it. Therefore, the answer is not to abandon these vitally important concepts and words, but to carefully explain them so we will all understand these essential truths of the Christian faith.

The most precious concept in Scripture is that of the blood of Christ. If we don't understand whose blood was shed, why it was necessary, and what it accomplished, it will seem frightening and cruel. Yet it is the means by which our salvation is possible. Christ's blood is the red thread that runs through God's Word, proclaiming hope to sinful humanity.

When John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the people, he summed up in two sentences who He was, why He came, and how He would accomplish God's purpose: *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he on behalf of whom I said, 'after me comes a man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me'"* (John 1:29-30).

Although Jesus in His incarnation was younger John, He was (and still is) the pre-existent Son of God (John 1:1) who came to earth as the God-man to take away the sin of the world. The title, Lamb of God, signifies how this would be accomplished. The Jews would have instantly connected this title with the daily sacrifice of lambs that allowed unholy people to approach a holy God (Exodus 29:38-39). Jesus had to die, in order to take away the sin that prevents human kind from having a relationship with the Lord.

To understand how essential Christ's blood is for our salvation, consider what Scripture says it accomplishes. First of all, we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). To redeem, means to buy back. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins with His death so He could purchase us from our captivity to sin and death and return us to God as His eternal possession.

Second, we are justified by his blood reconciled with God (Romans 5:9–10).

Justification means we are declared no longer guilty of our sins because Jesus paid the penalty for by dying in our place. Even further, we are declared righteous. An amazing transaction occurred on the cross – all our sins were placed on Jesus, and all His righteous deeds were credited to our account (2 Corinthians 5:21). Now we are reconciled to the Father by being brought back into our right relationship with Him.

Third, Jesus sanctifies us through His blood (Hebrews 13:12). Sanctification means we are set apart for the Lord and progressively made more righteous. Our redemption, justification, and reconciliation happen in a moment at our salvation, but sanctification is an event that begins at the same time and continues throughout our lives until it is completed when we are glorified in perfect, sinless bodies fit for heaven (Philippians 3:20–21).

Fourth, the blood of Christ continually cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:7-9). Although the guilt of our sins has been removed (justification), and the power of sin is being overcome (sanctification), we will never be totally free from the presence of sin while we are in our earthly bodies. Jesus promised that if we will confess our sins, His blood would keep on cleansing us so our relationship with the Father would not be hindered.

Finally, Christ's blood has given us access to God (Hebrews 10:19–22). In the Old Testament, only the high priest could go into the most holy place in the temple once a year with animal blood as an offering. But when Jesus offered the only perfect and complete sacrifice, His own blood, the veil of the temple in Jerusalem that separated God from the people was torn in two, from the top down to the bottom. Because of Christ's death for our sins, we can now approach our heavenly Father at any time directly and confidently with our prayers, petitions, and praises.

The difficult words and concepts in the Bible are never to be ignored or avoided. God placed them in His Word to explain the depths and riches of His salvation and the privileges we have as His redeemed people. Christ's blood is not a distasteful topic, but a precious gift applied to all who believe in Him. When we understand what it accomplished, we will have the comfort of knowing that our salvation is eternally secure and that we have been made forever acceptable before God.

To God be the glory!

Blessings and Shalom!

*Jan*

ps: The Season of Lent begins on Wednesday, February 14, Ash Wednesday

We are hoping to have a 5 week Bible Study for Lent – information to follow shortly

(\*Some of research for this letter IT Ministries)