

BLOOD IS A SYMBOL

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The sanctuary is the most pervasive illustration of the plan of salvation found in Scripture. Its intriguing architecture and exotic materials, its formal plan and intricately designed furnishings, its elaborate rituals and well organized three-tier ministry along with its calendar of daily services and prophetic annual festivals spanning millennia, make it the most complex enacted parable ever devised. The space devoted to it by the Spirit at the dawn of the revealed writings as well as the hundreds of allusions to it found spread throughout the Bible alert the reader to its importance.

However, the sanctuary, with all its symbolism and typology, raises a problem among those Bible scholars who feel that they must have unambiguous sentences with which to formulate concepts. In the tabernacle they encounter over two hundred symbols and types which do not fit into a merely verbal category. As exegetes and linguists they find little satisfaction for their skills and give up in frustration.

Conditioned by fanciful and bizarre meanings ascribed to biblical types and symbols by some ancient and modern commentators, many Bible students denigrate symbology and typology as allegorical and as therefore unworthy of serious biblical scholarship.

But because the sanctuary is replete with symbols and types it requires a special approach. Its pictures, like those in the apocalyptic writings of both Testaments and in Christ's parables, need creative visualization or they remain meaningless. But when the prospector reverently approaches the minutiae of God's Word with the conviction that nothing there is unimportant, his

predisposition prepares the way for the Spirit to direct his imagination to veins of rich ore never before perceived.

“Measure” the Sanctuary

On two occasions the Lord directed that the sanctuary should be studied by “measuring” its details. On the first of these two occasions, the Spirit guided Ezekiel through the closing scenes of the great controversy and then granted him a vision of a temple. The celestial Architect led him from chamber to chamber, noting windows and doors and pillars and porticoes, meticulously measuring every detail. With this experience fresh in mind the prophet was commanded: “Son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them *measure* the pattern” (Eze 43:10, where the KJV is more faithful to the Hebrew than some modern versions).

“The house of Israel” constituted God’s covenant people. Earthly covenants were ratified by blood. Paul reminds Christians that Christ’s blood ratified the new covenant for all believers in every age. At each Passover, and now at each communion service, God’s people were and are reminded of the precious “blood of the covenant.”

The details of Ezekiel’s temple vision were to be displayed before God’s covenant people to help them “measure the pattern.” This recommendation is applicable today. The full scope of the ministry of our Saviour, the true Pattern, can be understood only with this kind of investigation. Then the sacrificial love of the Victim-Priest, symbolized by His resurrected living blood, awakens appreciation in the heart of the observer, as well as guilt and shame. These latter, the guilt and the shame, the intricate provisions of the tabernacle stand ready to cleanse. In Ezekiel’s oracle the personal application of the details of the sanctuary to life’s needs is emphasized. The mediatorial blood is vital.

In vision the Revelator experienced the emotions of the Advent Awakening from the euphoria of 1843 (the “blessing” promised to those who should live at the termination of the 1335 days) to the sweet hope and bitter disappointment of 1844. As representative of the survivors of the Millerite movement, John was instructed to “prophesy again” to an international audience. The Spirit then

directed him to "rise, and *measure* the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein" (Rev 11:1, 2). By this activity he would discover the topic for his proclamation.

Here is the second occasion when the Spirit bade a prophet measure the sanctuary.

During the years immediately following 1844 the task of the Advent believers was first to "measure" the various parts of the tabernacle, as well as the vicarious blood splashed on its altar in which a raging fire consumed the substitute victim, and also the character of its worshipers. Then they were to preach the fruit of their study. In this oracle the world-wide application of the sanctuary to the needs of humanity at the end of history was emphasized.

These two visions, the one given to Ezekiel and the one to John, refer to the same time and event.

To make a measured drawing for a building or a piece of furniture the draftsman first assembles the dimensions of every element in its relationship to every other part and to the whole. He then considers the materials of which each is to be made and the quantities needed. Similarly, in our study of the sanctuary, every particular symbol must be "measured" and its proportions, materials, location, and relationships carefully considered. Jesus, of course, is the true Pattern we are studying as we do this.

Jesus Is the Representative Lamb

Some sanctuary symbols have been understood so long that they are taken for granted. For example, the Baptist twice announced Jesus as "the Lamb of God." His phrase, "the Lamb of God," evokes meaning without our seeing, except subliminally, an animal with four legs, a woolly coat and tail, two little horns and pointed ears, and that cries, Baa! What we perceive when we hear the phrase, what we feel, is our Saviour, gentle and kind, given by His Father to die for the world. By age-long use the symbol has become automatically identified with its real meaning. This kind of habitual application of the sanctified imagination must be directed toward every type and symbol in the tabernacle.

Jesus "took on Himself the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:16). His life-blood represents the life-blood of "Abraham's seed," the "heirs

according to the promise," who are His redeemed people. When Jesus died, humanity died in Him. When He arose, humanity again lived in Him. As Jesus ascended to His Father, humanity ascended in Him. Christ's blood is representative of the human race.

Moses, Isaiah, and our Saviour call attention to a great many details regarding the sacrificial lamb. It had to be innocent, young, flawless, and freely provided by its owner. It must be presented at the altar by a willing penitent, who bound it with cords and then confessed his sins while laying his hands, that is, his full weight, upon its head, thereby transferred the responsibility for his guilt to his helpless substitute, which he immediately slaughtered. Our imaginations empathize with the victim, sensing the flash of sun on the killing blade, watching the shuddering death agony and the blood streaming from the throat. Our hearts throb with horror—and especially so because we have come to believe that these symbols and types represent a reality far bigger than themselves.

But our mental pictures are not painted by the actual brush strokes of biblical writers, nor are our emotions evoked by their words. They are evoked by the Spirit's stimulation of our imaginations through representations far more powerful and eloquent than letters on a page.

Questions confront us: Which of the details of these symbols and types shall we consider meaningful enough to be measured, and which shall we dismiss as merely incidental? It is my opinion that there is nothing given by inspiration that is without significance, when all the available facts are brought to bear upon it.

Disciplined by the curbs of divine revelation, trained by lexicon and grammar and context, aided by the insights of history, geography and the established facts of science, our powers of visualization should be exerted upon each detail to push comprehension beyond the obvious meaning of words.

The Blood Shed or Spilled

For example, think of the role of "the blood of the lamb." As blood is the river of life for an animal, the blood of Christ represents the life essence of the Lamb of God. As blood is purified by air, Christ kept His blood pure by breathing continually the rare atmosphere of heaven. As blood removes waste products and builds and rebuilds

every organ of the body, Christ's blood rejuvenates the church and keeps every member healthy and vital. Blood touched every part and person in the ancient sanctuary and lay at the basis of every rite. Thus we are taught that Christ's blood is the life-blood of redemption.

Remembering that types and symbols testify of our Saviour in His ministry in heaven, we must mentally recreate all their particulars: the troubled penitent with bloodied clothing and crimsoned hands clutching the reeking knife, experiencing the drama in which he was both participator and observer; the lamb at last lying still in death, its blood caught in a golden bowl by the mediator and staining the earth with carmine; the priest proceeding with his duties with white robes streaked with scarlet, while spectators looked on in silence. The sacrificial blood embodied all these concepts, but in and of itself it was not enough to save.

The Blood Sprinkled or Applied

As we imagine the earthly ministrant carrying the "spilled blood" into the holy place glowing with quiet light and redolent of the breath of prayer, or to the brazen altar flaming with justice in the court, and see him splatter the blood in elaborate rituals, converting it into omnipotent "sprinkled blood," we must see Jesus ministering His own precious blood.

Through these happenings we perceive the theological truth that the spilling of the lamb's blood was not sufficient. It had to be precisely *applied* in specific places and at different times by two consecrated officers before it could become effective in making atonement. Jesus is Himself the Victim, Himself the Priest, Himself the High Priest. Through typology we learn that neither His death (represented by His spilled blood) nor the life which He laid down to produce the spilled blood was sufficient to procure our redemption. His blood had to be ministered; it had to be applied.

To apply His blood, the Saviour had to live again and take the essence of His triumphant life and death, now His living or resurrected blood, to the next stage of His ministry. And with it, He must dedicate His place of service and be Himself inaugurated as Priest and High Priest.

These concepts are not spelled out in the Bible, but they are clearly pictured by the details of symbols and types. Not until every particular has been etched in the mind by the inspired Word and the illuminating Spirit are we able to understand what actually is transpiring in the celestial tabernacle.

Some believe that the Old Testament sanctuary should be scrutinized solely through the eyes of the New Testament. But the meaning of many aspects of the tabernacle had been grasped by perceptive readers centuries before there was a New Testament. In my view, New Testament statements should be understood in the light of the Old. When Jesus fulfilled the predictions of typology by His life, death, and resurrection, the light from these sanctuary symbols shone clearly, but their glow had been there from the beginning.

Paul did not approach the Saviour's death and triumphant ministry in the heavenly sanctuary in a vacuum. He was saturated with its ancient illustrations. His statements regarding Christ's implementation of these types become clear only because the light from the Old Testament is streaming upon them. Today, when ideas from both Testaments are assembled, the significance of the plan of salvation as taught in the tabernacle emerges brightly.

Several Kinds of Substitute Sacrifice

We have been thinking of the submissive lamb as representative of Christ, but what of the other symbols—the powerful bull and the sturdy ram, the playful goat and the frolicsome kid, the plaintive dove and the gentle pigeon, as well as the gregarious sparrow twittering in joy, and the lonely red heifer? These also are prescribed symbols of the Victim. The characteristics of each of these creatures must be added to the picture of Jesus as a lamb, a quest that obviously would take us far beyond the limits of the present study. Only in the cumulated light streaming from every Spirit-selected symbol shall we be able to visualize the fullness of our great Substitute's character in life and death and grasp the quality of His "spilled blood."

Blood Establishes the Right of Jesus to Serve

The first act of Jesus as the *resurrected* Lamb (and the representative of humanity) was to ascend to His Father to present His

blood. He entered eternal Light, the first Man to do so and survive, and heard from His Father's lips that His sacrifice was acceptable. By surviving the divine effulgence He demonstrated before the universe that no taint of sin rested upon Him. Jesus received from His Father the added assurance that His followers would one day share the bliss of heaven with Him. But even at this juncture, His representative blood still was only "spilled blood."

Let us "measure" other scenes in sanctuary typology by asking two questions: When was the Mosaic tabernacle dedicated for service? and, When was its priesthood set apart to sacred office?

The apothecaries who prepared the holy unguent (see Ex 30:22-33) were informed that it would be used to anoint the entire tabernacle, including "the ark of the testimony" (verse 25). When Moses led Aaron and his sons in a rehearsal of its opening rites, he reminded them to anoint "all the vessels thereof" (Ex 40:9-11). After the tent had been erected and the priests had been prepared, "Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them" (Lev 8:10, 11). These types required that the most holy place be entered prior to the commencement of the services of the sanctuary, and, incidentally, long before those of the Day of Atonement were to be carried out.

The Spirit used two verbs for these acts: Moses "*anointed*" all the parts with oil, "and *sanctified* them" with "sprinkled blood." (See Lev 8:30, where oil and blood are specifically mentioned, and Heb 9:20- 22.) Heb 9:21 observes that "the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry" were *purified* with blood. Paul was well aware that this sanctifying and purifying blood represented the victorious life of Jesus.

Moses noted that oil was used but only hinted at the use of blood. Paul stated clearly that blood hallowed the tabernacle but only hinted at the role of the Spirit, symbolized by oil (see Heb 9:14). Not until all the symbolic and typical statements from both Testaments are combined do we get a true picture of what transpired on earth, and thus also in heaven.

Let me summarize: Moses, representative of God, and Aaron the high priest, typical of Christ, together took oil (symbol of one function of the Holy Spirit) and blood (the reality of the power of Christ's endless and triumphant life available only after Calvary)

and chrismated the ancient tabernacle, with all its contents, to sanctify and dedicate it. Their persons and actions were types, and what they used were symbols. Together these types and symbols portrayed what would transpire at the inauguration of the celestial sanctuary, and who would carry it out.

Christ's Blood Used to Inaugurate His Ministry in Heaven

The timing of these events is important. In Israel's tabernacle, anointing (or sprinkling) with "spilled blood" obviously required a victim's death. Because the inauguration of the heavenly tabernacle needed Christ's sanctifying (or purifying) blood (Heb 9:21-24), it could not take place until after He had "spilled" His blood through His death on the cross—nor until after His resurrection, by which its vitality was displayed. Then He had to ascend with His human body, carrying to the celestial sanctuary His "spilled blood" (now resurrected), the symbol of His triumphant life.

"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor 15:17-21).

Once Jesus arrived in heaven carrying his spilled-but-living blood, the Father and the Spirit joined Him in carrying out the services of dedication in the heavenly sanctuary. They accomplished this by changing the status of "spilled blood" to "sprinkled blood." This rite necessitated Christ's entrance into the most holy place.

Blood Marks Christ's Priestly Garments

Immediately following the dedication of the heavenly sanctuary Jesus Himself was consecrated as Priest and High Priest. For this important occasion the sanctuary was ready as the place of service, the Priest was ready as Mediator, and so was the Victim's living blood.

The blood of consecration, representing the quality of the victim's life, crimsoned the garments of Israel's priests (Lev 8:30). When we focus this picture on our Saviour, we perceive His white robe, His sinless character, marked with crimson to display His sufferings. This sign language points to Gethsemane, where He trod the winepress alone (Isa 63:1-3), His bloody sweat splashing

His garments and the sin-cursed earth. In Gethsemane he demonstrated that He had indeed "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb 5:8).

After Gethsemane, Calvary, *and* the resurrection, the Saviour could carry out His mediatorial duties and apply His "spilled blood" as "sprinkled blood" for the benefit of the lost world. All this was prefigured in the ancient diorama of salvation, the Old Testament tabernacle. During the daily morning and evening services the victim's sprinkled blood was used to consecrate the Jewish nation. Today, Jesus, as Priest, performs these "daily" services in the celestial tabernacle. John viewed this thrilling fact in vision: "I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain [in the very act of pouring out His blood], having seven horns and seven eyes" (Rev 5:6)—perfect might and perfect sight.

Invincible Blood

Look once more at the wide panorama we are considering, typified in the tabernacle diorama. As we have just seen, the inauguration of the Old Testament tabernacle reveals that the building was first "made" and subsequently anointed with blood and oil (Lev 8:13, ff.) immediately before the priests were consecrated, also with blood and oil. This sequence of events enables us to visualize that before Jesus could serve as the Priest and High Priest of our salvation, the heavenly sanctuary had first to be "made" by God and afterwards dedicated by the blood of Calvary and the oil of the Spirit (see Heb 4:14-16; 5:5-10; 7:24-28; 8:1-6). To signal that Jesus had been consecrated as Priest and High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, the Oil of the Spirit—seen by John under the symbol of "seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Rev 5:6)—was poured on His head and flowed down His beard (Ps 133:1-3, where Aaron is the type), cascading to earth in flaming Pentecostal cataracts, deluging the praying disciples, and illuminating the world (Acts 2:1-4.)

This inspired scenario, long foreshadowed by the symbols and types of the earthly tabernacle, has Jesus entering the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in company with the Father and the Spirit immediately after His ascension and before Pentecost to carry out vital tasks. It is possible that Paul had these entries of our Forerunner or Advocate "within the veil" in mind when encourag-

ing the faith of Hebrew Christians in Heb 6:19, 20. Is it because these types are ignored that there is so much debate over whether Christ's entry "within the veil" should be limited to the antitypical Day of Atonement?

Christ's Blood Represents His Perfect Life

When Jesus came into the world, He testified that death, typified by the four major rituals of the sacrificial system, was not the ultimate goal which His Father desired. The purpose of the incarnation was obedience to God's will, testified to by His death (Heb 10:5-14) on Calvary. Only because He *yielded Himself* to this penal death is our High Priest able to sanctify all who come to Him with His blood.

Records Written in Blood Are Removed by Blood

In the daily ritual in behalf of Israelite sinners, blood was sprinkled or splashed on the veil between the holy and most holy chambers of the sanctuary as well as smeared on the horns of the golden altar. In "some cases" the blood was sprinkled on the horns of the brazen altar alone; but then a sacramental portion of the victim, traditionally at least as large as an olive, was eaten by the priest. The residue of the blood from both ceremonies was poured at the base of the brazen altar.

The prophet Jeremiah reminded God's people of the reality which these rites signified: "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of your hearts, and upon the horns of your altars" (Jer 17:1). The rebellion of human beings is also etched on the palms and feet of the Victim Priest.

Both of these ancient rituals signified that the confessed and forever forgiven sins were transferred to the tabernacle and there recorded in a carmine script that registered the victories of the penitents in resisting sin in the shadow of God's glory.

The tabernacle itself, ordered by God, Who designed its building, furnishings, and arrangements; the victims which He provided and then required, and every detail of the Saviour's character they evoked; the Spirit-influenced sinner and his actions and intentions; the consecrated priest and his functions; and finally, the blood, representing the life of the innocent substitute and recording the

entire transaction on the “veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb 10:20) and on the horns of both altars—all spoke of aspects of the omnipotent Saviour’s life, death, and ministry.

The joyous worshipers remembered without fear or foreboding that at strategic sites in God’s house their sins were safely recorded in blood as having been confessed and overcome. They knew that the bloody records were unalterable, entirely safe from interference by the “accuser of the brethren,” and only awaiting the validating transactions of the triumphant Day of Atonement. They knew that on the Day of Atonement these records would be obliterated by the High Priest, who would then set them forever free from all of Satan’s charges.

These types and symbols shadowed forth the truth that on the antitypical Day of Atonement in the celestial tabernacle the record of every forgiven sin would be erased by the precious blood of the Lord’s Goat applied by the divine-human High Priest. Only after these details of the Old Testament tabernacle have been carefully “measured” can the student of the story of salvation grasp the separate roles played by Christ’s “spilled” and “sprinkled blood” and rejoice in full assurance.

Blood Is Life

The Spirit explained that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” and added, “I have given it to you upon your altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11 KJV).

In the clause “for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul,” the word “soul” (*nephesh*) is rendered “life” in various versions, bringing out the true significance of the passage: “. . . by reason of the life.” The New American Standard has, “. . . it is the blood *by reason of the life* that makes atonement”; “. . . *through the life*,” says The New Berkeley Version; “. . . *as the seat of life*,” offers The New American Bible. Thus the text might be appropriately translated, “Because the life of the flesh is in the blood, I have given it to you on the altar to cover your lives, because the blood atones *on account of the life* of the victim.” It is the quality of the victim’s life that is represented by the atoning or covering blood. The hymn writer clearly caught this: “Cover with His *life*, sinless is He.”

Let me reiterate. Because "blood is the life" (Deut 12:23) "of the flesh" (Gen 9:4, 5), blood is used as the symbol of the quintessence of the Victim's character laid down in death in the penitent's place. It represents not so much His death, per se, as His total energy and experience. This was emphasized by a sacrifice without blemish of any kind (Lev 1:3; Ex 12:5; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19), with no lacking or additional parts. And because blood could be used only subsequent to a victim's death, the rituals in which it was employed testify to the post-resurrection ministry of our immaculate Saviour.

Christ's life, "original and unborrowed," is the vast spring from which every river of living beings has had its source and continues to gush. Humanity is such a river. When Adam sinned, the human river was defiled and subject some day to drying up.

In considering how to purify the race, we might begin at Adam, the point at which sin and death entered. Our first parent certainly should have died to pay the penalty for his sin. But had he done so, his potential posterity would have perished. Neither could an angel or other unfallen being purge the human stream by a vicarious sacrifice, because, although he might be able to lay down his life, he could not take it up again. It becomes obvious that no finite being is able to cleanse the race. Thus Deity went one stage further back, to the immediate Source from which Adam sprang, that is, to Christ the Creator, since all humanity was in Him.

Jesus agreed to take responsibility and to give Himself for the race. When He died, humanity would die in Him. Thus the penalty for every sin would be paid once for all. And when He should arise, all humanity would potentially be resurrected in Him and given a second chance. Thus it is true that there is salvation in no "other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Because of this Paul could affirm: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). In the resurrected Saviour God now sees the human race as conditionally redeemed, with every debt discharged, waiting only for each individual personally to accept Jesus in order to make the plan of redemption a reality for that person.

Cleansing and Mediating Blood

The inspired writers are unanimous on this point: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7), for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" (Heb 9:22), and in Him "we have redemption through His blood" (Eph 1:7). These symbolic statements point to the transcendent reality that "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His *life*" (Rom 5:10). Paul here combines the results of the death and of the life of the Saviour. It is because He is alive that He has the authority to save sinners. His power to do so is symbolized by His eternally living human blood.

The Saviour's blood not only purchased the human race; it also ratified the new covenant through which redemption is possible. It is on the basis of His victorious life that Jesus approaches His Father and ours and is able to demand that Deity give eternal life to every repentant sinner, crying in triumph, "My blood, Father, My blood!" (see *Early Writings*, p. 38). By His blood He is able to justify the penitent and sanctify the saint who remains submissive to His will.

The salvific effects of His dwelling in our hearts by faith through grace can be illustrated by the blood circulating through our bodies. "Christ must dwell in your hearts, as the blood is in the body, and circulate there as a vitalizing power. On this subject we cannot be too urgent. While truth must be our panoply, our convictions need to be strengthened by the living sympathies that characterized the life of Christ" (*Testimonies to the Church*, 7: 189).

The never ceasing ministration of Christ's omnipotent blood in the heavenly sanctuary is needed by every penitent and will continue as long as there is one sinner ready to accept the proffered salvation. Contemplating Christ's ministry of His blood in the blazing light of the symbology and typology of the earthly sanctuary, we exclaim in joy and adoration, "Lord, how we love Thee for Thy love!"