

The Scarlet Thread of Redemption

Discovering God's Cleansing Blood Throughout the Scripture



An 8-Day Easter Devotional

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Standing in the Gap for Truth.

DEDICATION

From 1994 until 2013, the year I did my last official seminar, I had the amazing privilege to serve as a faculty member with WALK THRU THE BIBLE MINISTRIES. WTB was created by BRUCE WILKINSON and flowed out of his studies at Dallas Seminary. Under the tutelage of Dr. Howard Hendricks, Bruce was challenged to create a way to understand, but even more importantly, to remember the entire storyline of the Old and New Testament. Little did he know that nearly 50 years later, millions of people throughout dozens of countries worldwide would have their minds and hearts ignited to God's Word through Walk Thru seminars.

I met Bruce in 1983, during my senior year at Philadelphia College of Bible. Our week-long encounter changed my life forever. That same week, I attended my first WTB Old Testament seminar, led by my longtime friend ROGER PETERSEN. Even though I was a fourth year Bible college student, I was in awe at the level of learning which occurred in those six hours. I said to myself that if God would allow me, someday I would teach this material. Over the years, I met other friends like PETER HOOK, a college professor and WTB seminar instructor, who encouraged me to apply to become a faculty member. But it wasn't until the fall of 1993, I reached out to WTB and was surprised to receive a call from the Dean of Faculty, PHIL TUTTLE. After filling out the 25+ page application and getting a personal visit at my church in NYC, I was accepted and invited to their training in Atlanta. Phil trained and coached me, not just how to present the unique WTB material, but how to hone my communication skills.

Phil and Ellen Tuttle have become dear friends to Kris and me for all of these years and on a number of occasions we have had the privilege to speak at Bible conferences together. Over the years, Bruce moved on to other ministry ventures. Roger has done more seminars than any other instructor and his record will never be challenged! Peter, like myself, retired a few years

ago and we speak often on the phone. And Phil, well he is now “El Presidente” at WTB and has ushered this amazing ministry into a new era of worldwide impact!

I owe a lot to Walk Thru the Bible. Even today, I will teach material it produces and it always has significant spiritual impact. I am indebted to BRUCE, ROGER, PETER and the dozens of WTB Instructors who have changed the world by showing God’s people the genius of God’s Word. And finally, a special word of appreciation to PHIL TUTTLE. Beyond being the keystone of WTB for decades, he has been my friend and cheerleader. In uplifting times and through very trying, difficult times, Phil has been there! We have wept and laughed more times than we will remember and most memorably have encouraged each other to always look for ways to make a difference in people’s lives. This devotional is dedicated to Phil and the entire WTB family!

*“...Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To Him who loves us and has **freed us from our sins by His blood** and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:5–6*

Introduction: When I was conducting Walk thru the Bible seminars around the country, there was a moment during the presentation that I always looked forward to during the Old Testament seminar. Right after teaching on Moses and the Exodus of the people of Israel out of the clutches of Egypt, I would ask this question: *“What do you believe is the most important event in **ALL** of the Bible?”* If it was not the first answer, it usually was the second. An attendee would scream out – *“The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ!”* I would exuberantly affirm their answer... *“You are correct! The death of Christ and His subsequent resurrection is the most significant event.”* Then I asked a follow up question, *“But that took place in the New Testament. What is the most significant event in the Old Testament?”*

Coming to that answer took a bit more work. Some would say creation, the covenant with Abraham and even a wild guess of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem or the construction of the Temple. All are very important in Biblical history, yet the most significant Old Testament event is a close relative to the most important event in all of the Bible, and that would be Passover. You see in the Passover, we see a sacrifice of a lamb to cover the sins of the people and rescue them from the wrath to come. God uses blood to protect His people. Passover is the “forerunner” to the most significant event in all of the Bible, the death of the precious lamb of God, the Lord Jesus. Passover highlights the importance of blood being shed to satisfy God’s demand to have sins forgiven.

After conducting dozens of these seminars and asking those questions, the idea of blood being shed and someone or something being offered up as a sacrifice drove me to recall a great message preached decades ago by famed preacher, W.A. Criswell. Criswell served as the pastor at First Baptist Church of Dallas for four decades and on one New Year’s Eve he preached for a number of hours continuously, a message entitled the **SCARLET THREAD OF REDEMPTION**. Using the idea of blood and God’s use of blood in redeeming sinful man, he went through the entire Bible, pointing out the incredible

“scarlet thread” of shed blood woven throughout the Bible to explain the salvation story. Obviously, Passover and the death of Christ were included in his message. However, as you traverse through the pages of Scripture, it is fascinating how many times blood is mentioned. It was an insight that I have yet to forget.

This is Easter week, starting with Palm Sunday and moving towards the MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT in all of history. As we prepare to think again on the day when the Son of God shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins, I want to guide you through a devotional study of the ***Scarlet Thread of Redemption*** throughout God’s Word. From the moment that sin entered into the world, God’s remedy was blood. He began right from the beginning to cleanse and cover the stain of unrighteousness using blood. As we will see, the crimson flow came in various ways and through various circumstances, but each and every instance it was pointing to Golgotha where the final and complete scarlet flow came to deliver mankind. God has been consistent in teaching and preparing us, so that when Jesus, the Lamb of God, shows up, we will be able to understand the meaning of His coming and what impact He will have on us. Seeing each time God responds to man’s need with His scarlet solution will encourage our hearts and enlighten our minds.

My hope this week is that you will fall in love with God’s Word by seeing the powerful theme of blood that runs throughout the Holy Scriptures. You will be amazed when you realize how God threaded a needle with His red cord of love and pushed it through the book He authored, so that whichever page you turn to you will see evidence of His scarlet thread of redemption. May you be touched through this study and gain renewed confidence in the eternal redemptive plan of God. Now join us as we consider **THE SCARLET THREAD OF REDEMPTION**.

*“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like **scarlet**, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are **red like crimson**, they shall become like wool.” Isaiah 1:18*

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

The goal of this devotional is for you to prepare yourself for Easter. That is why I have written these guides to start on Palm Sunday and provide you spiritual insights throughout the Passion week. I have included the Monday after Easter as an exclamation point to our week long journey.

Each day you have been provided with a number of elements with the devotional to help you navigate the subject and stoke the fires of your soul. First, we will approach the subject of the day. This is intended to “prime the pump” and get you thinking about the text for the day. The theme throughout will be the importance of blood in the redeeming work of God. Each day we will look at another aspect of that theme in the Scriptures.

Then we will examine a passage of the Scriptures. As you read God’s Word, I encourage you to ask questions about the text. Become “curious” as you read it. Take in each word, idea and situation described. It is when we teach ourselves to ask why, how, who and what questions of the text that we begin to engage with the Bible. You may know the answers to questions but asking them anyway will lead to additional questions.

Thirdly, I will provide some commentary or devotional thoughts and a suggested way to direct your prayer for that day. Finally, I have included lyrics from some of the great hymns which have the theme of blood and the precious crimson flow that forgives our sins. I was amazed from my preparation how many writers include our theme in their song. As a matter of fact, I do not have enough days to use all the songs I found. They should be familiar enough that you will be able to sing them aloud in an act of personal worship. If you want, go to YouTube and you will find a rendition to sing-a-long with. Enough with these instructions, let’s get into our study!

All Scripture quoted from The English Standard Version

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Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the *shedding of blood* there is no forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 9:22

SUNDAY – Beginning of the Blood: Adam and the Need to Cover Original Sin

APPROACH: Sometimes I think about how things got started or how something was originally invented. Like letters, words and the writing of sentences. How did people figure that out? How about a wheel? How many times did they try until it worked? Knowing the inception of something gives you a unique understanding and perspective. Often how something begins determines the trajectory or future patterns of the original activity, product or entity. Almost always you can find glimpses of the original in future iterations. It would only make sense that if you were studying the topic of blood in the Bible, and its importance in regard to redemption, that you go to the first time it was used. We find that event all the way back in the Garden of Eden and the original man and woman who God created, Adam and Eve. Specifically, we need to look at when sin entered into the vein of mankind and how a Holy God responded. Let's read the encounter....

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Genesis 3:8–24

[8] And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. [9] But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" [10] And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." [11] He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" [12] The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." [13] Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

[14] The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” [16] To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” [17] And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; [18] thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. [19] By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” [20] The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. **[21] And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.** [22] Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” [23] therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. [24] He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

(ESV)

APPLY: As we know from the Biblical narrative, God created all the earth and then created man and woman and placed them in the Garden, also known as Paradise. It was a place of paradise from its beauty and resources, but most importantly, because there was no sin. Adam and Eve were perfect and in perfect fellowship with the Holy God. In our text we see that the relationship with mankind was such that God would walk among them and spend time with

them. Yet everything radically changed when God's created beings succumbed to Satan's scheme and disobeyed the Lord's command of not eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When they committed that act, sin was injected into their veins and thus would be trickled into the heart of every person who would follow throughout history.

Our text explains a few of the devastating consequences that came upon mankind because of sin. Just think about it: they would now need to hide from God because of the shame and fear that sin produces; Eve would have pain in child birth and all of us would experience physical maladies; work would be a drudgery and no longer a joy of man, adding an effort at everything we do; we would face a future wrought by spiritual war, heightening Satan's hatred of us; Adam and Eve would be banished from the Garden and the presence of God; and they, and the rest of mankind, would die at some point. Those are just a few that we can read in this passage! The question is, "How would God respond to this horrific act of disobedience and the apparent upending of God's paradise?" The answer – the shedding of blood.

As we will learn through this Passion Week, it is blood that God will institute as the remedy for our sin. Sin breaches the holiness of God and its only repair is the shedding of blood to cleanse and redeem. In verse 21, we read that to "cover" Adam and Eve's nakedness and shame, God provided animal skins. Not fig leaves as is portrayed in cartoonish depictions of these events. Leaves would not fix the problem. Instead, God Himself provided animal skins. The inference is that an animal in the Garden would need to be slain and its skins fashioned into clothing for the sin exposed man and woman. When the animal is slain, blood is shed. This is the first time we see bloodshed being the remedy of sin's effects in mankind's life. As we said at the beginning of this study today, if you go back to the inception of something, we can understand a lot. And so, it is when considering the shedding of blood for the covering of sin.

One last insight - remember, it was God who would provide the covering. It was God who initiated the sacrifice. It is the Lord of the Garden that gave a gift and resource from His Garden to provide what was needed to resolve man's sin problem. Man did not go looking for something to cover his guilt. No, it was God who would do it! And so, it would be from that time forward. God initiates. God provides. God fixes what man has broken. God uses blood to do it! As we begin this glorious study of the scarlet thread that weaves its way through the pages of Scripture, consider where and when that thread was launched in the Garden of Eden when sin entered into the world. Why did the scarlet thread of redemption begin? Because God needed to resolve man's sin. That thread continues from Genesis to Revelation.

ADORE: *"Father, even though I was not a part of the original sin, the fact is, if I were, I would have fallen just like Adam and Eve. And since that day, I have exhibited the consequences of sin in my own life. Thank you Father, that even in our collective depravity, You demonstrate mercy, grace and overwhelming forgiveness. Even more amazing is that You have supplied the sacrifice to cover my sin as You did in the Garden. May I never forget it was You who initiated and provided the blood sacrifice necessary for mankind's redemption. It has always been Your plan since the very beginning! In Your redeeming Name I pray, AMEN!"*

Story Behind the Song: Our first hymn is one I use many times during a communion service to highlight the importance of blood in redemption and that God has provided His crimson remedy for our iniquity. William Cowper was one of the few hymn writers that was also a recognized secular poet. This much-beloved, and yet tormented, literary figure was born in his father's rectory at Great Berkhamstead, England, on Nov. 26, 1731. His father, George II, was a chaplain. His mother died when he was 6 years old. He suffered in many ways and used writing poems and songs to find comfort. Cowper wrote one of the most beloved and most controversial hymns, "There is a Fountain

Filled With Blood.” It was most likely written in 1771, first published in *Conyers’s Collection of Psalms and Hymns* in 1772 and republished by Cowper and Newton in 1779 for *The Olney Hymns*. Based on Zechariah 13:1, “On that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity,” the hymn is a meditation on the saving power of the blood of Christ. Meditate on the words of this wonderful song.

THERE IS A FOUNTAIN

1. There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains:
Lose all their guilty stains; lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood; lose all their guilty stains.
2. The dying thief rejoiced to see, that fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away:
Wash all my sins away, wash all my sins away;
And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.
3. Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood, shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed ones of God be saved, to sin no more:
Be saved, to sin no more, be saved, to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed ones of God, be saved to sin no more.
4. E'er since by faith I saw the stream, Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die:
And shall be till I die, and shall be till I die;
Redeeming love shall be my theme, and shall be till I die.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been **justified by his blood**, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. Romans 5:7–9

MONDAY – Brotherly Blood: Cain, Abel and Costly Sacrifices

APPROACH: One of the aspects, when considering a “blood sacrifice,” is recognizing the cost or value of the blood. For there to be a blood sacrifice, something, or even more frightening, someone, must die. For years, I was a huge proponent of giving blood to the Red Cross or local blood bank. After I had surgery a number of times, I realized that just as I needed blood during surgery, others would as well and it was the least I could do. So annually, or in some years multiple times, I would head to a blood drive or the hospital and roll up my sleeve. It usually took a little over an hour and would be helping numerous people with that one pint of blood. Literally, I was saving a life. Amidst my personal satisfaction of doing good, I was struck with the fact that after the hour was over, I got up from a table, where I had been snacking on apple juice and peanut butter crackers, and headed home, no worse for the wear! I was still living. Not much of a genuine sacrifice. As we will see in today’s devotional, shedding of blood in the Bible almost always meant something or someone died. It is in those types of blood sharing, true, costly sacrifice, that God is most pleased with. In this second story of the scarlet thread, we are reminded that the blood needed for redemption is costly.

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Genesis 4:1-16

[1] Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” [2] And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. [3] In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, [4] and **Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,** [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. [6] The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your

face fallen? [7] If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” [8] Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. [9] Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” [10] And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. **[11] And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.** [12] When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” [13] Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. [14] Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” [15] Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. [16] Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (ESV)

APPLY: Mankind is not out of the Garden but for a short time and already their sin is multiplying and getting more serious. In Genesis 4, we see that Adam and Eve have become parents to two sons: Abel and Cain. Each of the boys are unique and special and have been given certain roles in their family. One is a herdsman and the other a farmer. There is nothing wrong with either occupation and both were needed in society. We will also note that God has not forsaken Adam’s family, even though they sinned and were vanquished from God’s presence. They still worshipped the Lord God. Maybe this was a result of the parenting of Adam and Eve who knew God and wanted the same for their children.

In the course of life, these brothers decide to make an offering unto the Lord. An offering is simply giving what you have to the Lord to show your love, adoration and to demonstrate your fear of the Lord. We do it today, but designate a tenth or a tithe of what we own and give it to the Lord's work. In this case, Cain gave the fruit of his crops and Abel gave a sheep from the flock. Please note something about Abel's gift in verse 4, "first born and fattened portion." This was literally the "prime cut" of what he had. He gave the very best of all his herd. When evaluating the two offerings, it says that the Lord was pleased with Abel's gift. We must assume that Cain did his best and gave fresh produce, not just some leftover fruits or even rotten fruit.

Nevertheless, there was something about Abel's gift that was more pleasing to the Lord. By the indication in the text, God made known His pleasure with Abel and Cain took it as a rejection or condemnation, even though God never said that Cain's gift was wrong or inappropriate for worship. God just did not "regard" it or mention it. He found greater pleasure with Abel's gift, and said so, and this angered Cain. Most commentators highlight the fact that later when the Jewish sacrificial system is developed, giving a "grain" offering is acceptable by God. However, it is a "blood" sacrifice, such as a lamb or sheep, which is the way to have sins atoned for. Many believe that was one of the reasons that God found favor with Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's.

We also know that when evaluating sacrifices, vegetables do not provide blood, where livestock, like sheep and lambs do. Again, we see this attention to blood. Thus, making a live animal much more valuable and costly in regard to worship. One can conclude that vegetation is not as costly as a living, breathing, blood-flowing creation! Sadly, what occurred after God assigns greater approval to Abel's blood sacrifice than brother Cain's fruit gift, is that resentment, envy and rivalry fills Cain's heart and he murders his sibling. Once again, blood is shed and it is costly.

As we move through the Scriptures and develop a theology of redeeming blood, we can see that what makes blood so unique and significant is that it is

costly. All gifts are appreciated but there are those that are higher valued because of what it took to produce. Peter placed a value on the blood of Christ when he wrote: “...*knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*” (1 Peter 1:18–19) Jesus’ blood was more valuable than silver or gold. As we think about God’s redeeming blood today, consider what it cost and the great expense that was spent to deliver such a gift.

ADORE: *“Lord God, I am reminded today that any shedding of blood is a costly endeavor. Whether by animal, another human life or Your precious Son, blood is costly. I am in awe that You would love me so much and care so much for my soul that You would give the expensive gift of Christ’s blood to atone for my sin. Thank you Father, for this most lavish sacrifice on my behalf. In Our Savior’s Name, AMEN!”*

Story Behind the Song: Elisha Albright (E. A.) Hoffman was a Presbyterian minister, composer of over 2,000 hymns and editor of over 50 song books. The son of an Evangelical minister, Hoffman grew up singing sacred hymns both in church and in the home with his parents. One of his most endearing hymns was, “Are You Washed in the Blood?”. This Christian hymn, written in 1878 in Ohio, was first published in *Spiritual Songs for Gospel Meetings and the Sunday School*. The song "became a marching song for the Salvation Army." The song contains many Bible references and allusions, including, “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," from Revelation 7:14.

ARE YOU WASHED IN THE BLOOD?

1. Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Chorus:

Are you washed in the blood,

In the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless?

Are they white as snow?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

2. Are you walking daily by the Savior's side?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Do you rest each moment in the Crucified?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? **Chorus**

3. When the Bridegroom cometh will your robes be white?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Will your soul be ready for the mansions bright,

And be washed in the blood of the Lamb? **Chorus**

4. Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,

And be washed in the blood of the Lamb;

There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,

O be washed in the blood of the Lamb! **Chorus**

*So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks **my blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

John 6:53-54

TUESDAY – Seal the Deal with Blood: Abraham and the Covenant

APPROACH: Maybe it's because I am originally from New York City, and grew up during the height of organized crime, that I have watched the GODFATHER trilogy numerous times. The whole Italian family culture is fascinating and even more, the practices of a mafia family is mind-blowing! Throughout the movie there are times when family members must be initiated into the criminal operations, but more so, into the secrecy behind their illegal activities. As part of swearing allegiance to the familia, they must take a "blood oath." This involved taking out a knife, slicing your thumb and rubbing it with the head of the family's likewise bleeding thumb. This essentially means that if you turn against the family, you must die. Quite a commitment! But so we don't give too much credit to the Colombos, Gallos or other mobsters, blood oaths have been around since the early part of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, many contractual agreement deals were sealed with the shedding of blood. One in particular is a covenant made between God and a wealthy herdsman from the Ur of the Chaldeans called Abram. God calls Abram to become a father of a people, whom Jehovah would care for, provide for and lavish on them all kinds of blessings. In turn, Abram and his family would be God's witness to all the nations of the world and make Him known to everyone. Let's look at when that covenant was established and what was used to seal the deal!

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Genesis 15

[1] After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." [2] But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" [3] And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." [4]

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” [5] And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” [6] And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. [7] And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” [8] **But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”** [9] **He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”** [10] **And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. [11] And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. [12] As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.** [13] Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. [14] But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. [15] As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. [16] And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” [17] When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. [18] On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, [19] the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, [20] the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, [21] the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.” (ESV)

APPLY: As we know, this passage describes what is known as the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT. To understand it fully, you should go back and read Genesis 11-14 and read how God called Abram (known later as Abraham) and the amazing

promise that God made to him. It was a threefold promise: God would give him a great name, family and land. Abram and his family would be known to all the world. That has been completed in that Abram's family grew into the nation of Israel and it is known to all the world through the Jewish faith. Secondly, to have a great nation you must first have a great family and to have a great family, you must have one child. Barren Abram and Sarah would miraculously give birth to Isaac and from that, over the centuries, millions would come forth. Finally, God deeded them the land of Canaan, later taking the name of Israel. Even though there has been much travail and pain over generations regarding the land, in 1948, Israel reclaimed the land and today the Jewish people inhabit the only piece of property which God actually assigned to a nation and its people. All those promises were fulfilled and they all trace back to a covenant that God made with Father Abram.

As we have read today, Abram asked the Lord God how he could be sure that the promise God was making about having a child, or possessing the land, would actually happen. The Lord God would assure Abram by entering into an ancient and serious "blood covenant." When a business transaction was established, the parties would slaughter an animal and the shed blood signified a serious commitment to fulfill the deal. It basically said, that if I am willing to kill a precious commodity to show you I mean business, fear not, I will deliver on the promise. History tells us that normally the two individuals entering into the contract would kill a valuable animal, divide it and walk hand in hand between its sacrificed carcass.

Please notice what happened between God and Abram. God asked for animals to be brought and they were slaughtered. There were various animals, all of which had value and meaning. Nevertheless, they were split in half and a gory path between the dead animals was created. But don't miss what happened next. In verse 12 we are told that Abram fell asleep. He was unconscious. Then it describes how the Lord God took Abram between the blood sacrifice and sealed the covenant.

Why is that significant? Abram did not do anything for the covenant. God did all the work. God initiated the covenant. God established the covenant. Therefore, God will fulfill it and Abram, who represents all of mankind, did absolutely nothing! There was no human effort involved and Abram could do nothing but surrender and fall into God's arms and allow God to fulfill everything!

All of that was established with BLOOD. Our scarlet thread continues to weave its way through the Bible. Blood has been used to cover mankind's sin. Blood and sacrifice is costly and usually means someone or something must lose their life. And now we see blood being used to seal the covenant that God made with Abram to fulfill the promises made to Israel. It is a powerful reminder that God always keeps His promises. God keeping His word and doing what He says He will do is no joke! The seriousness of God's commitment to us and the promise to keep His word was sealed with blood! Since Abram, nothing has changed! He continues to keep His promises and we know He will because He shed the blood of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, to prove how committed He is! What a God!

ADORE: *"Father, forgive me for ever doubting that whatever You said and whatever You have written in Your Word is YES AND AMEN and You will always fulfill Your promises. Lord, You said that You would never leave me or forsake me. You said You would return someday. You said that ALL my sins have been forgiven and I will never face Your wrath. All of those promises have been sealed in the precious blood of Jesus. I praise You today as my promise keeping God today! AMEN"*

Story Behind the Song: David was lamenting his sin when he wrote, "*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*" (Ps. 51.7). James Nicholson, inspired by that Psalm, wrote the words for this great hymn in 1871. James Nicholson was born around 1828 in Ireland. Nothing is known of his childhood or early years, but he immigrated from Ireland to the United States at around age 25 shortly after 1850 and settled in Philadelphia, PA, where he lived for almost twenty years and was an active member of the Wharton St. Methodist Episcopal Church. About 1871 he moved to Washington, DC, where he worked as a clerk in the U.S. Post Office Department. During his spare time, Nicholson remained active in various types of religious work, such as teaching Sunday school classes, leading singing, assisting in evangelistic efforts, and producing hymn texts. The words to "Whiter Than Snow," originally in six stanzas, may have been penned in 1871. The song first appeared in a 16 page pamphlet entitled *Joyful Songs No. 4*, published in 1872 at Philadelphia by the Methodist Episcopal Book Room. The tune (Fischer) was composed by William Gustavus Fischer (1835-1912). Each of the stanzas of "Whiter than Snow" originally began, "Dear Jesus" instead of "Lord Jesus." It is not known who made this and other alterations, but the present version is taken from *Gospel Hymns No. 2*, published in 1876 by Ira David Sankey (1840-1908). Sankey often altered the hymns which appeared in his collections, but the inclusion of this one in his books is undoubtedly responsible for its popularity. Nicholson's death occurred that same year, on Nov. 6, 1876, in Washington, and his body was buried in Philadelphia. What we do know is that Nicholson understood the power of Jesus' cleansing blood and that through it the gravest sinner could be washed clean.

WHITER THAN SNOW

1. Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole
I want Thee forever to ransom my soul
Break down every idol, cast out every foe
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

CHORUS: Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

2. Lord Jesus, for this I most humbly entreat
I wait, blessed Lord, at Thy crucified feet
By faith for my cleansing, I see Thy blood flow
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. **CHORUS**

3. Lord Jesus, Thou knowest I patiently wait
Come now and within me a new heart create
To those who have sought Thee Thou never said'st no
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. **CHORUS**

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:11-12

WEDNESDAY – Power of the Passover: Moses and the Blood of the Lamb

APPROACH: The last time I looked it up, it was in the top eight of all time grossing movies. Since 1973, you can watch this nearly four-hour motion picture on the Saturday night before Easter. It catapulted the careers of Yul Brenner and Charlton Heston. And its director has been enshrined as legend in movie history for heroically managing a cast of thousands, while being on location for months in Egypt and Mount Sinai. The movie is the TEN COMMANDMENTS and its director was Cecil B. DeMille. Released in 1956, DeMille brought to theaters worldwide the epic story of Moses and the enslaving and ultimate deliverance of the Hebrew people. The movie, even though there were numerous dramatic liberties taken, for the most part brings to life the Biblical text. From baby Moses being rescued from the bulrushes to making bricks without straw and the burning bush, DeMille tells the Old Testament account. The Red Sea parting was amazing, as was the receiving the tablets on Mt. Sinai. But it is the tenth plague which is the true highlight of the movie and changes the demeanor of the storyline. Moses declares that Jehovah will send forth the “angel of death” throughout the land and take the life of the first born of each family. But each family can escape the wrath of God if they place blood over the doorpost and this certain death will “Passover” them. Without any further delay, let’s read the account.

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions...*

Exodus 12:1-23

[1] The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, [2] “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. [3] Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household. [4] And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according

to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. **[5] Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, [6] and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. [7] “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. [8] They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. [9] Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. [10] And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. [11] In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover. [12] For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. [13] The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. [14] “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. [15] Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. [16] On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. [17] And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. [18] In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the**

month at evening. [19] For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. [20] You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread.” [21] Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. [22] Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. [23] For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.

APPLY: Annually Jewish families will celebrate Passover, reminding each other of the amazing events that we just read about. As we understand, Passover and the escaping death will begin a series of events that will lead the Hebrew people out of captivity after some 400 years. Here are a few insights and highlights from this event. First, you must go back to the proceeding chapters in Exodus to understand that God was afflicting Egypt, but more directly, its ruler Pharaoh, with plagues to get his attention and prove whose God is truly God. Pharaoh had rebuffed Moses and the Lord’s instruction. It is the tenth plague, when the Lord God says “enough” and will send forth death throughout the land. The “firstborn” of every kind will die and no one and nothing will be spared. God’s judgment and wrath will be unleashed. It is worth mentioning that death will touch everyone in the land. Although the people of Abraham had a unique relationship with God, they too could experience God’s wrath.

This is why Moses’ additional instruction to them is so significant. Moses tells them that there is a way to avoid death and judgment. There is a way to protect yourself and your family from experiencing the “angel of death” who

will visit the land that night. They were to slay a lamb, without blemish, and take its blood and paint it across the doorpost of their homes. As gruesome as it might sound and equally look, this act would protect them. This was a true act of faith. Moses gave a word of hope and rescue and the people had to act upon it. Later on in chapter 12, death did come and the cries throughout the land was deafening. The anguish was heart wrenching. Yet for those who placed blood on their homes, they were spared and celebrated life amidst death.

I find it interesting that every year since 1973, right before Easter, a TV network will show a movie depicting the story of Moses and the Jewish people. The reason is, the entire world understands that what happened to Israel, and specifically the Passover, is the forerunner to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Passover and Easter go hand in hand.

Both involve blood. The Passover lamb had its blood painted over every home to avoid God's wrath. Jesus' blood has to be painted across every heart to experience eternal life and avoid eternal damnation. Moses told them to find a "lamb without blemish" and Jesus was the "precious lamb of God," and as we know, He was without sin, holy and perfect when He went to the cross. And finally, applying the blood was an act of faith; trusting that God would see the blood on the home and not visit their family with death. So it is with us, that by faith, we believe in Christ and put our hope and trust in God's Word for salvation. The Scarlet Thread runs right through Egypt and the doorposts of the Hebrew people but then propels us toward Calvary and the cross of Christ.

What an amazing picture God gave us through the Passover, to prepare us for the most important event in human history. To think that each year Jewish families will gather together and recall this event and ask this question, "Why is tonight more special than every other night?" They believe that it was when blood was placed on a doorway, yet right in front of them is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Today will you pray for our Jewish friends and loved ones as

they will celebrate the holiday Passover. Ask God to open their eyes to the fact that the blood that was shed in their history leads to the blood of the Messiah.

ADORE: *“Father, I am again struck by the continuity of the Bible and how the Scarlet Thread of redemption weaves its way through the pages of Scripture. Thank You for the story of Moses and especially the Passover. As many in the Jewish faith celebrate this Passover season, may You touch their hearts in a new and fresh way and somehow allow them to make the connection between the Passover lamb and the Lamb of God who came to die for the sins of the world, Jesus Christ. God allow them to finally see Jesus as their Yeshua Messiah, for Your glory and for their eternal good! In the powerful name of our Savior, AMEN.*

Story Behind the Song: Born in 1735, seventeen year old Robert Robinson ran the streets of London in gangs, caring not for anything spiritual. He was just a small boy when his dad died. In 18th century England there was little in the way of a social welfare system and this meant that he had to go to work while still very young. Without a father to guide and steady him, Robert fell in with bad companions. One day his gang of rowdies harassed a drunken gypsy. Pouring liquor into her, they demanded she tell their fortunes for free. Pointing her finger at Robert she told him he would live to see his children and grandchildren. This struck a tender spot in his heart. “If I’m going to live to see my children and grandchildren,” he thought, “I’ll have to change my way of living. I can’t keep on like I’m going now.” A few nights later, Robert Robinson, half serious and half in fun, decided to go to a tent meeting to hear the Methodist preacher George Whitefield. To cover his “weak” urge, he suggested that the boys go with him and heckle the gathering. “Let’s go laugh at the deluded Methodists,” was his invitation to his gang. Whitefield preached on the text: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Matthew 3:7. Robert left in dread, under a deep sense that George Whitefield was preaching to him alone.

Finally, at the age of twenty, Robert made peace with God and immediately set out to become a preacher himself. He wrote a letter to George Whitefield and told him that he envied the happiness that he saw on the faces of those people in that tent. Two years later, in 1757, he wrote a hymn which expressed his joy in his new faith. Robinson, even as a young believer, understood that it is God's flow of forgiveness that cleansed him and made him whole.

COME THOU FOUNT

1. Come, Thou Fount of every blessing

Tune my heart to sing Thy grace.

Streams of mercy, never ceasing

Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet

Sung by flaming tongues above.

Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it

Mount of Thy redeeming love.

2. Here I raise my Ebenezer

Here there by Thy great help I've come.

And I hope, by Thy good pleasure

Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger

Wandering from the fold of God

He, to rescue me from danger

Interposed His precious blood.

3. Oh, that day when freed from sinning

I shall see Thy lovely face.

Clothed then in the blood washed linen

How I'll sing Thy wondrous grace.

Come, my Lord, no longer tarry

Take my ransomed soul away.

Send Thine angels now to carry
Me to realms of endless day.

4. Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be.
Let that goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love.
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above.

By faith he kept the Passover and **sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn
might not touch them. Hebrews 11:28**

THURSDAY – Rescued by a Scarlet Thread: Joshua, Rahab, Ruth and Boaz

APPROACH: In the summer of 1983, I was serving as an intern in a church in New York City, that each year, the entire church attended a week-long spiritual life conference in Ocean Grove, NJ. Ocean Grove was a historic Methodist Church camp meeting town dating back to the 1800's. There was a myriad of lodging opportunities in this sleepy shore town with most dating back 100 plus years. The place I was able to secure, to stay for the week, was a four-story Victorian style home, and you guessed it -- I was on the fourth floor! Each day I had to traverse the four flights of stairs because it did not have an elevator. The shower was a clawfoot tub with a hose and the bed had actual springs pushing through to the surface of the mattress. Yet the most memorable aspect of my stay, in this somewhat ancient hotel, is what I found in the closet. Each room was equipped with a rope ladder. I was told by the hotelier that "in the event of fire," and if the stairwell was cut off from egress, I would need to open the window, attach the hooks to the windowsill, release the ladder and it would unroll itself down to the ground. I can assure you that each night I fervently prayed for God's protection from fire, with the disconcerting thought of having to descend to safety on the untested and probably very dangerous escape ladder!

Thankfully, I did not need it. But it has made me wonder how many times a rickety rope ladder was the only way for a guest to escape danger! I envisioned myself hanging from a window and making my way to safety. As scary as the potential of my rope escape mechanism was to me, in the book of Joshua we read about how a rope hanging out the window literally rescued an entire nation! And in keeping with our theme, this rope was scarlet red. It is the story of the spies of Israel who were sent into Jericho and how a prostitute's scarlet sash was used as a sign for protection and rescue. Let's read this exciting story.

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Joshua 2

[1] And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. [2] And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." [3] Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." [4] But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. [5] And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." [6] But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. [7] So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out. [8] Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof [9] and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. [10] For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. [11] And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. [12] Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign [13] that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." [14] And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the

LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.” [15] Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. [16] And she said to them, “Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way.” [17] The men said to her, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. **[18] Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household. [19] Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head.** [20] But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear.”

[21] And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window. [22] They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. [23] Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. [24] And they said to Joshua, “Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us.” (ESV)

Matthew 1:5–6

[5] and Salmon the father of **Boaz by Rahab**, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, [6] and Jesse the father of **David the king....** (ESV)

APPLY: This story is much different than the other Biblical passages in this devotional because there is no direct connection to the idea of blood.

However, there is a “scarlet” scarf involved, verse 18 and 19 do mention “blood,” and in the end we do reference “bloodline” that comes from the principle characters. I guess what qualifies this story, to be a part of the Scriptural journey to find God’s redemptive word related to the scarlet thread, is the outcome of the story. You see redemption and rescue is the centerpiece of this story. In short, Israel is now being led by Joshua and they want to take back the Promise Land. As they enter the land, God puts before them what will be the most formidable task -- conquering the impenetrable city of Jericho.

As we know from the Biblical record, Joshua sends spies into Jericho, and to avoid being discovered, they decide to take up lodging in the home of Rahab, who was a harlot. But somehow the King of Jericho learned that the spies were staying with her. When asked about the Israelis, Rahab deceived her fellow Jerichoans and hid the men on the roof of her home. After they left, she went to the roof and revealed what she believed. Starting in verse 9, she makes a startling confession, *“I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. [10] For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. [11] And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”* With that said, she asked the spies to show her and her family favor. She concluded that their spying venture was a prelude to Israel overtaking and leveling Jericho and she wanted to be rescued. They agreed to spare her.

As she was lowering them out the window to safety, they suggest that if she hangs this “scarlet rope” that she was lowering them with, out her window, they would know that it was her home and she and the family would be

spared. I have read a number of commentaries over the years on this story and some theologians assert that the scarlet rope was really a scarf and she used it to indicate to people that she was a prostitute. Some claim that this is why in certain cities, “red lights” are used to identify houses of ill-repute. How ironic that what was once used to promote unrighteous, immoral activities is now an instrument of redemption and rescue.

Also, I find it fascinating that Rahab, a harlot, would hear news about Israel. That their God was showing His power in their lives and therefore she better run to the winning side! But isn't that just like God? Isn't that how God works? He takes the sinful and broken things of the world and then applies His redeeming power and life change happens.

In the words of Paul Harvey, here is the rest of the story. The spies return and Joshua will lead the people of Israel to march around the city and on the final day they will march seven times, blow the trumpets and shout and the walls came tumbling down. Most of the city was in rubble, except ONE home remained and those in that home were rescued. It was the home adorned with a scarlet scarf, the home of Rahab and her family. God's power was put on display, and the protection of a woman who had simple faith was honored.

I guess that would be enough to encourage you, but there is another chapter in the amazing story of Rahab the Harlot and her scarlet cord. You see Rahab would marry a man name Salmon and they would have a son named Boaz. Boaz would become famous in the Bible because he would come to the rescue of a young Moab widow named Ruth. Their love story was remarkable. But it gets better. Boaz and Ruth would have a son called Obed. Obed would have a son named Jesse and he would have a number of sons, but one in particular you might know -- King David. Like others in his lineage, David rescued Israel from the corrupt and evil hands of King Saul. And as we all know, it is through the line of David that One called the Messiah would be born. As a matter of fact, He will be born in the City of David -- Bethlehem. Yes, you got it, Jesus Christ came from the heritage started with a harlot. He, like his distant,

generational grandmother, will keep the scarlet thread of redemption moving until all of mankind has the opportunity to be redeemed. Rahab acted on faith, extended a scarlet cord of rescue and has her name listed in the genealogy of the Savior and Redeemer of the world! What a story....better yet - what a God!

ADORE: *Father, today's story reminds us of the impact of the scarlet thread in the Bible. You are in the business of applying Your redeeming power upon any life, even one who has committed the worst possible sins, and transforming their lives. We are impressed by the faith of Rahab, faith that saved her and her family. We are also amazed how you blessed her with being a member of the family of the Messiah. Thank you again for providing a window of understanding at how Your forgiveness works. We love You and are overwhelmed by Your mercy, grace and kindness. In the Messiah's Name we pray, AMEN!*

Story Behind the Song:

Lewis Edgar Jones was born February 8th, 1865, in Yates City, Illinois, and died September 1st, 1936. Jones grew up on a farm outside of Davenport, Iowa, until he left at age 21. He attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, where he was a classmate of the old-time preacher, Billy Sunday. Of the more than 200 hymns which Lewis Jones wrote in his lifetime, "There Is Power in the Blood," has long been his most famous. Like most of his songs, this one was written after a preacher's stirring address, on this occasion after hearing a message on the "Power in the blood of Jesus," at a camp meeting in Mountain Lake, Maryland. This song uses Jesus' blood to symbolize faith in God. The "pow'r in the blood" enables believers to "be free from the burden of sin," "be free from [our] passion and pride," and "do service for Jesus [our] King." The reason that Jesus' blood "has power" is that His crucifixion fulfilled a new covenant between God and humanity. People no longer need to sacrifice animals because Jesus became *the* Lamb, a perfect sacrifice, and we can all be washed "whiter than snow" because our sins are forgiven. Though

Christians don't literally gain strength, hope, and faith from anyone's blood, *we are enabled to do all the things in the song by Jesus' sacrifice*. I also love the repetition of "would you?" because it reiterates that salvation is a free invitation. This song, and others he wrote continue to echo in churches across the world. Little did the modest man know that his hobby of hymn writing would be his most enduring legacy.

THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD

1. Would you be free from the burden of sin?

There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;

Would you o'er evil a victory win?

There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.

Refrain: There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder-working pow'r

In the blood of the Lamb;

There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder-working pow'r

In the precious blood of the Lamb.

2. Would you be free from your passion and pride?

There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;

Come for a cleansing to Calvary's tide—

There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. **Refrain**

3. Would you be whiter, yes brighter than snow?

There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;

Sin-stains are lost in its life-giving flow—

There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. **Refrain**

4. Would you do service for Jesus, your King?

There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;

Would you live daily His praises to sing?

There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. **Refrain**

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But **he was pierced for our transgressions**; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with **his wounds we are healed**.

Isaiah 53:4-5

FRIDAY – The Death of Christ and the Blood of Messiah

APPROACH: I hope you have appreciated being reminded of the amazing Scarlet Thread of redemption throughout the Bible. Today, on Good Friday, we arrive at the event that every other story was leading up to, the shed blood of Christ. God established in the Garden that the shedding of blood was needed to cover sin. Later, we saw how a lamb was used to avoid God's wrath. We also know that a Jewish sacrificial system was developed to atone for sins and reconnect man with God. All of that God providentially provided in preparation for this very moment in redemptive history, when His only begotten Son would suffer, die and make the ultimate blood atonement for sin.

We should not be surprised because in Isaiah, the prophet outlined who the Messiah would be and that it would be by His shed blood and suffering that we would be saved. As a quick reminder, the Old Testament ended with the prophet Malachi, and then 400 years of silence took place. God did not utter a word over four millennia. Then God broke the silence with a baby's cry from a cave in Bethlehem, when Israel's Messiah was born through the birth canal of Jewish teenage virgin named Mary. His name would be Jesus and He would be raised in Nazareth by Mary and Joseph.

Then at 30 years of age, He would emerge as an itinerate preacher. During the next three years, He spoke with authority, recruited a band of zealots to minister with Him, performed miracles and confronted the religious leaders of the day. All of this was in preparation for the true reason He was sent from heaven, by God, to earth, and that was to die for the sins of mankind. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Suffering Servant that Isaiah foretold. The days leading up to His death were fast paced and head spinning. Behind the scenes men were plotting His demise. He was betrayed by one of His followers in the middle of the night and hauled off to a series of bogus trials. He would stand before the Roman Governor Pilate. Pilate was not happy to be put in a no-win

situation of losing support of the Jewish religious leaders and their followers or putting an innocent man to death. Pilate and his encounter with Christ tells us a lot of the spiritual struggle that was occurring.

As we lead up to the brutal crucifixion of the Savior, let's drop into the story as Jesus and Pilate meet and then the slaying of God's precious Lamb.

Obviously, all of the Gospels provide an account of the death of Christ and I would encourage you this day to read through each of them. For our purpose, let's consider this one from Matthew....

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Matthew 27:11–14

[11] Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." [12] But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. [13] Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" [14] But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Matthew 27:24–44

[24] So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "**I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.**" [25] **And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"** [26] Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. [27] Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. [28] And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, [29] and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" [30] And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. [31] And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own

clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. [32] As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. [33] And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), [34] they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. [35] And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. [36] Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. [37] And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." [38] Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. [39] And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads [40] and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." [41] So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, [42] "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. [43] He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" [44] And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

APPLY: It has been more than three years since John the Baptist had proclaimed that his cousin, Jesus, was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" How his words have come to fruition in a brutal fashion. In the first part of the narrative we find Pilate, the coward, questioning Jesus and being perplexed why He has been charged and is possibly facing death. When unsure what to do and buckling under the pressure of mob rule, Pilate gives the people the choice – Jesus or Barabbas? Ironically, Pilate does not want to be held guilty of shedding Jesus' blood. If he only knew that it would be that very blood of Jesus that would be able to forgive ALL of his guilt from ALL of his sin.

In an even more arrogant moment, the crowd screams out to let the blame for shedding the blood of Christ fall on them and their children. So there is no confusion, the crowd, their children, Pilate, the religious leaders or the

soldiers who will actually execute Jesus, cannot lay claim to the shedding of Jesus' blood. Jesus willingly laid down His life and ultimately, it is God Who kills Jesus. As you read through the rest of this passage, you will note that the word "blood" is never explicitly stated.

However, as you read into what was actually occurring, you understand that Jesus' blood was probably splattered on everyone. First, the scourging of Jesus, where He was to be beaten with a leather strap with pieces of metal and glass embedded in the whip. The soldier assigned with scourging was a master technician with his tool of pain. Each stroke on Jesus back would rip open His flesh and start to tear the muscle away from the bone. Blood flowed. Then in an act of ridicule and mocking, they force on top of His head a makeshift crown of thorns. This type of thorn was not a common garden "sticker bush." This was a hearty, thick vine with inch long thorns. More blood flowed. They spit on Him and struck His face. They ripped off His blood soaked robe, probably re-opening His wounds. He was forced to drag His cross to Golgotha, leaving a trail of blood in His path. Then they laid Him down on the cross and violently attached His hands, at the wrist, and His feet, at the ankles to that cross. Even more blood flow. From other accounts, we know that He hung on the cross for three hours and all who looked upon Him could see a crimson flow dripping down and falling to the ground below. John's gospel tells us that instead of breaking His legs, which would have been a normal part of a Roman crucifixion, a soldier would drive his spear in the Savior's side and a mixture of water and blood came out. His blood flowed and praise God it did!!

Like I mentioned earlier, all of history was waiting for this moment. From way back in Genesis, God's people had been looking forward and following God's scarlet thread to this moment and ever since then, that scarlet thread as been tied securely to Jesus and that gruesome scene on Golgotha.

One final observation. One of the reasons I wanted to read this account is what we read at the end. Matthew gives us insight on those who were there and those who were clueless at who Jesus was and the significance of what

He just did. Religious leaders mocked Him. Soldiers looked at Him as just a recipient of their punishment. A thief would not be convinced, even when another thief desperately believed. The ginned-up crowd chanted and celebrated His death. How sad that all of these people would be standing yards away from the precious blood of Christ that could redeem them, forgive them and offer them eternal life. Some of them walked away that day with evidence of His blood on their clothing, yet because of their lack of faith, it was not applied to their hearts. So close, yet so far! Thus is the condition for many on this day, especially this Good Friday.

Many will know what this day is about, might enter a church and participate in a religious activity, yet the blood of Christ has never been applied by faith to their lives, thus they are not genuinely redeemed people. They are no different than those described at Golgotha. But for many, who read this horrific story and believe that Jesus is the Messiah, sent by God and because He was sinless and spotless, His shed blood in that story, saves them. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Praise God for His blood. Thank God for the Scarlet Thread that redeems sinful people like us!

ADORE: *Father, we are moved again by the reality of what took place at the crucifixion of Your Son and our Savior, Jesus. Lord God, we cannot express our gratitude for all He went through to ultimately have His blood shed to satisfy Your demand for a sacrificial atonement for man's sin. We know that it is through the shedding of blood that there is the remission of sin. What an amazing gift You have given us. We pray that those who have not come to faith and had Christ's blood applied to their lives, that somehow they would hear the Gospel this Good Friday and You will draw them to Yourself. Again, thank You for Christ's death. In the Strong Name of Jesus, AMEN*

Story Behind the Song: Today I want to depart from the use of traditional hymns and share with you two praise songs, one new and one older. One of the intents for including hymns that are focused on the idea of the redeeming blood of Christ, was to provide a way to meditate and reflect on the amazing

work of Christ. These two songs will help you do that and may even foster a time of personal worship. The first song was written just a few years ago in 2012 by a friend of mine, Andi Rozier. If I remember correctly, he wrote this song leading up to his church's Good Friday and Easter weekend. He wanted to convey a simple way to explain the profound work accomplished by Christ at Calvary. What I want you to notice, like all good "spiritual songs" or praise choruses, is the element of confession in the words. The song is directed to God and we who sing it are expressing to the Lord what we realized happened on the cross and what we received from Christ' shed blood. It would be a "vertical" song, pointing the words upward to God. The author of the second song, "O the Blood of Jesus," is unknown. I could not find any hymnology history to give me any background about the song. However, I did discover the earliest publishing date was in 1912 and the chorus found its way into 14 different hymnals or song books during that decade. The style was unusual for that day. Yet its simplicity is what is profound. These two songs together should help you dwell on the message of our sacrificing Savior and the importance of His blood shed for you and me. By that blood, we are clean, free, alive and whole.

THANK YOU JESUS FOR THE CROSS

My life lived for only me. My days spent so sinfully.

My heart was dark, my eyes too blind to see. My pride destroying me.

But Your life, sent for sin to die. And Your blood, shed to justify.

Upon the cross, my ransom to afford. This sinner's great reward.

Thank You, Jesus, for the cross

Thank You for the price You paid for us.

Giving up Your life to save the lost. Thank You, Jesus, for the cross.

The crown placed upon Your head. The nails meant for me instead.

Your death became the only way to life. For me to live is Christ.

Thank You, Jesus, for the cross.

Thank You for the price You paid for us.

Giving up Your life to save the lost. Thank You, Jesus, for the cross.

OH THE BLOOD OF JESUS

1. Oh, the blood of Jesus,
Oh, the blood of Jesus,
Oh, the blood of Jesus,
it washes white as snow.

2. Oh, the cross of Jesus,
Oh, the cross of Jesus,
Oh, the cross of Jesus,
His death brings life to me.

3. Oh, the love of Jesus,
Oh, the love of Jesus,
Oh, the love of Jesus,
He freely gives to me.

And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, Judas departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, **since it is blood money."**

Matthew 27:5-6

SATURDAY – The Lord’s Supper and the Remembering of the Blood

APPROACH: My family will tell you that I have a very good memory. Not just a good memory but the kind of memory where I recall people, activities, dates and details with precision. Some might think it is a gift, but trust me, it occasionally can be annoying. You see, from time to time, out of nowhere, I will remember some random and bizarre memory. We will be driving along and I remember what date it is and I’ll blurt out – “Do you know that exactly 8 years ago I had a piece of my colon removed??” I know it’s bizarre. My wife will usually ask, “Where did that come from?” as if it crawled out from under a rock or hole! Most times it is because I see something that reminds me or I hear something on the radio and it triggers my brain and whammo – I REMEMBER!

As troublesome as it can be at times, God has created all of us with the capacity to remember and we all have the ability to bring to the forefront of our mind past facts, situations, ideas and information. This capacity is really important when it comes to our spiritual maturity and walk with the Lord. One of the things that God wants us to remember often is His redeeming blood and atonement found through Jesus Christ.

To help trigger even the most underdeveloped memory, God instituted the Lord’s Supper, also known as Communion. Using the basic elements of bread or a matzah cracker and the juice of the vine, God can bring to mind the work of Christ and the continuation of the Scarlet Thread of redemption. The Apostle Paul will be told by the Lord Jesus what the Lord’s Supper would be and how the church should celebrate it. Let’s be reminded again of God’s way to remind us of the body and blood of Christ. First, let’s go back to when the original Last Supper took place, right before the death of Christ and then to the communion explanation passage Paul penned in 1 Corinthians.

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Mark 14:22–25

[22] And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” [23] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. **[24] And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.** [25] Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 11:17–26

[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. [18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. [23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”** [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

APPLY: Obviously, when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper in our local fellowship it first is to help us remember where this ordinance began with

Christ and His disciples. On the night when Christ was betrayed by Judas, He gathered with His followers and they participated in a traditional Jewish Passover supper. During that meal they would have had unleavened bread and a number of cups of wine. As we are aware, the Passover celebration takes the Jews on a journey all the way back to Moses and the Hebrew people in captivity in Egypt. Jesus hijacked the meal and used the Passover element to prophetically speak about His death. We are sure that the disciples did not fully understand what He was telling them, but over the next days they would witness what He was describing. He tells them that the bread represents His body. Dramatically, He would tear it into pieces signifying that He would be torn and broken apart. Then lifting up what was known as the “cup of blessing” in the Passover meal, He stated that the wine represents His blood of His covenant, which would be poured out for many. For Jews, their memories were “triggered” and what must have come to mind was the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, both sealed with blood. Jesus was speaking of His covenant with them, the New Covenant. This blood covenant would forgive their sins “once and for all” and remove any future judgment. When He says that it was poured out for “many,” it is speaking of both Jews and Gentiles who would believe.

When the Church began in the days after the resurrection they would regularly reenact the Last Supper and used bread and wine to remember His broken body and His poured out blood. That continued and the church expanded and an essential part of the believers’ gathering was communion. Two decades later, the Apostle Paul will write instructions to the church in Corinth on how to properly conduct the Lord’s Supper. Again, bread and a cup is centerstage, but there is something else I want you to notice.

Paul's admonishment is given to a church dealing with division and infighting. There was tremendous disunity in the church. In addition, Corinth was misusing the Lord's Supper. Paul tells them they are to "wait for everyone to arrive" before they start eating. WHY? Interestingly, some of the believers in the church must have been servants and slaves. They would have had to care for their master's home and finish their work for the day before they could leave and join the fellowship. By the time they arrived, all the good food would be gone and seeing that they were slaves, they really needed a good meal! But also, the others might have already completed celebrating the bread and the cup and remembering the Lord.

Communion was a priority for the believers and therefore, no one should miss out! Watch this -- the celebration of the broken body of Christ and the shed blood of the Messiah would be a unifying event, as it should be. The Church is one body and our unity is caused by the work of Jesus that saves us and the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. This makes sense. When my mind brings a memory to my family about a vacation, a special occasion or a happy event in the past, we are drawn together. It is called a "Shared Moment" and it brings us together. It provides a warm sense of belonging. We have a fond affection and love for one another. Christ's shed blood and sacrifice provides that shared memory with all believers and it fuels our unity.

53 times in the New Testament the phrase "one another" is used to describe the unique relationship between fellow Christians. We are to love one another, pray for one another, encourage and comfort one another. But that unique relationship is formed when we are each cleansed of sin and become a "blood-bought" Child of God. Communion and the Lord's Table reminds us and binds us by the blood and body of Jesus!

ADORE: *Heavenly Father, what a blessing it is to join with our brothers and sisters and remember the work of our Savior around the Lord's Supper. You*

have told us that we are to do this until He returns for us and takes His people into glory. We are united by His blood, we are kept by His blood and it will be His blood that will carry us into eternity. May we strive to love, encourage and edify our fellow blood-bought believers. In Christ's Name, AMEN.

Story Behind the Song: Robert Lowry (1826-1899) has provided us with many of the most venerable nineteenth-century texts and tunes from the United States. The Philadelphia-born author and composer of this hymn was a popular Baptist preacher and educator who served churches in Pennsylvania, New York City, Brooklyn, and Plainfield, New Jersey. Lowry, a graduate of Bucknell University, was a professor of *belles lettres* in the University, receiving a D.D. in 1875. He became known for his gospel songs while ministering in Brooklyn, collaborating often with William H. Doane in producing some of the most popular Sunday school song collections of his day. The Rev. Carlton R. Young, editor of *The United Methodist Hymnal*, noted that "Nothing but the Blood" "was near the top of the list . . . on the most popular religious songs found in the five widely used hymnals and songbooks other than the 1957 Evangelical United Brethren and 1966 Methodist hymnals." For many, however, this hymn is anathema, especially for those who loathe "blood" hymns. "Nothing but the Blood" has all the earmarks of a classic gospel song. It focuses on a single theme and hammers it home. The singer will repeat the text, "nothing but the blood of Jesus" twelve times if he or she sings all four stanzas. The refrain is succinct and reinforces the theme. The language is direct and obvious, with all one or two-syllable words. The theme of cleansing from sin is prominent in gospel song literature. Hebrews 9:22 appeared originally above the hymn in the original publication by Lowry and William H. Doane entitled *Gospel Music* (1876). The passage reads: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD

1. What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

CHORUS: Oh! precious is the flow

That makes me white as snow;

No other fount I know,

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

2. For my cleansing this I see—

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

For my pardon this my plea—

Nothing but the blood of Jesus! **CHORUS**

3. Nothing can my sin erase

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Naught of works, 'tis all of grace—

Nothing but the blood of Jesus! **CHORUS**

4. This is all my hope and peace—

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

This is all my righteousness—

Nothing but the blood of Jesus! **CHORUS**

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Acts 20:27–28

SUNDAY – The Apostles and the Confirmation of the Blood

APPROACH: A number of years ago, when I was asked to speak at a church on the topic of the Scarlet Thread of redemption, I wanted to bring to life the reality of this concept with a visual illustration. I know I probably will lose a few of you when I tell you what I did, but here goes. I have more than a dozen different Bibles on my book shelves and so I picked a hardback cover edition and took it down to my workshop. I pulled out my power drill and secured the Bible to my work bench with a vise grip. I started to drill through the cover and pages and proceeded to bore out a half inch hole right through the middle of the Bible. I then went rooting around my wife's craft box and found a two-inch wide, bright red ribbon she used for wrapping packages. I finished the illustration by forcing the scarlet ribbon through the Bible. No matter what chapter or page in God's Word that I turned to, a scarlet thread ran across the pages. The day I spoke at the church, I preached from that Bible. They got it! My point is this, just about everywhere you look through the Bible you will find that scarlet thread and you will see God's redeeming work from blood being shed. We have been reminded of this truth from Genesis to Exodus to Isaiah and the Gospels. Today, I want to continue to extend the thread by looking at a number of passages where the New Testament Apostles mention the importance of blood and specifically the blood of Christ. After the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Messiah, the theme of the scarlet thread of redemption continues to be a dominating idea, as it should! As you read from the pen of Peter, John, Paul and the unknown author of Hebrews, consider what they say the blood of Christ provided for us.

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Romans 3:21–26

[21] But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—[22] the

righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] **and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.**

Ephesians 2:12–13

[12] remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **[13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

Colossians 1:19–20

[19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, **making peace by the blood of his cross.**

Hebrews 10:19–22

[19] Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, [21] and since we have a great priest over the house of God, [22] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Peter 1:18–19

[18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **[19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.**

1 John 1:7

[7] But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, **we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.**

APPLY: On this Easter morning, we celebrate the reality of the resurrection of our Savior and His power over sin, death and the grave. We also realize that the horror, sadness and violence associated with the shedding of Jesus' blood, has been wiped away with the fact that His blood has now been made into a power source of new life and restoration for the believer. As the apostles of Christ move away from the Easter scenes and time marches on, they begin to fully understand the benefits and blessings that the blood had bestowed on them and now is bestowed on us. What were those benefits? Let's start with a big theological word – "propitiation." In the Bible, propitiation is the act of appeasing God's wrath or turning away God's anger through a sacrifice.

Because of Paul's Jewish background, he knew the palpable reality that sinful man would face God's wrath. Paul was personally impacted by the fact that God's wrath was turned away through Christ's blood. Like Paul, before Christ, we were looking at a future of punishment and holy terror. Jesus' blood changed that and satisfied God's demand. Along with that is now being at peace with God. We were at enmity with God. We were God's enemy. Yet through the blood of Christ, we change that reality and now we are friends, brothers and sisters and called "beloved" by God. All because of the blood.

Once that relationship status changes, Paul and the writer of Hebrews tells us we have direct access to God through the blood of Christ. Right now, you can stop and engage in conversation with the God of the universe because you have been touched and cleansed by the blood of Christ. As Jesus was hanging on the cross and His blood was flowing to the ground, the veil of the Temple miraculously tore from top to bottom and access to the Holy of Holies was revealed to all people: What a blessing!

Removal of wrath, no longer an enemy, brought close to God and direct access to God. Here is another amazing benefit: I do not need to keep chasing all kinds of ways to God. One of the spiritual struggles that mankind has been afflicted by is frantically running from one solution to another, longing to find the way to finally get right with God. Peter acknowledged that “our forefathers” genuinely wanted to get right with God, but only found “futile” solutions. When Christ’s blood is provided, we can stop the chasing. All of us know the exhaustive nature of human effort. That burden is lifted through Christ’s crimson flow.

One last benefit: we are cleansed of sin. Not just the removal of the wrong, but the lasting power and control in our lives that comes from sin. Jesus’ blood frees us not just from the penalty of sin, but also its power. We can live victorious lives free from the power of sin. And then in the future, we will be delivered from the presence of sin when we arrive in heaven. The Savior’s blood is the vehicle that carries us out of sin’s grip!

There is so much more to consider. The point is profound. The Apostles kept the scarlet thread moving through the pages of Holy Scripture. What we need to do is meditate on these truths; keep them ever in front of us; daily encourage our hearts with these truths. These truths will set us free and empower us.

ADORE: *Father, I am in awe by all that You have given us through the precious blood of Christ. I acknowledge that we are not worthy of any of it! You have graciously and generously poured out every spiritual blessing through the redeeming work of the Savior. Help us to be ever aware that we are people who desperately need Christ’s redeeming power in our lives. Thank you Lord, AMEN.*

Story Behind the Song: When you say the word “hymn,” you can erroneously think old, ancient and irrelevant. That is a huge mistake. As we have seen this week, there is deep and meaningful music that dates back a hundred years and which is still very relevant. Additionally, there are some young, modern incredible songwriters giving the church new hymns. Matt Papa and Matt Boswell are two of these gifted musicians. They are theologians and have tapped into the deep things of God’s Word and blended them with inspiring melodies for the contemporary church. Here are two of their new hymns that embrace our theme of the redeeming blood of Christ. The title of the first song is so powerfully stated – O FOUNT OF LOVE! That says it all! Jesus’ blood was God’s love being poured over us! Often blood is not something we like to be around. It’s why we wear protective clothing if we are handling blood. But when it comes to Jesus’ blood, we want to bathe in it and be covered by it. Why? Because from it we experience God’s love, joy and grace. The second song highlights the majesty and beauty of our King because of His royal blood. I want to encourage you to look up both of these songs on YouTube and enjoy the talent of these two young men!

O FOUNT OF LOVE (Papa/Boswell)

O, Fount of love divine that flows from my Savior's bleeding side,
Where sinner's trade their filthy rags for His righteousness applied,
Mercy cleansing every stain now rushing o'er us like a flood,
There the wretch and vilest ones stand adopted through His blood.

O, Mount of grace, to Thee we cling, from the law hath set us free,
Once and for all on Calvary's hill love and justice shall agree,
Praise the Lord, the price is paid, the curse defeated by the Lamb,
We who once were slaves by birth, sons and daughters now we stand.

O, Well of joy is mine to drink, for my Lord has conquered death,
Victorious forevermore, the ancient foe is laid to rest,

Hallelujah, Christ is King, alive and reigning on the throne,
Our tongues employed with hymns of praise, glory be to God alone!

KING IN ALL HIS BEAUTY (Papa/Boswell)

O lift your eyes to heaven, see
The Holy One eternal
Behold the Lord of majesty
Exalted in His temple.

As symphonies of angels praise
Now strain to sound His glory
Come worship, fall before His grace
The King in all His beauty.

How worthy, how worthy
How worthy, the King in all His beauty!

Now see the King who wears a crown
One made of shame and splinters
The sacrifice for ruined man
The substitute for sinners.
As earth is stained with royal blood
And quakes with love and fury
He breathes His last and bows His head
The King in all His beauty.

How worthy, how worthy
How worthy, the King in all His beauty!

Now see the Savior lifted up
The Lamb who reigns in splendor
The hope of every tribe and tongue
His kingdom is forever.

Bring praise and honor to His courts

Bring wisdom, power, blessing

For endless ages we'll adore

The King in all His beauty.

How worthy, how worthy

How worthy, the King in all His beauty!

How worthy, how worthy

How worthy, the King in all His beauty!

Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' so that **the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the **blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah**, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary..**

Luke 11:49-51

MONDAY – John’s Revelation and The Final Evidence of the Blood

APPROACH: This is the final day in our journey through the Bible as we have considered how blood played a role in our redemption from sin and brought us into an eternal relationship with the Lord God through the person of Jesus Christ. During this week we have celebrated Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, but also looked in the Old Testament and saw how God was preparing the world to receive Christ as the Messiah and Savior. My hope is that Christ would be exalted, but that you would also fall in love with God’s Word and see the amazing unity and integration of God’s redemptive message. We have just scratched the surface. There is much more for you to mine like gold. I want to commend you to use a concordance or Google search and discover the myriad of passages that mention the word “blood” and build on this week. So how do we finish this week? I think the best way to end this study is to go to the end of the Bible and specifically look at the end times. The book of Revelation does not disappoint and a number of times mentions blood. Early in the letter, John records a scene from heaven that will take place and those who will be in attendance had to have contact with the blood of the Savior. But later, John will tell us of a day when Jesus the Victor King will stand with no rivals and His badge of courage will be a robe marked by blood. Isn’t it amazing that the scarlet thread will be there all the way at the end of all time. Let’s look at these two passages.

ANALYZE: *Read the text and ask questions....*

Revelation 5:9–10

[9] And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, **and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,** [10] and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” (ESV)

Revelation 19:11–16

[11] Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

[12] His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. [13] **He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.** [14]

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. [15] From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. [16] On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (ESV)

APPLY: The setting of the first passage is the Throne Room of God in heaven. John's vision helps his readers get excited about that moment in the future when we will be in the presence of God Almighty and the endless worship that will take place. In chapter five, John records that the scrolls begin to be opened and a fuller picture of future things will be revealed. As the enthroned Lord opens the scrolls, we find apocalyptic beasts, angels and the elders all crying out in worship and one of the things they praise Jesus for is His blood. They sing, *"by Your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."* That would be us and every people group around the globe. What an encouraging reminder that our "entrance pass into heaven" is the blood of Christ.

This is why we have drilled down on the redeeming blood of Christ. It is the only way that ANY person in ANY location around the world can get to heaven. Also, what a thrilling picture! Someday we will join together with blood bought believers from China, Ukraine, Russia, Iran, Israel and Brooklyn, NY!!! Can you hardly wait? Just think about what that will be like. People once separated by miles and speech will be united around the throne of God and lifting high the Name of Jesus. His blood has bridged that gap and made us one for all eternity. WOW!

The second passage focuses on the actual “unveiling” of Jesus Christ to the world. All of the book of Revelation, to this point, is leading up to the Messiah’s Second Coming. Now He has arrived and what an arrival it is! I would encourage you to go back and read the entire chapter, but in summary, Jesus has mounted a white horse and He is coming as a Judge and General. He will condemn and then conquer. There are many identifying marks on our Blessed Warrior-King. He has eyes of flames, a mouth with a sword shooting out of it, adorned with many crowns and His robe is sprinkled with, you guessed it, BLOOD.

Commentators have debated, whose blood is it? Some say that it is the blood of His enemies, who He has just quickly defeated. Others say that it is His own blood which serves as a reminder why He has the authority to reign victoriously.

Jesus has returned, this time as a conquering King and the unquestioned Lord of lords. John observes that Jesus' robe was dipped in blood. This is not a reference to the blood He shed on the cross for our sins. Rather, given the military context of this vision, it is the blood of His enemies. Isaiah 63:2–3 prophesies this event with a question and an answer. Verse 2 asks: *"Why is Your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?"* Verse 3 provides the answer: *"I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me; I trod them in My anger and trampled them in My wrath; their lifeblood spattered on My garments, and stained all My*

apparel."

At His first coming, Jesus filled the role of the *Lamb of God* and shed His blood for our sins. At His second coming, He will fill the role of the *Lion of the tribe of Judah* and devour His enemies because of their sins. As He roars against His foes, another of His names is prominent: "the Word of God." This title clearly identifies the rider on a white horse as Jesus, who came to earth the first time as God in the flesh but was rejected by the world. This time, He is not rejected, but revered and respected. I believe the blood on the robe is probably the blood of those who Jesus will defeat and vanquish to secure the victory and keep His redeemed ones safe. The Lamb got us this far and now the Lion is finishing the job! Nevertheless, when we get to heaven we will know the answer conclusively!

Isn't it wonderful to see a strong, overcoming conquering King who we will get to be with forever and ever! His blood opened the door for us to enter into the presence of God and it will be His shed blood that delivers us to our eternal inheritance.

ADORE: *Father, I can hardly wait to get to heaven and be in Your presence.*

All of this has been provided by the gift of redeeming blood. Blood to save us and blood to sustain us and blood to secure us forever! Until that day when Christ returns and ushers me into Glory, I wait with reverence, anticipation and hope. All I can say today is – Come Quickly, Lord Jesus!! In His blessed Name, AMEN!

Story Behind the Song: It's 1865, Elvina Hall sits in the Monument Street Methodist Church choir, in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor George Shrick is preaching on the subject of the crucifixion. During the sermon, Elvina is wrapped up in the message and becomes inspired to write some words about the crucifixion in the flyleaf of her hymnal. All of the stanzas come quickly to her as she writes while her pastor preaches. After church, she approaches her

pastor timidly, with the hymnal in hand, and has the following conversation: “Pastor, I did not hear your entire sermon this morning.” “That’s alright Elvina, I put a lot of people to sleep on Sunday morning with my sermons,” he said jokingly. “Oh no, Pastor. I did not fall asleep. I was thinking about the crucifixion and all that Jesus did for us and while you preached I was inspired to write these words in my hymnal. The words came quickly and smoothly as I wrote them down. I made a copy for you to see.” Pastor Shrick takes the words to his office where he remembers that the church’s choir director, John Grape, had written a tune the previous week. John gave a copy of the music to Pastor Shrick and told the pastor that he had no words for the tune. John did choose a title for his tune, but that’s as far as it went. He had titled his new tune *All to Christ I Owe*. Pastor Shrick looks at Elvina’s words and John’s tune and it looks like they match. Pastor Shrick then calls John to his office and asks him to look at the words that Elvina wrote, to see if they matched the tune he had written. John goes to a piano and begins to play his tune and sing Elvina’s words. To the amazement of both, neither one word of Elvina’s poem nor one note of John’s tune has to be altered! The words and the music fit together perfectly. Thus, on that Sunday morning in 1865 the hymn *Jesus Paid It All* was composed because of a dedicated choir member, a talented choir director, and a pastor who put them together. The tune needed a refrain, which Elvina and the pastor wrote together. It was soon sung in several churches in Baltimore, and well received. Hardly anyone knows the names of Elvina Hall and John Grape, but millions of Christians have sung their hymn for these many years. Since its first published appearance, this hymn has been widely used in churches, especially for the Lord’s Supper service. After spending a week thinking about Christ, His blood and our redemption, let’s declare with great confidence – JESUS PAID IT ALL!

JESUS PAID IT ALL

I hear the Savior say,
“Thy strength indeed is small.
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in Me thine all in all.”

REFRAIN

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

VERSE 2

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy pow’r, and Thine alone,
Can change the leper’s spots
And melt the heart of stone.

VERSE 3

For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim;
I’ll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calv’ry’s Lamb.

VERSE 4

And when, before the throne,
I stand in Him complete,
“Jesus died my soul to save,”
My lips shall still repeat.

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Revelation 12:11

