**Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant**

Mark 14:1-26 (key 24)

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.”

Brothers and Sisters, in the previous chapter (Mark 13), we learned about 'The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times'. The exact day and hour of the Son of Man's return to this world remain unknown. In today’s passage (Mark 14:1-26), we will delve into Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant, which is the focus of today’s message: “Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant”. Two weeks ago, during our Easter – or preferably "Passover" – Bible Conference, we explored the significance of Jesus Christ's crucifixion, death, and resurrection. However, in the message titled “Jesus is Nailed to the Cross, Forsaken, and Dies”, the emphasis on Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant was not central. Yet, His crucifixion and death profoundly involve the shedding of this blood – Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant. Reflecting on that message, the term "blood" appeared once, albeit powerfully, when Pilate, the Roman governor pressured by the chief priests and elders, ordered Jesus' crucifixion and death. Before making this decision, Pilate publicly washed his hands in front of the crowd, declaring, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:1-26). This declaration of innocence regarding Jesus’ blood illustrates the Biblical truth that the life of every creature is in its blood (Leviticus 17:14).

This truth is reflected in our idiomatic expressions, such as "blood on one's hands", indicating responsibility for someone’s death or involvement in a harmful act leading to death. Pilate’s assertion of innocence regarding Jesus’ blood meant he denied responsibility for Jesus' crucifixion and death. Thus, we will learn that Jesus' crucifixion and death centered on the shedding of His blood – His Blood of the Covenant. This Covenant between God and mankind signifies a binding promise and agreement stemming from God’s love for humanity. This message is simply about the value and significance of Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant. We are going to learn how precious Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant is through the woman who poured expensive perfume on His head for His burial. We are going to learn about the meaning of this blood through how Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. We also going to learn of the love of the One who let His blood be poured out for many for the forgiveness of our sins. Let us all read the key verse (verse 24), *“‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them.”* I pray that God may grant us understanding of His word to appreciate Jesus’ Blood of the Covenant which was poured out for me and you. Amen!

Brothers and Sisters, today’s passage begins by highlighting the time in which the Lord and His disciples found themselves. It also reveals that Jesus’ blood is innocent blood, shown by the secretive, evil, and cunning plot against Him by people who had a form of godliness but denied its power. Look at verses 1-2: *"Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. 'But not during the festival,' they said, 'or the people may riot.'"*

The chief priests and teachers of the law wanted to kill Jesus out of jealousy. They envied His influence over the people, His perfection and integrity, and His teachings, which carried authority unlike theirs. Most importantly, they stubbornly denied and rejected the signs that clearly showed He is the Messiah—the One they had long awaited to save them from their sins.

Notice in verses 1-2 that they had no legitimate grounds to kill Him. There was no proven case that made Him worthy of death. Their plan to shed His blood was not based on justice, but on jealousy and hatred. Jesus’ blood is innocent. He did nothing that legitimately deserved death. To be killed because of people’s jealousy or envy is not a lawful reason for death. This shows us that the Blood of the Covenant Jesus speaks of in the key verse was not shed because of His sins, but because of His righteousness. Amen.

There were only two days left before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread took place. The Passover was immediately followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread; hence they are often mentioned together. Leviticus 23:4-8 speaks about these festivals together: *"These are the Lord’s appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: The Lord’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month the Lord’s Festival of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. For seven days present a food offering to the Lord. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work."* Together, these festivals celebrate Israel’s liberation from slavery in Egypt after 430 years. Israelites from all over the world would gather in Jerusalem for this eight-day celebration, starting with the Passover and followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Exodus 12 provides detailed accounts of both festivals.

The chief priests and teachers of the law chose an interesting time to seek to secretly arrest and kill Jesus. In Jewish tradition, the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread not only celebrate the historical Exodus from Egypt but also anticipate the ultimate redemption through the coming of the Messiah.

You will recall that in Mark 11, Jesus entered Jerusalem as though He were a king, the Messiah, or a significant figure. Mark 11:8-9 says: *"Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!' 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'"* After appearing and ministering in Jerusalem, the Lord would go to lodge in Bethany (Mark 11:11). Since Bethany was close to Jerusalem, He stayed there often after arriving in the city. Jerusalem was the place where Jesus had said He would be delivered over to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They would condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles, who would mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him, and kill Him.

Three days later, He would rise (Mark 10:32-34).The chief priests and teachers of the law were likely deeply disturbed. During the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the people’s anticipation of redemption through the Messiah might point them to Jesus—the very One they stubbornly rejected. May we learn the danger of suppressing the truth at all costs. You might end up fearing people more than God, just as these religious leaders did. They did not think about God seeing their actions. Instead, they feared that the people would riot if they carried out their evil plan during the festival. They wanted to avoid having innocent blood on their hands—not because it was wrong in God's eyes, but because they feared the crowd.

Amid this evil secret plan against Jesus, something beautiful happened to Jesus that tells us that this blood sought after was not only innocent but special and precious. Look at verses 3-8: *"3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.' And they rebuked her harshly. 6 'Leave her alone,' said Jesus. 'Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. '"*

While some—such as Judas Iscariot, who would soon betray Jesus to the chief priests for money—were angry with the woman who poured a jar of expensive perfume on Jesus’ head, Jesus rebuked them. He defended her, saying she had done a beautiful thing to Him. She did not waste anything. They would always have the poor to care for, but they would not always have Jesus, who was about to die.

This was not harsh at all from Jesus. Look at our own lives. We pay thousands and thousands of rands for tuition fees—why don't we use that money for the poor? We spend thousands on funerals, yet there are people suffering—why don't we simply bury our loved ones plainly and use the money to help the poor? Weddings, too, cost thousands of rands. We do not give that money to the poor because it was meant for that special purpose at that time.

Likewise, Jesus said the following in defence of the woman and in truth: *“She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial”* (Mark 14:8). How is it a beautiful thing done to Jesus if it was about preparing for His burial? Let’s read the key verse together (Mark 14:24): *“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,”* He said to them. It was a beautiful thing in view of the purpose of His burial. There is no burial without death, and as we see in the passage, there is no death of Jesus without His blood being poured out for many—for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).

The pouring of perfume on His body shows that not just any blood was poured out. It was special. It was precious. It took an act of worship—an act of denying one’s life and following the Saviour as Lord. It was an act of laying one’s life before Him. Whoever this woman was, she gave Jesus her life. She gave Him something precious—a perfume worth a year’s salary, and she gave it all, not just a portion. She gave Jesus her passion, overcoming any fear of what Simon the leper, his friends, or his guests might say. She gave Jesus her worship, her whole self. She gave her all, offering something truly precious to him. Remember what Jesus said: *“She did what she could”* (Mark 14:8b). According to the key verse, Jesus’ blood of the covenant was poured out for many. If we believe in Jesus, should we not learn from this woman who gave her all even before His blood was poured out for the forgiveness of sins? How much more should we, now that we know He has died and risen? What beautiful thing in your life is worthy of Him—the One whose blood of the covenant was poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins?

The two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread came to an end, and now it was time to celebrate the Passover. Look at verses 12-16:*"On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus’ disciples asked Him, 'Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?' So He sent two of His disciples, telling them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, "The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.' The disciples left, went into the city, and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover."* Notice that Jesus did not speak plainly about the location. He gave directions that made it impossible for someone to easily follow them later. For example, if you went at another time, you might not find a man carrying water entering the house. Jesus did this to hide the exact location from Judas Iscariot, who had already betrayed Him and was watching for an opportunity to hand Him over. If Judas had known the place beforehand, the important celebration of the Passover could have been disturbed. Jesus, in an unconventional yet most significant way, ensured that nothing would interfere with this final and meaningful meal (the Last Supper).

During the night of the LORD’s Passover, as described in Exodus 12, the following words of God were about to be fulfilled: "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt" (Exodus 12:12-13).

For this judgment not to come upon the Israelites, they were commanded to select a lamb on the tenth day of the month, one per household or shared if a household was too small. The lamb had to be a one-year-old male without defect, either from the sheep or the goats. They had to take care of the lamb until the fourteenth day of the month, and then slaughter the lambs at twilight. They were to put some of the blood on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they ate the lamb. The meat had to be roasted over a fire with the head, legs, and internal organs, and it was not to be eaten raw or boiled. It had to be eaten the same night with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and any leftover meat had to be burned by morning. They had to eat it dressed for travel, with cloaks tucked in, sandals on their feet, and staffs in hand, eating in haste because it was the LORD’s Passover.

The Israelites were also instructed to commemorate this day by celebrating it as a festival to the LORD for all generations. They had to eat bread without yeast for seven days, remove all yeast from their houses on the first day, hold sacred assemblies on the first and seventh days, and do no work on those days except preparing food.

However, the way Jesus celebrated the Passover pointed to Himself as the true Passover Lamb and the true Bread to be eaten. Mark 14:22-24 says, "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them." When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him for baptism, he testified: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Jesus’ blood of the covenant became the sealing, establishing, and confirming sign that through Him we are forgiven, cleansed of all our sins, and brought into an intimate relationship with God. This relationship is not based on external obedience to a law that cannot take away sin, but on the inner transformation brought about by God’s Spirit. Jeremiah 31:33-34 prophesied this covenant sealed by Jesus’ blood: "'This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'"

To believe in Jesus is to believe in an inner transformation that cleanses us from all sin through His blood, making us people who know and love God personally and wholeheartedly. Having received Christ in my teenage years, I personally began to experience new desires inclined toward God rather than toward sin. I had grown up hating church passionately, but after encountering Christ, I began loving church passionately, even to the point of neglecting my schoolwork. Former sins such as the love of alcohol, pornography, masturbation, and the dream of adulthood as a means of freedom from parental authority began to lose their grip on me. I became thirsty for the Lord and His Word. Praise be to God for Jesus’ blood of the covenant that was powerful enough to transform a sinner like me into someone with righteous desires and new behaviour.

Even my dreams and fantasies changed; I no longer fantasized about rebellion, but about becoming a man of God. Yet when I reflect on the woman who passionately anointed Jesus with her very expensive perfume for His burial, and on Judas Iscariot’s hypocritical, angry response, I realize that I too still fear people's judgment and scrutiny. The beautiful thing I can offer Jesus is to put aside this fear and to live according to His word and His vision for my life, even if it means being questioned, challenged, or hated for His sake. I must not be like Judas, who spoke outwardly but inwardly opposed Christ. This is what I must do in gratitude for Jesus’ blood of the covenant.

**In conclusion**, when we think of Jesus’ crucifixion and death for our sins, let us remember that His death was about His blood being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Let us be mindful that His blood was innocent, precious, and powerful, and that it alone can take away sin. Let us also remember that His blood was poured out because of love—for the many. Let us appreciate the blood of the covenant as the woman did: by worshipping Jesus passionately and offering Him our most precious gifts, regardless of what others may think. Amen.