

## THE COVENANT IN JESUS' BLOOD

Mark 14:1-26

Key Verse: 24, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.

Jesus' public teaching was now over. The Bible passage we now see contains two events: a woman anoints Jesus with very expensive perfume, and Jesus has his last supper—a Passover meal—with his disciples. Let's learn from this woman about what is a beautiful thing to Jesus, and about the meaning of Jesus' broken body and shed blood.

### **I. A beautiful thing to Jesus (1-11)**

The Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were two days away. What was the Passover? It was a great celebration of the Jews, remembering the time that God delivered them out of slavery in Egypt by the blood of a lamb. The blood of a lamb on the doorframes of their homes was the sign that they were God's people. When the LORD saw the blood, he passed over those homes. But the homes without the blood experienced tragedy at the hands of God's judgment: the firstborn in that home died. Only the homes with the blood of the lamb were spared. It was this tenth and final plague on Egypt that also brought them freedom from their slavery. The Jews were allowed to leave Egypt and head for their promised land. It was during a Passover season that Jesus Christ died for us. John the Baptist called Jesus "the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). Apostle Paul wrote, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

Many people in Jerusalem and visitors from all over the world were in a festive mood and ready to commemorate God's historical, marvelous and merciful deliverance from slavery in Egypt. However, some were scheming evil against Jesus. It was the chief priests and teachers of the law. They hated Jesus and wanted to kill him. But they were afraid that the people, who generally were in favor of Jesus, would riot.

Jesus was in Bethany, close to Jerusalem, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper. Then something somewhat shocking happened. A woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head. Some of those who saw this said indignantly to one another: "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

The woman's perfume was worth more than a year's wages. At minimum wage that is \$30,000, or the price of a new car. Do you have \$30,000 in savings? Most people do

not. Do you have a brand new car? Most people do not. Here is the bigger question: could you give that savings or that new car to Jesus for his use? Perhaps none of us would, unless you were a millionaire. I seriously doubt that this woman, who clearly loved Jesus, was a millionaire. The people there rebuked her act as a wasteful use of her treasure.

What about Jesus? How did he see this woman's act? Look at verses 6-9. "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Jesus was not against helping the poor. Even so, Jesus did not regard her act as wasteful. Rather, Jesus called it "a beautiful thing." Why was it beautiful to Jesus? It was beautiful because it was done out of love for Jesus. Actually, I'm quite sure Jesus did not put on perfume daily. So, humanly, it looks strange or even silly for this woman to pour this very expensive perfume on Jesus. It would be like giving a new car to someone who doesn't drive, or like giving \$30,000 to someone who has no debt or bills to pay. Simply said, Jesus didn't need it. Jesus doesn't need our money or even our love. But he accepts it when it is given freely and thankfully to him. The Bible says, "God loves a cheerful giver."

Jesus even accepted her act as participation in his life-giving ministry. He said, "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial." And he added, "...wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Indeed, we are reading her story today, just as Jesus foretold, since her beautiful act is recorded in the Bible.

There was a disciple who had quite a different mindset than this woman. He was not thinking about what precious thing he could do for Jesus, or what he could give Jesus. Rather, he was consumed with what he could get from following Jesus. This man was Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He went to the chief priests, who were the enemies of Jesus, to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

Here it is good for us to ask ourselves: Why am I following Jesus? Is it to get something from him, or to give him my love and best treasure? To ask it another way: what beautiful thing have I done or can I do for Jesus? What am I giving Jesus to show my love and thanks to him?

Let me start with an example from the ultimate, and then go to the more practical of giving something beautiful to Jesus. The ultimate giving to Jesus is martyrdom—that is, to give our life for Christ. Lawrence was a Christian leader martyred in the year 258, by the Roman Emperor Valerian. Valerian demanded the church treasures. Lawrence asked for 3 days to gather them. Then he presented the blind, lame, poor, widows and orphans and declared, “Here are the church treasures!” Legend has it that Valerian was so furious he ordered Lawrence to suffer a slow death, being cooked on a hot gridiron. Historians say that while dying Lawrence said, “I am cooked on that side; turn me over, and eat.”<sup>1</sup> It is a most beautiful thing to give one’s life for Jesus and the gospel.

That is the ultimate act of love for Christ. How about us? Are we willing to die for our faith? You might ask: Wait a minute, do I have to suffer or sacrifice for Jesus to be a Christian? Can’t I just read the Bible, or pray, or show up at church? Consider this: a belief not worth dying for, is not worth living for either. Followers of Jesus Christ are called to be living sacrifices for Jesus Christ. More practically, what are we sacrificing for Jesus to show our love for him? Maybe we’re not quite ready to be a martyr for Jesus. So how can we be living sacrifices? Actually, there are so many ways to do something beautiful for Jesus.

Tommy Woodard and Eddie James are known as The Skit Guys. They’ve been best friends for 30 years since high school. They gave their time and talent and humor to make clever Christian skits for their church youth group. After a while, they started performing skits for churches and conferences. Eddie remembers, “We really were out on the road in Tommy’s truck going to churches for gas money and a chicken dinner, and that’s how we learned Scripture; that’s how we learned ministry; that’s how we learned to use the gifts and talents that were given to us by God.” Eddie adds, “And if we can make people laugh and show them God, that’s a beautiful, beautiful thing.”<sup>2</sup>

One church member used his paid week off work to go daily to the campus to invite students to Bible study. I believe that’s a beautiful thing to Jesus. Help someone personally in the name of Jesus. Spend time to make a friend with someone that you have nothing to gain personally from. Offer your talent or labor to do good for others. Some coworkers began a free Korean class to reach out to students. Help feed the poor or tutor students; visit or call the sick. If it’s done out of love for Jesus, it’s a beautiful thing.

C.T.Studd (1860-1931) was one of seven people known as The Cambridge Seven. His father was converted to Christ in his mid-life. His father, a wealthy man, changed his passion from raising race horses to winning souls for Christ. He had a burden for his children to know and live for Christ, so he even evangelists to his home. His son

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Lawrence>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.klove.com/ministry/faith-blog/faith/the-k-love-cover-story-with-the-skit-guys-on-their-new-book-smells-like-bacon-2390>

Charles, also known as C.T., was converted to Christ by one of these visiting evangelists. C.T., as a Christian, wrote a beautiful poem with 8 verses titled, "Only One Life." Here is verse 1: "Two little lines I heard one day, Traveling along life's busy way; Bringing conviction to my heart, And from my mind would not depart; Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last." Those were words that C.T. Studd didn't just say in theory; he lived them out. He was highly educated at Cambridge and was an excellent cricket player. But he decided to dedicate his life to reach non-Christians in China and later in Africa. About playing sports he said: "...I do not say, Don't play games or cricket... Only take care that games do not become an idol to you as they did to me. What good will it do to anybody in the next world to have been the best player that ever has been? And then think of the difference between that and winning souls for Jesus."

Shortly before his death, C.T. Studd wrote about what he rejoiced in:

"1. That God called me to China, and I went in spite of utmost opposition from all my loved ones.

2. That I joyfully acted as God told that rich young man to act.

3. That I deliberately at the call of God, when alone on the Bibbly liner in 1910, gave up my life for this work, which was to be henceforth not for the Sudan only, but for the whole unevangelized World.

My only joys therefore are that when God has given me a work to do, I have not refused it."<sup>3</sup>

Inspired by C.T. Studd's poem, "Only One Life," someone wrote the following:

"That college degree might seem impressive now, but was it gained for Christ, or for your recognition? That weight loss goal you met has your friends and family baffled at how amazing you look... but did you lose the weight to bring glory to yourself and your body or to bring glory to the Lord through your health? One of the hardest areas of having right motives is in the area of marriage. Is your choice of spouse based on what he or she does for you and how he or she makes you feel – or did you choose your spouse (potential or current) because you sought God's will relentlessly and you know that this person can help you fulfill God's call on your life?"<sup>4</sup>

May the Holy Spirit help us to do beautiful things for Jesus individually and as a church.

II. The most beautiful thing: Jesus gave his body and blood to make a covenant with us (12-26)

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<sup>3</sup> C.T. Studd references are at: <https://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biostudd5.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://preengaged.com/only-whats-done-for-christ-will-last/>

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" Jesus sent two 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." Remember how in a similar way, Jesus had sent disciples to find a donkey to ride into Jerusalem on. And, again, when the disciples obeyed Jesus' instructions, they found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." Of course, we know who this was—Judas Iscariot, because the author has already told us about his agreement to betray Jesus. But the disciples had no idea. They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

"It is one of the Twelve," Jesus replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Some people try to argue that Judas was a pawn who had no choice but to fulfill the prophecy by betraying Jesus. But Judas was fully responsible for his treacherous act of betrayal of his friend and master, Jesus. Even so, Jesus knew that evil does not win. God's purpose always prevails, even when things look terribly dark, such as when a beloved friend betrays you.

After giving the painful prophecy of one disciple's betrayal, Jesus explained the special meaning of his last supper at this Passover meal. Look at verses 22-26. "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. 'Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

On the surface, this is a strange and mysterious meal. Jesus called the broken bread his body, and the drink his blood. Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples. These same words were used when Jesus fed the 5000 with just 5 loaves and 2 fish. Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples to distribute to all the people. They all ate and were satisfied. Jesus fed them

all. Now Jesus says that the bread represents his body. He gave the bread at the last supper to his disciples and said, "Take it; this is my body." Luke adds a few more words of Jesus here: "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19). Jesus was instituting a new memorial in his body and blood. This was to be a solemn reminder that Jesus gave his life on the cross for us.

The broken bread represents his broken body. The cup to drink represents his shed blood. After passing the bread, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks again, and gave it to them and they all drank from it. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." Matthew adds words here saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28). And Matthew continues, "I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt 26:29).

Apostle John explained the meaning of Jesus' body and blood to a large crowd who demanded bread from Jesus: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day" (Jn 6:51,54).

Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." The Jewish people were well-acquainted with the word "covenant." God made covenants with them through Abraham, and through Moses, and through David. After giving Israel the laws of God, Moses spoke to them. Exodus 24:8 says, "Moses then took the blood [of sacrificed bulls], sprinkled it on the people and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.'" A covenant is a promise. Jesus made a new promise with all who believe in him.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 spoke of this new covenant: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "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 neighbor, 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."

Hebrews 9:14-15 echoes this new covenant in Jesus' blood, comparing it with the old covenant with Israel: "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the

eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”

Jesus gave his body to be broken and his blood to be shed for our salvation. Whoever trusts in Jesus will not perish but will have eternal life. This is his promise to us. Have you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Have you entered into this covenant of love with Jesus Christ through his broken body and shed blood on the cross?

Today, we heard of a beautiful thing that a woman poured out her precious treasure for Jesus. Her pouring out her precious perfume as her best love for Jesus was a foreshadowing of the most beautiful act ever: Jesus’ pouring out his precious blood as his best love for us. We have been given a great promise of eternal life in Jesus’ blood. It is our privilege and honor to give our hearts and lives and love as a beautiful thing to Jesus. Let us pray. Thank you Lord Jesus, for giving your life for us. Help us, by your Holy Spirit, to give our hearts and lives to you as our best treasure. Reign in us, Lord Jesus, by your grace, mercy, love and power. In your precious name, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.