

The Field of Blood

Acts 1: 15 – 26

The land of Israel, especially Jerusalem, was the field of dreams. God promised that land to Abraham's descendants, and it was described as the land flowing with milk and honey (Ex.3:8). One day every Jew would sit under his own fig tree and grow his own vineyard (Micah 4:4). Well, with the coming of Christ, God would teach His people that these promises were metaphorical and symbolic. They anticipated the life of the world to come – only after God would engraft the nations into His saving and expanded covenant family. So then the Promised Land – the field of dreams – was merely a physical symbol of what God's global family was to expect in the resurrected life of the world to come.

Anyone who held on to the old land, once the New Covenant came along, missed the whole point. With the coming of Christ a new age came upon God's creation. More emphatically, a new creation broke in upon the old creation. The covenant promises of God had come to another stage of fruition and the covenant people were expected to grow up and enter the New Covenant body. Those who stayed behind were not merely left behind, but were identified as apostates of the covenant. They were branches which were broken off the Covenant Tree that God planted through the patriarchs (Rom. 11). In this study we will see that just as the church was represented in the blood of Jesus, even so the Jewish apostates were represented in the blood of Judas.

I. Judas: The Apostate Representative

Notice that Acts 1:19 says that the field where Judas' guts spilled out "became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood". Based on two phrases in this verse I think Judas' bloody ground was a warning to Jerusalem, and sadly represented what would become of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

First, notice that "all those dwelling in Jerusalem" knew about Judas' field of blood. Whether they agreed with Judas' betrayal or not, they were all aware of the judgment he suffered. God was clearly warning all of Jerusalem of what would become of apostates. Like Judas their city would become a big Field of Blood if they were to reject the Apostolic Faith in the days ahead.

Second, notice that Judas' field of judgment is identified in "their own language." This is significant because in Acts 2 the gospel will go out in different languages. Again, God's warning of judgment exemplified by Judas' bloody field is clearly made known to all in the city, for the field is identified in the common language. At this point, the entire city is without excuse. The last message Jerusalem hears in their own language, before the Spirit's descent at Pentecost, is one of judgment on apostates. Jerusalem had plenty of warning, and time to join the New Covenant.

Sadly, Judas epitomized the city. The apostate Apostle would represent the apostate city of Jerusalem. While Jesus' blood identified the new people of God, Judas' blood identified the apostates – which were the Old Covenant people who were cut off when the New Covenant was implemented. Michael Bull, who comments on the significance of Judas' Field of Blood, makes the following observation concerning Jerusalem's lust for fool's gold.

"The rich desired a different cup—a glory they could *see*. Like Esau, they gobbled down fool's gold—false glory—and sold their eternal inheritance—resurrection "mansions"—for houses and lands. They "ascended" to receive Satan's Oral Law scroll from Herod's throne for a

religion they *could* stomach, and sent out Wormwood chariots (Jeremiah 23:15). But they would not be able to keep down this false gospel, the gold and silver for which they sold the Son of God. Like Judas, their bowels would be torn open for buying land with the rewards of iniquity (Acts 1:18). In AD70, Jews—dead or alive—were cut open and searched by Syrians and Romans scavenging for the gold that many had swallowed before attempting to escape the siege.”

taken from <http://www.bullartistry.com.au/wp/2009/06/23/fools-gold/>

The following is from Josephus' *The War of The Jews* 5:13:4; which Michael Bull alluded to:

“Yet did another plague seize upon those that were thus preserved; for there was found among the Syrian deserters a certain person who was caught gathering pieces of gold out of the excrements of the Jews' bellies; for the deserters used to swallow such pieces of gold, as we told you before, when they came out, and for these did the seditious search them all; for there was a great quantity of gold in the city, insomuch that as much was now sold [in the Roman camp] for twelve Attic [drams], as was sold before for twenty-five. But when this contrivance was discovered in one instance, the fame of it filled their several camps, that the deserters came to them full of gold. So the multitude of the Arabians, with the Syrians, cut up those that came as supplicants, and searched their bellies. Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this, since in one night's time about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected.”

It is very interesting that thousands of Jews would later have their stomachs cut open, as enemies looked for gold in their bellies, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. They swallowed the gold to hide it, but in judgment their entrails would be gushed out on the ground just like Judas. What Judas suffered, many thousands in the city would suffer just as well, only forty years later. The blood of Jesus and the blood of Judas bore witness to, and against, the city of Jerusalem. One was the blood of salvation, the other was blood of damnation, most of those who dwelled in the city choose the latter – and joined their representative Judas in “his own place” (Acts.1:25). Yet we who are marked with Jesus’ blood of salvation will join Him where He has gone “to prepare a place” for us (John 14:3).

II. Judas: The Prophesied Villain

As reflected in my structure of verses 18 – 20, the quote of both Psalm passages correspond to the judgment of using the wages of iniquity. Interestingly, Peter says that the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of David, when he wrote this Psalm, and his writings spoke of Judas. How can these Psalms speak of Judas, when Judas’ name is not mentioned in either of these Psalms? The Psalms in context, and in fulfillment, yield the answer.

Psalm 69 was written by David when he was in distress. Much of what David writes in this Psalm was replicated, even fulfilled in the sufferings of Christ. Also many passages from this Psalm are quoted in the New Testament and applied directly to Christ. If they are not direct quotations, they are clear parallels.

v. 4 “*they hated me without a cause*” - quoted in John 15:25.

v. 6 “*Let not those who wait for You....be ashamed because of me*” – see Rom.1:16, 9:33

v. 9a “*zeal for Your house has eaten me up*” – quoted in John 2:17

v. 9b “*reproaches of those who reproached you have fallen on me*” – compare with Is.53.

v. 21 “*gave me gall for my food....vinegar to drink*” – compare the bitter drink they gave Christ

These are the explicit times that I know of where this Psalm is quoted in the New Testament, and just a few of the times where we can see the entire Psalm being fulfilled in Jesus' sufferings. In verse 25 David says, "*Let their dwelling place be desolate, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them.*" The New Testament changes the pronoun "their" to "his", to make a specific application to Judas. The point is that the Apostles understand that the entire Psalm – even the entire Bible – came to a maturity and a full blossom in the work of Jesus. The coming of Jesus changes the meaning of the sufferings of the Psalmist. They are now understood in light of the sufferings of Christ. And the oppressors of the Psalmist are now understood in light of those who opposed Jesus and betrayed Him. Consider the quote by Peter Leithart:

"The apostles teach us to recognize that "how it turned out" exposes dimensions of the original event or text that may not have been apparent, and perhaps were not even there, until it turned out as it did. Typological reading is simply reading of earlier texts in the light of later texts and events. Reading Hosea in the light of the event of Jesus is, in principle, just as ordinary as reading Darwin in the light of Nazism, *The Descent of Man* in the light of *Mein Kampf*. The event of Darwin's text becomes a different event, with a new meaning, in the aftermath of Nazism. Prior to Hitler, Darwin's text did not have the property of "providing the theoretical foundations from National Socialism." After Hitler, it did.

Similarly, "Out of Egypt I have called My Son" takes on new properties, new meanings, as Jesus flees from the Egypt of Herodian Israel. "God spoke and there was light" takes on new meaning once we hear Jesus say, "I am the light of the world." Yahweh forming Adam from the dust is a different event once Jesus bends down outside the temple to make clay from the dust and spittle."

Deep Exegesis, p. 74.

Psalm 109:8 says "*Let his days be few, and let another take his office.*" Read Psalm 109. You will see that it is very similar to Psalm 69, except with more emphasis on the imprecatory prayer against David's slanderous and wicked enemies. As Peter says, all of this was "*necessarily*" fulfilled. And explaining "how it all turned out", as mentioned by Leithart, the Apostle Peter emphatically says that "the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas" (Acts 1:16). The Old Testament history and writings planted the seed, the Christ-event grew the fruit, and the church is now nourished by consuming it. As the Scripture bears witness to Christ, whether by anticipation or explication, it all applies to us with comparisons and contrasts as we follow Him who died for us.

An implicit point in Hebrews 12:24 is that Abel's blood spoke ever since it was shed, which is emphatically stated in Genesis 4:10 "*The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground*". Putting this verse with Rev. 6:10 we can see that the blood martyrs has always cried out to God for vengeance. Yet Jesus' blood speaks better things than that of any mere mortal. His blood cries out to God on our behalf for mercy and grace.

And in this study we have seen that there still a man's blood that cries out – not the blood of a martyr, or the Savior; and neither does it cry out to God. It is the blood of one who rejected so great a salvation, who exchanged the truth for a lie, and choose the wages of iniquity over the fruits of righteousness. It is the blood that speaks no good thing, except a warning, and yet multitudes refuse to listen. Though many forsook the truth of God before his time, Judas will forever be known as the forerunner upon that broad road of apostasy. Judas' blood cried out to the city of Jerusalem, just as much as it cries out today warning all those who neglect or reject the Faith of Christ Jesus.