

BLOOD TRANSFUSION

A brief Bible study by Max Hatton

This paper is essentially an appeal to “Jehovah’s Witnesses” to accept what the Bible teaches on blood and its usage. “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are not usually willing to read anything that contradicts their teachings, therefore, this paper may be of best value to those who have some contact with them so that they can use the material as a study aid. Dear reader, be prepared to help our “Jehovah’s Witness” friends – their stand on this issue involves a life and death determination for them and their loved ones. They do not realise it but they desperately need our help.

Legend has it that Lemmings deliberately join in a death march to the sea, where they drown. We have thought to ourselves “Crazy animals! But they are just poor silly animals.” However, apparently the legend is not true. Surprisingly, it is true that many humans “follow the leader” in similar practices, sacrificing themselves at the direction of their leaders.

We looked on with horror when we saw the TV coverage of the burning of the compound of the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas a few years ago. Many sincere but badly misguided people died in that inferno. Almost a thousand members of the Jim Jones cult sacrificed themselves at Jonestown, Guyana, because of the misleading teachings of their cult leader. More recently we had 38 people, under the leadership of Marshall Applewhite, who suicided believing that they would be carried off on a Comet which was then approaching our planet in 1997.

From time to time we read in newspapers, and other media sources, of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” who sacrifice themselves because of the teaching of the Watch Tower Society on blood transfusion. This pitiful situation goes on and on and we would no doubt be deeply shocked if we were informed on just how many lives have been surrendered among the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” because of the Watch Tower falsehood. We feel helpless knowing these people are being misled but not knowing how we can be of assistance. We shudder at the realisation of the heartbreak close relatives and friends must experience as they stand by finding all their appeals for sanity being rejected. Can we even begin to understand the agony of sincere parents who watch the life of a child slip away because they have refused them a life-saving blood transfusion? It is the prayerful hope of the author of this paper that what it contains may be helpful to someone before such tragic circumstances arrive.

Because this matter is one of utmost seriousness I have presented it here in a challenging way to “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” They need somehow to be made to take notice. Please dear reader if you be a “Jehovah’s Witness” accept what the Bible says – don’t let the leaders at the Watch Tower headquarters lead you astray – even to an unnecessary death, a death which is not required by God and which is nowhere even suggested in His Word. If you are a friend or an acquaintance of a “Jehovah’s Witness” please inform yourself on this subject so that you may at least be equipped to try to influence them in the right direction.

The study, which follows, will show:

1. That the Watch Tower contention that in the Bible “blood stands for life” is a woefully inadequate definition which is grossly misleading.
2. What the Bible really says about blood.
3. The real facts on how blood was to be used in worship.
4. That the Bible has nothing whatever to say which would prohibit blood transfusion.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT BLOOD

A study of the Scriptures leaves us in no doubt that those verses prohibiting the use of blood for food refer exclusively to the blood of *slain animals*. The crimson fluid flowing in the veins of man and beast has no special significance in the eyes of God. It is only when a life is taken, by other than natural causes, that the victim’s blood (representing the *life taken*) becomes of special interest to Him. A measure of blood from a live animal was of no consequence at all. Likewise, a portion of a man’s blood transported to the system of another for medical reasons is of no importance either. The blood of an animal that died from natural causes was never thought by anyone to possibly be of value as a sacrifice involved in the ancient sacrificial system. Yahweh required that a life be taken as a sacrifice, the blood of the victim represented *the life taken*. We can search the Scriptures as much as we like and we will never find instructions on what was to be done with the blood flowing from an injured man or beast.

The Bible texts that the Watch Tower uses to prohibit its followers from having a blood transfusion refer to *the blood of the slain*. Therefore, they have nothing whatever to do with blood transfusion which involves the transfer of a small portion of blood *from one live person to another*.

The Watch Tower attempts to create a diversion by trying to show that there are dangers inherent in the blood transfusion procedure. That there is some danger is admitted. However, there are dangers inherent in any surgical procedure. The point is that when the chips are down, when life is at risk, common sense tells us to choose the lesser of two evils. The risk is not great. We could involve in our own diversions asking why the Watch Tower accepts blood in inoculations? Is it because their leaders would be prohibited from visiting other countries if they did not subject themselves to this requirement? We won’t waste time or space on such things because the Watch Tower case is completely undermined by the Bible and that is supposed to be the real basis of their stand.

Even though the Bible is clear in its statements on blood, it will require some effort on the part of my readers to scan through the evidence. In an effort to keep this paper within reasonable limits I will often give Bible references but not quote from them fully. Please, dear reader, open your Bible and discover the truth personally. Read the passages concerned for yourself. Spend some time in study, become conversant on the matter so that you can intelligently discuss it with those in danger of Watch Tower manipulations of the Scriptures.

A STUDY OF THE WORD “BLOOD” IN SCRIPTURE

The contention of the Watch Tower leaders is that “blood stands for life.” (*How Can Blood Save Your Life?* page 3, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1990.)

Here is a basic error. The commonest use of the word “blood” in the Scriptures is as a visible token of a life violently ended; it is a sign of life either given or taken in death. Leon Morris, in his book *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, chapter III “The Blood” classifies the shades of meaning of the word “blood” as it appears in the Bible. He reports that the word appears 362 times in the Hebrew Bible and there are 203 examples where the word refers to death with violence of some kind. Obviously, this is the commonest usage of the word in the Old Testament. The word is found 98 times in the New Testament and 25 of these occurrences refer to violent death. This again is the largest group. Morris’ comments on blood in his book *The Atonement* are also valuable. They are seen in the chapter “Sacrifice.”

Because the Watch Tower contends that blood represents “life” I will list a few of the hundreds of verses which clearly relate to “death.” Anyone who takes the time to check the usage of the word, aided by a good concordance, will have no difficulty in discovering the way the word is generally used. I would also recommend a study of *The Meaning of the Word ‘Blood’ in Scripture* by A. M. Stibbs.

We first encounter the word “blood” in the Bible at **Genesis 4:10**. It cannot be disputed that Abel’s spilt blood represented his death (his life violently taken). Because his death required investigation and vengeance his blood is pictured as crying out for investigation.

Because the flood of Noah’s day destroyed all vegetation from the face of the earth, Yahweh gave man permission to eat flesh. **Genesis 9:3-6** contains the record of His approval. Yahweh required that the blood was not to be eaten with the flesh. At that time He did not say what should be done with it. The passage clearly states that a death could only be properly brought about by God’s permission. If a man was slain unlawfully, God would require that the killer die in compensation for the unlawful slaying.

As we study the Scriptures we see clearly that life is sacred. It is life that Yahweh seeks to protect. Blood has a sacred quality only when it symbolizes, or represents, *a life taken*.

Genesis 37 contains the account of the selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites. Initially, some of his brothers considered taking his life (verse 18). However, they decided to sell Joseph and apparently assumed that he had died as a result of their treachery. Later, when they were in trouble themselves, they suspected that they were being punished because of what they had done to their brother. Reuben took their minds back to the occasion and said, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.” (**Genesis 42:22 – New International Version**). All texts quoted will be from the *New International Version (NIV)* unless otherwise stated. Obviously, the words “*his blood*” could be substituted by the words “*his death*.” Joseph’s brothers were concerned that they would have to pay for his death.

Leviticus 20. This chapter provides numerous examples of circumstances requiring that sinners be put to death. The executioner was not to be held responsible for their death – the sinners brought it upon themselves by their own misdeeds. Verse 27 provides an example. “*A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.*”

Numbers 35:19 required that a murderer be put to death. The man responsible for the execution was described as an “avenger of blood.”

The above are just a few samples of the passages in the **Old Testament** where “blood” refers to *a life violently taken*. For instances of similar usage in the **New Testament** see **Matthew 23:29, 30, 34, 35; Luke 11:50, 51; Acts 5:28; Revelation 17:6; 18:24**.

The above examples make it crystal clear that to say “*blood stands for life*” as is claimed by the Watch Tower leaders simply *will not do*. Their definition brings them to make ridiculous claims, as we shall see just a little further on.

THE USE OF BLOOD IN WORSHIP

In this study we will see that the relevant passages of Scripture only make sense when interpreted in harmony with the definition we have seen reflected in the passages already examined.

Before continuing further, let us be perfectly clear on the fact that in his own right, on his own authority, man had no excuse whatever to take a life. God gave man permission to eat the flesh of animals. To keep things in their proper perspective, God required that man did not eat the creature’s blood. If man took to himself what symbolised the death of the animal, it would be as though he was in control of life. Man was required to continually acknowledge that the mastery over life belongs to God exclusively. Man had to acknowledge this by abstaining from what represented a life taken – the blood.

We need to look at just a couple of verses here. Those wanting further evidence need only to take their Concordance out and browse through verses containing the word “blood.”

Hebrews 9:11-15

This passage makes it abundantly clear what the Old Testament sacrificial system was really portraying. In verses 14, 15 we read:

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ ... cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death ... now that he had died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first Covenant.

Quite clearly “**blood**” and “**died**” are synonymous here. The sacrifices required under the Sanctuary system were pointing forward to the once for all time sacrifice of the true “Lamb of God.” The first Passover too illustrates the saving power of blood when used as a token of a life taken. The destroying Angels did not go near the dwellings which had sacrificial blood splashed on the doorposts.

Leviticus 17:11

This verse looms large in the thinking of the Watch Tower leaders. They insist that their statement that blood stands for life is supported here. At first glance this may appear to be so. The *NIV* rendering is as follows:

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.

Is the reference here to blood from just any source? The answer is a positive “Certainly not!” This could only be the blood of a dead animal which had been sacrificed.

As the Old Testament Scholar R. K. Harrison says in his commentary on **Leviticus**:

In view of the consistent Old Testament tradition that sin was a most serious matter in God’s sight, and merited the most drastic punishment, it is difficult to see how the slain sacrifices could be interpreted in any other than penal terms, with the animal acting as a substitute for the sinner. As though that were insufficient, the sacrificial procedures mention the death of the victim frequently, while remaining silent about its life. Shed blood constituted visible evidence that the life had indeed offered up in sacrifice. In order to set in proper perspective the notion of life subsisting in the blood, it is worthy of note that the correct translation of Leviticus 17:11 is ‘the life of the flesh is the blood’. Only as atonement is linked with death, represented by shed blood, and not life set free, would it appear to become efficacious in the covering of human sin?

There is no disagreement that while the blood is circulating in the body it is the life of the flesh. When it is related to the word Atonement however, it symbolises the life given up in death. We must not isolate this verse from the rest of Scripture. The Bible clearly and consistently teaches that the offering of a life as a substitute – a sacrifice – is what provides atonement. It is not the actual blood that provides atonement, but what the shed blood represents – a death. The draining of blood from an animal, without causing its death, and using it as an offering for atonement is a process not even contemplated in Scripture. Blood, unless it represented a life taken, was of no consequence, no value, it was something completely foreign to the sacrificial system. It had no value apart from the death of a victim. Mere blood is not under review in Scripture. What it represents, the death of a victim, is.

The Watch Tower Society, on page 8 of its booklet ***Blood, Medicine and the Law of God***, makes the following astonishing claim:

We cannot drain from our body part of that blood, which represents our life, and still love God with our whole soul, because we have taken away part of ‘our soul – our blood-’ and given it to someone else.

What an immature, incredibly pathetic statement! Apparently, the Watch Tower reasons that to love God with your whole soul, you must have all of your blood in your body. If this was true a “Jehovah’s Witness” who died from loss of blood (perhaps caused by some accident) would hardly be able to love God during the final stages of his/her deterioration. It is hard to believe that anyone in his/her right mind could believe such nonsense!

KEY TEXTS USED BY THE WATCH TOWER

The following verses are reviewed because they are the ones generally used by the Watch Tower leadership in an endeavour to support their case. Our review will make it transparently clear that the whole Watch Tower case collapses because all the texts used by them refer to the blood of the dead. Therefore, they have nothing whatever to do with Blood Transfusion which involves the transfer of a small portion of blood from one live individual to another.

Leviticus 3:17

A reading of **Leviticus 3** will reveal that this verse bears no relation whatever to the blood of a live human. The whole of the chapter clearly speaks of sacrifices. Continuous mention is made of the blood and the fat of the offering and instructions are given as to what is to be done with these.

Leviticus 7:26, 27

These verses very obviously apply to the blood of dead animals.

Leviticus 17:13

This verse refers to the blood of dead animals being poured on the ground and being covered with dirt. The Watch Tower Society insists that this text would prohibit the storing of blood for transfusion purposes. Let us clearly note that the blood of the dead is being referred to. This, then, has nothing to do with the blood of the living. Interestingly, inoculation, mentioned above, requires the storing of blood components. The Watch Tower approves this and is therefore willingly guilty of double standards when it suits it.

Acts 15:20, 28, 29; 21:25

These verses show that the prohibition on the eating of blood still applies today. The Watch Tower often distorts the clear meaning of these verses. It insists that they prohibit the practice of blood transfusion. Those conversant with the Bible will not be confused. It is not hard to see that nothing more is being prohibited here than what had already been prohibited in the Old Testament. We must let the Bible interpret itself. These verses, taken in the larger context of the Bible, show that we must not eat the blood of the dead. They have nothing whatever to do with the medical practice of blood transfusion.

Much more could be said on this matter but my endeavour has been to keep this presentation to as limited a form as possible. I am sure that I have said sufficient to expose the Watch Tower teaching as a tragic falsehood.

FINAL COMMENT AND APPEAL

How the Watch Tower leaders arrived at the conclusion that the Bible prohibits blood transfusion must be one of the greatest mysteries of the 20th century. The fact that uninformed but sincere people follow the incompetent interpretations and requirements of the Society must be one of the greatest tragedies of the 21st or any other century. How sad to see sincere people sacrificing themselves, and their loved ones, on the altar of ignorance! It is more than just sad for as **Genesis 9:5** says:

And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.

If we are responsible for the death of others God regards us as being blood-guilty. The Watch Tower leaders are guilty before God for influencing people to unnecessarily lay down their lives. This “no blood transfusion policy” must be an abomination in the eyes of God. It brings the Name of God into disrepute.

My appeal to “Jehovah’s Witnesses” is to accept what the Bible says. This will require that you disregard the Watch Tower literature, which misleads you. Let God Be True! You must be prepared to do this if you want to be in harmony with God – no doubt many of you do want this really. May our loving heavenly Father give you the grace, the good sense, and the courage to submit to Him rather than to the leaders of the Watch Tower Society. Many prayers ascend on your behalf.

MAY GOD BE HONoured BY OUR TEACHING AND BY OUR LIVES!