

The Book of Exodus

Lesson 17: The Covenant Confirmed at Sinai -- Exodus 24:1-18

Some moments are too large to be left in words on a page. A wedding is not finished when the couple agrees to marry; there is a day, a gathering, a vow spoken aloud, and a sealing of the promise that makes it real. You have stood in rooms like that, where a thing that had been growing quietly suddenly becomes public and binding, where two people step across a line they cannot un-cross. Exodus 24 is that day for Israel. God has spoken His law from the mountain. Now the covenant must be confirmed, ratified, sealed in a way the whole nation can see and remember.

Walk into this chapter slowly and notice how careful it is. There is a reading of the words. There is a building of an altar. There is the sprinkling of blood, half on the altar and half on the people. There is a meal eaten in the very presence of God, on the mountain, by men who lived to tell of it. None of this is casual. Israel is being bound to the Lord, and the Lord is binding Himself to Israel, and blood is the seal pressed into the wax of the promise. You can almost hear Moses say it: behold the blood of the covenant.

We read this as people who live on the other side of a greater covenant. We know the night when another Mediator lifted a cup and said, this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. We cannot read Exodus 24 without our hearts running ahead to that upper room and to a hill outside Jerusalem. The blood at Sinai was real, and the covenant it sealed was real, and yet it was pointing past itself the whole time, like the first light before a sunrise that has not yet broken.

So come up the mountain in your imagination. Stand with the seventy elders who saw the God of Israel and ate and drank and were not consumed. Feel the weight of a people saying together, all that the Lord has spoken we will do. And then let the question come quietly to you: what does it mean to belong to a covenant God, to be bound to Him by blood, to be invited not merely to obey at a distance but to eat in His presence? That question runs from Sinai straight into your own life with Christ.

Group Discussion: How does the way Exodus 24 confirms the covenant (the reading of the word, the response of the people, the blood, the meal in God's presence) show us what God wanted this relationship to be, and not merely what He wanted Israel to do?

Personal Reflection: Where in your own walk with God have you said the words 'all that the Lord has spoken I will do' more easily than you have actually lived them, and what would it look like this week to let your obedience catch up to your promise?

Read Exodus 24:1-18

Study Questions

1. Read 24:1–3. Moses tells the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules, and the people answer with one voice, 'All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.' What does this exchange reveal about how a covenant relationship with God is meant to work, and about the place of God's revealed word in it?
2. Read 24:3 again. The people promised wholehearted obedience before they had truly been tested. Where have you made a sweeping promise to God in a moment of conviction, and what does this passage teach you about the distance between saying 'we will do' and actually doing it?
3. Read 24:4–8. Moses wrote down the words, built an altar with twelve pillars, offered sacrifices, and sprinkled blood on the altar and on the people. Why was blood necessary to confirm this covenant, and what does the divided blood (half on the altar, half on the people) say about the relationship being sealed?
4. Read 24:7. When the Book of the Covenant was read aloud, the people again said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' How seriously do you take the public, read-aloud word of God when you gather with the saints, and how would your week change if you treated it as a covenant word spoken to you?
5. Read 24:9–11. The leaders went up, 'saw the God of Israel,' ate and drank, and God 'did not lay his hand' on them. What is remarkable, even astonishing, about sinful men eating and drinking in the presence of God, and what does this fellowship reveal about what the covenant was ultimately for?

6. Read 24:11 again. These men beheld God and ate before Him and lived. When do you treat coming into God's presence (in prayer, in worship, at the Lord's table) as something ordinary rather than astonishing, and how might recovering the wonder of it change the way you draw near?
7. Read 24:12–14. God calls Moses higher up to receive the tablets of stone, 'the law and the commandment.' What does it tell us about God that He puts His covenant words in writing, on stone, by His own giving, and how does this shape the way we ought to regard Scripture?
8. Read 24:13–14. Moses left Aaron and Hur in charge and went up with Joshua, trusting others to lead in his absence. Where is God asking you to shoulder responsibility, or to trust others with it, rather than insisting that everything wait on you?
9. Read 24:8 with Matthew 26:28 and Hebrews 9:18–22. Moses said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you.' Jesus said, 'this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' How does the blood of the covenant at Sinai point forward to and find its fulfillment in the blood of Christ, and what does Hebrews 8–10 teach us about the difference between the two covenants?
10. Read 24:15–18. Moses entered the cloud and the glory of the LORD, and remained on the mountain forty days as mediator between God and the people. Looking back across this whole chapter, name one specific way the Lord Jesus, our greater Mediator (Hebrews 12:24), is forming you to live as a person sealed by His blood and invited into God's very presence.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 26:26–28, Jesus institutes the Supper and names His blood as the blood of the new covenant for forgiveness; Hebrews 9:18–22, even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness; Hebrews 8:6–13, Christ is the mediator of a better covenant enacted on better promises; Hebrews 12:18–24, the contrast between Sinai's terror and Mount Zion where we come to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant; Exodus 19:5–8, the people's earlier pledge of obedience that this chapter now ratifies

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