

Exodus 24

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[0 : 00] Let's pray. God, we pray that your grace will be on our ears as we hear your word.

Your mercy will reign in our hearts as we ask and plead that you open up your word to us for righteousness and joy in you.

In Jesus name. Amen. Our text today comes to us as a description of what happened when Moses and the boys Aaron Nadab and Abihu approached Mount Sinai and went up as with 70 elders.

Since we've continued our journey in Exodus this summer, the children of Israel have been at the base of the mountain. Big mountain. They're at the base as God has commanded them to stay at the base of the mountain.

And when we got to chapter 19, we preached about the preparation that God was preparing them for in order to approach him on the mountain.

[1 : 28] But then in chapters 20 through 23, verse 19, we also seen the description of the words of the Decalogue and the rules that God gave Israel through Moses as he was laying them out for them.

So it's in this chapter that the covenant, chapter 24, that the covenant, as we just prayed about, is ratified between God and his people.

Where we see how just how sinful human beings and a divine, holy, majestic God, Yahweh, are able to be in communion together in relationship with one another.

This is where we see that sentiment. This covenant agreement allows for true worship to take place in the presence of Yahweh that pleases him.

In other words, covenant enables contact. Covenant enables contact. If you're married in here, that might mean something a little bit more to you.

[2 : 40] This is the reason why, as a Christian, we preach abstinence before marriage, because you don't want to take the covenant by having contact beforehand.

Right? That's why the Bible says, do not awaken love before it's time. This covenant that we see on Mount Sinai enables the people of Israel to have contact with God.

This initiative, this covenant is an initiative given by God. Given by who? By God. God has arranged the contact.

Yet he does not compromise his holiness in arranging this contact. God is with his people safely under this covenant.

Amen? So the covenant is made so that God's people will be with him. In verse 9, we'll look at that in a second. But this Sinaitic covenant is about what it means to have Yahweh as Lord.

[3 : 51] So what we're going to do in this text is we're just going to highlight three themes I think would be beneficial for us today. Three themes. One, location.

Say location. Number two, inauguration. And number three, invitation. Location, inauguration, invitation.

Amen? So these are the themes that I'm going to highlight for us today. Verse 1, Moses is instructed to go up to the mountain with Aaron and 70 elders to worship.

Aaron, his boy, 70 elders to worship. And I stopped right there because of the fact that chapter 19, there was strict instruction to not approach. Don't even have any of the animals approach.

Lest I break out against you. Lest you be destroyed. So there is a grace in just verse 1 that you already come in contact with when he says, then he said to Moses, come up to the Lord, you and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel.

[4 : 57] And they're not just coming up for no reason. The words right after that says to worship from afar. First and foremost, we have to consider this location to the mountain in which they're climbing.

Where they're given strict instructions not to come, but now God is telling them to come, at least to a certain extent. But Mount Sinai is where this Sinaitic covenant is confirmed, is where this covenant is actually ratified.

The importance of Mount Sinai in the time, in this time, meant that their religion is established amongst the nations. That what they believe is true, despite everybody else.

The ancient Near East people felt like the mountains were where the gods chilled, where they were at. And if you went to the tip top, that's where those gods were dwelling.

But this mountain, Mount Sinai, was a place where the God of gods is dwelling. And this God said in chapter 25, we'll see next week, I will come down to you.

[6 : 17] It's a little different than some of these pagan religions that they have encountered. And the people come and they could approach this God, but only on his terms.

You will approach in obedience in order to worship this God. God. What also makes this mountain important in our understanding is how Exodus, in Exodus, Moses approaches this mountain in degrees.

I mean, he's not just cavalier like, yo, what up, God? I heard you call me. What up? No, he approaches in degrees, in stages. This gives us a foretaste of the tabernacle.

If you look at verse 2, he says, Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but the elders shall not come near and the people shall not come up with him.

Moses alone. He's acting as high priest right now. Aaron is acting as the priesthood, Aaron and his boys. They're acting as the priesthood and the 70 elders are representing the people.

[7 : 20] The outer court, the inner court, the most holy of holies. They're representing this tabernacle scene, but in a higher way for Mount Sinai.

So verse 3 through 8, they're at the foot of the mountain. Verse 9 through 11, they're at the midpoint of the mountain. This is the location. Verses 12 through 18, Moses goes up into the mountain, into the cloud for 40 days and 40 nights.

And while in the cloud, on the seventh day, God actually says, all right, come here. Let me holler at you. The people's view of the glory of God was like a devouring fire, is what he says.

It's like a fire. Like if you're way down at the bottom of the mountain and you're looking up, it's like, is he going in there? He went in. Moses went into the cloud, stayed 40 days and 40 nights.

And this is continuing our theme in chapter 19, verse 9. And the Lord said to Moses, behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe you forever.

[8 : 31] God's not interested in one time decisions and beliefs. He wants a belief that lasts throughout generations. The location is important to Israel because it is where we see the inauguration of God's covenant for his children.

Its location is important. They are a unique people group, as Peter picks up on that phraseology later, unmatched by nobody in the entire planet because they are coming in contact with the everlasting God.

Because they have the opportunity to be in his presence. They can experience their God by being in his presence. They can worship their God by obeying his commands.

And they have a relationship with their God unique amongst the other nations. And why am I mentioning these other nations? Because their religion, this faith walk with Yahweh is not just about them alone.

He's concerned about how they represent amongst people. Just look over to chapter 23, verse 23.

Real quick. He says, When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do as they do.

[9 : 57] But you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. Their relationship with God is unique, even amongst other people groups.

But that necessarily doesn't mean that they didn't pick up some stuff from these other people groups. I mean, they just came out of Egypt, for goodness sake, right? After having been there for a number of years.

As we get to point number two, this inauguration, we start to see that there is a ritual that takes place. Scholars have long debated about this whole treaty, this suzerain treaty, that basically says a suzerain is a sovereign lord.

And when he decides to take over a people or to dish out laws for a specific people group, he enacts a specific treaty that lists the commands and the attributes of what they should do and their boundaries and where they should go and how they should relate to the sovereign lord.

Suzerain treaty. They say that this suzerain treaty was first seen with the Hittites. A lot of people think that the Israelites might have picked up on the Hittite treaty and used it for this Sinaitic covenant.

[11:17] There's nine basic ways in which this suzerain treaty actually is enacted. For one, there's a preamble. When a treaty from a sovereign lord is enacted, there is a preamble, first and foremost, where the author is identified.

The author of the treaty is identified. This guy. His title, his territory, his attributes. Well, we're not that far from that because in Exodus chapter 19, we've seen that God was laying out who he is and the boundaries like, I will destroy you.

Don't come over here. He's laying out exactly who he is. And then the suzerain treaty lays out this historical prologue where it describes in detail the circumstances for the previous relationship and what it should be afterwards.

We know the circumstance of their previous relationship. They fell in the garden. They're sinful human beings. And what it should be after is, well, you need to repent and turn to the living God in hope.

Then there's stipulations laid out. And then there's a reading of the covenant periodically. Now, we know that because there was a genealogy idea in the Hebrew living that they would read it for their children and children's children, that it would be as frontlets in front of their eyes so that whenever or wherever they go, everybody knows that they are Yahweh's children.

[12:44] So there's this periodic reading of this suzerain treaty, right? Then there's witnesses. Now, the Hittites had gods in everything. I mean, there was gods in the floor, gods in the moon, gods in the sky, gods in everywhere, right?

The witnesses that they described were the deity witnesses. But if we're looking at it through our gospel lenses, the heavens declare the glories. Of God. I mean, he is the God that makes everything.

We are monotheistic, but we know that even the rocks will cry out. We know that he can use a donkey. We know that there are things that God will use to glorify him even when we don't think it glorifies him.

The witnesses of his glory. Then they laid out these blessings and curses that if they broke the vow of the treaty, there is going to be some blessings. Or there might be curses if they broke the vow. Deuteronomy 28 kind of lays out these blessings and curses for the Hebrews. Then we see a formal oath in this suzerain treaty. A formal oath that was verbal.

[13:47] Where the children of God, even in Exodus 24, make a verbal oath in verse 7 and verse 3. A verbal oath that says, yeah, we agree with that.

We will follow and be obedient to that treaty. Ending off in a ceremony where they would sacrifice and spill blood and make an oath that ratified it.

And have a meal. Probably the best part, the meal, right? They'd have a meal to say that this is accomplished. Whether or not the suzerain treaty is accurate or applicable to the Israelites, the text shows us that the ritual had to take place in order for the covenant to be accurately applied and legally binding.

The people are at the mountain of God. And the inauguration of this covenant is about to be ratified with vows signed in blood in the presence of God.

So verse 3 through 8, we see the covenant inaugurated. Verse 3, listening to Moses, they hear him and they respond to him verbally and they're ready for the rituals. Verse 4, Moses writes down the words of God and builds an altar and then builds 12 pillars for the people of Israel, the tribes of Israel representing the people.

[15:11] So that even if you don't exactly know everything of the covenant, when you walk by the pillar, you get an idea. You know what it's about. And then verse 5, the young men sacrifice animals, letting everybody know that they recognize that they are the guilty party in the treaty.

They're the ones who are being taken over because they are the ones in need of a sacrifice on their behalf.

Peace is needed to be made between them and their God. The young men were probably the firstborn of the tribes, the firstborn of their clans.

And it's funny, if you're young here, this is a point for you. You need to know that the choices you choose today always affect tomorrow.

They don't just affect you. The things you do echo in eternity. And it's not just about your moment. So he sends the young men out to make sacrifices.

[16:18] Verse 6, Moses sprinkles the blood on the altar, representing that God is the one in authority. Verse 7, Moses reads the book of the covenant to the people, and then they make vows, the second vow.

And verse 8, Moses sprinkles the blood on the people, and the people receive the blood sprinkled on them, as a sign that we agree that if someone breaks this covenant, blood should be spilled. Now keep in mind, the sprinkling of the blood was also for sanctification of the priesthood. It represented the sanctity of Christ, the sanctity of the people. Aaron and Nadab and Abihu, they're the proto-priesthood, because the priesthood's not exactly established yet, and they are the ones who are sprinkled with blood as the priesthood.

This sets the basis for Israel's priestly kingdom, but also gives us a glimpse of the kingdom to come. This is why the author of Hebrews even upholds the Sinaitic covenant as a base for his argument as to how the Messiah fulfills and completes and even replaces the first covenant with his own blood shed on the cross by describing what happened on Mount Sinai.

Look over to Hebrews 9, verse 15, starting at verse 15. Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgression committed under the first covenant.

[17:58] Now watch this. For where a will is involved, the death of one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not enforced as long as the one who made it is alive.

Therefore, not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet and hyssop and sprinkled the book itself and all the people saying, this is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.

And in the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood.

But without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. Okay. So even though the Hebrew text does add a few details that we don't have in Exodus, the quotes from Hebrews and Exodus serve to show the relationship with God and the inauguration with blood that ratifies the covenant with his people.

So Hebrews and Exodus are serving to show our relationship with God. But then the ratification of the covenant with God and his people.

[19:21] The author of Hebrews means to point the listeners to the new covenant, this will, this New Testament, this diacathy.

So as to make a question, so as to make us question how the will comes about. How does the will come about? How does the will come about?

Someone died. If you're reading a will of a family member, chances are they're dead, unless you're notarizing it or something like that. But chances are they passed away.

So that's what Hebrews is meant to make us question, so how does the will come about? Whether the author of Hebrews is pointing to the death of animals in Exodus or the ultimate death of Christ specifically, we know that blood has to be shed for the covenant to be confirmed.

Blood needs to run in order for this covenant to be enacted. Caution, though. We don't want to jump just straight to Jesus right away. Yes, Jesus does taste death.

[20:30] Eventually. But that's not necessarily the point of Exodus. Because Jesus isn't alive yet, per se. The death seen in Exodus 24 is the death of these animals in the sacrifice, signifying that the blood has to be shed for the sins committed, right?

God becomes not the one who is flesh incarnate, but he becomes the executioner with the representation of the blood shed.

He is the executioner as well. We cannot skip to Jesus since we must see the weight and terror of our own sin.

We must feel the gravity of the offense of who we offended. Until we are well acquainted with the death we deserve, we cannot truly appreciate the death of Christ.

As Shilin says, before we can see the cross as something done for us, we need to see the cross as something done by us.

[21 : 36] Our own self-awareness and our own sin awareness further leads us to the fact that we need a savior. And this is how we can understand the words of institution spoken over the cup in Mark 14, 24, when Christ says, this is the blood of the covenant which is poured out.

For many. I know it's easy to jump to Jesus, very spiritualistic. But hold up for a second and just consider what the man went through on your behalf.

Blood spilt shows the fate of the covenant breaker. The blood of animals serves as a precedence, an example of the covenant.

A covenant curse that would point to a new covenant established by Christ's blood on the cross. So this inauguration on Mount Sinai binds the Lord with the people legally by blood.

The blood binds the people. The blood spilt in Exodus is representative of the blood that has to be spilt to pay for sins, not to only pay for sins, but to deliver men from a guilty conscience.

[22 : 51] You see, what the blood spilt in Exodus couldn't do was cleanse your conscience, according to Galatians and Romans and pretty much all the New Testament. The law couldn't do that.

It couldn't take away the liability of the punishment. The law couldn't do that. It couldn't expiate transgression. No, it couldn't do that.

No, we needed someone better. Christ announcing in Luke 22 20 that this is my blood of the new covenant.

Announces his blood, handles all the above. So in verse 11, leaders eat and drink as a sign of commitment to the covenant. This then leads us to our final theme.

Invitation. I mean, we have our location. We see the inauguration by blood. But now we're invited. In a sense.

[23 : 56] There's I mentioned before that there's degrees to walking up the mountain in the second in the midpoint of the mountain. The 70 elders and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu they approached.

They're at the midpoint. Verse 10 says something astonishing, though. Look at verse 10. They saw the God of Israel.

And when they saw this God of Israel, they didn't actually. They saw the God of Israel, but they actually just seen his feet. Look at look at verse 10. What does it say? And they saw the God of Israel.

There was under his feet, as it were, a pavement of sapphire stone like the very heaven for clearness. I mean, the very glimpse of the glory of just the base of who God was was enough to astonish and amaze and baffle even the wisest amongst us.

So they're only seeing the base of God. The point is that the invitation to approach God has to be exactly that, an invitation.

[25 : 04] You're getting a glimpse of his glory. What are you going to do about it? Approaching God in obedience. Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron, will eventually learn that lesson as they're killed for submitting false fires to God.

Worshiping God in an unsanctioned way, presuming upon his glory. God strikes him down. And then God tells Moses to tell Aaron, it's because they approached me the wrong way.

And if you read, he says, and Aaron kept silent. He was like, can't say nothing about that. But still, in verse 11, look at verse 11a.

He says, and he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel. God allowed them to approach and he didn't lay his hand on them. He allowed them to come close.

Verse 11b, the leaders eat and drink. But then we get to this third ascent where Moses alone comes near God in verse 2. He's called.

[26 : 16] Moses instructs the elders to wait in verse 14. Don't come any closer. Stay here. We'll be back. The Lord gives Moses the rules and the laws. The God of heaven has graciously written down the instructions for his people and given it to Moses.

As he said, this is for their instruction in verse 12. The permanence of the words written were for obedience. Moses' invitation to God was not merely for himself, as we've already discussed, but for the generations to come.

We get to see the chapters. In these chapters, a pivotal point where obedience and worship meet, where law and the presence of God are coincided.

Even later, as the instructions for the temple come about in chapter 25 and beyond, the idea is clear. Worship to God includes obedience to him.

This God who appears before his people, providing them sustenance for worship. Basically, daily obedience. The blood representing sanctification, cleansing for the children.

[27 : 26] A meal representing peace between God and man and confirming the sacrifices accepted by God. The divine relationship and communion between a holy God and simple people is brought to a head when Moses is seen, remember, entering into the cloud.

Verse 16, God calls out to Moses on the seventh day and he says, Come here, boy. This theophany of God is like devouring fire to them.

This image of God to the people is terrifying. This is a reminder of judgment, even while God is being gracious.

He hasn't departed any part of his character. He's actually just being himself. Whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles at one point is guilty of breaking it all.

This is a reminder to keep the whole law. Keeping all of the covenant is the only way to keep the covenant. Keeping only some of it and violating the rest is not keeping it at all.

[28 : 31] Douglas Stewart says, keeping the covenant for God's children is grace to them, is seen as grace for them. It's not a punishment.

It's not, oh, I got to clean my room. It's, no, I get to enjoy God by keeping his covenant as someone who is called by God.

I get to just study who he is. I get to be in his presence. Besides understanding our role in the covenant and besides understanding the weight and the gravity of our sin and besides even realizing how majestic God Almighty is, you got to understand, lastly, that the weight actually falls on God in the covenant.

God desires to be with his children. He desires to be with us. This flies in the face of pagan Eastern religion. Listen, people naturally desire kinship, witness ship, if that is a word, community or kinship. People are made to desire God. This is why the nightlife is so attractive. This is why Facebook is so addictive. This is why everything else competes for our attention and typically wins.

[29 : 56] But God has built you to want him and him alone. But God desires our full attention. He is actively working to get your attention more than you're working to get his attention.

We typically live in a false and wrong relationship. Sometimes we lose sight of the God who is in fear of the God who isn't. We'll replace the God who is for trinkets and plastics and people that can die tomorrow.

Well, this is wrong. And if you're listening today, you have to know that the invitation to come to God is wide open. He's calling you today. Wherever you are, whoever you are, and wherever you've been, he's calling you.

You. Luke 15. Jesus is about to go in about these three parables. Lost sheep, lost coin, prodigal son.

But it's interesting the way the passage begins. Verse 1 and 2 says, Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him.

[31 : 10] And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them? You see, Moses in Exodus models what Christ does for his people by entering into the presence of God, interceding on their behalf.

In order to bring you and I into a right relationship and right standing with God by shedding his own blood, becoming the sacrifice, he is our high priest.

But the grumbling of the Pharisees and the scribes about Jesus is due to the fact that because they think that he should come for good people. But he doesn't.

He comes for sinful, as Pastor Phil Jackson would say, toe up from the flow up, human beings sitting in this very room. He came to seek and save those who are lost.

Christ's meal is an invitation for reconciliation. The meal that is represented in chapter 24 reconciles us to the God who we wrecked shop with in Genesis chapter 3.

[32 : 26] It's the invitation for you to sit at peace face to face later as we're looking down the line. Blessed is everybody who is invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

And you can sit with the dude. I don't mean to call him dude, but I'm just saying. He invites you to commune with him on a level that no other God desires to.

Well, the whole sacrificial system is representative of the fact that God supplies what the people need in order to be in communion with him. And while the sacraments identify our union with Christ as we're looking back, a body broken for us, God also promises a meal later on.

And Jesus is the very fulfillment of God's desire to be with us. Emmanuel, God with us. He is for us. Wouldn't you like to know this, God?

There is so many things, again, competing for our communion and friendship. I seen earlier yesterday that, I don't know if it's true, but I seen that Illinois, weed is legal.

[33 : 45] And I'm always thinking to myself, but what can you desire more than God to actually help you relax? I'm just using weed as an example.

Or as Mila prayed about sex traffic, and there's so many things that will cause us to look at God and be like, why would you let that happen?

And yet God is saying, but I'm glorified even in the midst of that. We have the opportunity even today to experience his presence while looking back at our location, seeing the inauguration of this blood covenant and the invitation of God's covenant to his people.

As I close, let me just read for you Exodus chapter 33, verse 14 through 17. And he said, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

And he said to him, If your presence will not go with me, Moses is speaking, do not bring us up from here. For now shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people.

[34 : 54] Is it not your going with us that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth? And check this out.

The Lord says to Moses, This very thing that you have spoken, I will do. For you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name. Let's pray.

God, it is for freedom that Christ has set us free, so that we are not, again, yoked to the chains of slavery, of sin, that we don't have to wander left and right.

But Lord, we ask that in light of our location, wherever we are in life today, we can consider the covenant you made with Moses, with Abraham, with David, and through your son, Jesus Christ, as we are invited to be in the presence of God.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.