

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

**C0643 – November 15, 2006 – Ex 24:1-18 – The Ratification Of The
Mosaic Covenant - Part 2**

Middle of verse 4, after he wrote them down **He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve ^apillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.** Now, the altar would be according to the pattern in Exod 20:22-26, it would be made of earth and without steps. Now, this altar represents God and it was **built at the foot of Mount Sinai.** And he also **built twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.** Now these **twelve pillars** represent Israel. So, we have the two parties represented, God by the altar and Israel by the pillars. The two parties of the contract will stand facing each other for the ratification of the covenant by blood.

Verse 5, **And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.** The **young men** here are apparently the first-born sons that were redeemed on the night of the Passover by the unblemished lamb (Exod 13:1, 12). Normally this is a priestly task and the first priesthood of Israel was composed of the first-born sons. Only later would the priests be limited to the priestly tribe of Levi. So, they offered two kinds of offerings, **burnt offerings and peace offerings, both to the Lord.** These are the two kinds of offerings Moses had been taught to offer on the altar in Exodus 20:24. These offerings resulted in fellowship between God and Israel. Only when there was fellowship between God and Israel could God enter into a formal covenant relationship with them.

Verses 6-8, **And ^bMoses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they**

said, ^x “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” ^{8c} And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” What we have here is the joining together of two parties in a covenant. The altar represents God and the pillars represent Israel. The blood thrown on the altar represented God’s forgiveness of sin. The blood thrown on the people set them apart unto a life committed to obedience to God (Heb 9:13). If they obeyed they would be blessed. If they sinned God would forgive them through confession of sin on the basis of shed blood. If they did not confess God would discipline them in order to motivate them to be restored and advance spiritually.

PRINCIPLE: Believers today have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ in a spiritual sense and have been set apart for the purpose that we might obey His will (1 Peter 1:2).ⁱ

PRINCIPLE: The relationship between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant is much like that of the believer’s relationship with God and his fellowship with God. One’s relationship to God is unconditional. Once a part of the family of God always a part of the family of God. However, one’s fellowship status in the family is conditional on obedience. Special privileges are given to those who are faithful family members and privileges can be lost by disobedient family members. He who is faithful with little is given more and even what the unfaithful have will be taken away.

So, let’s review the order of events here at Sinai. First the blood was thrown on the altar (i.e. the Lord), second the Book of the Covenant was read and the people agreed to obey, and third the blood was thrown on the people (i.e. pillars).

1	2	3
Blood Thrown on Altar	Moses Read Book of the Covenant People Agreed	Blood Thrown on Pillars

The **Book of the Covenant** which Moses read was most likely the words that God had spoken to Moses on Mt Sinai and which **he wrote down** and recorded the day before, that is, Exodus 20:22-23:33. After reading it **in the**

hearing of the people they said, “**All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.**” These last words, **we will be obedient** are added to draw our attention to the epilogue of the covenant in Exodus 23:20-33 where God says that if they are obedient then He will bless them and they will have victory over their enemies and they will inherit the land. Oh that they understood their hearts and how they needed God’s help to obey (Dt 5:29). But now they have willingly consented to the terms of the contract. And once they agreed **Moses took the other half of the blood and threw it on** them, whether is meant the pillars which represent the people or the people themselves is not perfectly clear, but as he did this he said “**Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.**” At that point the covenant was ratified, binding and in full effect.

THE VISION OF GOD AND THE COVENANT MEAL (24:9-11)

In conjunction with the ratification of the covenant these 74 people were to ascend Mt Sinai, not to the peak but somewhere along the slope and there they would see **God** and eat a covenant meal. “It was common to symbolize the ratifying of a covenant with a meal (cf. Gen. 26:30; 31:54; Luke 22:15-20).”ⁱⁱ They would eat before God.

**Exodus 24:9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and
^dseventy of the elders of Israel ^ewent up,
¹⁰ and they ^fsaw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it
were a pavement of ^gsapphire stone, like the very heaven for
clearness.
¹¹ And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of
Israel; they beheld God, and ^hate and drank.**

Okay, this party of 74 chosen by God **went up** to have a meal before the King of the universe. They did not go to the peak of the mountain but somewhere along the slope. Now, the Scriptures affirm that people have seen God and that no one has seen God. These are difficult to reconcile.

God Has Been Seen

Gen 32:30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

Judg 13:22 And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God."

Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Isa 6:5 And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

God Can't Be Seen

Exod 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

1 Tim 6:16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

God Both Can and Cannot Be Seen

Exod 33:23 Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

How do we harmonize these passages? It seems best to say that no one has seen God in the fullness of His glory (cf Exod 33:18) but some people have seen God in part or that God can be seen from one perspective but not another (Exod 33:23). Ways God has been seen in part are through the Shechinah Glory and the Angel of YHWH. In our passage it says **they saw the God of Israel**. It is interesting that it does not say they saw YHWH of Israel (the Tetragrammaton and the everlasting memorial name of God) but the elohim of Israel (a general name for God or gods). The following words

explain what they saw that constituted **the God of Israel**. They saw **under his feet** something like a **pavement of sapphire stone**, that is, it had a blue hue to it and, **like the very heaven for clearness**, that is, like the atmosphere, clear blue and this formed the pavement under his feet. Apart from the **feet there is no description** of a visible form of God, only what rests beneath His feet. A similar vision is recorded in Ezek 1:26 where there was an “expanse over their heads” and “the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance.” The difference here is they didn’t see a throne or any human form. It sounds like what they saw was the Angel of YHWH shrouded in the Shechinah Glory. They saw no form because the Shechinah Glory was so bright they could not see anything except what was beneath the feet of the Angel of the Lord. Whatever the case what they saw was God in part and the sight was so awesome it impressed upon these 74 men who God is, His divine essence, what He is like. He is awesome in majesty and overwhelming in glory, totally separate from all creation.

Verse 11, **And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.** You would think v. 11 would read, “They saw God and did fall on their faces in fear.” But it says that they saw God and “did eat and drink.” “Because of the blood on the altar, they were able to have fellowship with God and with one another.” They were living in the presence of God and we should live in the presence of God each day. Living in the presence of God is living in fellowship with Him. Living in fellowship with Him is living up to the light we have received through divine revelation. Living in fellowship is walking in the light which exposes our sin. Fellowship with Him is maintained by confessing our sin, living a life of openness before Him. Confessing our sin means “acknowledging” it before Him. This needs to be done privately and daily. When we confess our sin we are cleansed from all sin on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7). The picture we have here is of men of God living in fellowship with Him. They are eating and drinking to the glory of God. The NT says “We should eat and drink to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31) and live each day in the presence of God...”ⁱⁱⁱ Daily confession of known sin is vital to spiritual advancement.

Finally, “It was common to symbolize the ratifying of a covenant with a meal (cf. Gen. 26:30; 31:54; Luke 22:15-20).”^{iv} When the new covenant was about to

be ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ it was done in the midst of the Passover meal.

THE ASCENT OF MOSES (24:12-18)

Exodus 24:12 The LORD said to Moses, ⁱ “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the ^jtablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.”

¹³ So Moses rose with his assistant ^kJoshua, and Moses went up ^linto the mountain of God.

¹⁴ And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and ^mHur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them.”

¹⁵ Then Moses went up on the mountain, and ⁿthe cloud covered the mountain.

¹⁶ ^oThe glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a ^pdevouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses ^qwas on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Wiersbe said the lesson in this section is that “It is possible to believe in God and be a part of His covenant and yet not be close to God. The nation was at the base of the mountain; the seventy elders with Aaron, Hur, Nadab, and Abihu were farther up the mountain; Moses went higher with his assistant Joshua; and then Moses left Joshua behind as he entered the cloud into the presence of the Lord. Under Law, God determined how near people could be to Him. But under grace, we are the ones who determine our nearness to God. God invites us to fellowship with Him. The elders worshiped God “afar off” (v. 1), but we today are invited to “draw near” (Heb. 10:22; James 4:8). What a privilege it is to fellowship with God, and what a tragedy it is that we too often fail to spend time in His presence.”^v We need to develop a dynamic relationship with God. Too often we perceive of our relationship with God as static. Too often we think of God as an abstract idea rather than a Person

with whom we can develop intimacy. To develop this intimacy we need to live openly before Him, confessing our sin daily, meditating on His word, praying to Him with thanksgiving, praise, and our requests. This is what it means to draw close to Him and walk with Him. Believers in this dispensation experience this intimacy in different degrees because they can choose to “draw near” or stay “afar off”.

On this day, Moses took **his assistant Joshua up the mountain**. This is the second time **Joshua** has been mentioned. He was first mentioned in Exod 17 when the Israelites had to face the Amalekites in the Battle of Rephidim. On this occasion he proved to be an obedient servant of Moses following his order to gather men and prepare them for battle. He was a man who was authority oriented and faithful in service. He evidently began his career as a military commander (17:9, 10), became Moses’ assistant (24:13), then Moses’ servant (33:11) and eventually succeeded Moses as the servant of YHWH (Josh 24:29) and leader of the Israelites. Joshua’s life shows the pattern of a believer who rises in favor with both God and men according to God’s timetable (cf Luke 2:52).

PRINCIPLE: Those like Joshua who serve faithfully with little are given greater responsibility. We are in training now for reigning later.

Standing in sharp contrast to Joshua are Nadab and Abihu who were close to God at once and became priests of God but then committed the sin unto death (Lev 10:1-5).

PRINCIPLE: “It is possible to come near to God and still go away and sin.”^{vi} While all believers should persevere some do not. A genuine believer can fall away. This does not mean the loss of salvation but falling away from the faith invites two judgments. First, judgment as a child of God in time by means of divine discipline. God only disciplines his sons and He disciplines because He loves us and wants us to return to Him and walk with Him in close intimate fellowship. Second, judgment as a servant of God in the future at the judgment seat of Christ which results in loss of reward (1 Cor 3:15). So, a genuine believer should persevere like Joshua but he may not like Nadab and Abihu. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. Others who failed to persevere are Lot, Saul, Hymenaeus and Alexander, et. al.. Even the apostle Paul was concerned that he may not finish his course (Acts 20:24) and that it was

possible to fall away from the faith (Mark 14:17; Luke 8:13; 1 Tim 4:1). To guard against this he disciplined his body so that ultimately he would not be disqualified (1 Cor 9:27). In the end Paul says he finish his course and kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7). As a result he said the crown of righteousness was reserved for him as a reward (2 Tim 4:8).

Verse 14, God wanted to give **the tablets of stone** to Moses. The **tablets** were the work of God, the words having been engraved by the finger of God (Exod 31:18) on the front and back of two small tablets (Exod 32:15-16) that could be carried in Moses' hand (Exod 34:29). Probably Moses received two copies of the Ten Commandments. Whenever an ancient near eastern treaty was entered into both the Suzerain and the Vassal would receive a copy of the terms so they could be accessed and faithfulness or unfaithfulness could be determined. In this case God is the Suzerain and Israel is His vassal. Thus, the first copy was God's copy and the second copy was Israel's copy. This is the only portion of Scripture which does not have dual authorship. All the other laws are built on these Ten Commandments, they are a summary of the whole law.

Apparently Joshua went up the mountain with Moses but not into the cloud that **covered the mountain**. While Moses was up on the Mountain he set the seventy **elders** and especially **Aaron and Hur** over the people, to govern in his absence. We already know who **Aaron** was. We know little about **Hur** but we know he was a prominent man in Israel from the tribe of Judah (Exod 31:2). Josephus said he was the husband of Miriam. He was introduced into the story at the Battle of Rephidim (Exod 17). Remember, in this battle Joshua was the commander but Moses was up on the hill with the staff of God in his hands. With him were Aaron and Hur. When Moses hands were up Israel prevailed but when he let his hands down Amalek prevailed. So, Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other until sunset and Israel prevailed. So, in Moses' absence **Aaron and Hur** are commissioned to deal with all disputes.

Verse 15, **Then Moses went up on the mountain, and ⁿthe cloud covered the mountain**. Of course, **the mountain** is the same mountain where Moses saw the burning bush, Mt Sinai, and this time He sees **the cloud**. Verse 16, **^oThe glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days**. The cloud is identified as the **glory of the**

Lord, that is, Shechinah Glory. The Shechinah Glory is a visible manifestation of God in the form of light or fire or cloud. Here it is a cloud and God often speaks out of a cloud (cf Matt 17:5). For **six days** Moses waited outside of the cloud on the slope of the mountain. He had learned to wait on the Lord. He was not about to rush into the cloud. He knew God would tell Him when to come. **And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.** Verse 17, **Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a ^pdevouring fire** just like in the burning bush except here the **fire** is consuming (Heb 12:18, 29 say that God is a consuming fire which refers to judgment of the believer for refusing to show gratitude to God and serve Him out of fear and reverence) **on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.** ¹⁸ **Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain.** During this time he was out of the sight of the people **And Moses ^qwas on the mountain forty days and forty nights.** Because of this forty day delay the people assumed Moses was no longer their leader and they turned to Aaron (Exod 32:1). During these 40 days and 40 nights **Moses** did not eat bread or drink water (Exod 34:28). This is the first record of a forty day fast. Moses, Elijah and Jesus each fasted forty days and forty nights and each of these three time periods are the major periods of miracles in the Bible. The number forty has tremendous significance in the biblical record. ^{vii}

^a Gen. 28:18; 31:45; [ch. 23:24]

^b Heb. 9:18, 19

^x [See ver. 3 above]

^c Cited Heb. 9:19, 20; [Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:2]

ⁱ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1993, S. Ex 24:1

ⁱⁱ Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 1:146

^d Num. 11:16

^e [ver. 1]

^f Gen. 32:30; Judg. 13:22; Isai. 6:1, 5; [ch. 33:20, 23; John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12, 20]

^g Ezek. 1:26; 10:1

^h [ch. 18:12; Gen. 31:54]

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1993, S. Ex 24:1

cf. *confer*, compare

^{iv} Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 1:146

ⁱ ver. 2, 15, 18

^j ch. 31:18; 32:15, 16; Deut. 5:22

^k ch. 33:11; [ch. 17:9, 10; 24:13]

^l See ch. 3:1

^m ch. 17:10, 12; 31:2

ⁿ ch. 19:9, 16; [Matt. 17:5]

^o ch. 16:10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10; 16:42

^p ch. 3:2; 19:18; Deut. 4:36; Heb. 12:18, 29

^q ch. 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 18, 25; 10:10

^vWiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1993, S. Ex 24:1

^{vi} Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1993, S. Ex 24:1

ⁿ ch. 19:9, 16; [Matt. 17:5]

^o ch. 16:10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10; 16:42

^p ch. 3:2; 19:18; Deut. 4:36; Heb. 12:18, 29

^q ch. 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 18, 25; 10:10

^{vii} It rained for forty days and forty nights (Gen 7:4ff), it took forty days to embalm Jacob (Gen 50:3), the 12 spies spied out the land for forty days (Numb 13:25), the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years (Numb 14:34), Moses spent another forty days and forty nights on Mt Sinai fasting (Dt 10:10), Goliath challenged Israel twice a day for forty days (1 Sam 17:16), David reigned over Israel for forty years (1 Kings 2:11), Elijah went without food and drink for forty days (1 Kings 19:8), Jonah warned Ninevah she had forty days left (Jonah 3:4), Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights (Matt 4:2), Jesus appeared in His resurrection body for forty days teaching about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

[Back To The Top](#)

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