

## Exodus Chapter 24

Verses 1-8

Moses confirmed the covenant, the “words” and “judgments” of the LORD (the “Book of the Covenant”), with the people.

This occasion was accompanied by magnificent pageantry and sacrificial worship, as well as Israel’s collective pledge of obedience (Heb. 9:19-20).

The 12 “pillars” represented the 12 “tribes”.

**Exodus 24:1 "And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off."**

We should have expected “And God said,” or “And Jehovah said.”

The omission of the nominative is probably to be accounted for by the insertion into Exodus at this point of “the Book of the Covenant,” which was originally a distinct document.

"Come up":

The ascent of Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders seems to have been commanded in order to give greater solemnity to the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel, which is the main subject of this section.

Moses received instructions on the subject before descending, and no doubt was divinely guided in the steps which he took previously to ascending with them.

"Nadab, and Abihu":

Aaron’s two elder sons (see Exodus 6:23).

"Seventy of the elders":

These are not the “judges” of Exodus 18:21-26, who were not yet appointed (see Note on Exodus 18:24-25), but rather the heads of tribes and families who had exercised authority over the Israelites in Egypt, and through whom Moses had always communicated with the people (see Exodus 3:16; 4:29; 12:21; 17:5-6).

We see that God has allowed actually seventy-two, counting Nadab and Abihu, to represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

Moses and Aaron were to stand above these seventy-two and only Moses would be allowed to go very close to the top of the mountain where God was.

This seventy and the two eldest sons of Aaron would be allowed to go up this mountain, but not to the top.

Seventy is 7 times 10.

The number ten has to do with world government and seven has to do with spiritual completeness.

I believe this number was chosen to show that they were like government heads to represent their group to God.

The two were allowed, because they were the next in line for priesthood through Aaron.

**Exodus 24:2 "And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him."**

Being therein a type of Christ, who, as the high-priest, entered alone into the most holy place.

In the following verse, we have the solemn covenant made between God and Israel, and the exchanging of the ratifications.

Typifying the covenant of grace between God and believers through Christ.

This was very similar to the priest and their high priest.

No one except the high priest would be allowed to go into the Holy of Holies.

The priest could go into the tabernacle, but not into the most holy place.

It was a very dangerous thing to get too close to the presence of God.

Moses (the most spiritual of this group) was the only one allowed this close to God.

**Exodus 24:3 "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do."**

Moses gave them an outline of the legislation which he subsequently committed to writing (Exodus 24:4), and formed into "the Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 24:7).

Its general meaning and main topic were communicated, but probably not all its details.

Otherwise it would scarcely have been necessary to read the contents of the book to them.

The people willingly gave their acceptance, feeling the laws to be "holy, just, and good," and not yet knowing how difficult they would find to render perfect obedience.

This was a detailed explanation of the commandments of the LORD.

Each was explained, so that all could understand.

These people would be without excuse if they did not follow God's directions that He had given them.

They all agreed to walk in the ways of God.

Notice they promised to do all of the things God commanded.

Remember also that they had heard the voice of God earlier as well.

**Exodus 24:4 "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel."**

“Twelve pillars”:

Unlike pagan stone markers (23:24), these were built to represent the 12 tribes and were placed alongside the altar Moses had erected in preparation for a covenant ratification ceremony.

They did not mark the worship site of a pagan deity.

These "twelve pillars" were symbolic of the covenant with the twelve tribes of Israel.

These twelve pillars represented the agreement with God and these twelve tribes.

This was similar to all covenants must be sealed with a sacrifice.

The "altar" was for the sacrifice.

**Exodus 24:5 "And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD."**

“Young men”:

Most probably a reference to firstborn children who officiated until the law appointed the Levites in their place.

**Exodus 24:6 "And Moses took half of the blood, and put [it] in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar."**

Of the beasts killed, which for the convenience of sprinkling; was mixed with a little water (Hebrews 9:19), whereby also Christ was most fitly represented, who came by water and blood (1 Job 5:6).

"Half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar":

To signify, as well that God was appeased and atoned by this blood, as it represented the blood of Christ, as also that Christ was sanctified with his own blood (Heb. 9:12).

This "sprinkling of the blood" was to seal the agreement between God and the people.

These young men were probably chosen for their strength in catching and killing the animals for sacrifice.

The "burnt offering" symbolized total commitment to God.

It was to be totally burned up.

The peace offering symbolized living in grace and peace.

**Exodus 24:7 "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient."**

"The book of the covenant":

Civil, social, and religious laws were received by Moses on Mt. Sinai, orally presented (verse 3), then written down (verse 4), and read to the people.

This book contained not only this detailed enlargement of the Decalogue (20:22 - 23:33), but also the Ten Commandments themselves (20:1-17), and the preliminary abbreviated presentation of the treaty (19:3-6; see notes on 19:3-8; 20:3-17).

This "book" was the book of the law that Moses had written.

He read this aloud to the people so they would completely understand.

They, of their own free will and accord, agreed to be obedient to God and His law.

They were without excuse, if they failed to do this.

**Exodus 24:8 "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled [it] on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."**

"The blood of the covenant":

Is the terminology from which the Old Testament (or covenant) gets its name.

Because Israel failed to keep this conditional covenant of works, God promised through Jeremiah the institution of an unconditional covenant of grace (Jer. 31:31-34), upon the atoning work of

Christ; and for this reason, the church also participates in it, through His blood (Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15-18; 12:24).

“Sprinkled it on the people”:

By this act, Moses, in response to the positive acceptance and assertion of obedience by the people after hearing the Book of the Covenant read to them, officially sealed the treaty with blood; a not uncommon custom (Gen. 15:9-13, 17).

Half of the blood used had been sprinkled on the altar as part of the consecration ceremony.

The representatives of Israel were thereby qualified to ascend the mountain and participate in the covenant meal with Yahweh (24:11; Heb. 9:20).

This "sprinkling of the blood" on the people was saying that God had accepted the covenant, and that these were His people.

Even now with Christians, the thing that saves us from Satan is the covering of the blood of Jesus.

The thing that defeated Satan was the shed blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Verses 9 and 11

“They saw the God of Israel”:

The representatives accompanying Moses up the mountain, as per God’s instructions, were privileged to have seen God without being consumed by His holiness.

Precisely what they saw must remain a moot point and must stay within the description given, which focuses only on what was under His feet.

This perhaps indicates that only a partial manifestation took place such as would occur before Moses (33:20), or that the elders, in the presence of divine majesty, beauty and strength (Psalm 96:6), did not dare raise their eyes above His footstool.

**Exodus 24:9 "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:"**

After the above things were done, the words of the LORD were told the people, and the book of the covenant read unto them, to which they agreed, sacrifices were offered, and the blood of them sprinkled on the altar, and on the people.

The Samaritan version adds to these, Eleazar and Ithamar, the two younger sons of Aaron.

"And seventy of the elders of Israel":

Who were called up to the mountain to the LORD (Exodus 24:1).

**Exodus 24:10 "And they saw the God of Israel: and [there was] under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in [his] clearness."**

"Paved work of a sapphire":

The description sounds like a comparison with lapis lazuli, an opaque blue precious stone much used in Mesopotamia and Egypt at that time.

The sacrificial meal followed the sacrifice of the animals to God.

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders chosen of God did as God said and went up the mountain of God for the sacrificial meal.

As they were eating this meal, God revealed Himself to them.

His face probably was not revealed, because you cannot look upon the face of God and live.

Exodus 33:20 "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live."

I really believe what these seventy-four people saw was a presence of God.

There perhaps was such brightness around Him, that they really did not see His face.

This clearness allowed them to see His heavenly source.

A sapphire is a blue stone.

It was as if He were standing in the heavenly.

At any rate, they were aware of His presence.

**Exodus 24:11 "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink."**

The word used is an unusual one, but seems to designate the "elders" (Exodus 24:1; 24:9).

It implies nobility of birth.

"He laid not his hand":

He in nowise hurt or injured them.

The belief was general that a man could not see God and live (Gen. 32:30; Exodus 32:20; Judges 6:22-23).

In one sense, it was true “No man hath seen the Father.”

But the Son could reveal Himself under the Old Dispensation, as under the New, and not even cause terror by His presence (see the last clause of the verse).

"Also they saw God":

Rather, they both saw God, and also did eat and drink.

It is intended to express in the clearest way that the two facts were concurrent.

As they feasted on the sacrificial meal, the vision of God was made manifest to them.

It is impossible to doubt that we have here a precious forecast of the Christian's highest privilege; the realization of the presence of God in the sacred feast of the Holy Communion.

As we said before, this feast was the end of the sacrifice and covenant.

This was just saying that God didn't kill the seventy-four who saw His presence.

#### Verses 12-15

God Himself had “written” the Ten Commandments on “tablets of stone” (31:18; Deut. 9:9).

“Joshua”, Moses' future successor, accompanied Moses up the mountain.

**Exodus 24:12 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them."**

“Tables of stone”:

For the first time, mention is made of what form the revelation of the law would take: tablets of stone.

They were also called the “tablets of the testimony” (31:18), and the “tablets of the covenant” (Deut. 9:9).

Moses undoubtedly had gone back down the mountain after the covenant feast with the seventy elders, Aaron and his two sons.

Now this was a different call for Moses to come up the mountain to meet with God privately.

God would give this written law to Moses and he was to come back and teach this law to the Children of Israel.

The Ten Commandments (Decalogue), was written in stone by God to show their permanence.

They were to endure from generation to generation, that these laws were not made by man, but by God.

**Exodus 24:13 "And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God."**

The close connection of Joshua with Moses is here, for the first time, indicated.

His employment as a general against Amalek (Exodus 17:9-13), might have simply marked his military capacity.

But from this point in the history it becomes apparent that he was Moses' most trusted friend and assistant in all matters where there was need of confidential relations between the leader and his subordinates.

And thus, that he was to be his successor (see Exodus 32:17; 33:11; Num. 13:8; 13:16; 27:18-23; Deut. 34:9), since no other person stood in any such close association.

This was the first mention of Joshua as minister.

This, undoubtedly meant that he was to help Moses.

Moses obeyed the voice of God and went up the mountain to meet with God.

**Exodus 24:14 "And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur [are] with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them."**

Moses understood that his stay in the mount was about to be a prolonged one (Exodus 24:12).

He therefore prudently determined to make arrangements for the government and direction of the people during his absence.

Aaron his brother, and Hur, the father of Bezaleel, perhaps his brother-in-law, seemed to him the fittest persons to exercise authority over the people during his absence.

And accordingly he named them as the persons to whom application was to be made under any circumstances of difficulty.



“Hur”:

See note on 17:10.

"If any man have any matters to do":

Any cases to be considered, any cause to be tried in difference between him and another man, and which cannot be determined by the inferior judges, is too difficult for them to take in hand.

"Let him come unto them":

Bring his case before them, and have their advice and opinion, and be determined by them.

Moses told the seventy elders, who represented the people, to wait for him right there.

Do not continue the journey until he returned.

Moses left Aaron and Hur as the final word on decisions until he returned.

**Exodus 24:15 "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount."**

To the top of it, and as it seems alone, leaving Joshua behind in a lower part of the mountain.

"And a cloud covered the mount":

In which cloud Jehovah was.

God had been with them leading them in this very cloud on their journey to the Promised Land.

God was in the thick cloud to keep them from seeing Him.

Verses 16-18

“The glory of the LORD” was first manifested in the form of a covering “cloud” and then a “consuming,” purifying “fire” that symbolized His holiness (Deut. 4:36).

Into that cloud went Moses for 40 days and nights, where he received the plans for the tabernacle and the priesthood.

That same divine glory would soon fill the tabernacle (40:34-38).

This was the first (ending in 32:6), of two (40 days and 40 nights each), trips to Sinai (34:2-28).

The awe-inspiring sight of God's glory cloud, the Shekinah, resting on the mountain and into which Moses disappeared for 40 days and nights, impressed everyone with the singular importance of this event in Israel's history.

During these days, Moses received all the instruction on the tabernacle and its furnishings and accoutrements (Chapters 25-31).

The settling of the Shekinah upon the tabernacle at its completion impressed the Israelites with the singular importance of this structure in Israel's worship of and relationship to Yahweh (40:34-38).

**Exodus 24:16 "And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud."**

I.e.: The tokens of his glorious presence in the fire (Exodus 24:17; Deut. 4:36).

"The cloud covered it":

From the eyes of the people.

"The seventh day":

So long God made Moses wait, either to exercise his humility, devotion, and dependence upon God; or to prepare him by degrees for so great a work; or because this was the Sabbath day, called therefore the seventh with an emphatical article.

And God might choose that day for the beginning of that glorious work, to put the greater honor upon it, and oblige the people to a stricter observance of it.

So it was upon a Lord's Day that John had his revelation delivered to him (Rev. 1:10).

A cloud covered the mount six days:

A token of God's special presence there.

Moses was sure that He who called him up would protect him.

Even those glorious attributes of God which are most terrible to the wicked, the saints with humble reverence rejoice in.

And through faith in the atoning Sacrifice, we hope for greater honor than Moses ever enjoyed on earth.

Now we see through a glass darkly, but when He shall appear, then face to face.

This vision of God will continue with equal, if not increasing brightness of joy, not for a few days only, but through eternity.

**Exodus 24:17 "And the sight of the glory of the LORD [was] like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel."**

For when God spoke out of the cloud, the glory of the LORD flashed out like devouring fire; it was not devouring fire, but it was like it.

It was like a great blaze of fire, which consumes all that is in its way; it was such a large body of light, and so clear and bright, that it looked like devouring flames of fire.

And being upon the top of the mount was very visible and seen at a great distance in the eyes of the children of Israel throughout their camp.

This was saying that all the people saw was a big fire and smoke on the mountain top.

As we have said before, God's appearance many times is associated with fire, "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

**Exodus 24:18 "And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."**

It was an extraordinary presence of mind which the grace of God furnished him with, else he durst not have ventured into the cloud, especially when it broke out in devouring fire.

And Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

It should seem the six days were not part of the forty; for during those six days Joshua was with Moses, who did eat of the manna, and drink of the brook mentioned (Deut. 9:21).

And while they were together, it is probable Moses did eat and drink with him; but when Moses was called into the midst of the cloud, he left Joshua without, who continued to eat and drink daily while he waited for Moses' return, but from here forward Moses fasted.

"Forty" means time of testing.

Truly this was a time of testing for the children of Israel and we will discover later on that they failed the test.

My own personal opinion about this time that Moses spent in such close relation with God, was for God to fill Moses with the information to write the first five books of the Bible and to give him all the commandments and ordinances.

God probably explained their usage in great detail to Moses and He also gave Moses the exact plans for the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

## **Exodus Chapter 24 Questions**

1. Who was Moses to bring with him on the mountain to worship afar off?
2. Why does the author believe seventy elders were chosen?
3. Why were Nadab and Abihu allowed to go?
4. Who alone was to come near the LORD?
5. After God spoke with Moses, what did Moses tell the people?
6. What did the people answer?
7. What did Moses write?
8. Why did he build twelve pillars?
9. Who offered the burnt offerings?
10. What was the name of the other offering?
11. What did Moses do with half the blood?
12. What did the sprinkling of the blood indicate?
13. What did the burnt offering symbolize?
14. What did the peace offering symbolize?
15. Why did Moses read the book to the people?
16. What did Moses sprinkle on the people?
17. What did this symbolize?
18. What did verse 10 mean by "they saw the God of Israel"?
19. What makes the author believe they did not see His face?
20. What color is a sapphire?
21. Why did they eat and drink?
22. What did the Scripture "...and be there..." mean to Moses?
23. What would God give Moses on the mountain top?
24. Who was Moses' minister?

25. What instructions did Moses give the seventy elders?
26. Who was in charge while Moses was gone?
27. What covered the mount?
28. How many days did Moses wait on the mount until God called him into the cloud?
29. In the eyes of the children of Israel, what did the glory of God look like?
30. How many days was Moses in the mount?
31. Why does the author believe Moses talked to God for this long?