

Dinner with God

11.14.2021

Message 33

Exodus Series

Exodus 24:1–18 (CSB)

THE COVENANT CEREMONY

24 Then he said to Moses, “Go up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of Israel’s elders, and bow in worship at a distance. ²Moses alone is to approach the LORD, but the others are not to approach, and the people are not to go up with him.”

³Moses came and told the people all the commands of the LORD and all the ordinances. Then all the people responded with a single voice, “We will do everything that the LORD has commanded.” ⁴And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early the next morning and set up an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel at the base of the mountain. ⁵Then he sent out young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. ⁶Moses took half the blood and set it in basins; the other half of the blood he splattered on the altar. ⁷He then took the covenant scroll and read it aloud to the people. They responded, “We will do and obey all that the LORD has commanded.”

⁸Moses took the blood, splattered it on the people, and said, **“This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you concerning all these words.”**

⁹Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of Israel’s elders, ¹⁰and they saw the God of Israel. Beneath his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. ¹¹God did not harm the Israelite nobles; they saw him, and they ate and drank.

¹²The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay there so that I may give you the stone tablets with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction.”

¹³ So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua and went up the mountain of God. ¹⁴ He told the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. Aaron and Hur are here with you. Whoever has a dispute should go to them." ¹⁵ When Moses went up the mountain, the cloud covered it. ¹⁶ The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day he called to Moses from the cloud. ¹⁷ The appearance of the LORD's glory to the Israelites was like a consuming fire on the mountaintop. ¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud as he went up the mountain, and he remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

1. We are witness to one of the first worship services recorded in Scripture.

A. The Law and Commandments have been given.

1. God has spoken.
2. **When God speaks, worship is the appropriate response.**

B. *"So Exodus 24 is the story of a worship service, the first one fully described in the Bible.*

It contains nearly all the basic elements of a public service, and thus it sets the pattern for Biblical worship. There was a call to worship, the reading of God's Word, a confession of faith, and the sharing of a sacramental meal. This was all done under the oversight of Israel's elders and by the servant appointed to lead public worship. And it was all done in the presence of a holy and glorious God. This is what worship is: meeting with God."¹

C. One major difference between this worship service and what you and I experience is the distance.

1. If you have ever been in a large mega-church or even a large concert, there is a great distance between you and the main stage or platform.

¹ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 778-779.

- a. But imagine being the 1 millionth person in line and unable to even hear Moses or see the blood.
- b. Not only was the distance physical, there was also an impenetrable barrier between them and God.
- c. Moses was the intermediary who served between God and the people.

2. You and I do not have to worship at a distance.

- a. The Holy Spirit lives within every believer.
- b. God is as close to us as we want Him to be.
- c. When we draw near to God, He draws near to us.
 1. I heard the story of a couple who had been married many years.
 2. The man owned an old pickup truck that he dearly loved.
 3. And that pickup had a bench seat.
 4. Early on when they were dating and newly-married, they would sit close to each other while they road together in that truck.
 5. After many years of marriage, the wife mentioned to her husband "We don't sit as close as we use to."
 6. His response: "I'm not the one who moved."
 7. God has not drifted or moved away, so when we feel or notice distance, we are the ones who have sought out our own space.

2. This grand worship service included lots of blood.

A. There is no sacrifice without the shedding of blood.

1. The blood of sacrifices serve as a sign of dedication and ordination.

2. The people, the altar that was built, and the words of the covenant are all dedication, ordained, and set-apart for God.

B. I tend to think of the blood of sacrifices in terms of death.

1. When I see lots of blood, my mind goes to thinking something is dead or dying.

2. But "Israel connected the meaning and significance of blood to life, not death."²

3. Scripture says that "life is in the blood."

a. Often, sacrifices and services like this would be joyous times.

b. It was a time of worship and celebration.

c. Random question: Is it possible to "mournfully worship"?

Is it possible to "Regretfully praise"
God?

4. The blood of sacrifices facilitated celebration with reflection.

a. Because the animal died, the people didn't have to.

b. When Adam and Eve sinned, and God took the first lives to make coverings for them, the death of the innocent animal took the place of the guilty people.

c. The death of a victim, in order for Israel to rejoice, nevertheless casts a shadow over even this ceremony at its time of greatest anticipation and promise, just as Yahweh's slaying of animals to cover the shame of the human race did in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:21).³

² Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 2, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 146.

³ Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 2, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 146.

C. These, and all the other sacrifices, point us to the greatest sacrifice: Jesus.

1. The innocent Jesus died so the guilty me could live.
2. The blood of Jesus was spilt so that my blood could be saved.
3. Jesus laid down His life, so I could find mine.
4. Jesus descended to Earth, so that those who believe could ascend with Him.
5. Hence, when we think about the death of Jesus, we rejoice while understanding the price that was paid for our rejoicing.

3. God then invites a select group to come up the Mountain.

A. They've already had some amazing experiences with God.

1. Pillars of Cloud and Fire.
2. They have heard the voice of God in thunder.
3. They have eaten bread from heaven and drank water in desert places.
4. But, there is always more to God than what you have experienced so far.
 - a. The old song "He gets sweeter and sweeter as the days go by, owe what a love between my Lord and I, I keep falling in love with Him..."
 - b. What awaits these men up the Mountain was an encounter like never before.

B. On that Mountain, God had prepared a meal for them.

1. I don't see anywhere here that the men brought food with them.
2. Instead, this passage reads that while the people prepared sacrifices down the Mountain, God prepared a meal for them up the mountain.

C. This meal almost beyond comprehension.

1. Here, you have God inviting these men to eat and drink.
2. To share a meal was to share life with someone.
 - a. It was a symbol of friendship.
 - b. This meal celebrated the "cutting" of this New Covenant.
 - c. "To eat with another person in the Mideast is a sacramental act signifying acceptance on a very deep level."⁴
3. There, God pulls back the curtain of heaven just enough that these men see or catch a glimpse of God.
 - a. The Hebrew is simple: they saw Him with their own eyes.
 - b. They are close enough to the Sovereign that they can see the pavement like foundation that was under God's feet.
 - c. It is clear that God does not reveal Himself completely here.
 1. Moses cries out a little later to see God's Glory.
 2. But the glimpse God permits is enough to invoke holy wonder and excitement.

D. Lapis Lazuli:

1. This prized material has been used to adorn great works of art from pharaohs' coffins to the [Sistine Chapel](#), and it's also touted for its connection to "[cosmic wisdom](#)" and use in [feng shui](#). In fact, it was once more precious than gold. We're talking, of course, about brilliant blue lapis lazuli, which can be found on [King Tut](#)'s coffin and other funeral items. In crushed form, it

⁴ Kenneth E. Bailey, [The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants](#), Second Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005), 29.

became the bluest blue in an artist's palette — ultramarine — so expensive that [Michelangelo couldn't afford it.](#)ⁱ

2. The Egyptians brought it over from Afghanistan, and thus the Israelites would have been acquainted with this material.

3. I've included two examples of this.

a. The dark blue is really pure and polished.

b. The one with white shows Lapis in it's rough state.

c. The more white and flecks present, the less pure it is.

4. God is depicted as setting His feet on Lapis that is so pure it is translucent.

a. **If the God we worship is so mighty that He sets his feet upon the purest of gems, why do we fret and worry?**

b. Too often, we point the magnifying glass of our perspective on our problems instead of God.

c. All we see is the problem before us, and not the majesty of the God we serve.

5. When these men sat-down with God, they were in the presence of the One who holds all the Universe in His hands.

a. They were not at the table of a beggar, but at the Table of a King.

b. They did not eat leftovers, but a meal catered for the situation.

c. When you and I bow our heads to pray, we are not petitioning some mere mortal, hoping he gives us a crumb.

d. When we pray, we have an audience with the One who made all things, knows all things, and holds all things in His grasp.

e. May we not be guilty of too low a view of God Almighty.

4. Notice who God invited to this special encounter.

A. There is a very specific guest list for this meal.

1. Moses, the current leader
2. Joshua, the future leader.
3. Aaron and his sons who would be priests.
4. 70 elders
 - a. They could be the men (or some of them) who were filled with the Holy Spirit in Numbers 11 to provide Moses with qualified help and leadership.
 - b. These men represented the leading families of Israel.
5. God invited enough people to the meal that they would be able to provide a faithful witness to the remaining people.
6. Just as God sent His Spirit upon the 120 on the day of Pentecost, with the expectation that more would follow, God met with these men so that they would point their own people to the reality and majesty of God.

B. Consider the invitation of Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu.

1. Aaron had a terrible rebellious streak in him.
 - a. He was a major participant in the Golden Calf incident.
 - b. He and his sister Miriam rebel against Moses in the Book of Numbers.
 - c. Aaron wasn't exactly the best priest material.
2. Nadab and Abihu were the adult sons of Aaron.
 - a. They were priests not because of their piety but because of who their father was.
 - b. Because Aaron had moments of great faith, God chose Aaron to be a priest and that responsibility was passed through the sons.

c. But, in Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu seem to have got drunk.

1. As the saying goes, "Play stupid games, win stupid prizes."

2. They then decide to offer their own "fire" to God, and God killed them on the spot.

d. **"Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu might have been the right people to invite to a party, but they would be the last people we would invite to a meeting with God."**

3. BUT GOD...doesn't always invite the people we expect.

C. God, repeatedly, demonstrates that He invites people to the Table that we would write off.

D. **This parallel is demonstrated remarkably well when we compare this Covenant meal with another meal, found in the New Testament.**

5. The Covenant Meal of Exodus 24 points us forward to the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 26:26–28 (CSB)

²⁶As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take and eat it; this is my body." ²⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you." ²⁸For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 9:19–22 (CSB)

¹⁹For when every command had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, **This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you.** ²¹In the same way, he sprinkled the tabernacle and all the articles of worship with blood. ²²According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

A. Look at these parallels:

1. Aaron would sin big in allowing the Golden Calf. Yet, he was restored back to God after showing repentance.
2. The Apostle Peter had a big fall in denying Christ 3x. Yet, he was restored back to Jesus after showing repentance.
3. Nadab and Abihu offered "strange-fire" or unauthorized sacrifices to God. They were sinful, prideful, and drunk and they died for their sins.
4. Judas Iscariot sold Jesus for the price of a slave and never recovered from the guilt, killing himself in his pain and misery.
5. What did all of these men have in common? They all shared a meal in the presence of God inaugurating a Grand and Great Covenant.

B. When we come to the Lord's table, Communion or Lord's Supper, we come not on the basis of our goodness but God's.

1. It is not our blood that makes this possible, but Christ's.
2. God invites us all, knowing our sins, knowing our failures, knowing our past and even our future.
3. God calls forth to imperfect men and women, to fellowship with the perfect God.
 - a. Moses struggled with anger and killed a man, yet received an invitation.
 - b. Aaron was prone to rebellious, yet God saved him a seat.
 - c. Nadab and Abihu would sin dramatically in the near future, yet they too saw the pavement under God's feet.
 - d. Peter would deny Christ 3x, and yet would be used to see thousands of people saved on the day of Pentecost.

e. Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave, yet he dipped his bread with Jesus.

C. Today, this room is filled with people that Jesus loves.

1. He loved you when you were an addict.
2. He loved you when you were sleeping around.
3. He loved you when you were full of hate.
4. He loved you when you simply weren't "a nice" person.
5. That love for you has not changed.

Application: Where do we go from here?

A. It begins with all of us developing a bigger picture of God.

1. We too often project our inadequacies upon God.
 - a. Because I can't forgive, God can't either.
 - b. Because I'm tired, God must be tired too.
 - c. Because I'm broken, God must be broken too.
2. God didn't change when Aaron gave into the Golden Calf temptation.
 - a. God didn't change when Judas betrayed him.
 - b. God didn't change because you are struggling, hurting, or living in sin.
 - c. If you will listen, you can still hear the voice of the Spirit of God calling you up on that mountain.
 - d. **The voice of love, forgiveness, and mercy is still calling out to the people He has invited to His table.**

B. There will come a day, when we join together in one more Covenantal meal. Revelation 19:6-8 (CSB)

⁶Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying,

Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, reigns!

⁷Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself.

⁸She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure.

For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.

1. Settle this in your heart: God is still God.
2. You are still loved.
3. Forgiveness for sins is still yours too have.
4. God will still accept your repentance.
5. A new life awaits.

ⁱ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/earth/geology/lapis-lazuli.htm>