

The Book of Exodus

Lesson 16

Chapters 24

The ordinance delivered to Moses which we have studied began in chapter 21 and concluded in 23. It was now time for worship.

Worship at a Distance

Exodus 24:1 Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. ² "Moses alone, however, shall come near to the LORD, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him."

The LORD instructed Moses to return to the camp and collect Aaron with his two eldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, and the 70 elders. This time, the 73 men, excluding Moses, were allowed to cross by the boundary line set on the mountain and climb for some distance but not into the cloud as Moses was allowed to do. The people below could see them as they began a time of worship. Still, no restrictions were placed on Moses for his coming and going on the mountain.

Moses' Message from the LORD

Exodus 24:3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the Ordinance; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" ^{4a} And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD.

After the time of worship on the side of the mountain, Moses reported all that the LORD had instructed him concerning the Ordinance covered in chapters 21 – 23 of this book. It was there that the 73 heard the judgments of the LORD for the first time. None of them should have been a surprise because the Ordinance made common sense especially to a people who had been miraculously led out of Egypt, through the sea, past the rock and to the foot of the mountain of God. Correctly, the people accepted the Ordinance and pledged to follow the will of the LORD. Following the announcement, Moses took the time to record the Ordinance on a scroll as a reminder to the people for generations to come. Moses will call it the book of the Covenant.

Worship at the Altar

Exodus 24:4b Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ And he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put *it* in basins, and the *other* half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" ⁸ So Moses took

the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

The morning after Moses completed the book of the Covenant, which contained the contents of the Ten Commandments (Moses had not received the stone tablets at this time) and the Ordinance, he built for a time of worship an altar with twelve stone stumps to represent the twelve tribes. The burnt offering was completed and so was the peace offering.

Here we have a quandary! Although we have heard of burnt offerings thus far in the Scripture, no instruction has been given as to the regulations for the ceremony. Furthermore, here we see for the first time the mention of a peace offering. The process Moses used in the peace offering was correct and followed the instruction that would be given later in the book of Leviticus. The information found in the Levitical account would not be given to Moses until after the Tabernacle, also called the Tent of Meeting, was built (Lev 1:1ff). Therefore, we must conclude that this record in the book of Exodus was written after, possibly several years, this actual event. As we have already seen in Exodus (Exo 16:35), some of the events in this book were summarized in light of the 40-year history in the wilderness rather than restricted to the six months represented in the story thus far. With that in mind, when Moses recounted in this book the first altar he had made to worship the LORD following the giving of the Covenant, he included the details that coincided with the proper way to make an offering and sacrifice. We admit that the LORD may have given Moses instructions for the proper manner for worshiping Him prior to this point in the story; however, after the Tabernacle was completed, the LORD would direct Moses specifically in the process by setting in place for Israel the proper procedures so the people would know His will and could comply.

Once the sacrifice was made and the blood was sprinkled on the new stone altar he had built, Moses sprinkled the blood on the people and said, "**Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.**" The Hebrew word *hinneh* is translated "Behold" here but in other places it is rendered *after all, go, here, how, if, if he sees, if he has indeed, lo, look, now, see, surely, there and unless*. As can be seen, none of these words help us understand the word *hinneh* and what its 938 uses in the Scripture mean. We would like to say it means *cast your eyes on the* "blood of the covenant," but that does not do justice to the meaning of the text. In its ambiguity in the Scripture, *hinneh* seems to imply something greater than ever imagined. Illustrations of its use are *Behold the Lamb of God, Behold the Angel of the LORD, Behold the Word of the LORD, Behold the LORD has prevented, Behold you are with child, and Behold I will bless him*, all of which appear in the first 16 chapters of Genesis alone. Behold! What does it really mean? Perhaps the best definition for this word is to *take notice with your heart, soul and mind because this is extremely important!* Behold!

And so it is with the important *berith* or covenant with the LORD. In making the sacrifice and offering, in sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the people, Israel was accepting the covenant agreement with the LORD. All of the Ordinance they intended to keep!

Beheld the God of Israel

Exodus 24:9 **Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. ¹¹ Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they beheld God, and they ate and drank.**

The Covenant had been accepted by the people; the worship had been completed and the LORD had allowed an extraordinary event to take place; the LORD allowed Moses to bring Aaron, his two oldest sons and the 70 elders of Israel up on the mountain, past the boundary line, past the edge of the cloud and into the presence of the LORD where Moses had been several times by this point in the story to catch a glimpse of the LORD, the God of Israel. This is not God the Father; this is not God the Spirit; this is God, the pre-incarnate Son, the LORD Creator of all that exist.

It is ever so interesting that Moses does not describe His hair, face, body, throne, crown, scepter, or attending angels; Moses mentions only the floor under the LORD's feet and the fact that the LORD did not stretch out His hand to punish all those in attendance with Moses. Here for the first time we see a glimpse of the throne room of the LORD consistent with every reference to it in the rest of the Scripture; the floor appeared to **"be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself."** To sum it up, John saw the same floor and recorded it in the Revelation.

In that visit, the leaders of Israel not only **"beheld God"** but also dined with Him. The Hebrew word for **"Beheld"** is different from the previous word for **"Behold."** It is the word *chazah* and it means to *see, gloat, look and gaze*. Regardless of its placement in the Scripture, it always means to *look at something*. In this case, the nobles of Israel who were in attendance with Moses before the LORD saw or looked upon the LORD God of Israel, the pre-incarnate Christ, their Creator, Sustainer, Savior and God. These human leaders of Israel were without excuse for they had seen the exact representation of God in the LORD. Although they had not seen God the Father and could not have seen God the Spirit, there was no prohibition against seeing God the LORD Who is the Second Person of the Trinity. Adam had seen Him and so had Abraham and Sarah. Moses had seen Him and now this group had. Others will see Him too until one day when He takes on flesh and enters this world as the Child, born in a manger, minister of the multitudes, crucified on the cross, resurrected from the grave, and ascended on high to return to the throne which has a floor of **"sapphire, as clear as the sky itself"** from which He reigned during this story in the exodus and He continues to reign from today.

The Stone Tablets

Exodus 24:12 **Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction."**

After the nobles of Israel worshipped and dined with Moses in the presence of the LORD, Moses must have returned to the camp with the guests. Then the LORD invited him back to the mountain to retrieve the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments carved by the LORD. The Scripture says, **"Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there..."** The use of the

word “**remain**” may not be the best choice in this context. The Hebrew is *hayah* and it means *to fall out, come to pass, become or be*. It is translated into no fewer than 60 different English words in the Old Testament with no easily determinable general theme in common among them. With a closer look, we see it most often translated as *live, surely become, take a place or wait*. Our translators through the six centuries of translating works into the English language must have had a difficult time with this word. The word does seem to indicate that the LORD wanted Moses to “remain” on the mountain even to the point of preparing to live there for an extended time. It is the plan of the LORD to take Moses away from the people long enough for them to become anxious and falter in their ways.

Moses and Joshua on the Mountain

Exodus 24:13 So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. ¹⁴ But to the elders he said, " Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them." ¹⁵ Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.

We cannot help but notice the order of succession in this part of the passage. Joshua was to follow Moses up the mountain, how far, we do not know. The elders were to remain in the camp and the legal disputes were to be handled by Aaron and Hur. Joshua was out of the line of fire so he could not participate in any sin that might occur in the camp during Moses’ absence; Aaron and Hur were in charge; the elders should have been able to keep the eyes of the people on the LORD because they were allowed to see Him in His glory. But would they?

With Moses returning to the mountain for an extended stay, the LORD allowed the cloud to engulf that peak to a greater extent. He would be living on the mountain for an extended period.

The Glory of the LORD on the Mountain

Exodus 24:16 And the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. ¹⁸ And Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

“**And the glory of the LORD,**” is the *kabod* of *Yehovah*. *Kabod* means the *abundance or honor, heavy in weight*. This definition does not help us to understanding of what Moses meant when he said, “**the glory of the LORD.**” In Exodus 16:10 the phrase was used to express something that appeared in the cloud that was leading the Israelites on their trail out of Egypt. In Numbers 14:10 it will appear inside the main room of the Tabernacle. Much more can be said about its use in the Scripture but the idea refers to the *majestic shining radiance* that accompanies the presence of the LORD. Moses says, “**And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top.**” For

example, when traveling down a state highway on a cloudy night we will see many streetlights of an upcoming town radiating off the clouds allowing us to see the reflection of the city lights from many miles away. In the case of Moses' statement in the context of knowledge of that day, it looked like there must have been a great fire on the mountain because of the incredible glow radiating from the cloud surrounding the mountain. Later in the Scripture, the word *glory* is going to be paired with the word *shekinah*. *Shekinah* means *that which dwells*. Together, they will present a picture of the presence of the LORD dwelling in the cloud like the cloud suspended between the two cherubs on the top of the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant that will soon be built at the foot of Mount Sinai according to the instructions and plans of the LORD (Exo 25:10ff).

Moses was in the cloud for 40 days, including 40 nights. Day always follows the night; in this passage Moses speaks of the complete day and specifies that the night was considered part of the complete day. This *day and night* statement is placed here to avoid the possible interpretation that Moses came and went from the mountain during the daylight hours; he was on the mountain 40 twenty-four-hour days which included darkness and light. Furthermore, he was there for six days without hearing a word from the LORD – until the seventh!