

Exodus Sermon Series

# The Covenant Confirmed

## Exodus 24:1-18

God redeemed His people from bondage, brought them out of Egypt, gave them His holy law, and now He confirms His gracious covenant. “Covenant” sounds official and foreign to us, but it’s a constant theme in Scripture describing to our relationship with God. He calls us, sets the terms, assures our hearts, and then invites us to fellowship with Him on the mountain.

### The Call of the Covenant

God calls Moses, Aaron the high priest and his sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel to worship Him from afar (v1). Only Moses can come near at the top (v2). Israel is being reformed and reconstituted by God, brought into closer relationship—a new covenant. There are new distinctions, new boundaries, and new roles, and for now people are fine with it (cf. Num. 16). People who don’t understand the Old Testament think of it as a time when God doesn’t want to be near His people much less the rest of the nations. But Yahweh tells Abram from the beginning He will bless all the families of the earth through him (Gen. 12:3). Calling Abram was God’s response to the Tower of Babel, where the *seventy* nations of the earth try to make a name for themselves (Gen. 10-11). The Lord confuses their language, scatters them, and calls Abram to begin His campaign to make his name great instead (Gen. 12:2). God doesn’t give up on the nations or break His word to Abraham, but now calls a priestly nation represented by seventy elders to lead all the kingdoms of the world to know and love Him (cf. Ps. 22:27ff.). The covenant is evangelistic. When God’s people renew covenant with Him faithfully, He blesses their heavenly worship and answers their prayer that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

### The Book of the Covenant

God sets the terms of the covenant, so Moses goes and tells the people the words (Ten Commandments) and the statutes (Ex. 21-23). They agree to do everything that God says (v3). This is good news—to walk in God’s just and merciful ways by grace, and seek Him for forgiveness when failing. Don’t confuse the works-righteousness perversion of the law that we see confronted in the New Testament with what God is giving His people here (cf. Gal. 2:16; 3:11; Rom. 3:20). The Book of the Covenant begins with “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2-3). Trying to earn your salvation by keeping the law is disobedience *to the law*. You follow Christ because you are His child; you don’t become His child by following Him. “All the words which the Lord has said we will do” (v3) is an obedient answer, the kind Jesus bestows; “Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name” (Rom. 1:5). Having already spoken the words, Moses now writes them down so they can read and remember (v4). He gets up early the next day, builds an altar and twelve pillars representing the twelve tribes, has young men offer ascension and peace offerings, sprinkles the altar, and then reads the

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Book of the Covenant to them again (vv4-7)! Keeping covenant is a matter trusting and doing, and how can you trust if you forget? We understand this between ourselves. How can a husband love his wife if he doesn't listen? How will you remember to do something if you don't write it down? How can you show up to church prepared without giving it any forethought? From Genesis up to this point would be their Bible, full of gospel, history, poetry, faith, conflict, deliverance, and promises. We have the full Book of the Covenant with 64 ½ more books, and must hunger to know and follow the Lord every day.

### **The Blood of the Covenant**

Moses takes half the blood from the ascension and peace offerings, puts it in basins, and uses the other half to sprinkle the altar, which is at the foot of the mountain (v6). Israel then hears the word of the Lord, promises to do it, and he sprinkles them, probably not directly but as represented by the twelve pillars (v8). Because God has drawn near, everything is increasing in holiness. The people come to the foot of the mountain and the altar, and are consecrated by sprinkling to be there (cf. 29:21). The bottom of the mountain with the altar is like the kitchen where the sacrificial food is prepared. Moses, Aaron and his sons, and the seventy elders go partway up the mountain where they see God and beneath Him a pavement like sapphire that's clear as heaven, and eat and drink (vv9-11). This is like the dining room, just outside the throne room at the top of the mountain where only Moses and Joshua his assistance are invited (v12). God wants to dwell with His people and not destroy them, so He lays out these boundaries. The tabernacle is a portable Sinai with a courtyard (kitchen) where Israelites can approach, a holy place (dining room) with a blue curtain where priests go, and a most holy place (throne room) where once a year on the Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the high priest goes in. The thing that makes all this access to holy Yahweh possible is the blood of the covenant (v8): "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Blood shows the covenant is a matter of life and death—keeping it brings the blessing of life and breaking it brings the curse of death (cf. Zech. 9:11; Ezek. 44:7). Jesus quotes this verse as He goes to offer His blood in place of ours: "Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Lk. 22:20). The blood of bulls and goats gets you near God at Sinai or in the tabernacle, but only the blood of a faithful and true man into heaven itself: "For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24). Jesus' blood atoned and brought us to God, making us worthy to worship, adore, and be with Him. Like Moses, we have entered into the cloud and come away radiant with His love and holiness.