**The Gospel According to Moses**

**Solemn and Spectacular**

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We are working our way through the Old Testament book of Exodus, in our sermon series, The Gospel According to Moses. We are in Exodus 24:1-11, where the covenant with Israel is being confirmed, the terms of the covenant agreed to by both parties. The mood is both solemn and spectacular. Funerals have a mood to them too. Most often they are solemn events. I remember my Aunt Ruth’s funeral. I was sitting with two of my sisters and one of us, I don’t remember who, cracked a joke and the three of us tried desperately to control our laughing because it was out of place. The Taylors often use humor to deal with tension. Scripture texts have a mood or tone, a feel to them. Texts have meaning and texts have tone to them. It is important for you to see the mood/tone of Exodus twenty-four because it is one of the most important texts in the Old Testament. Exodus twenty-four is a Solemn and Spectacular moment. My big idea is this, the covenant confirmation ceremony is a solemn and spectacular moment in which God makes Israel his people.

Exodus chapter twenty-four brings to a completion the covenant promised in Exodus chapter six. God has delivered Israel and brought them safely to the foot of Mount Sinai. The terms of the covenant are summarized in Exodus 19:4-6. Moses has gone up the mountain to receive the law and is now back down with the people. God calls Moses, Aaron and his two sons[[1]](#footnote-1) and seventy elders to come up to meet with him (24:1-2). But first, Moses leads Israel in a covenant ceremony (24:3-8) and then Moses and the elders go up the mountain (24:9-11). Finally, Moses goes up further to come near to the Lord (24:12-18), which we will look at next week. There are three movements in Exodus 24:1-11: the book of the covenant, the blood of the covenant, and the bread of the covenant. Listen as God’s word is read to us.

The covenant ceremony begins with the **Book of the Covenant**. Moses recites all the words of the Lord and the rules, the ten commandments and the cases laws (Ex 20-23). Their response was enthusiastic, without hesitation and with one voice all Israel declared their intent, all the words that the Lord has spoken we will do (3)! Then Moses writes down all the words the Lord told him. God binds himself to his people by the book of the covenant and secondly, God binds himself to his people by the **Blood of the Covenant**.

How can a sinful people approach a Holy God? The bible is written to answer that question. This is not only Israel’s dilemma, it’s also our dilemma. In a recent survey, two-thirds of *evangelicals* believe that we are born in a state of innocence, not sin. I received a random email yesterday, a bible study promoting this, we are not born sinners! Let me be clear, the bible teaches that humanity is born sinful. GK Chesterton said that original sin is the only doctrine that’s been empirically validated by 2,000 years of human history. Let’s look at the blood of the covenant.

Moses rose early the next morning, built an altar, and erected twelve pillars (4). The altar is the place where sacrifices are offered to atone for sin. The twelve pillars represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses sent young men to offer sacrifices to the Lord (5). Next Moses poured half the blood from these sacrifices in basins and threw the other half on the altar (6). Throwing the blood on the altar signifies God’s participation in the covenant confirmation, God accepting the offering for sin. Then Moses read the book of the covenant to the people and for a second time, and all Israel agreed to be obedient to all that God has said (7). The first time expressed their intent to obey, and this time is their agreement in the covenant confirmation. Then Moses throws blood on the seventy-four, who represent all of Israel, proclaiming, see the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words (8). Sinful Israel can approach a holy God because their sins are forgiven. The blood applied sanctifies Israel, sets them apart as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:4-6). This is a solemn moment. No one is distracted, no one is chattering or texting anyone. He is their God and they are his people. The covenant ceremony started with the book of the covenant, moved to the blood of the covenant, and finishes with the **Bread of the Covenant**.

In these final verses (24:9-11) the tone changes, from solemn to spectacular. The seventy-four move up the mountain to celebrate the covenant meal with God himself. They saw the God of Israel, but they did not really see him (10). They only see his feet[[2]](#footnote-2) because they are either prostrate or they are seeing his feet from underneath, through the sapphire pavement. Sapphire is a beautiful blue opaque stone. It is as clear as the clear blue sky. The floor of his throne is the sky, the only appropriate place for the one who rules overall. God did not lay his hand on them because their sin has been atoned for by the blood of the covenant. They behold God and eat and drink (11). Wow. The text ends with the purpose of the covenant, God dwelling with his people, fellowship with God, friendship with the God of heaven and earth. What a stark contrast to Sinai. At Sinai, they behold God and tremble with fear; here they behold God and eat and drink! The difference is that the covenant has been confirmed. God binds himself to sinful Israel by the book of the covenant, the blood of the covenant and the bread of the covenant. This was a solemn and spectacular moment in the life of Israel. As amazing as this moment was, what we have is far better.

We have a better book. We have all the promises of both the Old and New Testament to hope in, for all of God’s promises find their yes and amen in Christ. God’s saves us by his word and he shapes us by his word. God’s word is your life, food for the soul, grace to sustain your faith and a sword by which you fight sin.

We have a better mediator. Hebrews tells us Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises (8:6). Jesus has secured for us an everlasting covenant, with better promises, with a better hope.

We have a better sacrifice. Hebrews says that even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood and sprinkled the book and all the people, saying, this is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you. . . without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. . . he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by his own sacrifice (9:18-20, 22, 26). Moses could only say this is the blood of the covenant the Lord has made with you, but Jesus Christ says this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. And Christs’ one sacrifice is sufficient to atone for all your sin, sanctify us and cleanses our conscious of guilt.

We have a better meal. Every Sunday we celebrate the Lord’s supper to remind us of Jesus Christ, the mediator of a better covenant secured with his death (Mat 26:27-29). The meal in the presence of God on Sinai pointed to a better meal, a banquet, from which all nations will eat. All are invited to this banquet, you RSVP by faith in Jesus Christ. At that banquet, we will see God face to face (Rev 22:3-4). The Lord’s Supper is a foretaste of that coming banquet. As God’s redeemed people, we eat the Lord’s Supper in the presence of God. It is a solemn and spectacular moment for us; don’t take the Lord’s Supper lightly. Come and feast on the body and blood of Jesus Christ today, relishing in all that he has done for you and promises to do for you in the gospel.

Life Group Questions:

Icebreaker:

Tell us your name and a memorable meal you have had in th past.

Head

1. Describe the difference between the theophany at the foot of Sinai (ex 19:16-19) and the elders up the mountain (24:9-11).
2. Why are the two theophanies drastically different?
3. How does the Lord’s Supper compare with this covenant confirmation feast?

Heart

1. Read Exodus 19:4-6. How does God redeeming Israel before he demands allegiance display grace in Israel?
2. Have you ever experienced God’s presence? Describe it for us.
3. Why are meals helpful in developing relationships, sharing lives together?
4. How can meals/hospitality be used to share the gospel?

Hand

1. Does celebrating the Lord’s Supper imply that we promise to affirm and obey our covenant with God through Christ?
2. Think of someone who is not a Christian you can have over for a meal or coffee to build relationship with the hope of sharing the gospel.

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**God Gives his People Leaders**

God was watching over Israel by calling Moses to lead Israel at eighty years of age (3:7ff). The people of Israel did not see it that way at first, but he was the man God called to lead Israel. God gave Moses the Passover instructions and Moses then gave those instructions to Israel’s elders to lead Israel in the Passover (21).[[3]](#footnote-3) God watches over his people by giving them leaders who lead. Ie leadership development

**God Gives His People His Word**

God was watching over his people by giving them his word. This will become even more prominent as we go through Exodus. They needed to trust his word to be protected. The final plague reminds us that all of us are subject to judgment because of sin (Heb 9:27). it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment[[4]](#footnote-4) God watched over those who trusted his word as evidenced by the blood on their doors. God was teaching his people the need for a substitute for sin. So they watched and they waited that night with their families. Their hope for protection was not in themselves but in the one who watches over them. In the same way God protected Noah’s family inside the ark, God protected Israel inside their homes. God watches over us by giving us his word.

1. These two brothers participate in the ceremony and the meal yet end up being kills by God for offering unauthorized fire (Lev 10). God’s presence does not necessarily change people. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Scripture often describes God with anthropomorphic language, using human attributes to describe God. It is not literal but figurative. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. When God first called Moses, he instructed Moses to tell the elders first then also (3:6). As the Old Testament develops, the prominence of Israel’s elders increases, becoming more formal under Moses’ leadership (Num 11:16ff). The New Testament builds upon this structure with elders leading and teaching the church (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-16). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Heb9.27&off=3&ctx=fice+of+himself.+27%C2%A0~And+just+as+o%EF%BB%BFit+is+) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 9:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)