

## Worship God as Dangerous and Gracious (Exodus 24)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton May 5, 2024 ([www.gcb.church](http://www.gcb.church))

I'm eager to continue this book that changed the world, if you'd join me again in Exodus ch 24.

- What's the hope for this world? In turmoil or pain, where do we get relief and peace?
- How can we see God and what He's doing with sin and its consequences around us?
- For us who fall short, how can we come near Him? Does He want to draw near to us?
- Does failure to obey keep us away? What's the key to right worship?
- God's answer to all these questions is here in Ex 24.

The setting is Sinai after God's law is given. **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 worship from afar. <sup>2</sup> Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." <sup>3</sup> Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." <sup>4</sup> And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup> And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." <sup>9</sup> Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, <sup>10</sup> and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. <sup>11</sup> And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank. <sup>12</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." <sup>13</sup> So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. <sup>14</sup> And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them." <sup>15</sup> Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. <sup>16</sup> The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. <sup>17</sup> Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. <sup>18</sup> Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.*

DeYoung says Ex 24 'is one of the most important chapters in the OT [but] you probably never think of [it] as an important chapter... [like] Genesis 1...3...Isaiah 53 [creation/fall/Jesus]...But Ex 24 is one of the most significant points in the OT. It's a high point, literally and figuratively, because it gives us both a glimpse of what God looks like and what worship should look like.'<sup>1</sup> This chapter is incredible and almost unbelievable, men seeing God and eating with God. It's been said the book of Exodus has 'many dramatic moments: the burning bush... plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the Ten Commandments, to name only a few. But no scene is more dramatic than the one described in chapter 24, in which God confirms his covenant with Israel'<sup>2</sup>

**Some consider this the apex of the epic story of redemption from Egypt**

One artist imagines the scene like [THIS](#), with the consuming fire Israel saw. Heb 12:28 applies this very scene: *let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup> for our God is a consuming fire.*

- The same chapter talks about covenant grace in Jesus so we're not consumed for our sin.
- Taking my cue for how the Bible applies this, my title is: [Worship God who is dangerous and gracious](#). Like the famous line 'he isn't safe, but he's good, he's the King.'<sup>3</sup>

- To sinners God is not safe, but to His special people, He has covenant grace that saves.
  - o God is love and is holy, holy, holy.

**1<sup>st</sup> point: God is Dangerous.** In Ex 24:1 the end of the verse warns to ‘*worship from afar.*’

<sup>2</sup> *Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near...* (why? God is dangerous).

God is not to be approached without His authorization or worshipped apart from His revelation.

- In ch 3 at the bush He told Moses to stay back.
- Ch 20 told how to worship (1<sup>st</sup> 4 commands).
- God sets the terms for how He’ll be worshipped.
  - o The government doesn’t set the terms for worship (we took that stand in 2020).<sup>4</sup>
  - o And nor should we let the goats drive how we worship (unbelievers/seeker-driven).
  - o We let the Good Shepherd set the terms for His sheep He gathers.
  - o People can draw a crowd or a concert, make church all comfortable and casual, etc.
  - o But that’s not worship or the church’s purpose,
    - and it’s a dangerous thing if anything but God drives it.
- Proverbs 29:25 *Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the LORD means safety* (NLT)
- Hebrews 10:31 says it’s a dangerous ‘*dreadful / terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*’

**It’s a terrifying thing to be sinners in the hands of an angry God**

That’s the NT, but the original OT readers knew that from the names listed in v. 1.

- Aaron and Nadab and Abihu (Aaron’s sons) and the elders were called to this worship.
- Flip ahead to Lev 10 because those who first read the book of Moses knew those names.
- Some missed point #1.

Lev 10:1 *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered **unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them.** <sup>2</sup> **And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.** <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’ ” And Aaron held his peace. [end of v. 6 warns all] ...*bewail the burning that the LORD has kindled.**

God is a consuming fire, as the NT affirms, so we need to offer Him acceptable worship.

- God’s holy fire consumed those who worshipped in a way God didn’t command them.
  - o Unauthorized worship of God is dangerous.
- It doesn’t say exactly what they did except that it wasn’t exactly what God said.
- The point is God must be seen as holy/sanctified to those near Him in worship.
- The NT says fire will consume again in the future those who don’t truly honor Christ.
- 1 Cor 11 ends warning those who dishonor communion you may become sick or dead.
  - o This is NT, too.

**Your soul is in danger if you’re not reverent with repentant faith in Jesus. Turn and trust today.**

So go back to Ex 24 but remember those 2 names never got to go back to their families.

- God is serious about sin and dangerous to those who don’t take Him or their sin serious.
- Holy deadly fire is how He’s revealed, which is why He calls for burnt offerings in v. 5.
- Sinners should be consumed by fire, but here substitutes are consumed by fire instead.

<sup>5</sup> *And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered **burnt offerings** and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.*

- The need for peace is because man is not at peace by nature, he’s in a dangerous place.
- Remember the danger in Egypt when the death angel came unless they sacrificed a lamb.

- God's anger at sin saw blood of unblemished substitutes so He'd 'pass over' that place.
  - o There had to be blood covering them.

**Later in the Law, a hyssop branch again was used to sprinkle blood to sanctify/make holy**

<sup>6</sup> And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.

- NASB footnote says the Hebrew is literally 'covenant the Lord has *cut* with you *on all*.'
- This is graphic, animals cut open and their blood gathered and splattered on the people.
- Back in Gen 15 when God cut a covenant with Abraham, they cut the animals in halves.
- Walking through the blood splattered it on you to remind you this is life and death.
- Israel pledges a covenant vow to obey the Law in v. 7, the blood means death if they fail.
- The blood on them will demand theirs.

It's a dangerous deadly scene, and tension rises higher as Moses goes higher.

- In v. 15 Moses is called up the mountain and in v. 16 a glory cloud covers it.
- v. 17 calls it consuming fire. <sup>18</sup> *Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.*
- The only earlier time that phrase was used was a flood judgment 40 days and 40 nights.
- It was a dangerous phrase in history, 40 days and nights wipe out all not in the ark.
- Israel saw Moses no more in that time and didn't know what had become of him (ch 32).
- Other verses say Moses had no food or drink those 40 days, and saw God.
  - o But no man can do that and live, how can he?

### **This takes us to a 2<sup>nd</sup> point: God is gracious. This is a supernatural miracle of a merciful God.**

It's the grace of a mediator. <sup>2</sup> *Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near*

... There's only one mediator, and God's grace authorized him to offer up blood for all.

<sup>6</sup> *And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.*

- The altar represents God and His covenant grace, blood is sprinkled there first for mercy.
- Moses should've died and would've died but grace sustained him in God's presence.
- It was only by God's help that He could come to the altar by the power of blood.

Despite flames above, God's grace made Sinai like the hymn says the

'Mount of Thy redeeming love. Here I raise to Thee an altar,

Hither by Thy help I come...he to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood'<sup>5</sup>

**The danger of God's anger is interposed by the intervening blood of a spotless sacrifice**

Moses mediated grace to Israel so their representatives could also see and be with God. <sup>9</sup> *Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, <sup>10</sup> and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. <sup>11</sup> And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.*

**In the Bible only a few ever got a vision of glory, but never a meal with God after like this!**

- It's dangerous for sinners to see God, it means death, but a gracious God means to bless.
- He let them see Him and live—amazing grace—by covering blood and covenant mercy!
- It doesn't say they saw His face, v. 10 sounds like heads stayed down below His throne.
- Bowed heads beheld what looked like sapphire pavement under Him, but clear as heaven.
- It's not clear if they dared look up beyond His feet but it's clearly a glimpse from heaven.
- Ezekiel 1 is a vision of heavenly glory, a throne like sapphire over a crystal-like expanse.

- This world's biggest sapphire fits in a hand and is worth hundreds of millions.
- A pavement of it or even 1 tile would be trillions, this is an incomparably precious Lord!
  - o Infinite treasure and preciousness they saw and ate and drank

*Before glorious holiness, His hand didn't slay them, it apparently made them His dinner date?*

They wouldn't dare eat or drink before glory unless God invited them to commune with Him. The holy, holy, holy God beyond a glassy sea is bringing close in fellowship, a covenant meal. Scholars say the phrases on seeing God or eating and drinking with God are 'some of the most astonishing and inexplicable verses in the OT...nearly all exegetes would agree...God grants his ultimate gift—his presence...a meal of sharing...representing a reality and a symbol that God is approaching his people to reconcile them and to establish communion. Rather than drive them out of his presence, as he did in the garden of Eden, he now draws them into his presence...invited them back to a feast...Yahweh's most stunning announcement is yet to come. All of Israel would be able to experience his presence in a new way...in the midst of their own camp'<sup>6</sup>

That's what the tabernacle will be all about in ch 25-40, His presence among His people. That's Yahweh's goal in the Exodus, listen to Ex 6:7: *I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God... 29:46 I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them... 19:4-5 I brought you to myself...you will be my treasured possession among all peoples...a kingdom of priests...*

One writer sums up the biblical theology: 'Now a people consecrated to Yahweh can approach the holy mountain and the holy God at his invitation. Fear is being cast out; a boldness not present earlier (19:9-11) is evident. Yahweh had rejected the human-made tower of Babel and its attempt to reach [heaven, but now the true God] constructs, affirms, and makes holy an approach to him that will allow his people to enter into his holy dwelling place.'<sup>7</sup>

- Ex 24 is a covenant meal with their covenant God.
  - In Genesis after covenants between men, both parties 'ate and drank' (Gen 26, 31).
  - In a marriage covenant ceremony, there's often a reception after with both families.
  - A covenant is formed verbally ('I will'), then all involved eat and drink together.
  - It's been described as a holy hour and happy hour together in a big celebration supper
- Maybe a preview of Isa 25:6: 'On this mountain the LORD...will provide for all peoples a feast...'*

### What's the application to God as gracious? How are believers to respond? 1. Come and worship

In v. 1 the first word He says is 'Come up to the LORD...' and v. 1 ends 'and worship...'

Come and worship. In v. 3 part of worship God wants is all people hearing what God has said.

- Worship isn't singing (only or primarily), it's reading and heeding the Word of God, too.
- What Israel did is what worship should do spiritually, bring us up to see more of God.
- By v. 9-10 we see God wants His people to see Him and be with Him in fellowship.

His desire is 'come worship, bow down,' with reverence and obedience like v. 7.

- Behold your God high and lifted up, be humble, stay under His feet!
- Offer acceptable worship in fear and awe, because God is a consuming fire still.
- Remember worship isn't about you and what you want, it's about God and what He says.

*His Word is a means of grace when you say amen to it and mean to obey all He commands*

God in grace wants to draw near to His people and for His people to draw near to Him.

- In the NT, there's even deeper and sweeter intimacy with God. v. 1 ends with worship from afar, Eph 2:13 says we were *afar off* but are *brought near* by Christ's blood.

Jesus says *come* and all are invited up, not just a select leader, and He brings us up to God.

- He's greater than Moses, and what he did for 1 nation, Jesus sprinkled many nations.<sup>8</sup>
- Not just His chosen Israel, 1 Pet 1 calls us '*chosen/elect...sprinkled with his blood*' (v. 1-2).
- Ch 2 says Jesus is '*elect, precious, and...to you who believe He is precious...*' (v. 6-7 NKJV).
- There's precious value in His precious name and His precious blood!

**Is He precious to you? Can you say 'how precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed?'**

Turn to Heb 9 to see how the NT applies this very chapter to Jesus and His church.

- There's 1 Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, His blood covering us.
- Blood sprinkled or splattered on robes became a biblical image for cleansing or washing.
- Only His blood removes all the guilty stains of sin and can make whiter than snow.
- Isaiah and Revelation talk about that, nothing but the blood of Jesus washes away our sin

Heb 9:19 *For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and **sprinkled** both the book itself and all the people,*<sup>20</sup> *saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." ...*<sup>22</sup> *Indeed, under the law almost everything is **purified with blood**, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

**What the law pictured outwardly, the gospel applies inwardly**

**10:22:** *let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts **sprinkled clean** from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*<sup>23</sup> *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*<sup>24</sup> *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,*<sup>25</sup> *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...*

**So the NT applies Ex 24 images (sprinkling, drawing near) to corporate worship and fellowship**

[2<sup>nd</sup> application response to God as gracious: covenant commitments.](#) This is also back in Ex 24.

Moses recited the commands to God's people publicly, and they made covenant commitments.

<sup>3</sup> *And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do."*

<sup>4</sup> *And Moses wrote down all the words...So they said it unison, together, and a covenant was written.*

In v. 7 he read the covenant commands again, and it says again 2x they said '*we will.*'

- Just two weeks ago I read God's commands and recited our covenant commitments.
- And new members said '*we will,*' and I asked existing members to repeat it in unison.
- That's a biblical thing to do that believers have done for thousands of years literally.
- In 2 Kings 23 the leader covenanted to follow commands he read and all joined with him.
- In Neh 9-10 they prayed and put covenant commitments in writing, signing their names.
- Grace doesn't mean no commitments, covenant grace should motivate more commitment.
- People are members of all kinds of clubs, gyms, signing their name, is God to get less?
  - o Should you be willing to join the membership of Costco but not Christ's church?
  - o Don't just date a church, but fear commitment, commit in love, join your life

**If you haven't or have questions on covenant commitment, come to our membership class next SS**

Since the beginning of God's people, there have been written and verbal commitments.

- Ex 24 is in some sense where corporate worship begins, and note the biblical elements.
- There's a call to worship, there's a servant God appointed to lead with elders alongside.
- There's a reading of the book, and a verbal telling what God expects of His people.
- There's covenant commitments like we do as members join, and communing fellowship.
  - o Ex 24:11 says with God they ate and drank

[Our final application response: communion with the Lord.](#) v. 8 says '*behold the blood of the covenant*'

At the last supper/1<sup>st</sup> communion Jesus told disciples to behold the blood of His covenant.

- Bible time meals included bread and a cup, so the Ex 24 meal likely had those elements.
- Jesus took a cup and spoke of the new covenant in His blood poured out for sins of many.
- In Ex 24 the blood was sprinkled or poured on people, the cup symbolically puts it in us.
- The bread pictures the life of Christ He sacrificed to bring us to fellowship at His table.
- But we need to not treat the holy in unholy or unauthorized ways like Nadab and Abihu.
- Communion is only for those in covenant relationship with the Lord who they live for.
  - o Have you repented and trusted Jesus as your Lord?

He says in love Rev 3:19: *I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.* <sup>20</sup> *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

- This is the Jesus speaking and seeking intimate fellowship with the repentant.
- He said at the 1<sup>st</sup> communion *‘with fervent desire I have desired to eat this...with you...’*<sup>9</sup>
- Jesus earnestly desires to eat and drink with and believers again in the kingdom.
- The Lord who said ‘come’ in Ex 24 wants to commune and draw near us even now.

He says earnestly, fervently and freely in Isa 55 *Come, everyone who thirsts, come...come...and eat! Come... [and He mentions free] wine ... Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good...come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant...Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; Let the wicked forsake his ways...return to the LORD that he may have compassion, and to God, for he will abundantly pardon...*

---

<sup>1</sup> [Sermon: The Covenant Confirmed | Kevin DeYoung | URC \(universityreformedchurch.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 776–777.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Beaver to Lucy in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis.

<sup>4</sup> [We Must Obey God Rather than Men - Why We Must Keep Worshipping and Thanksgiving | SermonAudio](#)

<sup>5</sup> Robinson, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

<sup>6</sup> Carpenter, 148, 150.

<sup>7</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus 19-40*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Lexham Press, 2016), 147.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 52:15, note the context before and especially the chapter after.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 22:14 NKJV.