

CHRIST IN THE OLD COVENANT
Exodus 24: What Kind of God? Part II

What does Exodus 24 tell us about the God of the Bible? Last week we saw that He is a God who is near - He speaks, He has His words written down so that people can read them, He has been seen, He calls people to Himself, welcomes people into his fellowship.

God's Glory Far Exceeds What We Have Experienced

- But now Exodus 24 also shows us that the God of the Bible is far beyond humans. He is absolutely one of a kind, and His glory far exceeds what we have experienced. Because of this, the Bible is packed full of images and metaphors to help us understand the glory of God.
- consider just a few of the biblical images that are familiar to our experience:
 - You know what it's like to drink cool water, or to come across a gentle stream; the Bible says that God is like that.
 - You know what's it like to find shade from the blazing sun; to come into a dark room and finally find the light switch, so that the room goes from darkness to light; to taste good food. The glory of the Lord is like shade in a desert, light in darkness, good food.
 - He is like a shield that protects; like a castle or fortress; like calmness after a storm; like a tender father or a nursing mother
 - God is like a physician who brings healing; like a bird protecting her young under her wings; like fine gold or diamonds.
 - If you've been out to Anza Borrego state park in the spring, you know what's it like when rains bring the desert to life - the Bible says that the glory of the Lord is like that life-giving rain in the desert.
 - These are common, familiar images to help us understand the glory of God. But there also uncommon images, that show us that:
- God's glory far exceeds what we have experienced
 - a pavement of Sapphire (v.10)
 - Pavement is the Hebrew word for brick or tile - this is like a tile floor, and we know about expensive tile floors - you can go to Lowe's and pay \$300 a square foot for marble tile if you want. But this one appears to be Sapphire. The largest uncut Sapphire in the world is less than a square foot. By my calculations if you wanted to create a tile floor of good quality sapphires, it would start at about \$2,000,000 a square foot.
 - Ezekiel 10:1 describes the throne of God as something like a sapphire stone - like a giant sapphire. Sapphire floors and thrones are clearly beyond what we have experienced, but it tells us something about this God.
 - Now Exodus 24 doesn't provide more of these images of the throne of God, but of course other passages do.

- Isaiah 6 describes God as wearing a robe, and the edge of his robe, or the train, fills the temple. Now at some weddings the bride's train is large enough that it has to be moved fairly carefully, but here the glory of God absolutely fills all things.
- Ezekiel 1 describes an expanse at the throne of God, like the awesome gleam of crystal, and a radiance like a rainbow coming from the person on the throne.
- Matt. 17 describes the transfiguration of Christ, and says that his face shone like the sun. Now we know about the immense power of the sun, but to describe someone's face that way is beyond anything we have seen.
- Mark 9:3, also describing the transfigured Christ, says that his clothes were white "as no launderer on earth can whiten them." A white that is beyond anything we have seen.
- Revelation 1 describes Christ's voice like the sound of many waters - like the roar of a waterfall.
- Revelation 21 describes this heavenly city, the New Jerusalem as having the glory of God. What does that mean? It means it has a brilliance like a very costly stone, like crystal-clear jasper; the city is pure gold, like clear glass; the foundation stones are every kind of precious stone. And consider the size of these foundation stones - for the city walls reach some 1500 miles up into the air. What kind of foundation stones support that kind of wall - and these foundation stones are sapphire, emerald, topaz, amethyst. There are gate-sized pearls and streets of pure gold. There is no sun for the glory of God is the only necessary light.
- So as you can see, this reference in Exodus 24 to the pavement of sapphire is just one of many indications in the Bible that God's glory far exceeds what we have experienced, there is a clearness and whiteness and brightness and sound and power and richness and that exceeds the clearest and whitest and brightest and loudest and most powerful and richest we have ever seen or heard.

But secondly,

God's Glory Is Dangerous for Sinners

We can see this in three different ways in Exodus 24. First,

- **God is described using dangerous images.** The most common image is found in verse 17, you see that *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.*
 - God's glory is like a **consuming fire** (v.17)
 - Not a comfortable or warm or bright or cheery fire, but here you see the Hebrew adjective that means an eating or devouring fire.
 - Deut. 4:24 *The Lord your God is a consuming fire.*
 - Psalm 97:3 *Fire goes before Him and burns up His adversaries round about.*

- Is. 66:15 *For behold, the Lord will come in fire, and His chariots like the whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire.*
 - Ezekiel 1:27 *Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw something like fire.*
 - Revelation 1:13 *His eyes were like a flame of fire.*
 - Heb. 12:29 *Our God is a consuming fire.*
- **bolts of lightning**
 - Rev. 4:5 *Out from the throne come flashes of lightning.* Not just pretty lightning to look at, but destructive lightning as we had even this week in our area. II Sam. 22:15 *He sent out arrows and scattered them, lightning, and routed them.* God's glory is like damaging lightning.
- **earthquake**
 - Ps. 68:8 *Sinai itself quaked at the presence of God.*
 - II Sam. 22:8 *Then the earth shook and quaked, the foundations of heaven were trembling and were shaken, because He was angry.*
 - In the book of Revelation there are at least five major earthquakes described during the tribulation, climaxing with one that is greater than any that man has ever experienced as God shakes the entire planet.
- **crushing rocks and mountains**
 - Nahum 1:5-6 *Mountains quake because of Him and the hills dissolve... the rocks are broken up by Him.*
 - Micah 1:4 *The mountains will melt under Him and the valleys will be split.*
- Turn over to Lamentations 2, where we'll see the fire image and also three others. Read Lam. 2:2-5. So you see at the end of verse 3 the consuming fire round about; you see also in verse 4 the image of an archer with his bow pulled back and ready to shoot.
- **archer shooting arrows**
 - In Deuteronomy 32:(23) God promised Israel that when they rebelled against Him *I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them.* Later in the same section he said *I will make My arrows drunk with blood.* (v.42)
- **swallowing or consuming**
 - In Lamentations 2 we also see the image of swallowing something - at the beginning of verse 2 and also in verse 5 where it says God has swallowed up Israel, completely consumed them. (Lam. 2:5)
- **an enemy: an attacking warrior or army**
 - Verse 4 he has bent his bow like an enemy, verse 5 *The Lord has become like an enemy.*
 - Isaiah 42:13 *The Lord will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.*
 - Jer. 21:5 *I myself will war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, even in anger and wrath and great indignation.*

- **a deadly wild animal**
 - Hos. 13:7-8 *So I will be like a lion to them; like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside. I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and I will tear open their chests; there I will also devour them like a lioness, as a wild beast would tear them.*

That's a sample list of passages that describe God's glory using dangerous images so that we will see that God glory is dangerous for sinners. TURN TO Exodus 24. We'll see a second evidence that God's glory is dangerous, or maybe a consequence of it: READ verse 1.

- **God demands that sinners remain at a distance (v.1b)**
 - Read Exodus 19:11-12
 - Read Exodus 20:18
 - Read Exodus 3:4-5
 - When God instructed the Israelites about how to camp around the tabernacle, the Israelites were told to camp "at a distance" (Num. 2:2).
 - We could trace this theme all over the Bible, God demands that sinners remain at a distance.
 - In Jeremiah 30:21b God asks: *Who would dare to risk his life to approach Me?*

That is certainly a fair question based upon the evidence we've seen so far and the final evidence that we find in Exodus 24. Our final point is that

- **God stretches out His hand against sinners (v.11)**
 - Now in this case in Exodus 24 God did not stretch out his hand against them - Read Exodus 24:11. But verse 11 begins with the word "yet" or "but" because it is surprising that God doesn't - you would expect that God would. As a matter of fact He must stretch out His hand against sinners if He will be a just God. Num. 14:18 *He will by no means clear the guilty.* **God warned about this at Mt. Sinai:**
 - Exodus 19:21 *Warn the people so that they do not break through to the Lord to gaze and many of them perish.*
 - Exodus 19:24 *Do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, or He will break forth upon them.*
 - Many places in the prophets God uses this image of stretching out His hand against sinners. So **He promised this through the prophets.** And
 - **He has exemplified it many times.**
 - Here in Exodus 24 we read that Nabad and Abihu participated in this view of the glory of the Lord. Nadab & Abihu
 - were the two eldest sons of Aaron, who became two of Israel's first priests. But Leviticus 10:1-3 describes how they offered strange fire or incense before the Lord, and fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them. And after this God said to Aaron - their father - *By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy.*

- In Numbers 11 the people complained and God sent a very severe plague, so that they named the place "the graves of greediness" because there they buried the people who had been greedy.
- In Numbers 16 Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, and God opened up the earth and it swallowed them up and their households. When the congregation grumbled about it, more than 14,000 more died in a plague sent by the Lord.
- In Numbers 21 the people spoke against God, blamed Him for bringing them out of Egypt, and the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people so that many people of Israel died.
- In Numbers 25 Israel turned to immorality with the daughters of Moab, and God sent a plague that killed 24,000.
- In I Sam. 6, 50,000 died after they looked on the ark of the Lord.
- II Samuel 6 They disobeyed the Lord in how they moved the ark; as a result Uzzah ended up touching the ark and *the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence, and he died there by the ark of God.*
- I Ki. 13 a prophet disobeyed the Lord, and God sent a lion who met him on his way and killed him.
- II Kings 2 a large group of young men mocked God's prophet, and two bears came and killed forty-two of them.
- In Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira died for lying to the Lord and the congregation for their own reputation.
- Paul writes in I Cor. 11 that many have taken the Lord's Supper in an improper manner and for this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep.
- The Bible does not hide the fact that God stretches out His hand against sinners. He can stretched out His hand in a physical sense at any time, but the greater danger is when God stretches out his hand in a spiritual sense - as Jesus said *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*
- II Thes. 1:7-8 *The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*
- Revelation 6 says that when He comes the mighty of the earth cry out for the rocks to fall on the and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand? And as we read in the chapters of Revelation that follow, oh how the wrath is poured out until the devil is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)

And so we conclude that it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God: His glory is described using dangerous images; He demands that sinners remain at a distance; He stretches out His hand against sinners.

Now this is not a personality trait, as if God is just kind of a grumpy person. It is not a mood, that God gets into from time to time. But it is His character trait - He must be like this, because He is a righteous judge.

It is not directed randomly, so that you can never quite be sure whom God might be angry with today. But it is consistently directed at sinners. Not just sin, but sinners:

The Bible states these things clearly in Psalm 7:

Psalm 7:11-13 God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts.

Jesus said that *he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God* [now currently already] *abides on him* (John 3:36).

Most people's greatest concerns are that their GPS will be stolen or they will lose their job or they'll be in a plane crash. But those are not the big dangers in life - the big danger is life lived your own way. Nothing is more dangerous.

This is the reason why you and I must be saved. It is in this discussion that the word "saved" makes the most sense. What do we need to be saved from? If you were to find yourself being attacked in a war zone, experiencing a terrible earthquake, attacked by a bear, thrown into a cage with a hungry lion, caught in a rock slide, struck by lightning, burned in a forest fire, shot through with many arrows all in the same day you would have a better chance of survival than you have of surviving the wrath of God for your sin.

That is why you must repent of life lived your own way and come to Christ in faith to be saved - the Christ who took all of that wrath of God for your sin at Calvary.

Next week we will see the gospel in Exodus 24, as we answer this question: why did God not stretch out His hand against this group of men? How did Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders see God and eat there and live?