

### The Covenant Ratified; The Glory of the Lord Revealed

#### Exodus 24

Exodus 24 – *“Now 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> And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.”*

*<sup>3</sup> So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” <sup>4</sup> And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And 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> Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. <sup>6</sup> And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. <sup>7</sup> Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.” <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.”*

*<sup>9</sup> Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, <sup>10</sup> and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. <sup>11</sup> But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank. <sup>12</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.”*

*<sup>13</sup> So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. <sup>14</sup> And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.” <sup>15</sup> Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. <sup>16</sup> Now the glory of the Lord rested 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> The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. <sup>18</sup> So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”*

#### Background Notes

Exodus 24 completes a section that began in Exodus 19, when the children of Israel came to Mount Sinai. This section began with the giving of the Law, and it ends with the glory of the Lord. In this section we've seen the Ten Commandments and a number of other laws in the Mosaic Covenant. These additional laws were given for the protection and regulation of the society of the Children of Israel. So besides the moral laws, civil and ceremonial laws were given as well under the Mosaic Covenant. There were three kinds of laws: moral, civil and ceremonial.

As Christians we are subject to the moral laws of the Mosaic Covenant, because God's moral laws never change. For example, all the moral laws of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament. (The law regarding the keeping of the Sabbath is not a moral law, and it is not repeated in the New Testament.) We are not subject to the civil and ceremonial laws of the Mosaic Covenant because Christ is the end of the Law, as we read in Romans 10:4 – *“Christ is the end of the Law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”* That is, with the coming of Christ, the Mosaic Law as a means of approach to God was terminated. The Law could not provide righteousness because no one could keep the Law. Now righteousness is provided in Christ for all who believe, based on God's grace, apart from the Law.

However, even though the Mosaic Law is not the way of salvation, we've seen a number of biblical principles in the Law that we can apply today for practical Christian living — even things like protecting our property with a fence so nobody gets hurt! There are certainly biblical principles here.

A new section of the book of Exodus begins at the end of chapter 24, when Moses ascended Mount Sinai and remained there for forty days and forty nights. In this new section God communicated the form of worship for the children of Israel. All the details of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and the garments of the priests were given in detail, to ensure that Israel's approach to God in worship was in accordance with the Divine pattern.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The Covenant of the Law was ratified by the people.

In Exodus 24:1-3 we see Moses ascending Mount Sinai once again, this time with Aaron and his sons Nadab and Abihu, and 70 elders of Israel. They worshiped the Lord from a distance, while the people remained at the base of the mountain. Moses alone went further up the mountain and came near to the Lord to worship. What a wonderful contrast we have today! Now all of God's people can draw near to God's presence! Hebrews 10:19 & 22 – *“...we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus ... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

Moses reported all the words of the Lord to the people, and he repeated the ordinances of the Mosaic Covenant that he had received from the Lord in his previous trip up the mountain. The people responded: *“All the words which the Lord has said we will do.”* This was not the first time that the people had agreed to obey God's laws. In Exodus 19:8 they promised: - *“We will do everything the Lord has said.”*

Exodus 24:4 says that Moses wrote down everything the LORD had said in a book. Skeptics of the Bible used to ridicule the idea that Moses could write the first five books of the Bible. The ability to write, they said, didn't exist at the time of Moses! Well, archaeological investigations have shown that writing was around well before the time of Moses! And if anyone had the ability to write in those days, it would have been Moses! Remember -- Moses was educated *“...in all the*

*learning of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22).* So Moses wrote down all the laws that God had given to him. God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, but Moses wrote down the rest of the Mosaic Covenant, probably on clay tablets.

Moses read the Book of the Covenant to the people, and once again the people agreed to its terms: *“We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey” (v7).* Did they follow through on their promises? No, they did not, as we know. They broke the covenant.

The Covenant of the Law was formally approved — it was publicly ratified — not only by the words of the people, but by burnt offerings and the sprinkling of blood. Verses 5-8: *“...he [Moses] sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowl, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, ‘We will do everything that lord has said; we will obey.’ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”*

The sign of blood on the altar and on the people meant that if the people broke the covenant and did not keep their word, it was at the price of blood. The penalty was death. The people agreed to all of this. The Covenant of the Law was ratified by the people.

## **2. The Glory of the Lord was revealed to the people.**

The “cloud” mentioned in verses 15-18 was not a rain cloud, but a “glory cloud.” It was evidence of the Lord’s presence. Remember the “pillar of cloud” by day and the “pillar of fire” by night that led the children of Israel through the wilderness? This “glory cloud” was the pillar of cloud that led the people through the wilderness. This same “glory cloud” would rest on the soon-to-be-built Tabernacle.

The glory cloud of the presence of the Lord appeared as a consuming fire at the top of the mountain to the Israelites who were camped at the base of Mount Sinai. It must have been an awesome sight! God called to Moses from this glory cloud, and Moses entered the cloud. He remained there on the mountain for forty days and forty nights, receiving instructions from the Lord. Meanwhile, somewhere on the mountain, Joshua waited for Moses.

The other men who had previously come part of the way up the mountain (v1-2), now remained at the base of the mountain with the people—that is, Aaron and his sons, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel. But what an experience they had while they were there on the mountain. They saw God. Verses 9-11: *“Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under His feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise His hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God and they ate and drank.”* Sapphire, by the way, is a clear, bluish crystal. The eating and drinking was not like a party -- it would be a “covenant meal” in which the elders of Israel ratified the covenant God had made with Israel.

But did they really see God? These verses say that they saw God! But wait a minute -- doesn't the Bible say that no one has ever seen God? Yes, the Bible does say that. John 1:18 says, *"No man has seen God at any time."* So, how do we explain the fact that Exodus 24:10 says that these Israelite leaders saw God? And other biblical characters are said to have seen God as well. When Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord he said, *"So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.'" (Genesis 32:30).*

So what's the answer here? The answer is that no one has ever seen the essence of deity. However, at certain time God has revealed Himself in various forms with varying degrees of glory, as here in Exodus 24. However, the glory of the Lord was revealed to all the people.

## **Practical Application**

### **Remember the lesson of Nadab and Abihu!**

As sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu were priests with a high position, an important role in Israel. In Exodus 24, as part of this special group, they had the rare privilege of seeing the glory of the Lord. But we read in Leviticus 10 that Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" before the Lord—and they died before the Lord!

Do you see the lesson? You can be a Christian with great privilege and position -- but this does not mean that you are immune or free from the possibility of failure! Be warned! Remember the lesson of Nadab and Abihu!