



HG252: Mountain Top Experiences
Sinai: Mount Of Covenant

Exodus 24:1-18

Home Group Study Notes

12 February 2023 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Who has a head for heights and what's the highest
mountain you have climbed?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs
of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using
Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Exodus 24:1-18

Home Group Sermon

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Introduction

The book of Exodus provides the historical account of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt's cruel slavery just as Jesus Christ delivers all humanity from the slavery and consequences of sin. Exodus means a "going out" or "a departure." The Israelites departed from Egypt as God led them out of slavery to freedom through the dry bed of the Red Sea and to the Promised Land. Jesus' triumphant death and resurrection is the greater Exodus as he passed through the waters of death in order to deliver His people from their bondage to sin and take them to the new heaven and new earth. Wright says "Exodus provided the primary model of redemption in the Old Testament and New Testament and it stand as one of the keys for understanding the cross and salvation."

The Covenant Confirmed

In Exodus 19-23 Moses received the 10 Commandments along with instructions and guidance for living from God on Mt Sinai. He told the people everything God had said and the people unanimously agreed to obey every word. The next morning the covenant was ratified and Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain. Young bulls were sacrificed and the blood that was drained from the animals was separated into 2. Moses took 1/2 the blood and put it into basins. The other 1/2 was splashed against the altar representing God's blood. The 1/2 in basins was sprinkled on the people as a sign that they were recipients of the covenant benefits, - they would be His "treasured possession" and become a 'holy nation.'" (19.5-6). See also God's promises to them in Ex 6 6-8 and 23 25b-26, 29 and 30. The people again agreed to the terms of the covenant following a reading by Moses.

In the ratification ceremony we can begin to understand God's view of sin and forgiveness. God is sovereign and absolutely holy and He condemns sin as worthy of death. In the Old Testament God accepted the death of an animal as a substitute for the sinner and the blood was visual proof that one life had been given for another. In Lev 17. 11 God tells his people, "For the life of a creature is in the blood and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for ones life."

Provisional Substitute

This of course was only a temporary provision for forgiveness but through the animal sacrifices and the shedding of their blood God's grace had provided a way for the Israelites to atone for their sins. They would see graphically, every time the throat of a lamb or calf was sliced the life drained away.

It would serve as a reminder that without blood and death there was no forgiveness. We can see the connection between blood, death, covenant and atonement in the sacrificial system.

The old covenant sacrifices had to be made one day every year to atone for the people's sin and it became known as the Day of Atonement, but the sacrifices could not actually remove sin, only cover it up. The Hebrew word for atone means to "cover." Even the High Priest needed to be cleansed for his sins. He had to undertake ritual cleansing routines that enabled him to go into the Most Holy Place to offer sacrifices where he was rendered outwardly clean after the sacrifices were offered, but he was never cleansed on the inside. (see Lev 16).

There was never a final purification from sin because as soon as one offering and been made another would have to be made next year. Sin was never fully dealt with as these were imperfect offerings that could never purify the human heart. However, the old covenant laid the foundations for the new covenant brought about by the Person and work of Jesus Christ and whereas the Levitical Priesthood had to continually offer up sacrifices to the Lord to atone for sins, Christ only offered up one and that was sufficient. His atonement is sufficient for those who obey Him and for those He has secured an eternal redemption.

The Superior Sacrifice

Christ never needed to purify himself, He didn't need ritual cleansing, He was already clean. He offered himself as One without blemish and His sacrifice cleanses us internally. The Israelite had to wait a full year for the Day of Atonement to come round where his sins could be forgiven, but these sacrifices amounted to very little because nothing changed year after year. Just as our own efforts are worthless. We cannot cleanse ourselves or earn God's favour without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His death accomplishes what the old covenant sacrifices never could - eternal redemption and forgiveness.

The animal sacrifices were temporary and needed to be repeated whereas Jesus Christ death secures redemption forever, you cannot slip out of his hands once He has you, once saved always saved. Once we accept Christ as Saviour and Lord of our life we have entered into covenant with God and it's a binding agreement. Ps 105 says "God remembers His covenant forever." God kept His word in Jesus. In Christ we are part of the eternal covenant established in Christ's own blood. We have a Saviour who died, rose and ascended to the Father and now intercedes for us. He is forever faithful to his people. Jesus Christ achieved our redemption and more fully demonstrates the glory of God but in order to appreciate Him and worship God for what He has done we need to understand and think on the cost.

The Cost of Sacrifice

The death of these animal signified God's provision of a substitute to stand in the place of covenant breakers and that they could be forgiven by the shedding of blood and back then, it was the cost of forgiveness. A high cost for the animal. Hebrews 9.22 says that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." At calvary we see the most vivid depiction of the cost of our forgiveness under the new covenant. The animals dispatch was quick, not so for Jesus. We see the pain, the torture, the fear, the nails, the blood the pierced flesh... all done to atone for our sins, we see the cost to Jesus and the cost to the Father. Thomas Watson said, "Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet."

We will never praise the God of Grace with passion if we have a low view of sin. Christ died in agony and shed His own blood for us. Willingly. Death was never an accident, an afterthought or Plan B, it's not simply some natural process that everyone in the world is subject to, it is part of the divine judgement of sin. Death is a verdict, but not the end of the story, because of the gospel there is hope. Because of Jesus there is life.

The Covenant Meal

God chose to allow Moses, Aaron his 2 sons and 70 others to go up the mountain and meet with him and a meal was part of his plan which is both important and symbolic. V 10-11 tells us they "saw God" but we know from Ex 33:20 "no one can see God and live" but we can perhaps assume they saw his feet because we have a description of the pavement and his feet. Perhaps they had a vague vision of him, none the less we are told He ate with them and by showing something of Himself they could know for sure that God was serious about this covenant agreement with them and that they had agreed to keep with him in His actual Presence.

Christ Our Mediator

After the meal Moses was called further up the mountain, only he was allowed to draw near to God because he was chosen as the mediator between God and the Israelites. No one else was allowed to approach. Our Great High Priest Jesus Christ secured eternal redemption for His people by shedding His own blood and became the mediator of a new and better covenant. The old covenant priest entered the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle to offer sacrifices, Jesus went into the very Presence of God, into heaven itself and under the New Covenant we are invited to draw near too, because now Jesus Christ has given us access to the Father. It is in, through and accompanied by Jesus that we approach because, "Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and humanity," 1 Tim 2.5.

Sometimes the mountains in our lives are obstacles that we have to get round but sometimes we can choose to climb them like Moses and spend time with God. When Moses came down the mountain his experience had change him, "his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord." 34.29, but like Moses's journey ours requires determination, stamina, longing, obedience and a realisation that it is when we take time to pursue God He sometimes permits us to find Him and spend special time with Him. Most of the time it is easier to stay in the valleys and coast on the level ground but mountain top experiences can sustain us and help us through difficult times because it's up the mountain that we have those sweet close encounters with God that grow our faith.

The Lord's Supper

Just as God invited Moses and others up to have a meal with him so he invites us also. Each time we share the Eucharist we are reminded of the Last Supper meal Jesus shared with his friends. So as you receive the wine and a server says to you "The Blood of Christ shed for you," stop and think of what that means and what it cost. Jesus Christ says to us, "I gave up my life for you, my blood was shed for you, I willingly gave up my life for you because you are loved by me and by the Father and because we want you to spend eternity with us."

Timothy Keller puts it like this "What greater value could you possibly have than to be delighted in, and sacrificed for, by the Maker of the universe."

It's All About The Love of God

When Moses came down the mountain carrying the tablets and was met with a disobedient, unfaithful, ungrateful people who had fashioned their own god out of gold he was furious and he smashed the tablets on the ground. The Lord had rescued them and led them out of Egypt, fed them when hungry and provided water when thirsty, he was leading them to the Promised Land, but even after all he had done they still didn't trust him. Had they trusted him they would have waited while Moses was away and they would have worshipped Him instead of some gold idol in the form of a calf. Out of all nations God had chosen them. Had they known how much they were loved, they would have been at peace about the wait.

This story is all about the love that the Father has for us and knowing you are loved demands a response. Moses was mad, how must God have felt? Surely it was time when he could have said "enough is enough" and rejected them. But He is a faithful, covenant making, promise keeping God and He didn't give up on them and He will never give up on us.

"And now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and lift us from the dark valley of despair to the bright Mountain of hope, from the midnight of desperation to the Day-break of joy; to Him be power and authority, for ever. And ever."

Martin Luther King 1928-1968

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Emmanuel Church Text 2023



*The LORD bless you and keep you: the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you: the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26*

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Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Moses and 73 others were allowed to go up the mountain and share a meal with God, - an imperfect bunch of people meeting with the Sovereign, Holy God. What does this say about God? What does it say about His view of sharing meals together? What can it say to us about his desire for relationship with us?

2: God could have simply demanded obedience but instead he initiated a covenant between Himself and His people. How is this an indication of grace?

3: The people agreed to the terms of the covenant and responded "*We will do and obey everything that the Lord has commanded.*" v7. Have you ever said this to God? Are you intent on obeying God's Word no matter the consequences? Is there any part of your life off limits to God

4: “*The Blood of Christ shed for you.*” A powerful statement. A high cost paid by Jesus. Do you dwell much on this truth? Do you cherish the fact that Jesus poured out his life for you?

5: Tim Keller puts it like this - “*What greater value could you possibly have than to be delighted in, and sacrificed for, by the Maker of the universe.*” Does that feel true for you? How does it make you feel? How should this influence our worship?

6: It’s clear to see the Passion of Christ at Calvary and the love the Father has for us by sending Him to die to atone for our sins. What hinders us from showing Jesus *our* passion for Him in our worship? Is it that we have a “*low view of sin*” or do other things hold us back?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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