

Exodus 19, 24 — “Book of the Covenant”

Exodus 19:1-8 (NIV)

On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. ² After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

³ Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

⁷ So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. ⁸ The people all responded together, “We will do everything the Lord has said.” So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.

Exodus 24:3–11 (NIV)

³ When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, “Everything the Lord has said we will do.” ⁴ Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. ⁶ Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.”

⁸ 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.”

⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. ¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Comment

It cannot be understated how important these chapters are for the Bible, in particular chs. 19-24 and chs. 32-34. God is establishing a covenant with Israel through Moses thus chs. 19-24 are referred to as the “Book of the Covenant.” We will look at the 10 commandments and the example case law in chs. 21-23 next week but three things are important to recognize. **First**, God begins reminding them of the redemptive work he has already done. **Second**, the law is clearly a part of this covenant but comes *after* God’s deliverance (cf. Ex. 20:1-2). **Third**, Israel’s response to God’s covenant of redemption is to obey him. These features are important the New Testament allusions to themes here with respect to the church (Lk. 22:20; Jn. 14:15; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Questions

1. Dwell upon the imagery used in 19:4 which includes that of an eagle's wings and of a bridegroom ("brought you to myself"¹). What is being conveyed about the Lord here?
2. What is the significance that the Lord (YHWH) delivered Israel from slavery prior to giving them the law? Do you think that speaks to the dynamic between the gospel and obedience? Why or why not?
3. Several times in Ex. 19 and 24 it is repeated that the people said "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." Of course we know Israel did not keep their promise. How have you succeeded in keeping some promises and failed at keeping others? What have you learned about yourself and the Lord in your successes and failures?
4. What is the significance of the blood sprinkled on the people (Ex. 24:8)? How does Christ's blood bind us to obedience to him?
5. It is remarkable that in Ex. 24:11 Moses and the seventy elders "saw God" and ate and drank. The goal of the covenant has always been about God's presence. Do you long to see God, to be in his presence? Is this an important desire for the Christian and why?

¹ The language here is the language of a bridegroom bringing the bride to the chamber. This may be a deliberate allusion to another metaphor for the covenant relationship Biblical Studies Press, [*The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).