



## Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text  
Exodus 24:1-18

Topic  
70 of the Elders of Israel are invited to ascend Mount Sinai,  
but only Moses is brought into the cloud of God's glory

Title  
*"Hey, You, Get Off My Cloud;  
Don't Hang Around 'Cause 70's a Crowd"*

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*My Diet is Better than Yours.*

I'm referencing the 2016 reality TV series by that name. The series featured five contestants who each picked a trainer and a type of diet that they believed was the most suitable for them; the competitors subsequently dropped their trainers in the elimination process if the results were not satisfactory.

The results from worst to best:

#5 The Wellness Smackdown, changed in Episode Three to The Strong, Safe, Sexy Plan.

#4 The No Diet Plan.

#3 The Clean Momma Plan, changed in Episode Five to The Nutrient Timing Plan.

#2 The Paleolithic Wild Diet.

#1 The Superfood Swap Diet.

“Get lean while you clean,” is the slogan for the Clean Momma Plan. It’s creator calls it the busy woman’s guide to sustainable weight loss. It turns everyday household chores into exercises.

We will probably never agree on the best diet for humans; but we know the best diet for dogs. It’s K-L Ration. We know that because of the jingle:

*My dog’s bigger than your dog;  
My dog’s faster than yours  
My dog’s shinier ‘cause he gets Ken-L Ration,  
My dog’s **better** than yours*

Something else we agree on is that the New Covenant with Jesus is better than the Old Covenant with Moses. We’re told outright in Hebrews 7:22 that Jesus is the “guarantee of a better covenant.” The writer to the Hebrews goes on to explain that Jesus Christ is better than *everybody* and *everything*:

- In chapter two he says that Jesus Christ is better than angels.
- In chapter three he says that Jesus is better than Moses.
- In chapter four, Jesus is better than Joshua.
- And then Jesus is better than the high priest Aaron.
- And then Jesus is better than the Old Testament sacrifices

What Israel had was good; but what we have is better. They had the shadow; we have the substance.

Keep that in mind as we look at chapter twenty-four of Exodus. I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 "Draw Near To Me," says Jesus Who Bled Better For You, and #2 "Draw Near To Me," Says Jesus Who Builds Better With You.

#1 "Draw Near To Me," Says Jesus,  
Who Bled Better For You  
(v1-11)

It's not eavesdropping if you overhear conversations while you're waiting for the movie to start. While we were waiting for the third installment of *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* to start, *The Return of the King*, we overheard a guy telling those he was with that he had not seen the previous two movies.

It was just wrong on so many levels.

Sometimes you need previous or additional material to understand what you're watching... Or reading.

The Bible is like that generally. It's been said, and it's true, that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible.

You've probably heard the old adage regarding the Old and New Testaments that says, "The New is in the Old contained, while the Old is in the New explained."

As we've already suggested, the passage we are studying today should be explained by our knowledge of the Book of Hebrews.

Hebrews allows us to see that while the Covenant God made with Israel was good, ours is far, far better.

There is disagreement among commentators on the exact order of events in Exodus twenty-four. It seems like verses one through eleven describe one ascent of Mount Sinai, while verses twelve through eighteen describe a different ascent.

Regarding the first ascent, it seems that verses one and two, and verses nine through eleven, occur *after* verses three through eight.

That being the case, let's start with verses three through eight.

Exo 24:3 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."

"All the words of the LORD and all the judgments" summarizes the things we've been reading starting with God speaking the Ten Commandments to Israel in chapter twenty. What we learn here is that God wasn't simply giving them Laws; He was inviting Israel to enter into a binding agreement with Him - a covenant.

Having heard God's Laws, the people eagerly agreed, promising to obey the Lord.

At this point Israel is typically criticized for being too hasty. For sure, we know from their history that the nation would miserably fail to obey the Lord. I would, however, note two things:

1. First, this wasn't a promise to never disobey. It was an agreement to the terms of God's covenant. It was like those disclaimers that pop-up all the time on-line, where you must choose "Accept" or "Do Not Accept." If you want to move forward, you "Accept."
2. Second, do we not promise to obey the Lord everyday only to fall short? Let's cut them some grace.

That's not to give the impression God was forcing them into something against their will. Israel knew this was a binding covenant. What's more - I'm going to say that they were excited about entering into it. I mean, look at all God had already done for them? Who wouldn't want to sign on the dotted line?

Exo 24:4 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.

Sometimes you need a paper trail to establish what you really agreed to. A few months ago, we learned that the State of California had suspended Calvary Chapel of Hanford from being a corporation. It had the potential of voiding any contracts we have entered, e.g., our mortgage. They were claiming that at our inception, the Secretary of State determined we were a religious organization but not a church. The difference is that churches do not file any annual tax documents, but religious organizations do file annually. As far as the State was concerned, we owed filings dating back to 1985.

It was solved when we produced the original document we received from the State saying we were incorporated as - you guessed it - a church.

Moses built an altar, and twelve pillars. The altar represented God in the covenant, while the twelve pillars represented the nation of Israel and its twelve tribes.

Exo 24:5 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.

There was no formal priesthood yet, but Israelites were familiar with sacrifices going all the way back to the Garden of Eden. The “young men” were likely firstborn men who represented their tribes.

From the beginning, in the Garden, God established that something had to die in order for sin to be dealt with. Because the penalty for sin is death, and because everyone is born a sinner, a substitute is necessary to have fellowship with God. Blood must be shed.

Exo 24:6 And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

It was a covenant agreed to and ratified by blood - the blood of a substitute who died on their behalf. God would accept the substitute and they would live as His nation, under His Laws.

Exo 24:7 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."

It wasn't like the contracts we regularly sign, e.g., in escrow for a new home, in which we don't read anything, and have just a basic idea what we agreed to. The terms of the Covenant were clear.

Exo 24:8 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."

Moses probably sprinkled the blood on the twelve pillars that represented the people of Israel, and not on the people. Still, this was a bloody ceremony.

Exo 24:1 Now He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD..."

This signing, as it were, was preliminary and necessary in order for the Lord to be able to say to them (v1), "Come up to the LORD..."

What was happening in this Covenant was tremendous; it was exhilarating. God had made a way for Israel to approach Him, and to worship Him, and to reveal Him to the Gentiles. The fact that the Old Covenant is inferior to our superior New Covenant shouldn't be a reason for us to think little of it.

The superior access we have to Jesus can dull us to the fact that God was inviting Israel into His presence as much as He could prior to the Cross.

Exo 24:1 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.

On this momentous occasion, representatives of the nation, as well as those who would be priests, accompanied Moses. Sure, the worshipped "from afar," but it was closer than any living Israelite other than Moses had ever been to God.

Again, it was inferior to our access; but for its time, it was wonderful.

Exo 24:2 And Moses alone shall come near the LORD, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him."

Moses still enjoyed greater access. The gen-pop had access only through representation. It was nevertheless unprecedented access to the Creator of Heaven and earth.

Drop down or scroll ahead to verse nine:

Exo 24:9 Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,

Exo 24:10 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.

I thought you couldn't see God and live; yet these all are described as "see[ing] the God of Israel." Commentators jump through a lot of hoops to explain why they didn't *really* "see" God; or that they only saw His "feet."



According to commentary provided by Stephen in the Book of Acts, they saw the son of God, the God of Israel, in an human form, as a pledge of His future incarnation.

They saw Him; and the reason they didn't die is in the next verse:

Exo 24:11 But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand...

The "nobles" describes everyone other than Moses. God let them see Him without them dying. OK, it may have been a limited viewing - the place where He was standing. But they saw Him.

Exo 24:11 But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

They ate in His presence. Nothing in the Bible shouts fellowship quite like sharing a meal. Jesus goes so far as to compare salvation to His knocking on your door and you inviting Him in to supper.

Distance... Partial sight... The Old Covenant was inferior, but if you were part of that nation, you'd know that God was in your midst, loving you, desiring to have fellowship with you.

God wasn't trying to keep Himself hidden. He wanted to reveal Himself *to* Israel, and *through* Israel. It's just that before the Cross, this was as good as it got.

"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."

Compare what the apostle John would see *after* the Cross:

Rev 1:12 ... I saw seven golden lampstands,

Rev 1:13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Rev 1:14 His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

Rev 1:15 His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

Rev 1:16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.

“Come up to the LORD,” He said to Israel. There’s a New Testament version of that invitation. We are repeatedly exhorted to “Draw near to God.”

The writer to the Hebrews uses that phrasing several times. Here are three of them:

- Heb 4:16 (NASB) Therefore let us **draw near** with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- Heb 7:25 (NASB) Therefore He is able also to save forever those who **draw near** to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
- Heb 10:22 let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

One commentator said of this drawing near,

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Exodus 24:1-18  
*“Hey, You, Get Off My Cloud;  
Don’t Hang Around ‘Cause 70’s a Crowd”*

The great aim of this writer is that we get near God, that we have fellowship with him, that we not settle for a Christian life at a distance from God, that God not be a distant thought, but a near and present reality.

Our drawing near is not anything physical. It isn't the good works we perform; it isn't our spiritual disciplines; it isn't even our devotions.

It is an invisible decision of the heart to believe we can have immediate access to the throne of God in Heaven. Someone said, "God is as distant as the holy of holies in heaven, and yet as near as the door of faith."

The Israelites approached the Lord through the blood of bulls and goats. We approach Him through the blood of His Son shed for us. In Hebrews 10:19 it says, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus..."

The result: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

God desires we each draw near. His Son died to make it possible for a believer to *always* have immediate access to Him.

Are we unworthy? Of course! But it's not up to me to make myself worthy - as if I could do anything in my own strength.

I quoted Hebrews 10:22, which said, "let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

The authors of the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* explain that, saying,

The writer's words are probably an exhortation to lay hold consciously of the cleansing benefits of Christ's Cross and to draw near to God in enjoying them, putting away inward guilt and outward impurity.

Whatever might be keeping you from drawing near to God is not as powerful as the blood Jesus shed that you might draw near.

Lay hold of the access you have to Him, by faith. He desires to have supper with you - to fellowship with you. Enjoy it.

## #2 "Draw Near To Me," Says Jesus, Who Builds Better With You

(v12-18)

Have you ever considered the similarities between Jesus and Moses?

Jesus is sent by God to deliver his people, pursued as an infant by a murderous king, and spared in Egypt. Jesus came out of Egypt, enters the wilderness for forty days of testing, and then goes up on a mountain to deliver a new law. Jesus is known to miraculously feed large crowds of people in desolate, wilderness-like places and is spotted by his disciples on a mountain with his face shining like the sun.

*This echoes Moses' story almost exactly.* It's why we can say that Moses was a type of Jesus. We see Moses in the next set of verses - but we're looking ahead to Jesus.

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Exodus 24:1-18

*"Hey, You, Get Off My Cloud;  
Don't Hang Around 'Cause 70's a Crowd"*

Exo 24:12 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."

This is another ascent up Mount Sinai, after some time had passed.

Exo 24:13 So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

Joshua in this chapter makes for a great devotional. Sure, he got to go part way up with Moses; but not far enough to be in God's presence. Nevertheless he had to wait forty days in a kind of no-man's land.

Ever been there? Feeling a little distant from God, but without any immediate help from the fellowship of believers?

Exo 24:14 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."

They were to "wait" at the foot of Mount Sinai, at base camp. Moses seemed to know that he would be gone a while, because he made plans to have his duties as judge covered by Aaron and Hur.

Exo 24:15 Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

Exo 24:16 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.

Moses would wait for six days, in the cloud cover, before being brought into the presence of God. We don't know why he must wait, or how Moses occupied himself. It's likely Joshua was with him during this time. It could be the wait was more for Joshua than Moses - a time for them to retreat, as it were.

The things God does in and surrounding your life impact others. You can't always know the impact, but that doesn't diminish its importance.

Exo 24:17 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.

Fire can be devastating. Our friend Dennis Agajanian posted that his home was spared in the Alpine fire that started Friday.

The "consuming fire on the top" of Mount Sinai didn't consume anything; it burned as the glory of God. It gave the Israelites a visual of God.

Exo 24:18 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.

We pointed-out the similarities between Moses and Jesus. I came across this list of ways Jesus is superior to Moses:

- Moses was sent to deliver the nation of Israel out of physical slavery in Egypt, Jesus was sent to deliver people from all nations out of spiritual slavery to sin in their hearts.
- Moses only spoke the words he received from God, Jesus came as the very Word of God who declared, “I say to you” and it simply *was* God’s words.
- Moses came as a recipient of the Law, Jesus came to fulfill the Law.
- Moses’ face shone with the reflection of the heavenly glory he had seen, Jesus’ shone like the sun with his own divine glory.
- Moses mediated temporarily between God and man by the Law, Jesus mediates eternally between God and man by the shedding of his own blood.

Once more turning to Hebrews, we read,

Heb 3:3 For this One [i.e., Jesus] has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

Heb 3:4 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God.

Heb 3:5 And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*,

Heb 3:6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

Moses was a great servant. God used him mightily to build a nation, under God, based upon the Covenant ratified by the blood of substitutes.

Jesus is the Son. He is building the Church, based on the New Covenant ratified by His blood as our once-for-all Substitute.

Jesus is building better than Moses ever could. The apostle Peter said,

1Pe 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

There has never been anything like what we call the Church. Believers are each part of a living “building” project. The Holy Spirit inhabits us - individually and corporately.

In the recent *Justice League* feature film, the bad guy came to earth to retrieve what were called Mother Boxes. There were three of them. Wonder Woman says of them, “They don’t contain power; they are power.” They were kept apart, because if they got near one another, they’d unite and their power would be unleashed.

Maybe we can think of believers a little like that. We are living stones, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Built together, united in a fellowship, we are God’s power on earth as the means through which the Gospel is announced.

We are the better building, being built by the better Builder, in the fellowship of believers in the local church.

As living stones in this better building, we are “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”



Our assignment is an assessment. We are to ask ourselves, “Am I offering up spiritual sacrifices?”

By “ask ourselves,” I mean we are to ask the Lord to search our hearts. With His aid, review your use of time; your use of talent; and your use of treasure.

When we met at the YMCA, they had a wall that had fake bricks with the names of donors.

Spiritually speaking, you should see your name - your brick - in the on-going building of the greatest building ever built, the church of Jesus Christ.