EXODUS
Chapter 24

The Covenant Confirmed

**Then 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. 2 Moses alone shall come near to
the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."
3 Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the
people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will
do." 4 And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. 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. 5 And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and
sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. 6 And Moses took half of the blood and put it
in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the
Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has
spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." 8 And Moses took the blood and threw it on the
people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in
accordance with all these words." 9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy
of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet
as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. 11 And he did
not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and
drank. 12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I
may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written
for their instruction." 13 So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into
the mountain of God. 14 And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you.
And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them."
15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory
of the LORD dwelt 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. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of
the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of
Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the
mountain forty days and forty nights.**

24:1–2 Moses (the leader), along with priests and elders (religious and state leaders), represented the people in the covenant confirmation. (TLSB)

24:1 *Come up.* The action, temporarily interrupted for the Book of the Covenant (20:22–23:33), is resumed from 20:21. Moses and his associates would ascend the mountain after the events of vv. 3–8. (CSB)

Nadab and Abihu. Aaron's two oldest sons. Nadab would have succeeded Aaron as high priest, but he and his brother died because they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord (see Lev 10:1–2; Nu 3:4). (CSB)

seventy … elders. Cf. Nu 11:16; perhaps representing Jacob's 70 descendants. (CSB)

24:2 *Moses alone.* The mediator between God and the people of Israel. Jesus, the second Moses (see Heb 3:1–6), is the "mediator of a new covenant" (Heb 12:24). (CSB)

24:3 *words.* Probably refers to the Ten Commandments (see 20:1 and note). (CSB)

rules. Probably refers to the stipulations of the Book of the Covenant (21:1–23:19). (CSB)

with one voice. Showing consensus and unity. (TLSB)

24:4 *twelve stone.* Stones were piled up to make pillars as a memorial of the event (cf Jsh 4:4–7). (TLSB)

24:5 *young Israelite men … offered.* Designated for the task (cf 19:22), since the Levitical priesthood had not yet been established. (TLSB)

24:6 *half of the blood.* The division of the blood points to the twofold aspect of the "blood of the covenant" (v. 8): The blood on the altar symbolizes God's forgiveness and his acceptance of the offering; the blood on the people points to an oath that binds them in obedience (see vv. 3, 7). (CSB)

How covenants were made. An animal was sacrificed, and the agreement was sealed by its death and blood. This is the establishment of the agreement between God and His people. (TLSB)

24:7 *Book of the Covenant.* Strictly speaking, 20:22–23:19 —but here implying also the stipulations of 20:2–17; 23:20–33. (CSB)

Lit, "scroll." (TLSB)

24:8 *blood of the covenant.* The writer of the book of Hebrews explains the significance of this ratification ceremony for us as NT Christians with the words: "When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.' In the same way, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgives" (Hebrews 9:19-22). (PBC)

Under the covenant the people were called to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). (The priests were consecrated in this way.) Only through the cleansing of forgiveness could they become special. This is a covenant of grace, initiated by God and made possible by His willingness to transfer the people's guilt to the animals sacrificed for forgiveness. Only after entering into this covenant are the people set apart and equipped as God's people. The shed blood of Christ consecrates God's people of the new covenant as a holy nation with a holy purpose (1 Peter 2:9). Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for all sin has the power to consecrate all people to God. In a real and spiritual way His blood is applied and His forgiveness is appropriated in Holy Baptism, in Absolution, and the faithful hearing of the Word. His atoning blood is received in a real and physical way in the Lord's Supper: "this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

24:9 *went up.* See v. 1 and note. (The action, temporarily interrupted for the Book of the Covenant (20:22–23:33), is resumed from 20:21. Moses and his associates would ascend the mountain after the events of vv. 3–8. (CSB)

Nadab and Abihu. Aaron's two oldest sons. Nadab would have succeeded Aaron as high priest, but he and his brother died because they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord (see Lev 10:1–2; Nu 3:4). (CSB)

seventy … elders. Cf. Nu 11:16; perhaps representing Jacob's 70 descendants.) (CSB)

These ministers represent the whole nation before God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

24:10 *saw … God.* But not in the fullness of his glory (see 33:20). (CSB)

No one could see God and live, but the elders did not die. The Lord is never described physically in this passage, but Moses describes the place where the Lord appeared. (TLSB)

Describes God's acceptance of His people and the intimate fellowship between God and sinners (cf 33:18–20). (TLSB)

No OT passage ever describes God. God does not want Israel to make an image that looked like Him. (LL)

The Lord graciously dimmed His absolute glory in some way. (PBC)

It gives the Israelites tangible assurance that through the covenant they have become acceptable to approach God, and they can be sure of His promise to bless them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

under his feet – This implies that the deputation did not dare to raise their eyes to God. (Concordia Journal – April 1991)

sapphire. (lapis lazuli) – This reminds us of the vision described by the prophet Ezekiel recorded in Ezekiel 1:25-28. Again we are reminded of those beautiful pictures in the book of Revelation, when that great multitude of the redeemed that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language will be standing before the throne of God in front of the Lamb, when "they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. They will not need the light of the lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:4-5). (PBC)

heavens. Symbolized by the blue color of the "sapphire" (see Eze 1:26). (CSB)

24:11 *he did not lay his hand on*. This also appears to qualify the statements of verse 10. If, especially in view of Exodus 33:20, we might expect that a direct observation of the theophany would have meant certain death, these words may indicate the extraordinary nature of this event, marking this as a unique event in the history of Israel. (Concordia Journal – April 1991)

There's something a little alarming about this OT passage. Usually the Scriptures are very comforting. So why, we ask, would God "raise His hand" against His people? That's our problem, you see. It seems that we've lost the accurate picture of the true God of heaven and earth; we've substituted a god of our own making. The true God deals in categories of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood. God, in the popular mind, is an enabler who helps us do whatever our little hearts desire. That god does not exist; that god is a pure fabrication. Maybe the reason

people have grown confused and complacent in the Christian faith is that we have lost sight of the reality of sin and judgment. The sobering truth is that if God kept a record of our sins, there would not be a person left alive among us. "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Galatians 3:10). And we have not done them. That's the simple truth. Only Jesus has fulfilled the whole will and law of God. Dying our death in our place, He offered us His very own life to live. As a sign of His love and as an encouragement to our faith, He gives us a feast here in the wilderness of this world. What Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu could do only once, we can do over and over again. For as long as the earth endures, every time we eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in His remembrance, we eat and drink in the presence of God. Thankfully, He does not life His hand against us. There is pardon and peace in Jesus' name. There is comfort for every sorrowing heart and solace for every sinner crushed by the bitter memory of shattered promises. In that meal God Himself give us forgiveness of sins in the body Jesus gave upon His cross and the blood He shed for all. Along with forgiveness comes life – life to begin again. (Where in the World is God?)

chief men. Lit. "corners," "corner supports"; used in the sense of "leaders" only here. Cf. Gal 2:9. (CSB)

ate and drank. A covenant meal (cf. Ge 26:30; 31:54), celebrating the sealing of the covenant described in vv. 3–8. It foreshadows the Lord's Supper, which celebrates the new covenant sealed by Christ's death (see 1Co 11:25–26). (CSB)

The degree of fellowship is evidenced by the shared meal. (TLSB)

The Lord's Supper gives us a foretaste and guarantee of the future messianic banquet we will enjoy with the Lord (Rev. 19:7-9). The we will see God and eat and drink as did Israel's representatives. In fact, the Lord's Supper gives us even more. In Exodus 24 the two events were separate in time. The Israelites received the blood of the covenant at the bottom of the mountain, and they saw God, ate, and drank at the top of the mountain. In the Lord's Supper these two events are brought together; the bottom and the top of the mountain events are united. Now we eat the Lord's body and drink His blood of the covenant at the same time. Even now we are privileged to see the Lord, though in hidden form behind the bread and the wine. What blessings the Lord gives us in His Supper! (LL)

24:12 *Come up.* It is a fitting close to this ratification of the covenant between the Lord and Israel at Mount Sinai. Moses now at the Lord's own request ascends the mountain to receive the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments, as well as detailed instruction concerning the building if the tabernacle, the place of the covenant. (PBC)

their. The people's. (CSB)

God set the terms. He initiated the covenant with His people by rescuing them from Egypt. (TLSB)

instruction. As instruction from the covenant Lord, the laws were divine directives. (CSB)

The Hebrew root for the word law means to "point, direct, or instruct." Hence, the Law is Torah, instruction! It is not primarily a precept in legal form, but rather a revelation of God's instruction on how his people are to live. God wrote the manual on living. If people would follow the instructions, they would find life more pleasing and fulfilling. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

24:13 *his assistant Joshua.* Moses' aide and second-in-command. He would later lead the people into the Promised Land. (TLSB)

24:14 *Hur.* Probably the son of Caleb, one of two faithful spies. (TLSB)

24:15 *cloud covered the mountain* – Clouds for OT people meant God's presence. The transfiguration of our Lord replicates the mountain, the cloud cover, the glory of the Lord, and the calling to Moses from within the cloud. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

24:16 Moses does not inform us about his activities during the previous six days. (TLSB)

24:17 *glory of the LORD.* The glory of the Lord appearing as a consuming fire as well as a cloud is reminiscent of the experience of Israel's wanderings in the desert, where God's presence was indicated to them in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

24:18 *Moses entered the cloud* – Holy and majestic, yes, like a consuming fire. Yet at the same time gracious and forgiving, receiving Moses as a mediator of His covenant with His people. (PBC)

Moses and Joshua continued up the mountain to a point at which Joshua stopped and Moses ascended farther. Moses waited until the seventh day and then entered the presence of the Lord. (TLSB)

was on the mountain. Moses did not come down until he had received instructions concerning the tabernacle and its furnishings (see 32:15). (CSB)

forty days and forty nights. Jesus, the second Moses, fasted for the same length of time (see Mt 4:2). (CSB)

Moses stay on the mountain finds its parallel in Jesus' fasting for the same length of time at his temptation in the wilderness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

It was a miracle that he could do this without eating and drinking. The number forty occurs here as well as in Elijah's journey to Horeb (described in 1 Kings 19:8), Christ's temptation in the desert, and Israel's wandering in the wilderness. In every case it involves a time of testing as well as of strengthening by a merciful Lord. (PBC)

Ch 24 Moses ascends Mount Sinai to receive the terms of the covenant God makes with His people, concluding the Book of the Covenant begun in ch 20. Sin creates an impassible barrier between God and people. By the blood of the covenant, the Lord anticipates the forgiveness of sins in Jesus, who would become "sin" for us in order to redeem us (2Co 5:21). • "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps 51:7). Amen. (TLSB)