

EXODUS 24

THE PRESENCE AND NEARNESS OF GOD

God has always sought to dwell among His people. That was the purpose for creation.

The imagery and meaning of foreign cultures is often lost on us.

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

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." 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. 5 Then he sent young men of the children

of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. 6 And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 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." 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."

- This is the ratification of the covenant God has made with Israel. He has given them the Law, which we tend to equate with “Thou shalt nots.” But this isn’t really the case.
- They have been given statutes that reveal the heart of God. These laws aren’t just dry commandments, but they actually codify how taking care of people relates to the heart of God. When we understand them in their context, we don’t see a power-hungry ogre of a god. We see a caring benevolent creator who is using a people He has “built from scratch” who are to be a light to the nations. Does that sound familiar?

- We will get to the point of “worshipping from afar” later. But suffice it to say that it probably isn’t what some of us may think.
- Moses told the people what was in the Law and the people agreed to follow it. This was their chance to reject it if they chose to do so, but they agreed to it. How could they reject a covenant with the God who delivered them from Egypt and was currently manifesting His presence at the top of the mountain before which they were encamped?
- Don’t look at them as just agreeing, knowing they were going to fail. That wasn’t the case. I believe they were sincere, on the whole.
- Are we any different?
- We need to realize that there was grace built into the Law, when it was read as common law and not just statutes.
- **Deuteronomy 25:4**
- **4 “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.**
- Explain
- **1 Corinthians 9: 7 - 12**
- **7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does**

- not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?**
- **8 Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? 10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? 12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?**
 - The Apostle Paul shows us how the Law was to be used – as common law, not just statutory law. Can you see how the law is not just about an ox? That is what Paul asked. It is actually about the godly way to treat not only animals but other individuals as well. We are to read all of the Law in this way.
 - Moses then sprinkled the blood on the altar as well as the people. Blood was seen as the life force of all living things. It was also seen to be

a cleansing agent.

- Temple language – blood wasn't to cleanse the sins of the people. The scapegoat ceremony was for that. When people were offering animals for sacrifice in the OT, it was to cleanse the Temple from the pollution it had suffered due to the people who had come in contact and inhabited the Temple. The Temple, as the dwelling place of God had to be clean.

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

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."

13 So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. 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.” 15 Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

- Look carefully at the divisions of the people. Only Moses and some of the elders were allowed to approach the mountain and climb any part of it. The people as a whole were to remain at the base of the mountain in the camp.
- The elders were permitted to ascend up to a point. And Joshua could go with Moses for a little way up the mountain, but only Moses could go into the cloud where the presence of God was being manifested in power and glory.
- This is Temple language once again. When the Temple is eventually built, there is an outer court, where the majority of the people are allowed to go, and go no further. This was the base of the mountain. Then there was an inner court where the priests in general could go. This is the lower part of the mountain where the elders and Joshua were allowed to go. But only Moses could ascend to the top of

the mountain to be in God's presence. This is akin to the Holy of Holies where only the High Priest could go, and then he could only go in there once a year. It was the most sacred of the sacred space.

- How many kings of Israel can you name?
- How many High Priests can you name? The office of High Priest was an office that represented God. The name of the High Priest wasn't important. It was the office that was important. In the Law, there is an allowance for a king, but there is virtually no role for a king. He is almost a king in name only, as far as the Law goes. A high Priest, according to the Law could be seen as royalty, but a king could never be the high priest. In fact, the King was subservient to the High Priest. It was only among the pagan nations that a king could be a priest. This is why the book of Hebrews had to reference Melchizedek to combine the two.
- To the Israelites, the High Priest was more highly thought of than the king.
- So we have Temple language here – a preview of what will soon be manifested in the building of the Tabernacle and eventually

culminate in the building of the Temple – a house for God to live among His people. (Eden and the earth as a Temple.)

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. 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. 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.

- Six days – linked back to creation and the workweek, where work was being done.
- Forty – a time of testing such as in the flood.
- But where does all this lead us?

Israelites were make pilgrimages to Jerusalem in order to sacrifice. Everything was to take place at the Temple. The High Priest was whom they were to see. The High Priest performed a Messianic role.

- The other temples built during the divided

kingdom – God’s residence.

Mark 1: 14,15

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

- Adam and Eve were told to subdue the earth. This is royal language. This is the context for the kingdom among the Israelites. This is kingdom and Temple language. God coming to reign was played out in the Temple and its rituals.
- The time is, “at hand.” The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word meaning to draw near. It refers to time, meaning to be near, but it also refers to when people went to the Temple to sacrifice, they were said to “draw near” to God and His presence in the Temple. Bear that in mind.
- If you read what Jesus does in the Gospels, He declares that the time has drawn near, but we

also have to look at what He says and does. Along with His declaration that the kingdom has drawn near, He also heals the sick, casts out demons and forgives people of their sin.

- The Pharisees take umbrage at all this. Why? They are appalled because number one, only God can forgive sin. This was done through sacrifice through the office of the High Priest. And Jesus also healed the sick. This had to be confirmed through the priesthood. He was casting out demons, which was normally done through the priesthood and all these things were normally done at the Temple. And now Jesus was doing all these things apart from the priesthood in the Galilee, away from the Temple. How could He do this? He could do it because the Temple was supposed to be the house of God, but Jesus was/ is God and He moved “out of the Temple” and nearer to His people. The presence of God/ God Himself was now going out among His people.
- Only the Queen can issue passports.
- In 1 Corinthians 3 and 6, Paul tells us that

now we are the Temple and God, the Holy Spirit now resides within us!

- In Exodus and throughout the OT, God resided in a Temple made with hands. Eventually, the whole earth, a new heavens and earth, will be His Temple, as it was supposed to be in Genesis. God lived among His people in a Temple, garden, or mountain. And only certain members of the priesthood could come near Him so as to limit the pollution of humanity coming into the Temple. So there was this issue of worshipping God from afar. But Jesus, as the High Priest, as the manifest presence of God, moved out of the Temple and dwelt among His people, doing the things that at one time could only take place in the Temple. His presence became nearer than ever before! And now, for the believer, His presence is in each of us! We are the Temple! And in that, God's presence never leaves us, but it also moves around this present world through us as we are disciple and are to make disciples. Never doubt the presence of God. In fact, the believer can never deny the presence of God unless we deny our own existence.

- From the beginning, God has sought to be present in and among His people. Jesus has shown us how that works. Remember this when reading the Law and other OT books. And see how He is near you, even within you, even now.