

Exodus 24

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[0:00] Exodus 24, starting at verse 1. Everything the Lord has said we will do.

Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar on the foot of the mountain and set up 12 stone pillars representing the 12 tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half the blood and put it in bowls and the other half he splashed against the altar.

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. Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said this is the blood of the covenant and the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.

Moses and Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the 70 elders of Israel went up and they saw God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright as blue sky.

[1:42] But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites. They saw God and they ate and drank. The Lord said to Moses, come up to me on the mountain and stay here and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I've written for their instruction.

Then Moses set out with Joshua his aid and Moses went up the mountain of God. He said to the elders, wait here for us until we come back to you.

Aaron and her are with you and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them. When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai.

For six days, the clouds covered the mountains and on the seventh day, the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites, the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.

Then Moses entered the cloud as he went up the mountain and he stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. Well, if you've come along for the first time, then we've been working our way through this Old Testament book of Exodus.

[2:59] You'll see that if you were in the Bible, reading it through, it's near the beginning of the Bible. It's a story of how the people of God were kind of enslaved in Egypt and how God delivered them.

You maybe learned the stories if you're old enough in school or in primary school. Or you've seen it, it was popularized in the animated film, The Prince of Egypt.

And to be honest, it's tempting sometimes when we have a service like this morning, maybe with a number of guests to kind of think, maybe I'll preach on something else other than Exodus in depth of the Old Testament.

But actually, somebody sent me, and I'm passing it around to pals as well, a video clip of a couple of boxing commentators sort of talking about boxing, but then suddenly kind of talking about the Bible.

Now, neither of them, I don't think, would declare themselves Christians as yet, but they're both on this journey where a friend who's probably a Christian has handed them a Bible and said, you need to read this. And they're like, what?

[4:00] And he said, as he started to read it, it's unbelievable. Just how helpful, you know, how it's been speaking. And the two of them in the middle of this, you know, sort of interview start talking to each other about how important they found the Bible in each of their lives, and they're joyfully kind of looking into it.

But the thing is, if you're new to looking into the Bible, and you're sort of wondering where to look, and you come across something like this in the Old Testament, and you think, ah, how am I

supposed to make sense of this? So I think actually there's something quite helpful about looking at this this morning.

If you're new to looking into the Bible, I really encourage you to start with the New Testament, maybe the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, just to kind of help you get a sort of handle on where Jesus is at.

And if you're new to it, actually, think about going to the Christianity Explorer course as well. So this actually, for those who have been sort of tracking through Exodus with us, this is our last in the series in Exodus.

I know there's more of the book to go, but we're kind of taking a break. And out next week, we're going to start a series in Paul's second letter. We're going to go in the New Testament, second letter to the church in Thessalonica.

[5:02] And then after that, we're going to have one week looking at the Jude, who's Jesus' half-brother, letter that he wrote. And then we'll dip back into the Old Testament, the intriguing book of Hosea, the prophet.

So that's kind of where we're going. So just a reminder of the context for those who haven't been here or just need a reminder of the last couple of weeks, what we've been doing.

A couple of weeks ago, we looked at the passage that really, you know, have this sort of 10 words for life that God wanted to speak into the people of God. 10 statements that summed out how to live life before God and with one another.

10 words that were meant to keep and enlarge our loves. Love for God and love for neighbor. 10 words or sentences that we discovered that were to help cultivate, for us as Christians, our life in Christ.

Help us to live in the freedom for which Christ has set us free. Those 10 words, 10 sentences are popularly called the 10 commandments. And then last week, we looked at other, you know, sort of laws and regulations for the people of God at that time and sort of how they can help us today.

[6:16] What they show about God, what God is like, and the sort of eternal character of God as well as the heart of God. As he spoke into the lives of these new believers, the new life that he was giving to them, and spoke things that were there to kind of set them free from the stuff that binds, that so easily entangles that the Bible calls sin.

And if you're new or not, and it's easy to kind of sort of look at the passage like this and think, what on earth is going on there?

There's a lot going on. I'm not sure I understand it. But hopefully, as we kind of look through it, it'll kind of become a little bit clearer and see just how helpful the whole of the scriptures are for us.

I know that guys in the community groups, hopefully get a heads up. We looked at the passage through the week, and I'll give you a heads up on what we're going to be looking at. But if you've not looked at it before, then actually you can see something of the arc of what's going on.

If you look at sort of the first verse and then sort of partway through and see what's happening. So first verse, chapter 24, verse 1. Then the Lord said to Moses, come up to the Lord, you and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and the 70 of the elders of Israel.

[7:28] You're to worship at a distance, but Moses is going to approach alone. And then by verses 9 to 11, they're eating in the presence of the Lord. That's actually what Scott was referring to.

So there's a kind of at the beginning, stay at your distance, but actually partway through, we see that the people are intimate in the presence of God.

So they feared coming up and coming near. Something happens in the middle that changes that, and then all of a sudden, they're in close fellowship with the Lord. That's kind of what's happening. They're at a distance, something happens in the middle, they're not far from God. And when I was thinking about this, thinking how do I kind of sum up this? Is there a helpful kind of phrase?

And when our kids were growing up, we used to listen to the Australian sort of kids, Christian songwriter, Colin Buchanan. He did lots of memory verses to song.

[8:28] One of them was, James 4 verse 8, draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. James 4, you know, very easy. And that's actually what came to mind. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you, and reveal to you glorious things.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you, and he will reveal glorious things. That's where we're kind of going this morning. Verses 1 and 2, they're like a summary statement of the rest of the verses.

How in sort of verses 1 to 11 are the account of Moses and the elders going up the mountain, and then verses 12 to 19, Moses and Joshua going for an extended period, and how the rest of the people are not to go up.

So kind of hang it right. Three phrases, confirmations and covenant, communing, and then consuming glory. Hopefully that will make sense as I go along.

So verse 3, before Moses and the elders ascend, something happens culturally, familiar to them, but maybe utterly foreign to us. Now, especially if you're looking to the Bible for the first time, and there's lots in the Bible that you kind of have to think about that.

[9:37] You know, some of these things, like this event, happened three and a half thousand years ago, and so there are things culturally that made sense to them that don't necessarily make sense to us. So for example, classic is in Ruth chapter 4, verse 7.

It's page 270 if you want to have a look at it, but Ruth chapter 4, verse 7, and there's a sort of parenthesis to kind of caveat what's going on to help the reader understand, and it says this. Now, in the earlier times in Israel, for their redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandals and gave it to the other.

This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel. So three and a half thousand years ago, you'd take off your sandal, and you'd give it to whomever you were doing a transaction with, and they got to hold on to your smelly sandal, which is the way that they did it.

So I guess you would make sure you wore your scabby sandals that morning, because you don't want to give them your best one. And then you wonder if somebody just saw an entrepreneurial opportunity and had it in the marketplace, you know, sort of scabby sandals for sale that you can give as part of your transaction so you can hold on to your Gucci's or whatever it is that you have.

[10:46] And again, sort of similarly in this passage, things that are familiar then, not familiar to us now, that might be helpful to know, especially if you're new at looking at the scriptures, that in ancient times, large and binding agreements were called covenants.

That's what they called them. The Latin word for covenant is testament. And so that's, the Bible is all about covenants. There are two testaments. There's the Old Testament and there's the New Testament.

And really the word, because the Latin word testament is just covenant. It's old covenant and new covenant. That's why Jesus, you know, if you're familiar with at the Last Supper, he took the cup saying, this is the new covenant, new binding agreement that I'm establishing in my blood.

So there's the old covenant. We're in the old covenant and then there's the new covenant. A covenant is a strong binding agreement. Tim Keller used to describe it as a combination of love and law.

By that, it meant that it was relational and there was love. But there were agreements on both sides for as both parties kept the covenant, there was blessing. But if they didn't keep it, there were forfeits or curses when they were breached.

[12:08] So the Bible describes times when two nations or kings make binding agreements or covenants for peace or for partnership. And when it says that they make a covenant, literally the Hebrew says that they cut a covenant.

And typically what would happen is that they would literally cut a series of animals in half and they would lay them on the side of a path.

And both parties would walk through on the path between the animals and saying, we are today making a binding agreement and may it be to either of us as with these data animals if we do not keep this binding agreement.

That's how they did it back in the day. Very visual, very dramatic, in the sight of all the people. And so that was a sort of memorable thing.

Imagine if they did that today. You know, trade negotiations at the moment are dramatic enough without all of that being kind of part of it. Again, you know, it's actually, we may be more familiar with this than we think.

[13:19] Some folks think that when we talk about cutting a deal, whether it's in the courts or on trade or whatever, or negotiations, that it comes from this cutting a covenant. You know, that's the kind of root of it.

So we may not be as unfamiliar with it as we think. The nearest modern example of a covenant of both love and law that we have today still in existence is a marriage ceremony.

It is both highly relational, it's an expression of love, but also there's a measure of law, isn't there, and it's done in the presence of witnesses. It's legally binding. It involves vows.

You know, I love you, I promise to love you, I vow to love you through sickness and in health. Or I vow that all that I have is yours. And each of the parties says, I do.

And so we have this sort of covenant binding agreement of law and love. It's lifelong. So we see in verse three, the people of God, the bride, if you like, saying, I do, saying, we do, verse three.

[14 : 25] 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.

We do. And the previous three chapters were about, as I was saying earlier, about how we live in the light of God's redeeming love. And Moses stands between God and his people, as a sort of master of ceremony, if you like, and asks, you know, God's people, will you love and live in this way?

In verse three, they say, we do. Everything the Lord has said, we will do. It's an expression of loving commitment to the Lord that we're seeing.

The Lord who himself loves them and is committed to them. It's a reciprocal relationship that's being encouraged and confirmed, isn't it?

They're being called in this new relationship to live not any old way, but this way, his way.

[15 : 30] And this morning at the beginning, of the year, maybe as we look at this passage and say, Lord, what is it you're wanting to say to me through this? And let the Holy Spirit, you know, let the Lord knock on your hearts and help us at the beginning of the year to kind of examine just the health of our commitment, our love for the Lord, our sort of appreciation of his love for us.

Maybe think, you know, how warm is my heart to the Lord? How strong is my commitment to him and to his way? If I was to scale it on one to 10, where would it be? And that wherever, on whatever you're marking that out in your mind, in your heart this morning, be asking the Lord as we look for this, Lord, draw me that step closer this morning, please.

Closer, Lord, to you. As we embark onto this new year, a new opportunity, a new chapter, Lord, would you help me to walk it ever closer with you?

Walking in that continual sense of your presence with me to help me walk in your will and your way and to enjoy the freedom for which you've set me free, the new life you've given to me, whether I'm single or married, whether I'm a student and my studies or working or retired or unemployed or parenting or in the midst of the depth of my struggles as well as in the high points in my life, Lord, would you just be present helping me?

Well, we might be thinking, okay, Callum, so you've talked about the kind of, the bride, if you like, or the people of God and there I do or we do. What about the Lord? Where's the Lord's I do in this passage?

[17 : 10] Well, actually, God had cut his covenant not just with this generation but actually with all the previous generations of believers previously from the time of Abraham.

We saw that when we looked through the book of Genesis together, Genesis chapter 12, that God was cutting a covenant not just with Abraham but with all the generations to come and so each generation in a sense would need to kind of reaffirm that commitment.

In Genesis 12, we saw how God cut his covenant before Abraham and in the similar way that we described how covenants were cut in those days.

The animals were laid out side by side. There was a path in between but what happened there was really interesting that both Abraham and God did not pass through the path. Only one party passed through the path and that was the Lord himself and that was really odd because that's not how things were done but what was the Lord saying in that?

He was saying, actually, I am going to keep this covenant. May it be to me as with these animals if you do not keep this covenant.

[18 : 20] And that's something we need to bookmark and we'll come back to. In Genesis 12 though, God is saying his I do to each generation, each individual who is being invited to respond and say I do or we do in the same way as Kate and Natalie, Finley and Becky did this morning.

There were vows, there were kind of covenanting their love to him in the light of his covenanted love established for them on the cross 2,000 years ago for God said, I do and has asked each generation, each individual, each family to come and say in response for every generation after will you come and say I do and we'll enter into a living, loving relationship with the Lord as they give

testimony to.

People responding not to a religion but a relationship. With a God who made them, who loves them and calls us into the safety and freedom of life and love with him and before him and together.

I think even those looking at a distance not yet Christians like those boxing commentators looking at the back saying there's something good here. There is something good here that I need to find out about. But as in a wedding ceremony as rings are kind of given to each other and received as a sort of visible token of the commitment that's being made and a sort of seal of their relationship sealed with a kiss and anticipation of the consummation that's to come later.

Here in verses 4-6 the equivalent of kind of rings are being given and again strange to us maybe but very familiar with them and the culture kind of you know more familiar tokens.

[20:09] what occurs is a visible symbol of their commitment as a nation as peoples as tribes as heads as families and as individuals.

So hence there are the 12 stones that represent the 12 tribes or states or regions of Israel if you like. Verse 5 the young men come representing in a sense the youngest to the oldest to give offerings recognised as sort of they're recognisable as this solemn commitment that they're making and then there's the taking of the blood again not familiar with us but well known to them half of it is taken and put on the altar I guess representing God's half if you like verse 6 but you may also be wondering well first if you're going if you're new to why blood?

well in this context it meant two things it meant cleansing and consecration cleansing from the past and consecration or commitment from now on the only other place that this happens in the scriptures is actually when the priests are consecrated for service there's cleansing and consecration that they are you know blood is placed on them and again after that happens verse 7 they affirm what's happening we do we do we do we will gladly follow his lead we will be obedient to his ways his good ways which are right and true and it's as if if you like the rings are placed on their fingers and verse 8 they are sprinkled the blood is taken the other half of the blood is sprinkled on them representing their part of the commit as well as God's part in it all but why is cleansing important or a concept symbolized

I guess part of it as you reflect on it the believers then to be honest there's nothing new under the sun we're no different from believers today as they gathered they were not perfect I'm sure there were those amongst the assembled group who had had a bust up that very morning hurtful words said whether it was with staff or between husbands and wives or parents and kids I'm sure some were kind of doubting thinking what's going on here others who had just carrying the burden of having lied to a neighbour who were carrying bitterness in their heart or jealousy or designs on their neighbour's husband or wife or any number of things going on in hearts of the many thousands who were assembled there and so there was a sense in which guys this needs to change you want to change let's change this let's forgive the past what's gone before has gone before this is a new start let's start here and from now on you're not going to become perfect but let's begin to see that change that new life beginning to take root in your experience and it's also interesting that in the scriptures if you read through it that the people of

God get a real reminder from the Lord every now and again things like I was reading actually this morning in Deuteronomy as I'm going through the Bible a year God says guys you've got to remember I didn't choose you set my affection on you because you are awesome that's just not the reality here you're actually a stiff necked people you're pretty stubborn my redeeming love for you is both a saving love I'm saving you from that and it is a changing love a change a transformation that's to happen from the inside out that this is a grace based relationship grace that gives second and third and fourth and many other chances to quote Bono in one of his songs it is a grace that makes beauty out of ugly things we know the ugliness of our heart don't we and grace that grace is not an excuse to sin it's a chance for a fresh start isn't it so that when we stumble and fall we confess it before

[24:32] God we get back up as he helps us in the new life that we're by his Holy Spirit to free us from the things that so entangle us and complicate our lives our sin and then verse 8 as Moses declares the seal it's more than rings are given it is this cleansing it's this commitment and might be thinking why is God doing this how could a holy God as we were singing already this morning marry as it were such a broken people you've heard me use this illustration before but I think it's helpful so imagine a king who falls in love with a pauper someone who has a past and she's full of debt her clothes are ragged with yeast and she can afford new ones and so on what happens when he

marries her what happens what changes what happens when he in all his wealth marries her in all her poverty well what is his becomes hers and what is hers becomes his in his great wealth he is able to more than pay the debt that she owes her state like changes from pauper to princess her clothes are changed from rags to new robes as their life begins together that relationship between the bride and the groom is the one that the bible uses actually many times to describe god's relationship with his people christ's relationship with his church god's relationship christ's relationship to you and i we're taken broken and impoverished by sin as we are and upon our i do and taking him as savior and lord into our lives our status changes from loathing and ambivalent to god to loving him and loved by him our identity changes estranged our enmity with him we become his adopted children we are his our debt of sin is paid we are arrayed in a new robe the robe of righteousness that the scripture speaks of live not under his wrath but under his pleasure we live with him in his presence vividly palpably now and fully forever and how then can a just god do that how is he not holding his nose up at these things does he just forget the wrongs of course remember what we said about

Genesis 12 when he walked through and cut that covenant that he himself passed through the animals and said I will pay the price for your failures and actually as he did that we know that actually what he was thinking about was the cross when Christ would come and die on the cross the bible says for our sins paying the price that we could not pay paying the debt that we could not pay I myself will take on me your failings and maintain the covenant and be the one who establishes and maintains the covenant with you so that you might be mine and I might be yours and that you may be changed made new born again into the new and living way that I have for you and I wonder if you're listening this morning and you can call yourself a Christian or thinking I'm sort of new at connecting with this and your heart is pounding because you're thinking this is what I want I want to know God I want Christ in my life I want this new start with him I want him to pay the debt that I can't pay I want him to begin to transform my life I want to begin to walk with him although know this that the Holy Spirit God is working in your heart right now that's why your heart is pounding and he's saying come say I do to Jesus as Saviour and Lord of your life this morning and if that's you please please come and speak to me or email me or just know in your heart today that that's what you're doing and we've got some resources that we'd love to help you with if that's what you're doing this morning so there's this commitment and covenant being made then there's this the communing verse 9 Moses Aaron Nadab and Abihu and the 70 elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel and under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli as bright blue as the sky but God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites and they saw God and they ate and drank before in a sense they were staying away staying not coming near excluded as it were but now that the covenant commitment has been established and ratified they've been cleansed and made their vows and commitments things have changed as the blood of the covenant begins to take hold as they're cleansed and consecrated they're able to come to the Lord having said I do and they come and you don't see the Lord raising his hand but actually extending his hands to come come come to the foot of my throne as it were and of course they don't see the whole of God because that would be all consuming for them but actually they see the pavement underneath his feet they come to the foot of the throne and they eat and they celebrate and that's really important because actually then as now dining together is really significant because when you invite somebody to your table for a meal you're in saying come let's be friends

I'd like to get to know you better let's deepen the friendship and so here as they eat before the Lord as they're invited to come and dine before him what he's established in that covenant is now being made manifest and their new fellowship their status before the Lord is kind of demonstrated as they eat and drink before him it's so interesting that when Jesus said this is the new covenant as we said earlier which is established in my blood my death for your life where did that happen it was in a meal wasn't it it was in a meal in the early days of the church communion was taken as part of a meal demonstrating our fellowship not just with one another but at the end our fellowship with God and the new relationship that we have with him you know as we think about these things and we think about and stop and there's a lot of information there but actually as you think about what [31:53] God has done for us and how he invites us to respond to him and when we respond to him he comes running arms open actually the Christian life though we feel very ordinary the Christian life is the most extraordinary privilege isn't it when we think about what we've been are

being invited into the deepest and closest possible relationship with the one who is Lord of all the one with whom John Piper reminds us that when we are most satisfied in him he is most glorified in us and so as we draw near to God and God draws near to them in response he begins to reveal that glory we see that consuming glory in verse 12 Moses is then invited up the hill with Joshua here of angels verses 14 for Aaron and her to be kind of civic magistrates verses 15 and 17 there is fire what they see is a consuming fire and why is that significant well of course earlier on in the passages the glory of God was represented as a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night it's sort of saying here the presence of God is palpable the glory of God is being revealed and of course glory means weight or substance the glory of God was very visible to them but what about for us where is the glory of God seen well the psalmist tells us everywhere the heavens and the earth declare the glory of God day after day they pour forth speech but also the glory of the Lord has been revealed to you the glory is in Jesus and it's being revealed to us day by day as we walk with him as we draw near to him his glory is being revealed in his grace to us let me quote borrow a quote from Jonathan

Edwards he said grace is but glory begun and the glory is but grace perfected let me say that again grace is but glory begun and glory is but grace perfected you are experiencing glory friends we might feel utterly ordinary but extraordinary things have been going on in your life glory where he extends to broken sinners like you and I a love that we don't deserve and yet that he's delighted to offer and to give to those who will receive it which he purchased for us on the cross at his own expense that is the kind of God that we worship that is why there is such fervor when we sing these songs because that is the kind of God that he is so draw here in this passage the invitation to draw near to God this year nearer and know him draw nearer to you and reveal to us unimaginable glories how do you feel about that this morning maybe you've come and you think oh I'm just done I'm just done I don't have the strength for this or the capacity for this well God has more than the capacity for this for you to help you with it if you'll invite him and say Lord you know I'm not feeling this would you help me with that this year now in 1755 John Wesley who got along with his brother and George Whitfield and others were greatly used in seasons of revival where many many thousands of people were converted across Europe and in the states in 1755 drawing inspiration from 100 years previous from the Puritans that he'd been reading he felt that the people of God needed to kind of regularly reaffirm their commitment you know we had the guys standing up today with their I do's but in a sense he felt actually it would be helpful to do that annually to reaffirm our commitment to the

Lord it's not something that we've done before but I do wonder if just for this year if none else that as part of our 10th anniversary innovations we could stand together and use the words the kind of original words that John Wesley wrote with these and those in it's a bit you know but I want us to feel the kind of sense of connection with brothers and sisters from the past who have stood in affirmation of these things across the generations who have said the I do have known the power of God in their lives to stand in a sense as a sort of congregational individual renewal knowing that we are cleansed by his blood freed by his spirit and in a sense offering our hearts and our commitment consecration to him for the coming year as a church together as individuals as households as families I've written the words on the screen and we'll go through them slowly but I'd like us to stand and if you can everyone stand but not everyone you don't you're not forced to say these words but if you are thinking

Lord I'm responding to what I've seen in Exodus 24 here something of that drawing near to you and you drawing near to me and revealing a glory Lord I just need that in my life I look for that for the coming year so let's read these things through slowly I am no longer my own but thine put me to what thou wilt rank me with whom thou wilt put me to doing put me to suffering let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee exalted for thee or brought low for thee let me be full let me be empty let me have all things let me have nothing I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal and now

[38 : 36] O glorious and blessed God Father Son and Holy Spirit thou art mine and I am thine so be it and the covenant which I have made on earth let it be ratified in heaven Amen Amen Let me pray God our Father you know where each of our lives are at you know each of our situations you know what's going on our hearts and our minds you know for some of us how falteringly even reluctantly we say these words but we bless you and thank you that you are a gracious God and you will hold them to us and you will help us with them but Lord we hear the surrender that we're

giving to you hear the resignation of our souls not my will be done but thine be done and may
I find you in whatever circumstance I find myself we're on the mountaintop or in the valley Lord
we're experiencing you more nearly more dearly know more of you and a reality of you in my life in
each of these circumstances Lord we surrender Lord we give ourselves to you for your glory and for
our good Lord we come in Jesus name Amen