

Message #46

Exodus 24:1-11

What does it take to have a real close relationship with God once you have been saved? What does it take to enter into a real worshipful experience? Well, in this very context we get an answer to that question.

As we see from this text it takes human leadership; it takes shed blood and it takes the written Word. It doesn't matter what the dispensation, those three elements are always necessary for close, intimate fellowship with God. There needs to be human leaders, there needs to be shed blood and there needs to be structured leadership.

We come now to a moment when it is time again for Moses to go up the mountain for the very special reason. God wanted to finalize the covenant that He had made with Israel. God had already saved Israel and now He wanted to bring her into a close relationship with Himself.

He wanted to take this relationship to a new level. There would be leaders involved, shed blood involved, the written Word involved and, ultimately, a place of worship involved. It starts here and what we see here is this:

GOD CALLED MOSES AND OTHER LEADERS UP THE MOUNTAIN TO SHOW THEM THAT THROUGH PROPER SACRIFICES AND SHED BLOOD AND THROUGH A FOCUS ON THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD, HE WOULD HAVE INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE.

There is a big difference between worshipping God and worshipping God in an acceptable way. If we are to worship God in an acceptable way, it must be on His terms, not our terms. So this is the beginning of true acceptable worship that God would accept. There are seven worship actions that are described in this text from which we may glean a great deal.

ACTION #1 – God told Moses to come up the mountain to Him and bring some other leaders with him. **24:1a**

The first time Moses went up this mountain, no one went with him (Ex. 19:3, 20). But this time Moses was told to bring Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. Now God is calling them up this mountain for a covenant ratification meal.

I think there is a very important principle to glean from this and that is **in order to have close fellowship with God, it must be in the context of God-appointed and accepted leadership.**

Aaron had been with Moses ever since they went to Egypt to deliver Israel. Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's two oldest sons (Ex. 6:23). The seventy included Joshua (24:13).

So these were the top men of Israel and they were invited by God to ascend with Moses. One reason why they were to go up the mountain was to "worship" God.

Right from the beginning of this relationship God has with Israel, He is showing her that God-appointed leadership is important to worship.

ACTION #2 – God told Moses that only he could come near to God and the rest needed to keep their distance. **24:1b-2**

The pronoun “you” (v. 1) is plural, which means it is addressed to everyone except Moses. God would only permit Moses to have closeness to His presence. Everyone else had to keep their distance, even though they were key men of God. Some leaders could go higher up the mountain than the people, but only Moses alone was permitted to get real close to Him.

This tells us that God does distinguish between His people. He does call some to higher positions. He does make elective distinctions between men.

One man by permission of God had a closer relationship with God than the other leaders. The one man was Moses. The others were important but they needed to keep their distance because God would not let them function at the same level of Moses. He was the key leader and God wanted those other men to recognize that point.

I personally think we are losing sight of this principle. This point is being lost in churches and in theological institutions. There are key men that God does raise up to lead His work. Certainly we see there is a plurality of leaders, but the fact is the plurality does not replace the individuality. God does typically cause one to be more gifted than another.

For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer was a gifted theologian raised up by God to start Dallas Seminary. Now frankly, I don't think too many will ever be in his league. In fact, if you read today's theologies or books about theology such as Charles Ryrie's *Basic Theology* or Floyd Barakman's *Practical Christian Theology* or Charles Baker's *Dispensational Theology* or J. Dwight Pentecost's *Things to Come*, truth is they are all based on Dr. Chafer. Now I know that today's young buck theologians want to think they have arrived at a more scholarly level, but the truth is we aren't even close to what God did with Lewis Sperry Chafer. Wise people admit that.

I have known of churches that think we all are equal. Well, positionally speaking, there is a sense in which that is true, but there is also a sense in which it is not true. Can we not be honest enough to admit that God does let some men get closer to Him than He does others? It is proved right here in this text.

So the worship that was acceptable to God was a worship that recognized there is a distance between God and man; but in that distance gap some men are called by God into a closer relationship to Him than others.

ACTION #3 – Moses went down the mountain and told the people all the words of God.

24:3a

Moses came down the mountain and actually communicated to the people “all the words,” all the laws and all the ordinances that God had given them to this point. Now do you see the point here? A close relationship with God demands that we carefully study and hear “all” the words of God. It demands we carefully study the whole counsel of God. All the people need to hear and learn all the Word.

ACTION #4 – All the people say they will obey all the words and laws of God. **24:3b**

Here we go again. As one writer said, this is “commendable enthusiasm” but frankly it is delusional. Israel is in that self-trusting fog and she actually believes that she will obey all the Word of God. As we have said, she will not even make it past commandment number one.

What really should have happened here and what should have happened in the Garden of Eden, where they had just one commandment, is that the people should have said—God, please help us to obey you because we can’t do this ourselves and we won’t do this ourselves. Had Adam and Eve or had Israel really drawn near to God, she would have seen God help her. But she was self-sufficient and self-reliant and that is when we fall flat on our faces.

But we do see something that is important. If we want fellowship with God, we should have a desire to obey the Word of God. It is true we will not ever totally measure up, but that should be our desire. We should want to know the Word of God so we may apply it to our lives.

ACTION #5 – Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. **24:4a**

This is important. **From the earliest days, God wanted His Word in written form.** Fellowship with God demands the written Word. Once you have the written Word, you have the will of God in written form.

Having the Word of God in written form would mean that people could know God’s will on every issue of life. People could go to corporate worship and hear leaders expound the Scriptures. Parents could teach children and newcomers the importance of the commandments of God.

These commandments which were written down were literally critical to life because if you broke some of them, you could end up dead.

This is a very important principle to see. The Word of God is always critical to our spiritual life. We need to read it and reread it because this is a key to having life in our relationship with God.

ACTION #6 – Moses built an altar . **24:4b-8**

Now the purpose of this altar was to be a place to worship God. There were three elements to it:

Moses got up early in the morning and built an altar at the foot or base of Mt. Sinai, and the altar featured twelve pillars; one that represented each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

At this altar there were three key elements:

Element #1 - There were offerings and sacrifices . **24:5**

Now these sacrifices were extremely important because they illustrated the fact that in order for the people to have a peaceful relationship with God, something must die as a substitute. So in order to have peace with God, some sacrificial substitute must die to make that happen. Young men were sent to offer those sacrifices, probably under the supervision of Moses and Aaron

Element #2 - There was blood . **24:6**

Now blood was poured in basins and was sprinkled on the altar (**24:6**). It was also sprinkled on the people (**24:8**). So any covenant connection that God would have with humans was based on this blood. Every Israelite would be forced to admit that the only way we have a relationship with God is by shed blood being applied to us and to the sacred things of God.

The writer of Hebrews would say without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). Without the shedding of blood, there is no relationship with God.

The sprinkling of the blood would be a symbolic act that would represent that Israel was in a covenant relationship with God through a blood sacrifice.

This is how we get into a relationship with God, through blood sacrifice.

Element #3 - There was the reading and hearing of the Word of God. **24:7**

Look at the emphasis in this context on reading, communicating and hearing the written Word of God (v. 3, 4, 7). If we keep in mind that this is a sacred worship scene, we certainly may see the importance of the Word of God.

Places of worship that are true Biblical places of worship will have, as its primary emphasis, a focus on the written Word of God.

ACTION #7 – Moses and the others ascend to meet with God. **24:9-11**

The worship service was over at the base of the mountain and now 74 men went up Mt. Sinai to have a covenant meal with God. Moses and His colleagues, who had heard the voice of God, were now going to see a visible display of the presence of God.

Now this is important because it is clear that having this intimate fellowship with God was preceded by proper cleansing and proper focus on God's written Word.

This is a key principle we need as well. Any who will have intimate fellowship with God, will be clean and focused on God's Word.

Now the concept of eating a meal together is one that speaks of close fellowship and acceptance. Typically you do not sit down and eat a meal with enemies. So this idea that they would go up the mountain and actually be permitted to eat a meal in the presence of God would mean that God accepted them and had a kindred relationship with them.

Now **verses 10 and 11** say they saw God. So a question arises as to what exactly did they see? We know that they did not see God completely because that did not happen (I John 4:12). We also know from **Exodus 33:20 that no one can see God's face and live.**

However, they did see enough to know they were dealing with a Divine Person and not a Divine Thing. We are worshipping a real person, not some imaginary animal. We must assume from the account here that they saw some sort of vague general shape or form of God that appeared to have "feet" and "hands."

What they actually saw clearly, however, was something under His feet (**v. 10**). They saw a platform or road structure under His feet that appeared to be made of sapphire. It was as clear as the sky itself. This certainly communicates to us that God is over everything and anything close to even His feet is pure and clear and clean.

Now **verse 11** says God did not stretch out His hand against these sons of Israel and that is followed up by the statement that they ate and drank. So this is a significant moment because it shows Israel that through the sacrifices and shed blood and through the focus on His Word, God is at peace with these people.

God is not against them; but in fact has fellowship with them.

Think about this—Holy, Almighty God is having fellowship with sinful, finite people.

In order to have close fellowship with God, we need cleansing blood and we need the written Scriptures.