

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 24:1-8
“The Covenant Confirmed”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19329
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

Exodus 24:1-8

Verse 1-2

“Then he said to Moses, ‘Come up to YHWH, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, but Moses alone is to approach YHWH, the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him.’”

- Moses is now given specific instructions from the Lord. He is to go down to the people and bring back a special delegation of men. The persons are specifically named. They are Aaron, Moses’ brother, and Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons. Seventy unnamed elders are to accompany these three. The group is to go with Moses part way up on the mountain. However, they are not invited into the direct presence of God. This favor is reserved for Moses alone.
- The purpose of all this is worship. These men are to join Moses in worshipping YHWH on the mountain of God.
- Moses’ special role as God’s agent must not be overlooked. Moses’ role is to stand between the people and God. He intercedes for the people before God and brings God’s messages back to them. This function sets him apart. He has been picked by God for a special role in God’s dealing with humankind. God still picks people to play special roles in his plan.

Verse 3-4a

“When Moses went and told the people all YHWH’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, ‘Everything YHWH has said we will do.’ Moses then wrote down everything YHWH had said.”

- When Moses returned to the camp the first thing he did was tell the people everything God had said to him while he was on the mountain. See Exodus 20:1–23:33.

- Having heard all God had said to Moses, the people agreed unanimously to obey all God had said.
- Moses then wrote down all that God had told him. Later, see verse 7, this writing of Moses is referred to as the “Book of the Covenant.”

Verse 4b-6

***“He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to YHWH. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar.*”**

- The next day, Moses built an altar in preparation for worship at the foot of the mountain. He set monuments around the altar in representation of the twelve tribes. As there was no established priesthood in Israel at the time, he chose young men to serve as attendants at the altar. They offered bulls as sacrifices and collected half of the blood in bowls. The other half was sprinkled on the altar.
- Blood is the symbol of life. The animal dies when its blood is drained from it. The animals’ blood is first sprinkled on the altar, consecrating it and the sacrifice offered on it as a symbol of God’s willingness to enter into relation with the people of Israel. This is the beginning of a new relationship that will bring new life to Israel as the people of God.

Verse 7

“Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, ‘We will do everything YHWH has said; we will obey.’”

- Previously, Moses had told the people everything that God had said to him while he was on the mountain. The people affirmed their intention to do what God had said. Then he wrote it all down in a book. On this occasion, Moses read all that he had written down to the people. This was Moses’ attempt to be sure that what he had recorded accurately represented what he had previously said and that the people remained in agreement concerning that fact. The people indicated their agreement by declaring their intention to follow what God had instructed them to do. Because it is now written down, it is not subject to discussion. It is now codified. Those who accept what is written have bound themselves to it.

- In acknowledging God’s word and pledging to obey it, Israel has opened the door for God’s blessing.

Verse 8

“Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that YHWH has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”

- Moses then took the other half of the blood and sprinkled it on the people of Israel. In so doing, he reminded them that they had bound themselves to God by declaring their intention to obey his word. They had not been forced into this relationship, but had chosen it of their own free will. But now they were bound by it. Life for them would be determined by it. Obedience to God’s word would bring them life. Disobedience would bring them death.
- These words remind us of the words spoken at the Lord’s Table when the cup is served, “This is the new covenant in my blood.” As Israel was bound to God through covenant established by the blood of animals, so we are bound to God by blood, but not the blood of animals. We are bound to God by the blood of his only begotten son, Jesus Christ. From this blood covenant with God we receive life. To reject it results in death.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Covenant Confirmed*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)