

Exodus 23-24 • “Behold the blood of the covenant”

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Chapter 23, so open your Bibles there, please. Exodus chapter 23, and we will get into our section for tonight. All right. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for the opportunity tonight to gather here. Whenever we come together as the body of Christ, spend some time worshiping, and praising You, and digging into Your Word, it's always a beneficial time. And we pray that You would just really nourish us tonight through the Word. We pray the ministry and grace of the scriptures would just really touch our hearts and stabilize our lives.

Lord, we live in challenging times and we need that stability that only comes from You, Lord. It's certainly not going to come from the world. The world's in chaos. The world around us is literally in the throes of childbirth, as the Apostle Paul tells us.

And there's nothing stable, there's nothing secure in this world, but Lord, there's You and You are both. And we thank You for that God. And we thank You that not only are You stable and secure, but You're faithful, faithful in all of Your ways.

So we trust that your faithfulness will be expressed tonight as we get into Your Word in Jesus precious name, amen. Amen.

I'm going to show you again as we get into these chapters, a little bit of an outline of what each one is going to present for us. So we'll start with chapter 23 up on the screen.

Chapter 23 Outline

- Guidelines and warnings about justice and fairness (23:1-3)
- Kindness and fairness towards Others (23:4-9)
- Resting and giving rest (23:10-13)
- Observing feasts (23:14-17)
- Obedience to the Lord (23:20-33)

And this is what we're going to be looking at. **Guidelines and warnings about justice and fairness.** He's going to talk to the people of Israel about **kindness and fairness towards Others.** **Resting and giving rest.** **Observing feasts and Obedience to the Lord.**

Let me just share with you that last week, we started this section where the Lord was bringing instruction on how to live for the people of Israel who had been living for the last 400 years in Egypt. And who had, of course, been influenced and adopted a lot of the Egyptian ways, and a lot of the moral codes, and a lot of the cultural and civil laws that go along with living in a particular country.

And as the Lord gets His people out into the wilderness where He can spend time with them alone, He begins to communicate to them, the uniqueness of His moral law, and justice, and that sort of thing. And so we're going to be doing that at least for one more chapter, before we start getting into some instructions for worship. This begins, and you're going to see, by the way, in these verses, that God is going to talk to the people about fairness and falsehood.

He says in verse 1, *"You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness."* (ESV) And this speaks of taking something that someone says and passing it along when it is knowingly false.

Now, somebody might say to me, well, okay, what happens if I pass along information that I didn't know was false at the time? I ended up saying or sharing something that was false, but I didn't know it. No, that's still on you because you didn't check it out. Just because somebody tells you something doesn't mean it's true.

And boy, is that a lesson for our internet driven culture or what. We hear something and we just, we make assumptions, we just assume. It's crazy to me how many times I'll read about some crime supposedly, or alleged crime that's been committed before this thing's ever been proven. And if you read the comments, which I don't do anymore because it was too disturbing, but people are just ready to be a mob. They're ready to literally just get a rope. We're going to go after this guy.

And they weren't there and they don't know anything beyond what they just read, which could be very biased. And yet people don't stop to ask questions and say, is this true? And I think that it's really important. And this is what the Lord is saying here. He says, don't join hands with a wicked man, people. There's a

lot of wicked folk out there and they're trying to get you to follow the narrative. That they want to pass along.

And there are all kinds of narratives that are being pushed upon society today. And we as Christians need to stop perpetuating false narratives because there are ton of them out there. And they all have, of course have very, very heavy political leanings, most of them, and so forth. But just be really careful.

Verse 2 says, *“You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, ³ nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.”*

So 2 things here. He says, don't go with the crowd because the masses are not always right. Don't think that just because this is the popular opinion, that, that makes it right.

What did Jesus say about we who follow the Lord? He basically said that we are going to be few. Okay. He said, the way to destruction is broad and easy and many go that way, but the way to life is narrow and hard. (Matthew 7:13-14) Right. He says few find it.

What does that tell you about popular opinion in the world today? That's probably not the one that you need to be listening to, or need to be allowing yourself to be influenced by. He says, be careful about siding with the many. Be careful about that.

But then in verse 3, He also says, hey, listen, be careful, even being partial to a poor man in a lawsuit. You might feel bad about the fact that this guy doesn't have any money, and you might feel bad that he's being sued by someone. But He says, basically, the Lord is saying, don't let your emotions rule you to the point where you say, well, I think this guy needs a break, even if it's a perversion of justice. No.

He says, listen, justice is justice. If the man did wrong, the man did wrong, right? Even if he's a poor man. Even if he's got a lot of strikes against him, life's been hard to this guy. If he did wrong, he did wrong, right? We need to be careful. Justice is very important to the Lord.

Now we're going to talk a little bit about how you might treat other people that you even don't like very much. It says in verse 4, *“If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, (maybe they're wandering around in your field for an example, He says) you shall bring it back to him.”* In other words, do the

right thing. Don't just say, oh, that's Clem's donkey there, I'm just going to let it go. I don't care. I don't know where I came up with Clem. Anyway, He says, bring it back.

“⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, (in other words, this thing has collapsed under its burden. He says,) you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.” And this is one of those age old references to if you see your enemy in trouble, having trouble, maybe he's alongside the road and his car has broken down, stop and help. Right.

He says in verse 6, *“You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. (God says) ⁸ And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.”* And you guys know what a bribe is? Taking money or, possessions or something in order to render a particular decision.

He says in verse 9, *“You shall not oppress a sojourner. (He actually talked about that in the previous chapters, so this is a repeat, and He says,) You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.”*

In other words, you were foreigners. You didn't belong there. You're going to have people in your land too when you get there who are foreigners and they don't belong there, so don't oppress them just because they're passing through your land. You guys know what that's like. In other words, remember where the Lord brought you from and treat other people the way you would have wanted to have been treated in that situation as well.

Verse 10 and following, we're going to deal here with laws about resting and observing festivals. He says, *“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, ¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, (why?) that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.”*

There's an assumption here that there's going to be a crop that's going to come up, even though it wasn't tended, even though the land was allowed to lie fallow. Which of course means it wasn't worked that particular year.

There was another reason for this, and that was to let the land rejuvenate. They didn't have chemicals that they put on their property today like we do. Our

farmers, they put chemicals on the land so that they can continue to farm the land. If you don't do that, if you don't put nutrients back in the soil, you're going to strip the land of all of its nutrients if you keep planting year after year, after year, after year, and pretty soon the land isn't going to be able to produce because the nutrients are gone.

And so what we do today of course, in our culture, is we just put the nutrients back in. Well, they didn't have the ability to do that back then so God said, one year out of seven, let the land just replenish, let the nutrients go back to the land and so forth. Yeah. What He's saying here is the entire seventh year was a Sabbath year for the land, but it was also meant, beyond replenishing the land, to take care of the poor, and the beasts of the field.

Verse 12 says, *“Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, (that's the foreigner among you) may be refreshed.”*

This is a wise principle in life. We don't keep the Sabbath in the legalistic way that the Jews were commanded to keep the Sabbath as it relates to the Law of Moses. But that doesn't mean there isn't some wise information here about taking a day off.

Ask yourself, when do you take a day off? One day off per week? Do you take a day just to rest? In other words, resting from your usual labors. And resting doesn't necessarily mean non activity because you can find something very restful that might actually be active.

You might find hiking to be a very restful, peaceful, even therapeutic sort of an activity. Well, that's other than your usual work day or whatever, so great, so go hiking. You might find it's fishing, right, Larry? You go fishing. That's where your rest. There's all kinds of things that a person could do that are actually fairly active, but they may be very restful for them.

And here's what God is saying. He's saying, I made your body. I created you. And here's what I did. I created in you a need to rest 1 day out of 7, so do that. Be smart. Now, those of you who are young, you've got tons of energy and you can just go, go, go. You can work 7 days a week, and you can put in 10, 12 hours a day plus, and you can go and you can last for a long time. You can't do that forever. And it's a good idea, even while you're young, to just get into a habit of understanding the principle of rest. And that's what the Lord is saying here, and He says, it's even a good idea for your animals.

He says, ¹³ *“Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.”*

¹⁴ *“Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. ¹⁵ You shall keep (and here we go,) the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (that’s Passover, connected to the Feast of Unleavened Bread) As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed.”* There's the first one. He says, this is the one you must keep every year, that's Passover.

Secondly, verse 16, *“You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field.”* And this is the feast that the Jews referred to as Pentecost. And Pentecost essentially came from the idea of 50, 50 days from Passover, and that's why it was essentially referred that way. But it was also called the Feast of Weeks, and so these things had multiple names.

But this was the second feast that they were to keep, right, as it relates to the commands of the Lord. And then He says, *“You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.”* Now, this is the Feast of Tabernacles, also referred to as The Feast of Booths. But here He refers to it as the Feast of Ingathering, so you have 3 names for the same feast.

Now, there were other feasts that the Jews celebrated in a given annual cycle. But these were the 3 that were commanded of the Jews. And when they settled in the land and they had a central capital area, which eventually was Jerusalem, it was required of all Jewish males to attend these feasts if you were living within a particular area of miles from Jerusalem, you were required to come to Jerusalem 3 times a year for these feasts.

And that's why He says in verse 17, *“Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God.”* Right? Now, if you lived outside of that area, or if you happen to be a female, these were optional, but for the men living within a certain range, they had to be there.

Verse 18, *“You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my feast remain until the morning. ¹⁹ “The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.”*

That is just this, He's beginning to pass along this idea of the firstfruits and the firstfruits means, the first and the best of your crops. The first and best of your flocks, they belong to the Lord. You give it to the Lord. You lay it before the

Lord. This is where we get the idea even today of offering up the firstfruits of our labors.

And then He adds this interesting note. *“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.”* And although it's a creepy sort of a sounding sort of a deal, we don't really know what this prohibition is all about. It may have been instituted because, it was a fertility right of the pagans, we don't know. The pagans did things like that because they thought that it fostered fertility. And so we don't really know if that's what that was all about so God said, don't do it.

Verse 20, *“Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ²¹ Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, (check this out) for my name is in him.”*

What does that mean? *“...my name is in him.”* We forget what that means. Even though every time we pray, we usually end our prayers by saying, in Jesus name, amen. And we don't think about it because we're just told to do that. What does that mean? What does it mean to do something in someone's name? What does it mean when you tack that on your prayer?

What did it mean here? When God said, *“...my name is in him.”* Guys, that's authority. The name means authority, that's what He's saying. What God is saying, He's saying, hey, obey the angel that goes before you because I've given him authority. My authority is in him, so when you're praying and you're ending your prayer, in the name of Jesus, you're saying in the authority of Jesus. You're literally taking His authority into prayer, the authority He has given you because He told you to do that, to use His name.

It's like a key, like a master key. He says here's a master key, use it. This is my authority. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Now, when you pray in my name, right? They all knew that. Back in that day, if somebody said, do it in my name, they all knew that meant in my authority.

If I was a servant of the king and I went out into the people and I said, listen up everybody, because I have a message I'm going to give you in the name of the king. They would all know that I'd been given authority to give that message to them, and that my authority meant, that message what they heard from me was they were hearing from the king.

Think about that next time you pray and you just roll off those words, in Jesus name, amen, like we tend to do sometimes. Just remember you're praying in His authority. They're very important to remember.

Verse 22 says, *“But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.”*

²³ *“When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, ²⁴ you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, (and that means, don't even do anything, don't live like they live) but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars (which means their worship items) in pieces.”* Get rid of them. Get rid of them.

Verse 25, *“You shall serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you.”* Now remember, this is a conditional promise. He's conditioning this on them, serving the Lord and walking in obedience to His law.

And He says, *“²⁶ None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. ²⁷ I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.”* In other words, they will be afraid of you.

“²⁸ And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. (check this out though) ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land.”

I want to have you just pause there for a minute, because what the Lord is doing is He's acknowledging a principle of the fallen world. The principle of the fallen world is that land that goes uncultivated and uncared for, turns wild and desolate. I don't think that was God's original intention when He created the world. I really don't.

I really, truly, honestly believe that this is a byproduct of the fall of man. That because of sin, and because man's sin even affected the world, the earth. There are things in the earth today, I truly believe God had no intention of creating. I don't believe earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding. I don't think any of those things were a part of His original creative plan.

I believe that they're part of the fact that the ground was even cursed. We read that in Genesis chapter 3. God says to Adam, cursed is the ground because of you. (Genesis 3:17) We know that because Adam was put in that position as caretaker, that his sin and his failure had a cascading effect beyond simply to him and the first woman.

Here we are living in this fallen world where we have this principle that we all know and understand. Those of you who have a yard, you know that if you don't water your yard, put on weed control, or at least go out there on your hands, and knees and pluck weeds out of your grass, and water it from time to time.

I learned this lesson the hard way because when I was living in Minnesota for all the years we didn't water our lawns because we got so much rain during the year, you didn't have to. Nobody watered their lawns. You know what sprinklers were for? They were for kids to run through them in the summer. That's all we ever used them for. I never once growing up saw my parents water their lawn. Never once. It doesn't mean we didn't have a nice lawn. We had a fairly nice lawn. Minnesotans aren't that..., I mean, if it's green, it's fine. It doesn't even matter if it's grass or a weed, if it's green, it's okay. We just cut it all and there you are.

But then Sue and I moved to Seattle where you really don't have to water in Seattle. Here's something people don't know about Seattle however, Seattle does have a dry season and it's the summer months. And your lawn can turn brown up in Seattle if it's a particularly dry season. But even then, not that many people water, because they know it's just going to start raining again after a little while and it's all going to replenish.

And then I get down here to the high desert of eastern Oregon, when Sue and I moved here 33 and a half years ago. And I was applying what I knew. I mean, I saw people watering their lawns, but I thought, oh water at once a week, right? No problem. Once a week. That's I'm sure that's plenty. I started watering my lawn once a week and I was noticing my lawn looked horrible, and my neighbor's lawn looked really good.

I had him come over one day I said, come over and give me your thoughts, would you? And he said, he came across the street. He must have thought I was just a total idiot cause I'm saying, Lou, what's going on with my grass? Do I have like bugs in here or something? He reached down and grabbed a little bit, and he looks at it, because you need to water it. Oh, okay. Your lawn will go wild so what is the Lord saying to Israel here? I'm not going to, I'm not going to

kick all the people, all the Canaanites out of the land in one year, because if I did the ground, the land would become desolate.

Now, here's the point I've been getting to. This principle that applies to the land applies to your spiritual life as well. You neglect it, you let weeds come up in your heart, you don't fertilize your heart with the Word, and water it with the Word, and take care of it like a precious garden, it'll be overrun. And it doesn't take long. If I stopped watering my lawn right now, it wouldn't take long before it would just go to weeds.

And if you stop reading your Bible, if you stop praying, if you stop connecting with other believers in fellowship, which are 3 things that God has given us to keep our hearts in good condition, they will revert to the wild. It will go wild. And then you're going to find yourself back in church, and you know what you're going to think? I don't think I belong here.

You're going to feel totally out of place because your heart is just full of weeds. It's full of brush, and you know what? It's going to take some time for you to go through. And sometimes the Lord allows us that time, just to get in there and start weeding. I've never enjoyed weeding. I understand some people do, they're weird, but I don't like it.

But sometimes when it comes to your spiritual weeding, it simply has to be done. But you know what? We also have found out interesting thing about my lawn here in eastern Oregon? The more I take care of my grass, the less weeds show up. In other words, when I have a healthy lawn, the weeds have a harder time coming up. Isn't that interesting?

The spiritual principle there is, you stay in the Word, you stay in prayer, you stay in fellowship, and the difficulties and the challenges of the weeds in your life are going to have a harder time taking root, because the good stuff is taking hold in your life as well. Yeah, very important.

Verse 31 says, *"And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you."*³² *You shall make no covenant with them and their gods.*³³ *They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."*

Guys, and that's just as true today as it was back then. If you serve the gods of this world, they're going to be a snare to you. And the gods of this world are

obvious. There's money, sex, pleasure, power, right? I mean, we just, we all know what the people of the world are going after. We all know. If you serve those gods, they will be a snare to you.

Chapter 24, let's put up on the screen the listing of chapter 24 so we can take a look at what we're going to see here.

Chapter 24 Outline

- The Covenant confirmed with blood
- Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons and 70 elders meet the Lord
- Moses receives the stone tablets
- Moses is with the Lord 40 days and nights

What we see is, we're going to see **The Covenant confirmed with blood**. We're going to talk about that. **Moses, Aaron the sons of Aaron, and then 70 elders** are going to be called up to **meet with the Lord**. **Moses will receive the stone tablets**. Well, he will be told that he's going to receive that. And then **Moses will be with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights**. Pretty crazy.

Verse 1. *"Then he (the Lord) said to Moses, 'Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, (those are the sons of Aaron) 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.'*" Meaning at all.

He's giving some initial instructions. Now, before all this happens, we're going to read verse 3 and following. *"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."*

And what this is all involving, and I know this is nothing that you and I can relate to today from the standpoint of sacrificing animals, taking blood, and sprinkling it. But this is a symbolic gesture on the part of Moses on behalf of God. It is basically God's formal promise to ratify and to say, I will keep my end of the bargain. I'm going to keep the covenant, so this covenant is made through blood. All right. And this is very important that you see this. The covenant...

It wasn't just people coming together and saying, listen, here's the deal, here's the law, you do this, and then I'll do that, and it'll be great. It was ratified. It was put into place by blood.

Now this was a relatively common thing back in those days when people made a covenant, way back in the Book of Genesis. We saw how when God made a covenant with Abraham, He did it through the sacrifice of animals. You remember what they did? God told Abraham to go and get some animals and He killed them, and cut them in half, set them opposite one another.

And the traditional way of cutting a covenant back in those days was for 2 people who were making the covenant, to walk between the pieces of the animals declaring their side of the covenant. And the idea was, if you go back on your oath, may you be like these animals that you just walked through. That was the point. Okay.

The whole idea of involving sacrificial animals and blood is not uncommon in their culture, but God is going to draw it into a further understanding, which we're going to see here in just a moment.

But notice what He goes on to say in verse 7. It says, *“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 (how would you love to have been there and gotten sprinkled with blood?) and (he) said, (look at this) “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”*” All right.

Behold the blood of the covenant. This is super important for you guys to see this because when God makes a covenant, it involves blood. Even the new covenant was ratified with blood. It wasn't the blood of animals. Why? Well, because animals, the blood of animals can't take away sin. And we knew that. We've always known that It was just a picture of something greater.

In the New Testament, Jesus lifted the cup at the Last Supper, and He said, this cup is the new covenant in My blood. (Luke 22:20) Not the blood of a goat, or a ram, or a lamb, or an ox. My blood. It is ratified in my blood. The giving of a life for life. That was the picture in the old Testament. That was the reality in the new Testament. The picture in the Old Testament was symbolized. The picture was realized in the New Testament when Jesus gave His life on the cross for you and me, right? Now, one of the reasons I love the Book of Hebrews so much is because the author of Hebrews talks about this. And I was looking

through Hebrews as I was studying out this passage. And there was so much I wanted to share with you from Hebrews, but I wouldn't be able to even get back to Exodus, but there's a section I do want to share with you. Check this out on the screen. This is the author of Hebrews from chapter 9 saying,

Hebrews 9:18-22 (ESV)

Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself (meaning what he had written down of the law itself) and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent (we're going to read this in the coming chapters) and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, (look at this) and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Okay? Now that applies to the New Testament just as much as to the old. "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." But we're not doing animals these days. That was just a picture. The fulfillment has arrived on the scene and He shed His own blood, and cleansed us with His own blood. And He purchased us with His blood. Isn't that cool? We have been purchased you guys, with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

All right, verse 9. Let's keep reading. "*Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, (those are, again, the sons of Aaron) 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.*"

When you read that, it says, it almost makes it sound like they sat down and they had dinner with God, doesn't it? It says, they saw God and "*they ate and*

drank. ” It's like, hey, break out the food. We're here to hang out with God. That doesn't mean they ate with God. That's an ancient phrase that simply means, they saw God and they didn't die. Okay?

When it says, “*they ate and drank,*” it means they kept on living. Because you see, the belief was that you can't behold God and live, and that's true. That's not just speculation. You can't see God in His glory.

Listen people, anyone who has ever seen God in the Old Testament, or even any whatever, that whether it's written down in some prophetic book or whatever. Anyone in the Bible who says that they saw God, they didn't see the glory of God. They saw a manifestation of God. How do you know that? Because of what John wrote in John chapter 1, verse 18. Let me put it on the screen, goes like this.

John 1:18 (ESV)

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

No one has ever seen God; the only God, (and now that's referring to Jesus) *who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.* Or revealed Him. In other words, we see in Jesus, God. But no one has ever beheld God.

Now, listen, I know it says right here that they beheld God, but later on, Moses is actually going to ask God to see His face and God's going to say no. No, you can't. You can't see My face. He's going to tell him straight out. No man can see Me and live. (Exodus 33:20) In other words, what that means is these bodies, these physical fleshly bodies, they weren't created to behold the glory of God.

There's coming a new body for you that is created to behold and literally stand in the unbridled presence of God without being turned to ash, which is what would happen to your current body. If you were to..., if God were to appear in this room in all of His glory, not only would you not be here, this room wouldn't be here. I mean, it just would all be gone. No one has ever seen God. All right,

Verse 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.”*” God just telling Moses here He wanted to give him the commandments that the Lord had spoken in the hearing of all the people. You remember all the people heard the 10 commandments echoed from the mountain and they begged not to hear any more from the Lord, lest they die.

But these are going to be written on stone tablets. And so He says, I'm going to give you these on stone tablets. And I want you just to stop for a moment, please, and I want you to think about the fact that this was a rather interesting move on God's part, to put the law on stone tablets. He didn't have to put them on stone tablets, by the way. They were already writing at this time on parchment and leather, so why is He giving them on stone tablets? What's the deal with stone tablets?

Well, there's probably a lot of things that stone probably speaks to you. I mean, it speaks of the strength and the rigidity of God's commandments, and they are. It also speaks to the fact that they can be broken just as the stone themselves itself is not impervious to breakage.

In fact, when Moses came and brought those very tablets down the mountain after 40 days and he found the people living in reckless abandoned, sexual perversion, he threw the tablets on the ground and he broke them in front of all of the people to signify what they had done in breaking the commandments of God in such a short period of time.

But, more than just strength, rigidity, and even breakable, stone showed how the Old Testament law was cold and impersonal. The Old Testament law is cold and impersonal. And I believe that's exactly why when God spoke prophetically about the coming of the new covenant. He talked about the fact that it wasn't going to be cold and impersonal anymore. In fact, He said it's going to be very personal. Let me show you this on the screen from Jeremiah chapter 31. The Lord says,

Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV)

...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it (where?) on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Is that cold and impersonal? No, that's very intimate. That's very warm and intimate. He says, I'm going to take My law, literally My morality, My heart, My very heart, My justice, My righteousness, and I'm going to literally imprint it on your heart so that you're not going to have to go to some cold, impersonal stone tablet to find out what my law is all about. I'm going to write it on your heart so that it's very personal. It's very you. And what that means, people. It

doesn't just mean, don't just think of it as, now you have this cool hard drive. It used to be outside on stone tablets, now He just wrote it on the hard drive that's living inside of you.

No, it's way more than that. He has written it on your heart in the sense that He has made it your very desire. In other words, there's not some external impersonal law that gets sent to you saying, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" Like some voice from the mountain coming from I don't know where.

Now it's God speaking in my heart and saying, yeah, that would be terrible, that's wrong. And it's so much a part of my heart, my heart says, I don't want to do that. I don't want to go there. It's why we begin to change you guys. This is why we begin to change because the Holy Spirit has taken God's very law, His very heart, His Word, and He's written it inside of us.

He has made it a part of us, to guide us and direct us. And that's why when Christians write to me and they say, pastor Paul, I don't know what to do about this. It grieves me that they're writing me.

Don't you understand Christians that God has given you something so much more superior than an external law, or even another human being to tell you what they think you should do. Who cares what somebody says you should do? I tell people, I write people all the time. I write them back. I say, ask God. He is living within you. His law is living within you. Ask Him. There's no limit to what He will say to you. There was a limit to the Ten Commandments. There were 10.

There's no limit. There's an infinite wisdom from above that now lives within you that could apply to any situation. People write me all the time and they'll say, what does the Bible say about in vitro fertilization? And I'm like, seriously? Are you really asking that question? It's like, yeah, it's just thou shalt not, artificially..., no. I just, I write them back. I try to be polite. I say, well, the Bible doesn't talk about IVF because that hadn't been invented yet.

Well, God gave the law to the people who were there for the time in which they lived, but you don't live in that time. You live in the time when questions like IVF come up, and all kinds of other questions that might give, put you into some a moral quandary. And you're wondering, well, what does God's Word say about that?

Ask Him. Ask Him. He lives within you. Ask Him. Ah, see, that's too hard. I'm not going to do that. Well, but what if I pray and I don't get an answer? Then

keep praying. You've heard me say this lots of times. People say, pastor Paul, I prayed and I didn't get an answer. You know what you just told me? You told me you put a deadline on God's answer. You told me, you didn't..., so I asked them right away. How long did you pray? Oh, a couple of weeks. Okay, where did you come up with the idea that a couple of weeks was too long to wait? Where did you come up with that? Well, I just figured.

No, yeah, you figured. You figured wrong. Keep praying. Jesus said, keep praying. Keep knocking. Persevere. Remember that parable He told about the man going to get something to eat for his neighbor or for a guest who came to his house in the middle of the night? And he kept knocking until the guy finally got up and gave him what he wanted just at least so he'd shut him up. At least he opened the door and said, here, take it. Now go.

He says, listen, if that's the way men treat men, how is God going to treat you? You're a beloved child when you keep knocking, so keep knocking. Keep asking until you get an answer. Sometimes God wants us to persevere. Sometimes He wants us to continue in prayer, to press in, press in, press in, until you get in. So ask God. I think that's what the stone tablets were all about.

“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.”” Moses is going to be gone for a little while, Aaron and Hur are going to take care of any issues that are going on with the people.

“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 (at least to the people on the ground) was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. (and it says) ¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.” And by the way, he didn't eat or drink that whole time.

Now, when you read things like this, do you form a picture in your mind when it says that what the people saw while Moses was there for that 40 days, what they saw, was a fire on the top of the mountain that looked like it was a devouring fire. It didn't devour, but it was just this devouring fire. I'm assuming with smoke, maybe even rising above, who knows? I don't..., that's what they saw. That's what the people saw while Moses was up on the mountain. And you

might think to yourself, man, I tell you, if I saw something like that, I would, I'd be obedient to the Lord the rest of my days.

No, you're going to find out that during this 40 days, the people are going to completely wig out. And they're going to start saying, so where's this Moses guy anyway? And then they're going to go to Aaron and they're going to say, make us a God to lead us back because this Moses guy, we don't know what happened to him. They saw the things that they saw and they still walked away.

If you're praying for somebody to see a miracle, so they'll start walking with the Lord. It's not a surefire way of arresting someone's heart. It just isn't. You can see a miracle and still walk away from the Lord. You need to really pray that their heart would be changed, truly changed. transformed. That's what's going to make a difference. We're going to stop there, and we'll pick it up in chapter 25.

Getting into chapter 25 next week, we're going to start dealing with the instructions for building the tabernacle, building the furniture in the tabernacle. You're going to find that this is going to be interesting because all of this stuff is a picture of Jesus. It all points to Jesus some way or another, so I want to encourage you to be here with us next week as we continue the study, so pray with me.

Father, we thank You so much for just Your love for us. Thank You, God for giving us Your Word, and teaching us, and showing us so many insights that connect the old Testament and the old covenant with the new Testament and the new covenant.

Lord we thank You for drawing that line of consistency, that thread of consistency, because Lord, it just encourages our hearts. And it builds our faith.

And we pray, Lord God, that we would truly understand and meditate on the reality of the living God living within our hearts, literally dwelling within our hearts. And the Word of God living within us, the voice of God living in our hearts. Lord, help us to really, truly understand that and to come to You when we need wisdom.

Lord, Your Word says, if any man lacks wisdom, let him come, let him ask so Lord, let us do that. And give us the perseverance to pray and to keep praying when we need direction to continue to pray, and to pray with expectation. We thank You and praise You in the name of Jesus, our Savior, and all God's people said, amen. Amen. God bless you.