

THE CLIMACTIC ADOPTION OF THE LAW, THE MOSAIC COVENANT: THE GREAT DUTY OF BELIEVERS AFTER RECEIVING THE LAW, THE WORD OF GOD EXODUS 24:01–11

Introduction

This is a climactic passage, the Scripture that graphically closes the giving of the law to Israel. But note: once a person has heard the law of God — heard the Word of God — that person becomes obligated to God. The one thing we must all realize is this: people by the millions own the Holy Bible, the Word of God, and many of them have read a passage here and there. Millions of others have heard the Word of God preached. But one thing is missing in the reading and hearing of most people: a sense of their obligation to God. Again, God is clear: once a person has received or heard His Word, that person has certain obligations, certain duties before God.

This was the situation with Israel. God had just given the law, His Holy Word, to Moses; and Moses was now ready to bring the Word of God to the people. But once they had received the Word, they would become obligated to God, strongly obligated. This is the subject of this passage: *The Climactic Adoption of the Law, the Mosaic Covenant: The Great Duty of Believers After Receiving the Law, the Word of God*, Exodus 24:1-18.

- I. God's great call: worship Him (vv. 1-2).
- II. The 1st duty: obedience — to make a total commitment to obey God (v. 3).
- III. The 2nd duty: to seal one's commitment — to make a formal agreement (covenant) with God (vv. 4-8).
- IV. The 3rd duty: to worship God (vv. 9-11).
- V. The 4th duty: to receive more and more of God's law, of God's Word (vv. 12-18).

I. *Exodus 24:01–02 God's Great Call to Worship Him*

There was God's great call for His people to worship Him. Remember, Moses was still up on Mt. Sinai in the presence of God. God had just given him...

- the Ten Commandments (19:1-20:26)
- the civil laws to govern Israel (21:1-23:19)
- the three great rewards or promises for obedience (23:20-23)

Now, God was ready for Moses to return to the people, to lead them to ratify the law, to adopt it as the law of the land. God expected two things from the people: obedience to the law and the faithful worship of God.

1. Note what God did right before Moses left His presence: God extended a call for Moses to return after Moses had given the law to the people. Moses was to come back up into God's presence for worship. But this time the call to worship was extended to all Israel. Moses was to bring the leaders of Israel, the representatives of the people, with him:

=> Aaron, and Nadab and Abihu, the two oldest sons of Aaron

=> The seventy elders or rulers of Israel

One of the most glorious events in the history of the world was about to take place: the giving of the Ten Commandments and the law to God's people. Consequently, God wanted and expected His people to obey the commandments and to worship Him in appreciation for the commandments and the law. Moses was, therefore, to return to God for worship after the law was ratified (formally accepted and sanctioned); and he was to bring the leaders of God's people with him.

2. But note: there was a limitation to God's call, two limitations. The leaders were to worship afar off, a great distance away from God's presence. Only Moses could come near and approach God.

Why did God lay these two restrictions upon the people? Obviously, to teach two necessary lessons.

- a. God's people must know this fact: there is a great gulf between God and man, an impassable gulf. God is holy, righteous and pure — perfect in all His being. But man is the very opposite. Man is unholy, unrighteous and impure — imperfect (sinful and depraved) in his being.

God lives in the incorruptible world, the spiritual and heavenly world that is permanent and eternal, that never wastes away. Whereas, man lives in the corruptible world, the physical and earthly world that is running down and is temporal and wasting away.

There is a great gulf between God and man: man cannot enter God's presence. He cannot approach God nor enter heaven, not unless God Himself makes the way and shows man the way.

Isa 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Isa 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Luke 16:26 "And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us."

Rom 3:10-18 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their

throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

- b. God’s people must know another fact as well: only God’s appointed mediator can approach God. This was Moses: only Moses could come near God. This, of course, pointed toward Jesus Christ, the great mediator appointed by God to bridge the great gulf between God and man.

1 Tim 2:5-6 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.*

Heb 3:1-2 *Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.*

Heb 7:25 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

Heb 8:6 *But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

Heb 9:15 *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

Heb 9:24-28 *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

1 John 2:1 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

EXODUS 24:01 NADAB

Nadab was Aaron and Elisheba's oldest son. He was in line to succeed his father Aaron as High Priest.

- Nadab was called to join his father and the seventy elders as they went up Mount Sinai to enter the presence of God (see Exo 24:1, 9-11).

Exo 24:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance."

- Nadab was ordained to be one of the original priests (see Exo 28:1; Lev 8:1-36).

Exo 28:1 "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests."

- Nadab tragically sinned against God with his brother Abihu by offering strange fire before the LORD. They were both consumed with God's fire of judgment (see Lev 10:1-2; Num 3:4).

Lev 10:1-2 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

Nadab's untimely death, along with Abihu, was a graphic picture for the other priests that they had to approach God exactly as He said, that they must never take lightly the holiness of God. □

EXODUS 24:01 ABIHU

Abihu was Aaron and Elisheba's second oldest son (see Exo 6:23; Num 3:2; 26:60; 1 Chr 6:3; 24:1).

- Abihu was called to join his father and the seventy elders as they went up Mount Sinai to enter the presence of God (see Exo 24:1, 9-11).

Exo 24:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance."

- Abihu was ordained as one of the original priests (see Exo 28:1; Lev 8:1-36).

Exo 28:1 "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests."

- Abihu tragically sinned against God with his brother Nadab by offering strange fire before the LORD. They were both consumed with God’s fire of judgment (see Lev 10:1-2; Num 3:4).

Lev 10:1-2 Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. □

II. *Exodus 24:03 Obedience, A Total Commitment to Obey God*

The very first duty of God’s people is obedience — to make a total commitment to obey God. Picture the scene: Mt. Sinai is covered with a thick, bright cloud. All of a sudden, someone at the foot of the mountain notices an unclear shadow emerging more and more out of the foggy cloud, walking down the mountain. Soon the shadow is clearly seen: it is Moses! No doubt people began running all about the camp of the Israelites, shouting the news, “Moses is returning! Moses is returning!”

The leaders gathered at the foot of the mountain to greet Moses while all the people spread the news among themselves and anxiously began gathering together tribe by tribe — eagerly waiting to hear what Moses had to report. Two great events then took place.

1. Moses declared God’s law, God’s Word, to the people. Note that he shared “all” with the people. This means that he declared...
 - the Ten Commandments (19:1-20:26)
 - the civil laws to govern the nation (21:1-23:19)
2. The people committed themselves to keep the commandments and laws of God. In fact, note exactly what they said: they would do *everything* the LORD had said. What a moment of excitement and of enthusiasm, of being emotionally charged: hearing the law of God being proclaimed for the first time, the very laws that were to govern their nation. With one voice, in unison, they shouted out that they would do everything God had said. The people committed themselves — *totally committed themselves* — to follow God, to keep His commandments and laws.

Thought 1. The one thing God wants from us is obedience. God longs for us to keep His commandments, to do all He says.

Deu 5:29 *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

Deu 26:16 *The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Josh 1:8 *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*

1 Sam 15:22 *But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

Mat 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

Mat 7:24 *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”*

John 15:10 *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”*

Rev 22:14 *Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.*

III. Exodus 24:04–08 A Total Commitment, A Formal Agreement

The second duty of God’s people is to seal the commitment made to God. In Israel’s case, Moses sealed the commitment by making a *formal agreement* (covenant) with God.

1. First, Moses carefully wrote down everything the LORD God said (v. 4). No doubt God’s Spirit quickened his memory to remember all that God had said (2 Pet 1:21; Jn. 14:26). Perhaps Moses had also taken some notes up on the mountain when God was instructing him. Whatever the case, the Ten Commandments and law needed to be recorded so that God’s people would always have God’s Word available for study, understanding and guidance.

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

1 Pet 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

2. Second, Moses confirmed the agreement, the covenant, between God and the people. He sealed the commitment the people had made to God, sealed it by conducting a public service.
 - a. Moses built an altar and twelve stone pillars at the foot of Mt. Sinai (v. 4b). The altar was necessary in order to sacrifice the animals to God. The twelve stone pillars represented the twelve tribes of Israel (Jos 4:3, 5-9, 20; 1 Kng 18:31).
 - b. Moses sent young men to offer sacrifices upon the altar (v. 5). They sacrificed young bulls as burnt offerings and peace or fellowship offerings. (See note, Gen 8:20; *Burnt Offerings*, Gen 8:20.)

- c. Moses then took half the blood and sprinkled it on the altar (v. 6). The blood symbolized that the life of the offerer was being sacrificed, given up, poured out, dedicated to God. In sprinkling the blood upon the altar, Moses was declaring that the people were asking God...
- to accept them and their commitment
 - to forgive their sins
 - to receive them and their dedication as being genuinely given
- d. Moses then took the Book of the Covenant or Law that he had written and read it to the people (v. 7). Why? Because it was the very thing they were committing themselves to keep. In order to keep the law, they needed to hear it time and again. They needed to learn the Ten Commandments and the civil laws, keep them focused in their memories.
- e. The people again declared their commitment: they would do everything the LORD had said (v. 7b). But note: this time they added a more forceful declaration: “We will obey.”
- Psa 119:93 “I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.”*
- Psa 119:125 I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.*
- Psa 119:129 “Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them.”*
- Psa 119:144 Your statutes are always righteous; give me understanding that I may live.*
- f. Moses sprinkled half the blood upon the people (v. 8). Remembering that there were over two to three million Israelites, the leaders obviously helped Moses or else Moses sprinkled only the leaders and the people are seen as being represented in their leaders. The symbolic meaning of this act is graphic: the picture is that of God offering His forgiveness and acceptance to the people...
- because the people *believed* that the sacrifice secured God’s forgiveness and acceptance
 - because the people committed themselves to obey God’s Word

Note what Moses did as he sprinkled the people: he cried out, “this blood confirms the covenant between you and God” (v. 8).

Thought 1. The blood of the sacrifice is a symbol or picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ confirms the covenant God has made with man. God forgives and accepts man — binds man to Himself — through the blood of Christ and only through the blood of Christ.

Lev 17:11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.

Mat 26:28 “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Rom 5:9 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Heb 9:14 *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

Heb 9:22 *In fact the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

IV. Exodus 24:09–11 Duty to Worship God

The third duty of God's people is to worship God.

1. Once the public service ended, Moses and the leaders obeyed God: they went up on Mt. Sinai to worship God (v. 9). What these men experienced is one of the most amazing experiences described in all of Scripture. Three phenomenal facts are reported.
 - a. First, the leaders saw God (v. 10). How could this be when Scripture says time and again that no person has ever seen God? No doubt what they saw was only a shadow, a faint resemblance of God. Scripture is clear: no person could ever see God in the splendour and brilliance of His glory and holiness. God's glory and holiness would consume and vaporize the person. This is exactly what Scripture declares:

Exo 33:20 *"But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

John 1:18 *"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."*

1 Tim 6:16 *Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen.*
 - b. Second, the leaders saw a dazzling pavement made of blue sapphire stone under God's feet (v. 10b). The sapphire stone was as clear as the blue of the sky itself. What a beautiful sight this must have been: a glimpse of the splendour, brilliance, glory and beauty of the spiritual world, of heaven itself, the very place where God Himself is.

Note how Moses grasped after words to describe the scene, how inadequate human language is in describing the glory of heaven: he says that this seemed to be what it was; that it was *something like this*; that there *appeared to be* pavement made of brilliant blue sapphire stone. Moses and the leaders were unquestionably caught up in the glory and splendour of the sight, worshipping and praising God for all He is and for all He had done for His people.

- c. Third, God's glory did not strike the leaders dead (v. 11). And again, it is emphasized that they *saw* God. The word *saw* (*chazah*) means an inward, spiritual or prophetic vision. (Frank E. Gaebelien. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 450). It means to mentally see and contemplate with pleasure; to have a vision: beholding, looking, seeing something in one's mind.
2. Note that the leaders ate a covenant meal before God. The meal symbolized the people's commitment and covenant with God. The meal sealed the covenant and commitment. It was probably during the meal and worship session that God revealed His glory to the leaders.

Thought 1. God calls us to come aside and worship Him. It is when we get all alone with God — away from the hustle and bustle of day-to-day activities — that God meets us and pours out His presence and glory upon us.

Psa 29:2 *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.*

Psa 95:6 *Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*

Psa 96:9 *Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.*

Psa 99:5 *Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.*

John 4:24 *“God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

Rev 14:6-7 *Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” ■*