

Title: The Wedding
Text: Exodus 24
Theme: The marriage of God to his people
Series: Exodus #41
Prop Stmtnt God's plan is to have a people of his own to love and thrill.

Read Text:

We have gathered together in the sight of God and these witnesses to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony. And thus begins another wedding in which a covenant is established between a man, a woman and God. The covenant of marriage is based upon the new covenant that Christ made with the church. The new covenant that Christ made with the church is based upon the old covenant that God made with this people. What Moses was to the OT people of God, Christ is to the NT people of God. What Israel was in the OT, the church is in the NT. What the Passover was in the OT, communion is in the NT. Communion is like a wedding anniversary. We remember the vows we made. We renew our commitment and we look forward to the future. Today as part of our worship, we are going to observe communion, which we usually do on the 1st Sunday of the month. Therefore, I consider it to be a very kind Providence that we have to come to Exodus 24 on this particular Sunday. This chapter is like a sleeping giant, in the sense that it does not get the attention of a Romans 8, Isaiah 6, Psalm 23 or Revelation 19. And yet this chapter is astounding! It is my intent this morning to help you see the momentous significance of the event this chapter records and to see the role that it has in our history, our present life and future hope. Chapter 24 is a beautiful harmony of a worship service and a wedding. Properly understood, those two concepts were perfectly together because God designed it that way. He created and called a people to be his bride who will rule under him and with him and who will love, worship and enjoy him perfectly and forever. That has been his plan from the beginning and he is going to see it through to the end. Chapter 24 is a taste of not only what could be, but also of what will be. There is a call to worship (v.1), the reading of God's Word (v.3), a confession of faith and the sharing of a meal. We are doing that in our service this morning. But in this chapter there is also the wedding of God and his people. And therefore is a time of great joy. Right here we are given a glimpse as to why God is so jealous for the love of his people and therefore forbids them to participate in idolatry. He knows that there is no God like him. There is no one who is more committed to loving them and protecting them and thrilling them than He is. God is infinitely serious about pursuing the joy of his children. He made us to awe us. He made us to relate with us. He made us to be satisfied in him alone. So, in this one chapter you are able to get a taste of the very end for which God made the world, of which we are a part.

This chapter summarizes the entire story of the Bible. Here is what we see:

- 1) God created the world as his kingdom/temple and people as his family to worship him and enjoy him forever.**

God is Creator. God is the Initiator. God is the King! And God is a magnificent King. His magnificence is seen in his expansiveness. He is so absolutely immense and infinite of being, that he describes the earth as his footstool. And yet, he created the earth and the people in it to enjoy his presence in a personal and glorious relationship. Now think with me. What do you expect to do when you go to a temple? (even a pagan one) You go to encounter God (or a god). God made the garden to be his temple, where we would encounter him. The garden was designed to be just the beginning. Adam and Eve and all those after them were supposed to spread the borders of Eden all over the planet so that the entire earth was a garden/temple. As you know, it did not work out that way. Adam and Eve sinned and the garden/temple was lost. But God's plan will not be denied. So, God is starting with Israel. His plan is make a garden/temple where people can encounter him with the goal of spreading the borders of this all over the world. Before the tabernacle is built, God gives to his children a taste of it here on Mt. Sinai. The difference between this garden/temple and Eden is because of sin.

Here, only Moses can go to the very top of the mountain, while the representatives of the people are permitted to be on the mountain, unlike the people who have to stay at the base. Later on we will see the tabernacle separates the place for the people from the place for the priests from the place for the one and only high priest. Of course, all of this just sets the stage for when because of Christ's death, the curtain that separates the Holy of Holies from everything else is ripped in two, so that now, all people can live with and enjoy God.

2) God's relationship with his people is based on a mediator and a covenant.

At least 6 or 7 times this chapter speaks of Moses going up the mountain. Moses is going on behalf of the people and in order to speak to the people on behalf of God. Moses, as the mediator helps establish the covenant between God and his people. This book of the covenant that has been recorded and is about to be ratified, cannot be changed or reworded by the people. This is an all or nothing deal. Moses understands the seriousness of this. Once again, keep in mind that the New Covenant that Christ established as both the Mediator and the Sacrifice is equally serious. God establishes the terms of the covenant. You have to relate to God on his terms – not your own. You have to agree with God.

3) God's covenant is established on the basis of a sacrifice.

As part of the ceremony of ratifying the covenant, animals are killed and their blood is sprinkled on the people. This was done as a purifying ritual. The sprinkling of blood on the people was to be a covering for their sin. There was no other way for a relationship to be established between God and his people. This is the story of the Bible. Sacrifices are offered over and over in order to atone for sin so that God can relate with his people. All of those sacrifices are done pointing to the ultimate sacrifice to come through Christ.

Ex. 24.8	Context: Passover/Sinai	Covenant/Sacrifice	Kingdom
Matt 26.26	Context: Passover/Jerusalem	Covenant/Sacrifice	Kingdom

God could not move forward with his people until atonement had been made for their sin. The animal sacrifices only covered for a while, until the ultimate sacrifice would be offered by Christ, but the picture is clear. God can only establish a covenant on the basis of a sacrifice.

4) This blood-based, blood-bought covenant opens up the means by which we can worship God and enjoy his presence forever.

As much as I am dazzled by the language of verses 9-11, it is only a taste of what we are going to enjoy with God and his people forever! This language is found throughout the Bible. David reflected it in Psalm 23 when he said, “and I will dwell in the house of the Lord – forever!” Christ promised his disciples that one day he will eat bread and drink wine with them in his kingdom. Our relationship now as believers is a taste of this eternal relationship to come. This chapter reflects the entire story line of the Bible as it tells the account of the wedding of God and his people.

This means that his people are his bride and this is the ceremony that formalizes that relationship with the OT people of God. But think of that for a second. The King has chosen you to be his bride!! And what kind of a King is he? He is powerful, majestic, righteous, sovereign and gracious. He is so gracious!! The commands of the King to his people are not given to them as the basis for his choosing, but as their response to His grace. While he chose them for his people, and is making a covenant with them, they must understand the terms of the covenant and the seriousness of it. You can see how our weddings are patterned after this. At the beginning of the wedding ceremony the minister says, “these vows are not to be entered into unadvisedly or taken lightly, but deliberately, reverently and in the awe of God.” That statement is a warning. Please understand how important this is. That is what is going on at the end of chapter 23 (vs. 20-33). After additional warnings Moses leads the people in accepting the covenant and in formally becoming the people of God. The story has basically two parts; the sealing and the celebration, or the wedding and the reception.

1. **Sealing the Covenant** – 1-8

Notice the Intent is spelled out in v.3. (read) What do you intend to do? We do this in a wedding when the minister asks, “Will you take this woman to be your wife and this man to be your husband?” At that point in the wedding service the couple is not married, but they have just stated what their intentions are. If at this point they say “no” then there is no sense to go on. Dismiss the crowd, and call the banquet hall and give the cake to your cousins from out of town. There will be no celebration because there is no wedding.

Now, look at the Symbols that are used. (v.4)

- The pillars were set up representing the 12 tribes which meant that everyone was included in this. As part of that representation there were 70 elders chosen perhaps representing the nation as it originally entered Egypt, now having left.

- The altars represented God. The blood on the altar represents God's forgiveness and acceptance of the offering.
- The blood of the covenant (v.8) the basis by which the covenant was accepted and sealed. Only by means of a sacrifice acceptable to God can God have a relationship with people. The covenant spells out how God expects his people to live in view of their redemption.
- The blood on the people – the consequences of breaking it, which helps them understand what is at stake. This covenant is a matter of life and death. (Heb. 10.22)

In our weddings, a man and a woman say to each other “til death do us part.” The point of that, is that I would rather die, in fact, I will choose to die before I break this vow. It is not the size of the diamond, nor the quality of the gold that makes the ring precious. Oh no, the promise of death over dishonor is what makes the ring so important. In this wedding, it is God who gives them the covenant, sealed in blood as the visible and literal promise of his enduring love.

The Commitment (v.7) is formally given by the people. The people could not make this promise on the basis of anything other than sacrifice. They said they would obey, but the only way they could live in obedience was to participate in the sacrifices that were necessary to atone for their sin and remove their guilt. And then comes the pronouncement. (v.8)

2. **Celebrating the Covenant** – 9-14

Now comes the celebration. It is rather staggering to think that this awesome God, whose burning and terrifying splendor shook the mountains with earthquakes, deafened the witnesses with thunder, blinded the observers with lightening is now allowing these men to enjoy a meal in his presence which seems, on the basis of the language here to be something that one would expect to die from.

How do you explain the fact that they saw God and later on the Bible says that you can't see God and live? God told Moses (33.20) that you cannot see my face and live. John 1.18 says that no one has seen God, and 1 Timothy 6.16 says that no one has seen him nor can see him. Is this an exception to the rule? No. In fact, Numbers 12.8 comments on the meetings that Moses had with God and said that when Moses sees God, he sees the form of the LORD. In other words, God reveals himself in a way (cloud, fire) that veils (especially cloud) his glory so that mortal man is not destroyed. Now, while that is part of what is going on here, I don't think it tells the entire story. The very language of verse 9 suggests that when they saw God, they could barely lift their heads. God prevented them from looking on him completely, and they were only permitted to look high enough to see that he was standing on the sky! When it says that they saw God, it is clear that they could only see where God was! God is described as standing on a floor made out of sapphire-looking stones. The picture is clear. The sky was the floor upon which God was standing. That is incredible. The earth is his footstool. He chose to reveal his presence

there at Mt. Sinai and to allow these men to not only come that close but to relax in his presence in such a way that they even enjoyed a meal there under his feet!

Isaiah 66.1

Psalm 99.1, 5

Psalm 110.1

All of this sets the stage for what is about to take place. The blue stone represents the sky that is the footstool for God. This scene in chapter 24 is reflected in the design of the tabernacle. And, the tabernacle is designed to point us to Christ and to his plan to live with us in such a way that we enjoy him and are satisfied in him forever.

As the men get in their places to serve this morning, I want to go back to one portion of the chapter that I mentioned but did not elaborate on, and that is the sprinkling of the blood on the people. People make a big deal about they wear at a wedding. The guests, the mothers, the wedding party, but of course – the bride. In this chapter, the bride (the children of Israel) come to the ceremony, only to have Moses take the blood of the sacrifices and splatter it on them. Hebrews 9 says that he used the branches of a hyssop plant. It isn't the last time that blood is splattered on things. And once again, there is a critical reason why.

If you want to be part of God's people, if you want to be married to God, whatever you are wearing has got to go. What you are wearing, that is what you are bringing to the relationship is offensive to him because you and I are so thoroughly corrupt. We have to be washed. We have to be cleansed. Our sin has to be covered and removed. And this can only take place through the perfect death of a perfect sacrifice.

Concl. 1 Peter 1.2; Hebrews 9.19-20; 10.22