

Exodus 23:14-24:18 Rhythms of Worship and a Divine Covenant

The passage before us tonight is a profound passage!

A) In this passage, God provides the structural rhythm for their worship and the solemn sealing of their covenant identity.

14 “Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: 15 You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); 16 and the Feast of Harvest, the first fruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.

17 “Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

18 “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. 19 The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk. - Pray

B) Life is busy! Always something to do, somewhere to go –

1) Always something demanding time attention – resources

C) We live in a world driven by constant motion, endless production, the result of that is often shallow relationships

It wasn’t much different for the Children of Israel – Busy hard working people.

A) God knowing that would be the case with Human nature in general

B) Developed a yearly Rhythm for his people that would center around the observance of 3 feast or Festivals

C) These 3 festivals were times when his people were called to pause and come before him.

D) Later in Israel’s history – once established in the land of promise – the men were required to come to Jerusalem 3x a year for these feast

The Feast of Unleavened Bread which included Passover

The Feast of Harvest also called First Fruits recognizing God's provision.-

The Feast of Ingathering later called the feast of Tabernacles

A)The **Feasts of Passover and First Fruits** was in the Spring – New year
The Feast of Tabernacles happened in the Fall

B)The Feast of Unleavened Bread which included Passover – celebration of Salvation and Sanctification – remembering deliverance from Egypt

C)The Seven days celebrating the Feast of Unleavened bread was about consecration – removing leaven – type of sin

1)Saved to be a consecrated people. – Sanctified set apart to God

The Feast of Harvest also called First Fruits celebrating God's provision

A)It was the recognition that all that they had belonged to the Lord

B)They would honor that by Giving God the first fruits of their crops and animals

C)First fruits of their increase.

Notice V.15 God says None of you shall appear before me empty handed

A)But the attitude of this festival was not one of coming begrudgingly –
“Eyeore- oh I have to bring my offering –

B)It was coming in an attitude of Joy – God has blessed me so much – I am privileged to give back this small portion to him

1)Excited to give my first fruits not my left overs

C)Paul the apostle would pick up on this idea in the NT book of 1

Corinthians in talking about tithing – **God loves a cheerful giver – Hilarious**

1)This is so awesome – I get to give to the Lord

**D) During Covid we moved away from passing an offering basket
But one of the things I miss about doing that is – I think we miss out on
this aspect – See I give digitally online – Don't think about it much**

A) Just automatically goes

B) So that is the feast of Passover / UB and First fruits or Harvest

**C) The 3rd feast was the Feast of Ingathering later called the feast of
Tabernacles – Celebrating God's faithfulness – 40 yrs in wilderness**

1) Manna – Water from the Rock

**D) Seven day camping trip – Later each day – temple MT – pitcher
Shout of celebration**

**So the Lord was building into the yearly Rhythm of his people – these
celebrations of Gratitude**

**A) Such a great practice – because I think the natural tendency of so
many of us is to complain**

**B) Get frustrated with what isn't happening – what is wrong – instead of
what is right.**

**C) God wanted his people to be people of Gratitude – so built it into their
yearly Rhythm**

Studies have been done on how Gratitude Reconfigures the Brain

**A) There was a study that was done in 2016 at Indiana University where
they evaluated adults struggling with anxiety and depression.**

B) One group was tasked with writing gratitude letters weekly.

**C) The Finding: Brain scans taken three months *after* the study
showed that those who wrote the weekly gratitude letters**

**1) displayed significantly greater activation in the medial prefrontal
cortex when experiencing gratitude.**

Other studies have been done – where they have discovered that When you actively focus on what you appreciate,

A)Your brain stimulates the limbic system and releases a surge of two critical neurotransmitters:

- **Dopamine:** The chemical responsible for pleasure, motivation, and reward.

When dopamine spikes, it creates a neurological feedback loop. Your brain notes the reward and actively begins scanning your environment for *more* things to be grateful for

B)The other neurotransmitter that gets stimulated when you are intentionally focusing on things to be grateful for is:

- **Serotonin:** The neurotransmitter heavily responsible for mood stabilization, calmness, and willpower.

C)Researchers have found – that by flooding these pathways, gratitude behaves much like **natural antidepressants, strengthening the synaptic connections that **suppress** negative thoughts and meditations.**

D)And listen our God is way smarter than these scientist which is why he encourages us to learn how the be thankful in all circumstances

¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

So we see that God was creating a yearly Rhythm for his people that would encourage them to stop and remember and reflect on what God has done. ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

A)So how can we develop a similar practice?

B)We do that with Communion – weekly times of worship.

C)Journaling: **Weekly gratitude journal – what am I thankful for – Good for my heart**

1)What am I thankful for – Wife, kids, friends, our church, our staff

So God commanded his people to set this Rhythm of stopping to remember.

A) But God doesn't just give commands to his people – **he promises to go before them and lead them into his purposes**

²⁰ “Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name *is* in Him.

B) Now I mentioned on Sunday that we were going to see a surprise appearance of Jesus in the Story this week.

C) It is here in the figure of this Angel – **Note capital A** – usually a good give away that this is not talking about an ordinary Angel

Most scholars believe that Angel in Exodus 23 is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ is known in theology as a Christophany (or a Theophany).

A) Takes on a bodily form: Genesis – Melch or in Joshua the Commander of the Army of the Lord

B) Early Church fathers like Justin Martyr and Augustine held this view

C) Later Scholars like Matthew Henry, John Calvin held this view

D) Modern day Commentators – Chuck Smith, John MacArthur, David Jeremiah hold this view.

The text gives us specific reasons for holding this view.

A) 1. The Divine Identity: "My Name is in Him" (v. 21)

B) **The Scholarly Argument:** In the ancient Near East and Hebrew thought, a person's "name" wasn't just a label;

1) it represented their essence, character, authority, and presence.

C)By stating that His unique divine name (Yahweh) resides *inside* this Angel, God is indicating

1)that this being is not a created angelic creature (like Gabriel or Michael).

D)He possesses the very nature of God.

Jesus declared of himself in John 5:43 - ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me.

A)One of his many claims to deity

B)Hebrews 1:3 he is described and the exact imprint of God's nature

2. The Divine Prerogative: The Power to Forgive Sin (v. 21)

A)The Text: God warns Israel regarding the Angel: ²¹ **Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions..."**

B)The Scholarly Argument: Throughout the Old Testament, it is an absolute theological truth that only God can forgive or retain sins.

C)Remember in Mark 2 the paralytic let through the roof – Jesus told him his sins were forgiven – the religious leaders got all bent out of shape.

D)Which is easier – Forgive or say – rise up and walk – Just so you know I have the power to forgive sins – Rise up and walk

E)Interesting – because many scholars believe his paralysis was the result of sin – hearing his sins were forgiven greatest need

3. Absolute Authority: Total Obedience Required (v. 21-22)

A) In The Text: God equates obeying the Angel with obeying God Himself: ²² But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

B) Here, the voice of the Angel and the voice of Yahweh are completely synchronized and interchangeable.

C) To rebel against the Angel is to rebel against God; to obey the Angel is to obey God.

D) The Scholarly Argument: God never shares His glory or absolute authority with any created being.

So this is a beautiful picture of God declaring- I am going to lead you and go before you.

A) But here is what this text also teaches us - God does not abandon His people to wander aimlessly. He goes before them,

B) But His presence requires holiness and uncompromised devotion.

²² But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. ²³ For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. 24 You shall **not bow down to their gods**, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.

25 “So you **shall serve the Lord your God**, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. 26 No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

27 “I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. 28 And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. **30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.** 31 And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out

before you. 32 You shall make no covenant with them, nor with 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.

A few things to note here: V.30 God says little by little I will drive the enemy out.

A) Interesting: Every once in a while – I meet someone who had a radical transformation – quit doing drugs / Alcohol in one day

B) Miracle the craving was gone.

C) But in most Christians lives – Sanctification is a process – little by little – God working in our hearts

Focusing on one thing: This needs to change.

A) That changes and then it is something else – that is the process of Sanctification – little by little – Show each other grace

B) None of us have arrived! – All people in Process ... loving redeemer

C) Notice also the Lord says in V.28 – I am not going to remove them all at once – lest the land become desolate

Too much for them to take over if it was all at once.

A) The Genius of God

B) The 3rd thing that is worth noting is God says that he is going to be the one who drives them out –

I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. V.22

I will cut them off. V.23

I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you V.27

I will send hornets before you, to drive them out V.27

Little by little I will drive them out V.30

For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. V31

C) God is making it clear – Victory is going to come from me

But the people of Israel had a part to play in it as well.

A) They needed to keep themselves pure before the Lord and separate from their gods and idols in order to experience God's Victory

you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.

B) They were going to have a part in the battle – and in pulling down the pillars –

C) That is how God works – He divinely works through human instruments!

Now as we move into chapter 24 – we find that God doesn't set up a Rhythm for his people to Remember

A) But he takes it one step further and he establishes a Covenant with them

Now He said to Moses, **"Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar."** And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him. **afar.**

B) The standard of Worship in the OT was always from afar – Distance – barriers

1) Only Moses was allowed to draw near

C) We will begin to see on Sunday – Instructions for the tabernacle – 13 chapters

Distance: Holy of Holies – Only the HP and only one day of the year.

A) The Veil – Barrier – wall – do not enter

**B) Calvary It is finished – Veil was rent in two – top to bottom
OPEN HOUSE**

C)Because we have a great High Priest in Jesus – We are invited ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

3 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” 4 And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And 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 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. 6 And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.” 8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.”

Now we looked at this in some detail on Sunday. Moses rehearses the condition of the covenant with them- Ch. 20-23

A)They enthusiastically promise – All that God says we will do

B)But then Moses builds and Altar – Provision – Failure is coming

C)This Covenant is sealed in Blood – sprinkled on the Altar

D)Big idea: God doesn’t merely rescue people from bondage; He brings them into a covenant relationship with Himself.

Man would fail miserably in keeping the covenant – But God knew that would be the case.

A)So God began to hint of a new covenant that he was going to establish

B)900 years later he would say through the Prophet Jeremiah 31

³¹“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—³²not according to the

covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. ³³ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jeremiah 31:31-33

New Covenant – Internal work

Ezekiel

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God Ezekiel 36:26-28

Then on the night before Jesus went to the Cross – He institutes this new Covenant: Matthew 26

²⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹ But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” Matthew 26:27-29

Blood of the OC was sealed by an Innocent lamb

The Blood of the NC was sealed by the Blood of Jesus the lamb of God

Moses is invited to come into God’s presence V.9-18

9 Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. 11 But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank. ¹² **Then the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there;** and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.”

¹³ So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. ¹⁴ And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.”

¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

¹⁶ Now the glory of the LORD rested 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.

So here is what is really interesting to me in this story

A) God calls Moses out from the others – Come up here.

**B) Moses is there with the Lord – for six days before anything happens
Before God even speaks**

C) God says v.12 “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there;

**Before God was going to say anything or do anything or give anything
He said to Moses just come and be there.**

A) Just come and be in my presence

**B) Reminds me of that passage in Mark 6:7 He called his disciples to
himself**

**C) Before he called them to do anything – before go into all the world –
Come and be with me**

God was saying to Moses – Just come be in my presence

**A) The "theology of presence" is one of the most profound threads
running through the entire biblical narrative.**

**B) From God walking with humanity in the cool of the Genesis garden to
the final declaration in Revelation that "*the dwelling place of God is with
man,*" [Rev 21:3]**

**C) Scripture reveals that God's ultimate goal is not just our obedience,
but our company.**

**D) God's invitation to "just be" challenges our modern, production-
driven mindset.**

"Culture says, 'Produce, achieve, accomplish.' God says, '**Be still, and know that I am God.**' [Psalm 46:10] The greatest gift you can give the world is not your frantic labor, but a soul deeply saturated in the presence of Jesus."

— **Chuck Swindoll**

"We must not confuse the work of the Lord with the Lord of the work. The Lord is more interested in the worker than He is in the work... He desires **your fellowship** more than He desires your service."

— **Pastor Chuck Smith**

Acts 13 The Elders of Antioch - Ministered to the Lord

The Bible links God's presence directly to the restoration of our mental and emotional health. It is the antidote to the anxiety tracked by modern neurology.

The Insight: Psalm 16:11 states, *"In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*

Notice it does not say joy is found in God's *presents* (blessings), but in His *presence*.

Years ago we used to sing this song – called open the sky
 Open up the sky
 Fall down like rain
 We don't want blessings
 We want You

Remember a gal in the church coming up to me and saying: I don't like that song – I want blessings – I need blessings

A)Biggest blessing is more of him

B)We seek him – He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him –

C)Rewards with more of himself

So Moses is in God's presence for six days and nothing happens –

A)Imagine that – Waiting is hard – we don't like it

B)But we all know the promise

³¹But those who wait on the LORD
 Shall renew *their* strength;
 They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
 They shall run and not be weary,
 They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

C)Waiting gets a lot easier – when we are content to just be in his presence – part of the purpose of the wait

D)Captivated by who he is

Moses Encounters the Glory of God — vv. 17–18

¹⁷The sight of the glory of the LORD *was* like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. ¹⁸So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

“The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire...”

Fire is warming and a blessing or Terrifying depending on your relationship to it.

A)Fire place – camp fire – Awesome

B)Open room in your house – field behind your fence – terrifying

C)God is a consuming fire – He wants to burn bright in us – not burn us out or burn us up.

Seeking Presence – Blessing

Rebellion – Scary

