

Exodus 23-24

Three months after being set free from Egypt the children of Israel congregated together at the foot of Mount Sinai. As God descended the mountain was covered with lighting, thundering and a thick cloud and the people were filled with fear. They cried out:

Exodus 20:19

“You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

Chapters 20 – 31 record the conversation between God and Moses

The first part of that conversation is the receiving of the Moral, civil and ceremonial law recorded in chapter 21-23. This law code will become the basis of Israel’s government and their relationship with God.

As this portion comes to an end God makes a series of promises to Israel. These promises are conditional on them accepting the covenant.

This becomes the subject of the closing section of Exodus 23. The promises are:

1. That **He will send an angel** before them to be their guide, director, and helper (vers. 20 - 23).
2. That **He will be the enemy of their enemies** and that **He will drive out their enemies**
3. That **He will give them the entire country** between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean on the one hand, the Desert and the Euphrates on the other (ver. 31).
4. That **He will bless their sustenance**, avert sickness from them, cause them to multiply, and prolong their days upon earth (ver. 25, 26)

The first promise

Exodus 23:20

“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

This promise is the foundation of the rest of the promises in this chapter. God promises to send His Angel to guide Israel to the land of promise. It is certainly a picture of how God guides us into the blessed life

This sounds very similar to a promise given to us in the NT

Jude 1:24-25

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

Israel was promised an Angel to lead them all the way into the land and to give them victory over their enemies.

We are promised that Christ will accompany us on our journey and present us faultless before the Father.

Hebrews 7:25

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

John 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

God's method of leading His people to the Promised Land will be through The Angel of The Lord. Moses promises that He will "keep them in the way." This will be done as the Angel guides them by speaking to them. The word of God has always been the method of God to lead the people of God. His word is designed to be a light unto our path

Who is this angel?

The angel of the Lord is often used as a reference to God Himself. This is sometimes referred to as a theophany or an appearance of God in physical form.

We meet the angel of the Lord in many places through the OT.

- Hagar met Him when fleeing from Sarah

- Abraham met Him when sacrificing Isaac
- Moses met Him at the burning bush
- Gideon met Him in the cave
- Samson's parents met Him when He promised them a child
- David met Him outside Jerusalem
- Elijah met Him on the run
- The Assyrian army met Him when they attempted to take Judah

And in many cases it is clear that those who saw the angel actually had an encounter with God. This is clearly seen as Moses met the Angel at the burning bush

Exodus 3:2

*And **the Angel of the Lord** appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.*

Exodus 3:5-6

Then He said**, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." **6** Moreover He said, "**I am the God of your father**—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for **he was afraid to look upon God.

Exodus 3:14

*And God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM.**" And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "**I AM** has sent me to you."*

Jesus explained that He existed before His birth, was know by Abraham and was the one who encountered Moses at the burning bush

John 8:56-58

*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I AM.**"*

We can deduce that these appearances of the Angel of the Lord are actually what some call a Christophany, or a pre incarnate appearance of Christ.

Paul seemed to indicate that this angel was in fact Christ when he wrote,

1 Corinthians 10:9

Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;

And Moses was told that God's name would be in the Angel.

We know the name of 3 angels in Scripture:

- Gabriel
- Michael
- Lucifer – a fallen angel

These Angels do not bear the name of God. That is a privilege for Christ alone who bears the name Yahweh is in his name. His name is literally Yah-shua meaning YHWH is salvation. Christ's name was not chosen out of a baby book, nor was named after a relative. His name was given to Him by heaven and chosen because it reveals His nature and His purpose

Matthew 1:21

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Another interesting fact is that the appearances of the angel of the Lord cease after the incarnation of Christ. Angels are mentioned numerous times in the New Testament, but "the angel of the Lord" is never mentioned in the New Testament after the birth of Christ.

The second promise

Exodus 23:22-23

*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.*

This is the first of the conditional promises. If they fear the Lord and obey His word they will have victory over their enemies as the Angel goes before them and leads them

This victory illustrates the battle we face as believers.

Exodus 23:24

*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.*

Exodus 23:31

*... and you shall **drive them out** before you.*

Exodus 23:32-33

*You shall **make no covenant** with them, nor with their gods.*

*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."*

It is clear that if Israel is to be victorious in the battle against the inhabitants of Canaan they must drive out the people and remove all the altars to false gods.

The people were removed as a form of judgment. For over 400 years God had been patiently enduring His people suffering in Egypt while His mercy was being extended to the Canaanites. It was now time for judgment to fall upon them for their rejection of God and their sinful practices. One of the great hopes that we all have is that judgment will never actually be averted. Those who live heinous lifestyles and seem to get away with it will in fact one day stand before God to make recompense for their actions. Canaan, after 400 years would now face judgment for their sins, which included things like human sacrifice.

The altars were removed as a form of protection. God knows the nature of man and that if we leave doors open toward areas of compromise we will fall into sin in times of weakness. Israel failed in this area and generation after generation stumbled into idolatry. We can learn much from their failure and seek to not only remove sin from our lives but those things that will lead us into sin. The gentile churches in the first century were encouraged to not only remove themselves from idols, but also from meat sacrificed to idols. Shopping in the markets near the places of

worship they once visited would prove too much of a temptation for many young Christians.

Their story is also a picture of how the victory is won

Exodus 23:28

And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.

God promises to provide supernatural assistance. He never intended them to fight these battles on their own. The same is true of the child of God today. We are encouraged to cloth ourselves in the power of the Spirit and don the armor of God as we step daily into the battle to live holy, overcome personal sin and win others to faith in Christ.

Exodus 23:29-30

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.

Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

God explains that the battle will take time.

Alan Redpath once wrote:

The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, the making of the man of God is the task of a lifetime

Matthew Henry put it this way

In real kindness to the church, its enemies are subdued by little and little; thus we are kept on our guard, and in continual dependence on God.

Often the secret to success as a Christian is the little steps we take daily. If we choose daily to spend time in the word and avoid things that lead us to sin we will find great victories in life

The third promise

Exodus 23:31

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.

The Promises to Israel included a land they would inhabit. This Land was God's to give and to take away. As time moved on they were disposed from the land on two occasions. The first took place over a period of nearly 150 years. In 722bc the northern nations were overthrown and taken captive by Assyrian. Later in 587bc the southern nation fell to Babylon. After 70 years in captivity they were allowed to return to the land where they remained until after the death of Christ, when in 70ad Roman forces conquered Israel and burned Jerusalem. It was not until the middle of the 20th century that Israel inhabited the land again. This was in fulfillment of seemingly impossible promises given by Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 36:24

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.

The fourth promise

Exodus 23:25-26

"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.

No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

The old covenant had certain conditional promises associated with it. While these same promises cannot be transferred to the New Covenant there are other conditional promises that belong to the child of God today. In other words God never promised the New Testament believer or the church a land or that we would be without sickness or miscarriage. The New Testament believer is however promised a blessed life when we accept Christ and choose to walk in accordance with the Word of God.

The book of Hebrews compares the two covenants

Hebrews 8:6

*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established on better promises.*

Hebrews 8:7

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

Hebrews 8 takes a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34

*“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—not 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.*

*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.*

No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Hebrews 9:15

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 10:1

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

Hebrews 10:11-14

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

*and having a High Priest over the house of God,
let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled
from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is
faithful.
And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,
not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but
exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Chapter 24

Exodus 24:1-2

*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. 2 And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but
they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him."*

God once again called Moses up the mountain. This time he was not to come alone. Aaron, the High Priest, his two sons and the 70 elders of the congregation are to join him in the presence of the lord

They are called to come worship in varying degrees of intimacy. We see here a comparison as well as a contrast of New Testament ministry.

First, those who serve must draw nearer to the lord than those whom they serve. The apostles were to be given to the word and prayer if they were to be effective in ministering to the church

Second we, unlike them are not separated into classes where only certain people can draw near to God.

Exodus 24:3

*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."*

Moses relayed to the people what he heard from the Lord. They once again promise to obey the Lord. As time goes on they will show evidence that their commitment was very shallow as they quickly turn from the law into idolatry

It is possible that their failure to keep this promise was due to the fact that they did not consider the gravity of their response. They were willing to obey but not willing to examine themselves to see what was necessary in order to actually obey. We do the same thing today. Many raise their hands as a pledge of commitment to Christ without taking the time to examine their life and see what

things may have to change if the commitment is going to become real. If we want to succeed in walking with Christ we need to count the costs and determine what things need to be added and what needs to be taken away from our current way of life.

Exodus 24:4-8

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. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 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." 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."

Once the covenant had been accepted it was sealed with sacrifice and bond in writing.

David Guzik wrote

"God did not make an individual covenant with its own arrangement for each Israelite. There was one covenant. The same is true today under the New Covenant. You do have a personal relationship with God; you don't have your own private agreement with Him that contradicts the revealed words of the LORD."

God makes an offer to each of us; he declares that if we want to have our sins forgiven, to become a child of God, be given a new life and freely receive the gift of eternal life then we must trust in Christ for salvation and show evidence of that by turning from our sins.

Rather than accepting these terms, many people approach this as we do the negotiation table.

Contract negotiation is the process of give and take the parties go through to reach an agreement. Or, as they often say in business, "you don't get what you deserve; you get what you negotiate."

You cannot approach relationship with God that way. He is not willing to make concessions to the agreement to satisfy our lifestyles

The first step in ratifying the covenant was to build an altar. It was build upon 12 foundations representing the 12 tribes.

Once the innocent animal was sacrificed the blood was sprinkled upon the altar, to cleanse it and upon the people to cleanse them.

It is worth noting that Moses refers to both the blood of the covenant and the book of the covenant.

Exodus 24:9-11

Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 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. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

This is a beautiful picture of fellowship with God.

As the leaders went up the mountain, they met with God and experienced his glory. He wants to meet with us in the mundane things of life.

He will meet with us on the mountaintop but He also meets with us in the day to day. Don't limit fellowship with God to your quiet time, take Him with you to the kitchen, the job site, the classroom and the ball field

