THE COVENANT SEALED IN BLOOD

Exodus 23:20-24:18

Key Verse 24:8 “Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

 As we studied before, God brought the Israelites our from slavery in Egypt, opened the Red Sea, guiding them by the pillar of fire at night and the pillar of cloud by day, into the desert until they arrived at the foot of the Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai, God made a covenant with them in Exodus 19:5,6, “*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.*” God wanted to make the Israelites a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God meant that he would bless them to be a blessing for all nations. Wow! This must be a blessing to ones who used to live as slaves for 430 years in Egypt. This must be the unconditional and marvelous grace of God for the Israelites. In this way, God’s covenant with the Israelites was based only on the grace of God, not by the good deeds of the Israelites. So in all chapters of the OT, the authors praise this grace of God for his people, and God himself reminds them to remember this grace.

First, the Covenant (23:20-33). The covenant was made based on God’s faithfulness. This covenant shows God’s character, his faithfulness which would keep his promise with Abraham. In Genesis 12-17 God called Abraham and promised he would become a blessing for the world. God made a covenant with Abraham that he would make Abraham a great nation, and give him a land which we call ‘the Promised Land.’ 430 years after he made the covenant with Abraham, God now wants to keep his promise. Abraham had died long ago, but God remembered his promise with Abraham and kept it by making a covenant with his descendants, the Israelites. 430 years had passed since they made a covenant, but God remembered it and kept it at Mount Sinai. How faithful our God is! We are unfaithful, easily forgetting what we promised with God. In fact, we don’t remember what we said to God, and don’t care if we didn’t keep it. But, God remembers what he said and what we said, and keeps his words because he is faithful.

 In this way God’s covenant with the Israelites was based on the grace of God and his faithfulness. Then what is a ‘covenant’? Before we enter into the today’s passage, I want to explain the meaning of the word ‘covenant’, and its purpose and function regarding each covenant in the OT. Look at the screen.

 Covenant: “*berith”* in Hebrew term (appearing 285 times in the OT)

 “*diatheke*” in Greek term (33 times in the NT)

 “Binding or establishing of **a bond** between two parties.

**Solemn commitment**, guaranteeing promises or obligations undertaken by one or both covenanting parties.

1. The Creation Covenant: Ge 1-3 Adam unilateral
2. The Noahic Covenant: Ge 6-9 Noah unilateral
3. The Abrahamic Covenant: Ge 12-17 Abraham uni(bi)lateral
4. The Sinaitic Covenant: Ex 19-24 Moses bilateral
5. The Davidic Covenant: 2 Sa 7: Ps 89 David unilateral
6. The New Covenant: Jer 31:31-34 Prophets unilateral
7. The Covenant in Jesus’ blood Lk 22:20 Messiah unilateral
* Jesus Christ is “the mediator of a new covenant” (Heb 9:15,12:24)

* “I will be your God and you will be my people” (Ex 6:7, Jer 7:23; 31:33, Rev 21:3)

In Exodus 23:22-33 God promised the Israelites with blessing, protection, and success when they kept the covenant as the people of God. God would send an angel ahead of them and guard them until they entered the Promised Land. God would protect them from their enemies and give their land to them. God would protect them from disease and illness and bless their water and food. What a blessing of God for his people! Indeed God has done for them thus far in the desert. God fed them with manna and quail. God provided them with water from the rock which quenched their thirst. God promised that he would continue to be with them.

Now it’s the Israelites’ turn. There was a condition for God’s blessing. They must pay attention to the angel and listen to what he says. They must not rebel against him. They must worship the Lord God alone. God is the only one who they must worship. They made a covenant with Him. So, they must not make any covenant with the foreigners or their gods when they enter the land. This was because the gentiles could become a snare which would cause them to sin against God. These conditions were a basic requirement for God’s blessing. These were the duties of God’s people they had to fulfill to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God is gracious and merciful. God is the one who blesses. We give thanks to God who called us, saved us, and made us his children through faith in Jesus Christ. As the people of God, we have to fulfill our basic duty and requirement. As God sent the angel ahead of the Israelites, God sends the Holy Spirit to guide and guard us until we enter the kingdom of God. The Lord is our God and we are his people. The Lord God is the only one whom we must worship. There is no one else whom we trust and love, but God. We come to the church every weekend to worship Him online. But we must worship Him every day in every place, at home, at work, and at school. The Lord God is the center of our heart and the focus of our life purpose. Then God will bless us as he blessed the Israelites.

Second, the covenant sealed in the blood (24:1-18) Someone compared making God’s covenant with his people to pledging a marriage vow at a wedding ceremony. When an officiator asks a couple about their commitment, they have to respond before God and before their witnesses by saying, “I do” or “No”. “Mr. Bridegroom, I ask you. Do you accept Miss Bride as your wife?” The bridegroom has to respond with ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The same question is given to the bride. After finishing the marriage vows, they exchange rings as the seal of their vow. Then, the officiator proclaims their official marriage and confirms it before God and the witnesses.

 In the same way God made the covenant with his people at Mt. Sinai. The Israelites responded to God’s promise by saying, “We will do everything the Lord has said.” (19:8, 24:3,7) Look at verses 3-4. “When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, **they responded with one voice, “Everything the Lord has said we will do.”** Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said.” They responded with the same answer three times. They answered it right after Moses built an altar and offered the animal sacrifices to the Lord. (7) Number three means completeness. In this way his people completed their part to make the covenant valid.

Now, it is God’s turn. God used Moses as his agent. Moses took half the blood of sacrificed animals and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. He then took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.” (6-7) Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “**This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words**.” (8) God sealed the covenant by sprinkling blood on the people.

According to their customs in ancient days, people sealed a covenant by passing through between two half-cut animals. I think it meant that if they violated the covenant, they would be cut in half like the animal. Now God initiated the covenant-sealing ceremony by sprinkling blood on both sides, on the altar and on the people. A married couple exchanges their rings as the seal of their marriage vow, and God sprinkles blood as the seal of his covenant with his people. Then, why blood? Blood represents life. Hebrews 9:21-22 says, “In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

 As we studied above, Jesus established a new covenant in his own blood. Hebrews 9:15 says that Christ is the mediator of a new covenant. Jesus took Moses’ role between God and us. Jesus used his own blood to make God’s covenant valid. Hebrews 9:15 says that Jesus died as a ransom to set us free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (9:15) Moses became the mediator between God and the Israelites by sprinkling animal’s blood, which was imperfect and temporary for our salvation. Jesus became the mediator of the new covenant for us by bringing his own blood once and for all for our eternal redemption. (Heb 9:12) Amen!

 The blood covenant between God and the Israelites was completed by the ceremony. Now there was a banquet to celebrate the ceremony. It was like a wedding banquet for guests after the wedding ceremony. God called Moses, Aaron, his children, and seventy elders to the mountain and opened the banquet. They saw the God of Israel whose moving feet was like a bright blue light. (10) In general no one can see God directly. As our eyes hurt when we see the sun directly, so people died when they saw God face to face. But God did not raise his hand against the leaders of the Israelites because God saved their lives in order to celebrate the ceremony. Verse 11 says, “**they saw God, and they ate and drank**.” (11) What a grace and blessing for the Israelites to have eating fellowship with God!

This was a privilege for the people of God. The gentiles could not join in this blessing. Slaves had no right to share in God’s blessing. Now the former Egyptian slaves became the people of God. They became a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They saw God and ate and drank.

 We have been praying for this country America with this prayer topic: May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Is it a prayer topic only for America? Biblically speaking, this is prayer topic for all those who are in Christ Jesus. I will explain why. Look at the screen.

**A Kingdom of Priests and A Holy Nation**

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Rev 1:8)

Who was: Ex 19:5-6 Who is: 1 Pe 2:9-10 Who is to come: Rev 1:6, 5:10, 21:3

Exodus 19:5-6: **5**Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **6**you[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+19%3A5-6%2C+1+Pe+2%3A9-10%2C+Rev+1%3A6%2C+5%3A10%2C+21%3A3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-2033a)] will be for me a **kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

1Pe 2:9-10: **9**But you **are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation**, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **10**Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Rev 1:6, 5:10, 21:3

**6**and has made us to be **a kingdom and priests** to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

**10**. You have made them to be **a kingdom and priests** to serve our God,
    and they will reign[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+19%3A5-6%2C+1+Pe+2%3A9-10%2C+Rev+1%3A6%2C+5%3A10%2C+21%3A3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30790a)] on the earth.”

**3**And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be **his people,** and God himself will be with them and be their God.