

Title: The Heart of God

Text: Exodus 20:22-24:18

Theme: The heart of YHWH is on display as he confirms his covenant with the nation of Israel. The Law reveals who he is, what he's like, and how his people can live as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in the land of promised blessing. The inauguration of this Theocracy is not only celebratory, but a *shadow* pointing to *substance*.

Emphasis: *YHWH confirms his covenant with his people by blood and the glory of his presence.*

Outline:

- I. The Ten Words (Preamble) – Exodus 20:1-21
- II. The Law Detailed (Constitution) – Exodus 20:22-23:19
- III. The Land Promised (Conquest) – Exodus 23:20-33
- IV. The Covenant Confirmed (Inauguration) – Exodus 24:1-18

INTRODUCTION

As we consider the text before us, we must always be aware of the literary context in which our selected portion of Scripture lies, as well as, seeing how this “part” is connected to the “whole.” Having just experienced *THE EXODUS* – 10 plagues, Passover, the parting of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh’s army – the nation of Israel is camped at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19).

YHWH reminds them of what they just experienced by his hand and his purposes for this nation (**Ex. 19:4-6**). YHWH’s promises his presence in order that the nation would respond in belief (**Ex. 19:9**). Then, he gives them the 10 Words/Commandments (Ex. 20). This summary of the entire Law can be distilled into *two* categories 1) Love YHWH and 2) Love one another. We must be careful not to isolate The Ten Words from either the *prologue* (**Ex. 20:1-2**) or the *epilogue* (**Ex. 20:18-21**).

- Prologue (20:1-2) – reinforced YHWH as their God who destroyed all the gods of Egypt and rescued Israel from slavery.
- Epilogue (20:18-21) – the nation trembled at the presence of God and stood far off, while Moses (as mediator) drew near to the presence of God and exhorted the nation not to “be afraid of,” but rather “the fear of” YHWH would keep them from sinning against him.

It is in this context, at Mount Sinai, where we will camp for the remainder of the book of Exodus.

I. The Ten Words (Preamble) (Exodus 20:1-21)

In the giving of the 10 Words, you witness ***the heart of the Law for the nation of Israel.*** This summary is representative of the whole and may be distilled to two categories: 1) Love YHWH 2) Love one another.

II. The Law Detailed (Constitution) (Exodus 20:22-23:19)

Throughout this detailed description of rules and regulations you see firsthand ***YHWH’s heart for the nation of Israel.*** This people would be distinct from all other nations – “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex.19:6). As they lived among other nations, they would be distinct in their lifestyle and worship reflecting the glory of YHWH.

This section expands upon and further explains what “The 10” look like in time and space. When one hears “love YHWH” and “love one another,” the natural question that follows is, “What does that mean? What does that look like practically?”

We will not take the time to dissect the layers and depth of this detailed description (you are encouraged to explore this on your own), but rather simply give honorable mention to the categories God thought important to emphasize for this nation to live under his rule/reign in this Theocracy.

- Practical instruction about worship of YHWH – images, altars, sacrifices, etc. (20:22-26)
- Practical instruction about treatment of slaves (21:1-32)
- Practical instruction about restitution – IF this happens/THEN respond in this way... (21:33-22:15)
- Practical instruction about loving your neighbor (22:16-23:9)
 - Sexual/Relational (22:16-17, 19)
 - Sorcery (22:18)
 - Sojourner (22:21; 23:9)
 - Orphans and Widows (22:22-24)
 - Lending money (22:25-27)
 - Honoring God and Leadership (22:28)
 - Generosity (22:29)
 - Consecrated to God (22:29-31)
 - No false witness/perversion of justice (23:1-3, 6-8)
 - Love your enemy (23:4-5)
- Practical instruction about worship/love for God (22:20; 23:10-19)
 - Sacrifice/Worship to other gods (22:20)
 - Sabbath (23:10-13)
 - Festivals/Corporate Feasts and Sacrifices (23:11-19)

While we could “campout” at any one of these checkpoints/topics, we will push forward to explore the climax of this journey.

III. The Land Promised (Conquest) (Exodus 23:20-33)

A special messenger from YHWH would lead this nation in conquest of their promised inheritance. Great blessing would accompany the nation as they followed his leadership. [This is an interesting “rabbit trail” to explore, however, we keep pressing on.]

IV. The Covenant Confirmed (Inauguration) (Exodus 24:1-18)

What an exciting experience for this new nation to celebrate as the covenant is confirmed and the Theocracy is inaugurated! [READ: EXODUS 24:1-8]

a. Call to Worship (v1-3)

- Moses is instructed to come before YHWH to worship along with the leadership
- Moses → draws near | Leadership of Israel → distant/worships from afar
- Moses relays the words of YHWH to the people → Respond 1) unanimously 2) affirmatively

This is the preview of what’s about to unfold in “real time” over the remainder of this chapter.

b. Consecration of the Worshipers (v4-8)

- Moses transcribes the words of YHWH
- Moses builds an altar to YHWH (12 pillars/12 tribes)
- Sacrifice to/Worship of YHWH
- The **Book of the Covenant (Scroll/Words)** → read in the hearing of the people (v7)
- The **Blood of the Covenant** → sprinkled on the scroll/book and the people (v8)
- Response: 1) unanimously 2) affirmatively (our heart’s desire is to obey!)

c. Confirmation of the Covenant (Vassal Treaty/Constitution) (v9-11)

- The leadership meet with God on the mountain – a unique/special experience for a number of reasons, but it's vital at this point to remember that parameters/boundaries were just established in Chapter 19 to keep people from scaling the mountain to "see God."
- Now you have the leadership "seeing the God of Israel" (v10)
- **Unique description** – no real description of YHWH (image, details, likeness, etc.), but rather of the surroundings of the base of the "throne" (at his feet) → from the position of being prostrate before God.
- **Unique experience** – ate and drank
- **Unique consequence** – they lived

d. Communion with YHWH (v12-18)

- Moses is instructed to enter YHWH's presence, as mediator, to receive the TABLETS OF STONE (Ten Words) along with the law and commandments (explanation) written for their instruction.
- While Joshua is allowed to journey further up the mountain with Moses, the rest of the leadership is wait with the people and lead the nation until Moses returns from meeting with YHWH/GOD.
- The glory of the presence of YHWH descends upon the mountain in fire and cloud. Cloud covers the mountain to separate/protect the people from exposure to God's unfiltered glory, *which would consume them otherwise.*
- CLOUD VEILS YHWH's GLORY:
 - 6 days the cloud covers
 - The 7th day YHWH calls out to Moses from the cloud
 - The nation sees this display from the base of the mountain
 - Moses enters the cloud, into the presence of YHWH, and remains on the mountain for 40 days/40 nights – completely sustained by the presence of God.

While this is truly a unique and exciting time, unprecedented in all human history; where the God of the universe rescues a people for himself in accordance with his promise and establishes them as his representatives to the nations by confirming his covenant with them and inaugurating this Theocracy.

BUT THIS IS MERELY A SHADOW OF THE GOOD THINGS TO COME . . .

As we filter this text in Exodus through the person and work of Jesus we see the substance and fulfillment of every promise, every picture, and every shadow throughout the text of Scripture.

Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36) –

- after 6 days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John up the mountain. On the mountain he was transfigured before them – face shone like the sun, clothes became white as light.
- Moses and Elijah appeared and began discussing with Jesus about his departure.
- As the disciples struggled to process this, a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice spoke from the cloud – "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him."
- When they lifted up their eyes, ***they saw no one but Jesus only.***

Hebrews 8 – BETTER COVENANT, BETTER MEDIATING PRIEST, BETTER SACRIFICE...BETTER EVERYTHING!

- Read Hebrews 7:26-28 → Hebrews 8:5-7, 13

CONCLUSION

The covenant that was ratified in Exodus 24, inaugurating the nation of Israel as the people of YHWH, was truly unprecedented and glorious. God was beginning to reclaim and restore what was rightfully his. This vassal treaty that outlined how the nation of Israel would live as a kingdom of priest and a holy nation among all pagan nations, would demonstrate the heart of YHWH as they loved him and loved one another.

BUT, a better covenant was necessary – **A ROYAL GIFT COVENANT**. Through the sinless life, substitutionary death, glorious resurrection, and ascension of Jesus – *A BETTER COVENANT HAS CONFIRMED THE INAUGURATION OF A BETTER KINGDOM UNDER THE RULE OF KING JESUS.*