

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

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Exodus 24 - Exodus 25

This chapter opens with an expression remarkably characteristic of the entire Mosaic economy.

“And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off . . . they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him.”

We may search from end to end of the legal ritual, and not find those two precious words, **“draw nigh.”** Ah! no; such words could never be heard from the top of Sinai, nor from amid the shadows of the law. They could only be uttered at Heaven’s side of the empty tomb of Jesus, where the Blood of the Cross has opened a perfectly cloudless prospect to the vision of faith.

The words, **“afar off,”** are as characteristic of the law, as **“draw nigh”** are of the Gospel.

Under the law, the work was never done, which could entitle a sinner to draw nigh. Man had not fulfilled his promised obedience; and the **“blood of calves and goats”** could not atone for the failure, or give his guilty conscience peace. Hence, therefore, he had to stand **“afar off.”** Man’s vows were broken and his sin unpurged; how, then, could he draw nigh? The blood of ten thousand bullocks could not wipe away one stain from the conscience, or give the peaceful sense of nearness to God.

However, the **“first covenant”** is here dedicated with blood. An altar is erected at the foot of the hill, with **“twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.”**

“And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar . . . And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words” although, as the apostle teaches us, it was **“impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin,”** yet did it **“sanctify to the purifying of the flesh,”** and, as **“a shadow of good things to come,”** it availed to maintain the people in relationship with the Lord.

“Then went up Moses, and 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 a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of Heaven in clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God and did eat and drink.”

*This was the manifestation of “**the God of Israel**,” in light and purity, majesty and holiness.*

It was not the unfolding of the affections of a Father’s bosom, or the sweet accents of a Father’s voice, breathing peace and inspiring confidence into the heart. No; the **“paved work of a sapphire stone”** told out that unapproachable purity and light which could only tell a sinner to keep off - still, **“they saw God and did eat and drink.”** Touching proof of divine forbearance and mercy, as also of the power of the blood!

Looking at this entire scene as a mere illustration, there is much to interest the heart.

There is the defiled camp below and the sapphire pavement above; but the altar, at the foot of the hill, tells us of that way by which the sinner can make his escape from the defilement of his own condition, and mount up to the presence of God, there to feast and worship in perfect peace. The blood which flowed around the altar furnished man’s only title to stand in the presence of that glory which **“was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.”**

“And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.”

This was truly a high and holy position for Moses. He was called away from earth and earthly things abstracted from natural influences, he is shut in with God, to hear from his mouth the deep mysteries of the Person and work of Christ; for such, in point of fact, we have unfolded in the tabernacle and all its significant furniture! **“the patterns of things in the heavens.”**

The blessed One knew full well what was about to be the end of man’s covenant of works; but He unfolds to Moses, in types and shadows, His own precious thoughts of love and counsels of grace, manifested in, and secured by, Christ. Blessed, for evermore, be the grace which has not left us under a covenant of works. Blessed be He who has hushed the law’s loud thunders and quenched mount Sinai’s flame by **“the blood of the everlasting covenant,”** and given us a peace which no power of earth or hell can shake. **“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”**

~ end of chapter 24 ~

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