

Text: Exod. 24:1-8

Title: "Going up to Yahweh"

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Introduction: Gearhungry.com published an article about the 10 hardest mountains to climb. At the top of the list, they called out Mount Annapurna in Nepal as the most difficult mountain to climb in the world. At 26,545 feet, Annapurna is the world's tenth highest mountain. At the time of the article, only 191 climbers had ever attempted to reach its summit, and 63 of those had died, giving the Mountain the highest mortality rate in the world. In 2014, 43 of the 63 lost their lives in a single avalanche of snow.

The author of that article probably never read Exodus 24, because Mount Sinai did not make his list of the ten hardest mountains in the world to climb. The biblical record here is clear that Sinai is the most difficult mountain-climb mankind has ever faced. What made Sinai difficult was not the threat of snow avalanches or the mountain's elevation. What made Sinai a difficult climb for man is that it was the place where holy God gave mankind His law.

Climbing Sinai is different than climbing any other mountain. To climb any other mountain is to get a great view and some acclaim as a skilled mountaineer; to climb Sinai is to be accepted into the presence of the God of heaven.

To climb any other mountain is strictly optional; getting to the top of Sinai is not optional. Being accepted into the presence of our holy God and Creator is our only hope of avoiding His just judgment. To climb any other mountain, the climber needs a knowledgeable guide. To get to the top of Sinai, you and I need the reconciliation of mediation.

*The Century Dictionary* defines *mediation* this way: "1. The act of mediating; intervention; interposition. 2. Agency between parties with a view to reconcile them or to effect some arrangement between them; entreaty for another; intercession. 3. The state of being mediate, or of serving as a medium or means; intermediate relation; a coming between."

Because of our sin and God's holiness, this is what you and I need in order to be accepted in the holy presence of the God of Sinai. We need the reconciliation of mediation. The good news of the gospel of Exodus 24 is that the God of Sinai has arranged for the mediation we need to be reconciled to Him.

I have titled the first 8 verses of the passage, "Going up to Yahweh," and I want us to see three provisions that the God of Sinai has made for us to be accepted into His holy presence this morning.

I. The God of Sinai has provided a mediator (vv. 1-2).

Application: The Lord singles out a small group of men in verse 1, who are to accompany Moses as they go up to Yahweh. From Exod. 12:37, we know that the men of Israel numbered around 600,000 at this time in their history, and yet here only 74 of the 600,000 are singled out in this instruction to worship at a distance. That is 0.0012% of the 600,000. It is a little less than 1 out of every 8100 men.

I mention those statistics because I want us to grasp the fact that these, whom God told to stay at a distance, were exceptional among their peers. They were the religious leaders of God's people. The Lord is making an example of them by showing the entire nation, who would have revered them, that not even they had what it takes to get to the top of Sinai on their own. They too needed mediation, and God displays their need in front of the entire nation. What was true of this

0.0012% was true of everyone. None were allowed to come near. All had to worship at a distance.

The Bible is clear that the best that mankind has to offer falls far short of what is necessary to be accepted by our holy God. Isa. 64:6 explains, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

This is true of everyone: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The God of Sinai gave man His law, and the end result of that gift is worldwide condemnation without exception: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

So, if we could find 1 in 8100 whom we might describe as a good person, our passage is clear that the best he could ever do is worship at a distance from the God of Sinai. The best that man has to offer is not allowed into His presence.

But the Lord is not satisfied to have His image-bearers at a distance from Him, sinful though they be, and so He asks Moses to come, and to do so alone (v. 2). In Moses alone, the God of Sinai provides the nation of Israel a mediator or a go-between who can bring them to God and God to them.

This same Moses would later prophesy that he was but a picture of a greater Prophet who would come as the one mediator between God and every man (Deut. 18:15-16, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying,

Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not”).

Hebrews tells us that this second Moses, whom Moses prophesied would come, was Jesus Christ. The author describes Jesus this way: “For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

Moses pictured God’s plan to meet our need. Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and you and me. He is the only Mediator. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the one Mediator between God and man who can bring God to us and us to God in the reconciliation of sins forgiven.

Sins are forgiven through Him alone because Jesus died in our place on the cross, bearing the condemnation of God’s law that we deserved. Have you been ushered into our holy God’s forgiveness and acceptance by claiming Jesus Christ as your Mediator, your Savior from sin? He is the only Mediator the God of Sinai has provided for the reconciliation we need.

II. The God of Sinai has provided a revelation (vv. 3-4a, 7).

Illustration: At breakfast with a pastor friend this past week, I was reminded of an illustration that helps to explain biblical faith: “Supposing we were climbing in the Alps and were very high on the bare rock, and suddenly the fog shuts down. The guide turns to us and says that the ice is forming

and that there is no hope and that before morning we will all freeze to death here on the shoulder of the mountain. Simply to keep warm, the guide keeps us moving in the dense fog further out on the shoulder until none of us have any idea where we are. After an hour or so, someone says to the guide: 'Supposing I drop and hit a ledge ten feet down in the fog. What would happen then?' The guide would say that you might make it till the morning and thus live. So, with absolutely no knowledge or any reason to support this action, one of the group hangs and drops into the fog. This would be one kind of faith, a leap of faith.

"Supposing, however, after we have worked out on the shoulder in the midst of the fog and the growing ice on the rock, we had stopped and we heard a voice and the voice said: 'You cannot see me, but I know exactly where you are from your voices. I am on another ridge. I have lived in these mountains man and boy for over sixty years and I know every foot of them. I assure you that ten feet below you there is a ledge. If you hang and drop, you can make it through the night and I will get you in the morning.'

"I would not hang and drop at once, but would ask questions to try and ascertain if the man knew what he was talking about and if he was not my enemy. In the Alps for example, I would ask him his name. If the name he gave me was the name of a family from that part of the mountains, it would count a great deal to me. In the Swiss Alps there are certain family names that indicate mountain families of that area. For example, in the area of the Alps where I live, such a name would be that of Avanthey.

"In my desperate situation, even though time would be running out, I would ask him what to me would be the sufficient questions, and when I became convinced by his answers, then I would hang and drop." [Francis A. Schaeffer,

*He Is There and He Is Not Silent* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), pp. 124-125.]

Application: That illustration does a good job explaining why God's Word is so very important when it comes to the mediation we need to be accepted in His presence. It was putting faith in a voice that saved these hikers, and God has spoken to us this way in the voice of His Word, the Bible.

God's Word is living and powerful, and if you are unable to believe that Jesus is your Savior this morning, God's Word has the power to change your unbelief into belief. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

God's Holy Spirit did the miracle called inspiration that gave us His infallible revelation in Scripture, and God's Holy Spirit can do the miracle through His Word that brings saving faith to your heart. The only question is whether you will give an ear to God's Word and listen to what it says. The enemy of the souls of men has seen to it that very few seem willing to do so today.

III. The God of Sinai has provided a sacrifice (vv. 4b-6, 8).

Application: In contrast to the way people today neglect their Bibles, all of the nation of Israel stood quietly still as Moses read to them the words of the law. Twice in this passage, the people of Israel declare their sincere commitment to obey everything that God had commanded in what Moses just read.

It seems perhaps at this point the work of mediation between God and man would be complete. God lays down His law, man says he will keep God's law, and so God now accepts man into His holy presence. There is an obvious prob-

lem with this equation, of course. All mankind, with these Israelites that are promising their obedience at the top of the list, fail to obey God's commandments. Man sins. You and I sin. We have broken God's commandments.

The Lord understood that this would be the case and that something more had to be done in order for us to be able to go up to Him. As Israel professes their commitment to not sin, the Lord responds with instructions for an altar, a sacrifice, and shed blood. When Israel says, "We will obey," God knows they will not, and so He answers back, "Behold, the blood of the covenant!"

God's revelation at Sinai included instructions for animal sacrifices that would point them to the ultimate sacrifice He had promised for the mediation mankind needs. Jesus is the Passover Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world in the plan of God to save sinners, rejected by Israel, tried before Pilate, slaughtered on the cross of Calvary, and risen victorious over death and our sin.

You will notice that God instructed Moses to do two things with this shed blood. First, this blood had to be scattered on the altar. As Jesus's blood was spilt on the cross, the wrath of God against our sin was propitiated. Because the cross was the place of God's judgment on Christ for our sin, it became the place of God's mercy to us. And so the blood was scattered on the altar.

And then the second half of the blood was scattered on the people. This symbolizes the way Jesus's shed blood at Calvary can be applied to each of us personally to cleanse us from all the stains of our sins. Isa. 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." 1 John 1:7, "But if we

walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 Cor. 6:9-11, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Conclusion: Sinai is the most difficult mountain to climb, because it is a climb into the presence of our holy God. To climb Sinai is to make it to heaven. In the perfection of God's holiness, He cannot abide the presence of sin without judging that sin. But in His love for you and for me, He sent His only Son to be our Mediator and our Sacrifice. He asks not for your record of obedience. He asks only for you to believe that Jesus Christ can save you from all your sin.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*