

Sermon Handout
Ratifying the Covenant
Exodus 20:22-26; 24:1-11

I. The arrangement of the story: Exodus 20:22 – 24:11

The two passages bracket the revelation of key elements of covenant obedience.

- a. Civil case laws (instructional) 21:2-22:27
 - i. Each one is introduced by conditional language “if . . . then . . .”
 - ii. They are 10 in number, arranged as a chiasm
- b. Direct prohibitions (imperatives) 22:28-23:19
 - i. “thou shalt not . . .” paralleling the 10 Words (20:3-17)
 - ii. They are 7 in number, arranged as a chiasm

Ratifying the covenant given by God through Moses

- a. Instructions for building the altar 20:22-26
“you **saw** that I talked from **heaven**” 20:22
- b. The ceremony in front of the altar 24:1-11
“They **saw** the God of Israel . . . in the clarity of **heaven**” 24:10-11

The section begins and ends with matched wording – a view of God in heaven.

II. Constructing the altar 20:22-26

- a. Reiteration of the first two commandments vv. 22-23
“you shall not set idols beside me” *cf.* 20:3 (*contrast*: Christ at God’s right hand)
“neither gold nor silver” idols made on earth by human hands Ps 135:15-17
 - b. Only natural elements to be used in construction vv. 24-25
Earth or uncut stones – not the product of human craftsmanship
The altar is to be unpolluted & temporary (God doesn’t exist only at Sinai)
 - c. No element of cultic sexuality (“nakedness”) allowed v. 26
The top of the altar is not to be approached *cf.* 24:2
- A gold idol & nakedness involved in the rebellion of Chapter 32 (vv. 2-4, 25)

III. The ratification ceremony 24:1-11

- a. Representatives of the people are called forward vv. 1-2 (*cf.* vv. 9-11)
- b. Moses recites the terms of the covenant & the people assent v. 3
- c. The altar is built & used according to God’s instructions vv. 4-6
- d. Moses again recites the terms & the people assent v. 7
- e. The people are sprinkled with “the blood of the covenant” v. 8
- f. Representatives of the people see and commune with God vv. 9-11
No harm comes to them (“he laid not his hand” on them)
By contrast, eating & drinking with idols brings judgment (Ex 32)