

# The Covenant of Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well good evening and welcome to our evening service. Lovely to have you with us, especially if you're watching online this evening. Warm welcome and a warm welcome to those visiting us as well. Nice to see you home again, Yamado. And what shall I say, fiance, wife to be, etc. Whatever. Let us worship God this evening then by singing to his praise in Psalm 111.

It's on page 391, be on the screen. We couldn't find a recording of this Psalm. It's a Psalm that appears to be very rarely sung and yet I hope that as we go through you'll see the importance and the relevance of this Psalm to the text that we're going to look at this evening. Psalm 111 at the beginning, praise ye the Lord with my whole heart. I will God's praise declare where the assemblies of the just and congregations are. The whole works of the Lord our God are great above all measure, sought out they are of everyone that doth theran take pleasure and so on down to verse five. He giveeth me done to all those that truly do him fear and evermore his covenant he in his mind will bear and it's God's covenant mercies that we'll be looking at in detail this evening. Psalm 111 then at the beginning, praise ye the Lord with my whole heart. I will God's praise declare. the whole works of the Lord our God are great above all measure, sought out they are of everyone that doth theran take pleasure and so on down to verse five.

made to be thought upon the Lord is gracious and he is full of compassion.

He giveeth me done to all those that truly do him fear and evermore his covenant he in his mind will bear and it's God's covenant.

[ 4 : 33 ] He in his mind will bear.

Let us join together in prayer. Our Father in heaven we give you thanks that we can come this evening even as we were singing in that Psalm to praise you with our whole heart.

That we will God's praise declare within the assemblies of the people and in the congregation. And we thank you that we can come this evening to worship together and to praise your name.

Both in presence in your house and online and we thank you for those who are unable to be with us in person. But to join with us in worship from their own homes or wherever they may be.

We thank you particularly for the way in which you have given us the gift of the media to be able to spread your word. And as we hear time and time again from different preachers and different congregations that sermons are being listened to and people are being blessed by these sermons in all parts of the world from Latin America through to parts of Africa and the Far East.

[ 5 : 57 ] And we thank you for the gift of this technology. But we thank you more than anything else for the gift of your word that we can come to your word this evening to worship you.

Help us O Lord to worship in spirit and in truth. And to worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Three persons but one God. And we thank you O Lord for the wonders that we see in these things.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, for the covenant of grace, for everything that was done at the Atonement Render. For the finished work of Calvary, for His resurrection and His ascension.

And even as we remember on this day His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Yet those who were shouting Hosanna on one day were crying, crucify, crucify Him in the following few days. Whether or not it was the same people we don't know but it may well have been.

And doubtless O Lord if we had been present we would have been among those shouting crucify Him, crucify Him as well. But we thank you that over the process of time that you have established a new covenant, a covenant of grace with your people.

[ 7 : 20 ] And open their eyes to see you in your beauty. We thank you for your word that we have it in our own languages, that we are able to meditate upon it and to peruse it.

And we thank you for those who translate your word from one language to another. We ask that you would bless the work of Bible translator in so many parts of the world.

Parts which are still unreached, parts of the Amazon and some of the Pacific Islands and various other places. Where people still do not have your word in their own language.

But we thank you that we have that privilege and that gift and help us to remember that it is a privilege to be gathered together in your house this day.

A privilege that we did not appreciate until it was taken away from us over the last period of time.

But we thank you O Lord that that privilege has been restored to us.

[ 8 : 19 ] We pray for those at home fearful still of coming among people due to this pandemic. And if it be your will we thank you for the effect the vaccines have had.

But if it be your will that this pandemic would pass. It is nothing new. It is something we read about even in your word early on that plagues were sent.

It is one of these were sent throughout history as a warning to people to remember that here they have no continuing city. And we are reminded of that this day once again as one of our number is taken from us.

We pray for the McLean family this evening. We pray that you would bless them, that you would uphold them, that you would strengthen them. As you have visited them in your providence once again, a providence that is so difficult for us to understand.

But yet you do all things for good. And we thank you that our brother who has been taken for us has now crossed the Jordan and has entered into the celestial city.

[ 9 : 24 ] We pray for those who are left behind who are mourning his passing. And we pray that you would strengthen and uphold them. We remember others who are ill in our congregation as well.

That you would grant restoring mercy if that be your will. And we pray for those who are away from us. We remember the McAskill family at this time in Glasgow worrying about the health of a daughter.

That you would uphold and strengthen them and grant restoring of health if that be your will. Bless your word for so ever it was preached in the course of the day and still to be preached.

We thank you for those on the communion mount this morning, that you would bless any and gravers who went to the table for the first time. Or in congregations throughout our denomination or indeed throughout your church around the world.

Be with us now as we come to read a portion of your word and to meditate upon it and pardon our sins through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

[ 10 : 30 ] Let us read God's word then as we find it. First of all in the Old Testament and in the book of Exodus and in chapter 24.

The book of Exodus and chapter 24 and we shall read the whole chapter. Then he said to Moses, that is he God said the Lord said to Moses, Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel and worship from afar.

Moses alone shall come near to the Lord, but the others shall not come near and the people shall not come up with him. Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said all the words that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord.

He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and 12 pillars according to the 12 tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel who offered, he burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord.

[ 11 : 52 ] And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people.

And they said all that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will be obedient. And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people or sprinkled it on the people perhaps a better rendering.

And said, behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words. Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel went up and they saw the God of Israel.

There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel.

They beheld God and ate and drank. The Lord said to Moses, come up to me on the mountain and wait there that I may give you the tablets of stone with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.

[13:10] So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua and Moses went up into the mountain of God. And he said to the elders, wait here for us until we return to you.

And behold Aaron and her are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them. Then Moses went up on the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain.

The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain.

And Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. Amen. And may the Lord bless to us that reading of his holy and infallible word and to his name be the praise.

[14:14] Every week there has been featured on the screens a Suleth.

And this week I've been asked to do something here. And I've chosen to show you something that I hope you're aware of but some of you might not be.

And this is the free church legacy website. I think we can go to that now if possible.

Yeah, I can't see it on the screen there but it's there behind me. Now what is this? This is a collection of sermons many of which, if not all of, were recorded on cassette tapes many years ago. And they have been digitalised and put online in this archive. And there will be preachers there. I'm sure if you go down the list of the preachers there's over a thousand sermons on it.

[15:22] There will be preachers there that you've probably never heard of. But others that you may well have heard, not only heard of but also heard in person.

And some of the sermons are in Gaelic. How do you find a Gaelic sermon? Well the very simple way of doing it is that you look for the preacher that you want to listen to.

And you will find very often that that preacher is, or you will always find that that preacher is mentioned twice. The first time just with this name. I'm not sure who's there at the moment. I said Donald, my Donald.

Donald Gilles. So when you see Donald Gilles mentioned first of all just with the name, that means that set of sermons are in English.

But when you see the congregation mentioned with it, that means that they are in Gaelic. So if you click on the cross of us one there, then you will find that the sermons there are in Gaelic.

[16:36] And you will find Callum Matheson there, for example. You will find James McKeever. You'll find my own father there as well. And you'll find sermons in both English and Gaelic.

And for those of you who miss Gaelic sermons, there are enough Gaelic sermons on that site to keep you going for the next year or so. Not all of them have the singing. Some are just the actual sermons. But some do.

And again, depending on the cassette tape from which they were taken, the quality varies a little bit. But you'll find that on your device, if you listen with headphones, that it's much, much clearer and able to listen to.

So that's just a quick look at the Free Church Legacy website. I suppose that most of you were familiar with it already. If not, you should be now. And that will allow you to have no excuses for not listening to Gaelic sermons if you want to listen to them.

Or indeed, a host of English sermons as well. Many of them there. And they have been a great blessing to people since they've been added. And they are continually, the site is being continually added too.

[17:57] I know, for example, I've already passed on to Thomas a number of Gaelic sermons, digitalised Gaelic sermons of my own father that haven't been put up yet. So little by little, the site is being expanded as people have time to do it.

But there's a huge collection of sermons available there for you. So, praying that the Lord would bless that then. Let us now read God's word again.

This time in the New Testament and in the book of Hebrews. The letter to the Hebrews and chapter 9.

Chapter 9, chapter 8 and 9 in a sense, are really a sermon and a commentary by the writer to the Hebrews on the chapter that we read in Exodus 24.

But we'll just read a few verses here from in chapter 9, from verses 19 on to 28.

[19:10] For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hisop, and sprinkled both the

book itself and all the people.

And you'll remember that we saw that as we read in Exodus saying, this is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you. And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent, that's the tabernacle, and all the vessels used and worship.

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood. And without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites. But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

[ 20 : 18 ] Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood, not his own. For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world.

But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment, so Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

And chapter 10, which you can read at home yourselves, goes on to explain that in a bit more detail. May the Lord bless to us that reading of his holy and infallible word and to his name be the prayer.

Let us join together in prayer once again. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that we are able to read your word and to meditate on the things contained within it.

And to give you thanks for the blood of the covenant shed by the Lord Jesus Christ to make atonement for his people. We thank you that we can come this evening cleansed by that blood.

[ 21 : 49 ] But you have promised that all who believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. And we thank you, O Lord, that that is your promise.

And a promise that your people are not only familiar with, but a promise which they cling faithfully to every single day. But we know that we sin daily and thoughtward indeed.

And yet we give thanks that you do not deal with us according to our sin. We pray, O Lord, that you would bless your word to us this evening as we meditate upon it.

Grant the unction of your spirit and the presence of your spirit among us. You have promised that we're two or three, have gathered together on your name, that you are there.

And we believe, O Lord, that you are here this evening. We pray for any who as yet may not understand the covenant of grace, the sacrifice that was made, who are struggling to come to terms with it and to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, to believe on the finished work of Calvary.

[ 22 : 58 ] We pray that you would make your word efficacious this evening, that you would bless it to us. We have made it as a congregation, as an island and as a country for your word to be blessed to us.

We have turned our back on the things of God. Once known as the land of the book, your book has been cast aside by so many. And even in the making of our laws and in schools and hospitals, your word has been taken away from its press that it held before.

And it is no wonder that generations are growing up with no knowledge of the things of God. And the result is to be seen in society and in the situation in which we live.

We pray that you would give wisdom to those who rule over us. We thank you for the Queen. We thank you for her and our faithful witness, that you would bless an upholder at this time, especially as she becomes frailer and frailer.

We pray for those who rule over us in Edinburgh and in London. And we pray that you would give them the wisdom that comes from on high. Guide them in all the difficult decisions that have to be made, both regarding the situation in our own country and the situation worldwide.

[ 24 : 22 ] We pray this evening especially for the church in Ukraine, that you would uphold and bless them as they join together and worship this evening. We thank you for the work of the Bible Society there.

We pray, oh Lord, that you would deal with the situation there, that you would stop this war and bring peace if that be your will. And that you would show Putin and the Russians your power and

your glory and bring them to a saving knowledge of yourselves.

For without you, there is nothing that can be done, because man's in humanity to man will continue day by day. We pray, oh Lord, for those who are suffering in other parts of the world, for those in Syria and Yemen and various other places in Africa, who are still undergoing conflicts, that you would bring peace through your world.

For there is nothing else that can bring peace, except the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that in whatever circumstances we are in, that we are able to look to you and we are able to look to the cross.

And we thank you for all that was done there. Bless your word as it has preached throughout the world this evening. Uphold your persecuted church, wheresoever it is, particularly in China, in North Korea and in other places in the Far East.

[ 25 : 57 ] And bless all those whom we cast upon your care daily. Bless our congregation, bless those who are sick and who are mourning at this time. Those in hospitals and in care homes, uphold and strengthen.

And be with us and guide us at this time, as we come to meditate upon your word. And pardon sins through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us turn back then to the chapter, the first reading that we read, the book of Exodus in chapter 24. And we can read at verse 9.

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and 70 of the Elders of Israel went up and they saw the God of Israel. It was under his feet as it were a payment of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel. They beheld God and ate and drank.

[ 27 : 12 ] And I want to consider the whole chapter, not just these particular words, but these words are especially striking for us. And I'm quite sure this evening that if I was to ask you, what particular chapters in the Old Testament stand out for you?

I'm sure most of you would say, well, it's Genesis 1 and there's the creation and then there's Isaiah 53 and so on. But hardly anyone would come up with Exodus 24.

You might come up with Exodus 20, which is the giving of the Ten Commandments and so on. And yet Exodus 24 is probably, if not the most important chapter in the Old Testament, then certainly one of the most important chapters.

As relates to the history of the children of Israel. We can certainly argue that the prophecies of Isaiah and so on are perhaps more important in the long term.

But as regards the history of the people of Israel, of the children of Israel, Exodus 24 is almost certainly the most outstanding chapter.

[ 28 : 35 ] You've probably read it before, but probably never really has it struck you as to how important it is.

And certainly that was the way it was with myself. I had read it many times before, but on one particular reading, not so long ago, it came to me in great power and great force.

And I began to see things in it that I'd never actually seen before. And I want to share with you some of these things.

The chronology of the chapter is perhaps a little bit difficult. Because it appears that at the very beginning, Moses goes up into the mount, then he comes down again in verse 3, and then he goes up again later on in the verse.

And then it appears that in verse 9 he's come down and he's going up again. So there's a sort of up, down, up, down to Mount Sinai.

[ 29 : 44 ] Now this takes place when the children of Israel are camped at Mount Sinai after having left Egypt. And it's approximately, probably around a year since they've come out of slavery in Egypt.

And during that time, of course, they have seen the destruction that God caused on the armies of Pharaoh. They have seen the miracles that were done, the plagues in Egypt and so on.

But now God has brought them, the Lord has brought them to Mount Sinai for a particular purpose. And they will remain there for quite some considerable time.

Probably well over a year. It may even be longer than that. There's considerable argument among commentators as to how long they were actually there.

And God has appointed Moses, first of all, as their leader. He is the one who is in direct contact, if we can put it that way, with God.

[ 30 : 52 ] He is the one who has summoned up into the mountain to retrieve instruction from God. And he is the one who comes down and then tells the people what the Lord has said to him.

And then we see this interesting instruction at the beginning of chapter 24. When he, that is the Lord said to Moses, come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from Athan.

Now it's interesting that this is the first time that seventy-four people are invited up into the mountain. Moses and his brother Aaron, Aaron who is to be consecrated as high priest later on, both of the tribe of Levi, and the two eldest of Aaron's son, Nadab and Abihu.

And seventy elders. Now it's probably those seventy elders that had been appointed in Exodus 18. You remember when Moses was judging the people that his father in logethro had said to him, you can't do all this by yourself.

You need to delegate, you need people to help you. And therefore seventy elders were appointed who would deal with the smaller disputes in the various tribes, while Moses dealt with any great matter.

[ 32 : 27 ] And we see that delegation given again at the end when he says to the people, wait here for us until we return, behold Aaron and Herod with you, whoever is a dispute, let him go to them.

And so from there comes the number of what was known later on as the Sanhedrin, those who ruled the children of Israel, the people of Israel, seventy.

This is the Sanhedrin that is found in the New Testament, seventy elders of the people of Israel, and these would be the ones before whom the Lord Jesus Christ would appear at his trial.

But there is, you notice, a barrier put in place. The others shall not come near and the people shall not come up with them.

And you see that the representatives of the people, the elders are the ones who are to come up.

And then it would appear that Moses comes down from the mountain and he tells the words of the Lord and all the rules.

[ 33 : 49 ] And then there is something very interesting that takes place. Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules, and all the people answered with one voice and said, all the words that the Lord has spoken, we will do.

All the instructions that have been given, we will follow. And then Moses does something really special. Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord.

And then he follows it by something even more special. He rises early in the morning, builds an altar at the foot of the mountain, and he builds twelve pillars. And the twelve pillars, they reckon were built probably in a circle round the altar.

These would have been pillars of just rough stone and each one represented one of the tribes of Israel. But it's not enough just to build an altar and the pillars. Something else has to be done.

And you see that in verse five, that the young men of the people of Israel sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings of oxen to the Lord.

[ 35 : 05 ] But then Moses does something that is in a sense what really matters. He takes half of the blood and he sprinkles it on the altar.

And he takes the other half of the blood and he sprinkles it on the people. Now, it's not mentioned, of course, of the million and a half people of Israel who were in the wilderness.

He didn't sprinkle them all, but he sprinkled them on the representative elders of the people. And the question is, what exactly was he doing?

Well, the answer comes in verse seven. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And the key word to this is the term covenant.

Because God here is making a covenant with his people. Now, the Hebrew term for covenant to make a covenant literally means to cut a covenant.

[ 36 : 10 ] And the custom in those days was that an animal would be cut in half in two parts. The two parts would be laid on two separate sides and those making the covenant would pass between the two halves of the animal.

And therefore the covenant was sealed by blood. Now, this was standard practice, even among the pagans at the time.

But we see it first of all taking place when God makes his covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15. You can go back and see that passage yourself later on. You remember how Abraham cuts an animal in half, various animals, if I remember correctly. And then as he walks up and down between them, the smoking lamp appears and so on. And that is the covenant that God makes with Abraham. And every covenant is ratified by blood. That is why we read the passage in Hebrews, which shows of course the better covenant that was to come.

[ 37 : 20 ] The covenant of grace that would be sealed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then something radical, amazing.

I hate to use the word amazing because it's so overused but this is amazing. Something amazing takes place. The 74 elders, 70 and Moses and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu, they go up and they saw the God of Israel.

Wonder if you've ever reflected on what that means and how would that be possible? We are told and we know from Scripture that God is a spirit.

Although there are all sort of aprimatums used to explain God in human terms, nevertheless there's no mention of that here. They saw the God of Israel.

Who did they see? Or what did they see? They were given to us to that question. But we can suppose that they did not see a spirit.

[ 38 : 42 ] Because you can't see a spirit. And many commentators think that what happened here was that this is a theophany. Now if you're not familiar with the word theophany, it means a pre-incarnation appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not unusual in the Old Testament. Not long after this there is another theophany after Moses dies and Joshua takes over going into the Promised Land, the battles where the commander of the Lord's host appears to Joshua.

And you remember that particular incident that takes place. And there are various others throughout the Old Testament. And many commentators think that this is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. That they see the Lord Jesus Christ. However it's argued that's not what the text says. They saw the God of Israel.

Some think that what they saw was the glory of the Lord. The Shekinah Cloud. That covered the tabernacle by day and the pillar of fire by night.

[ 39 : 59 ] That what they saw was the presence of the Lord. And they argued that this is so because of there was under his feet as it were a payment of sapphire stone.

But there's no further description. And that the sight and the glory was so powerful that all they could do was bow down in worship.

And because they were prostrate in worship, they dared not look up at the actual presence that was there in front of them.

You can perhaps form your own idea of how that was. It's quite an amazing passage to meditate on.

They saw the God of Israel. And notice who sees him. There is first of all Moses.

[ 40 : 58 ] Not just the leader of the children of Israel, but a prophet. One who prophesies later on of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

That God after him would raise up another leader. Then there's Aaron and Nadab and Abihu. The representatives of the priesthood, the high priest Aaron and his two eldest sons.

And one would suppose under the natural law of things that Nadab, the eldest, would be the one who would succeed to follow Aaron as high priest later on.

However, we'll see in God's providence later on that was not to be the case. So we have a prophet, we have priests, and then we have the representatives of the people.

The 70 elders are present. What happens? They beheld God and they ate and they drank.

[ 42 : 13 ] That's quite amazing when you think of these words. What did they eat? And what did they drink? The scripture doesn't give us an answer.

But it would seem, and most commentators agree on this, that what they ate was bread and what they drank was wine. Now, yes, I grant that may be speculation, but it is more than likely that that was the case.

Why? Because here you have the first collective worship service that is recorded in scripture for us.

This is the first time, if I can put it another way, that a communion service takes place in the Old Testament.

And you see once again, all things are present. All the elements necessary are present. First of all, there is the invitation.

[ 43 : 21 ] Come up. God himself gives the invitation at the beginning of the chapter. Come up to the Lord. You and Aaron, Nadab and Abiu, and 70 of the elders of Israel.

Come up. And whenever we come to worship, that invitation is there. Come up and worship. That is why there is a pulpit, and perhaps a stand like this. It's not to elevate the preacher above the congregation.

It's to elevate the word of God above the congregation. That's why there is a book recorded and why Moses reads the book.

And you see that that is the format that we follow. That there is an invitation to worship. And in that worship, there is a reading of the word of God, the book of the covenant.

[ 44 : 27 ] That's what Moses does in verse 7. He takes the book of the covenant and he reads it in the hearing of the people. And Moses faithfully writes down what God tells him to write.

But there's something else that's even more amazing. In verse 11, he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel.

He did not harm them. Why is that mentioned? Well, if you go back a few chapters, you will find time and time again that it is only Moses that is to come close to the mount.

That the people are warned not to come close to the holy mountain in case they die. And it reminds you again of Moses and the burning bush.

Wasn't that the instruction that he was given? Take off your sandals from off your feet for the ground on which you stand is holy. The mountain represents, in a sense, the holiness of God.

[ 45 : 39 ] And the natural man, you and I in our natural sinful state, we cannot approach the holiness of God.

There has to be something that brings us closer before we can come close enough to worship.

And what is this? It is a covenant being made with us. Now, the covenant that is made here, God says, of course, that in the course of this covenant, he will give two tables of stone to Moses containing the ten commandments.

And usually we think that the two tables were with four commandments on one and six on the other. Four commandments that were about how to worship God, the four commandments that related to God, and one and the six commandments of man's duty to man on the other.

But other commentators suggest that that's not the case at all. What they suggest is the following. That it was customary when a covenant was made that each one of the parties had a copy of the covenant.

[ 47 : 01 ] And you might say in one sense, well, why would God need a copy of the covenant?

Well, that's just the way it was done because the copy was put in the ark of the covenant later on.

Maybe that's the way it was. One copy symbolizing the copy that God held of the covenant and the other copy, the copy for the people, the children of Israel, which was read to the people by Moses from time to time.

And we find at various points throughout the Old Testament the reading of the book of the law. Both sides have to agree a covenant. Isn't that what we saw when we read the passage from Hebrews, which you can go back and look at yourself?

Both sides have to agree to the conditions of the covenant. That's why the people respond, all that God has said, we will do.

But yet, while Moses is on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights alone, what happens down in the camp below?

[ 48 : 23 ] The people persuade Aaron in the next few chapters, although the chapters that follow here is what Moses has told during the 40 days and the 40 nights.

He has given all the instructions for the building of the tabernacle and its funerary. But when he comes down from the mountain in Exodus 32, what does he find?

He and Joshua come down and discover that the people are worshiping the golden calf. The covenant has already been broken.

And it is not God who ever breaks his covenant. It is the people, you and I, who break God's covenant again and again.

And the result of the breaking of the covenant, of course, demanded justice. And if you read what happened after the golden calf, of course, you will see that justice being administered by Moses. [ 49 : 37 ] And it results in the golden calf being destroyed, ground into a powder, and Moses throwing it on the water and making the people drink of it.

And there is further punishment meet us out. You see, God's justice requires punishment. God's perfect justice requires perfect obedience and perfect punishment. And therefore the sacrifices that were offered here could not satisfy God's justice. And we see that in a very sad way.

Although there is this wonderful scene of the first communion meal, the first covenant meal, with the 74 on the mountain who ate and drank with God and they saw God.

Nevertheless, there's a sad food note to this chapter. And the sad food note comes with the two sons of Aaron.

[ 50 : 54 ] Turn for a moment to Leviticus chapter 10. Just a couple of verses. Leviticus chapter 10, I think it's on the screen now.

Unfortunately, I can't read that screen from here, but we'll see just at the beginning of it. Leviticus 10.

Now, Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, whose birth had been recorded in Exodus 6 for us, each took his censor and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them.

And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them. And they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, this is what the Lord has said, among those who are near me, I will be sanctified and before all the people, I will be glorified.

And Aaron held his peace. Aaron had been consecrated as high priest. He has just seen his two sons also consecrated as priests.

[ 52 : 19 ] It's one of the amazing things about it. They have been consecrated to the priesthood. And what happens?

They do something that they shouldn't have done. They fill their censors, which were to burn incense, but the fire that they use in them was not taken from the altar of burnt offering.

The holes were not taken from there. And you remember that when the altar of burnt offering was consecrated, the fire that burnt the offering came down from heaven.

It was fire from God. And from then on, the fire on the altar never went out.

There was a time that Moses or Aaron offered incense before the Lord. The holes in the censor were taken from the altar of burnt offering.

[ 53 : 30 ] And it would appear that Nadab and Abidu did not do that. That they must have lit the fire in their censors from some other source. Maybe their own cooking fire or whatever.

We don't know. But what we see is God's justice immediately taking place. They are struck down by fire.

And Aaron, in his role as high priest, and you can read the rest of the chapter later, is not even allowed to mourn for them.

The standard sign of mourning was that you would tear your clothes. The high priest was forbidden under any circumstances to tear his clothes as a sign of mourning.

And that in itself has an interesting fruit note. You remember when Jesus appears before Caiaphas. At Caiaphas accuses him of blasphemy and scripture tells us, the text tells us, the book tells us that Caiaphas tore his robe.

[ 54 : 50 ] And the moment he did, he abdicated his high priesthood. Who replaced Caiaphas as high priest?

The Lord Jesus Christ. And if you read on in Hebrews, you will see how the covenant priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ then replaces the Levitical priesthood.

Aaron is not even allowed to mourn for his two sons. He's not even allowed to bury them. It's his relatives who carry them outside of the camp.

What a tragic day, a day that should have been for rejoicing. And yet it results in the death of his two sons. Why? What did they do that was so wrong?

Well, it would seem if you read on in Exodus 10, sorry, in Leviticus 10, that there is an instruction given almost immediately afterwards. The Lord spoke to Aaron in verse 8 saying, drink no wine or strong drink.

[ 56 : 03 ] Cure your sons with you when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.

And it would seem, most theologians, most commentators here, think that that was the mistake that Nadab and Abihu made.

That they were drunk when they lit their censors and went to worship with them. And because of that, God's justice, the sword of God's justice, that we saw placed at the gates of Eden when Adam and Eve are cast out.

The sword of God's justice acts immediately. It's not the only time that we see this in the Old Testament.

It's curious, and it may well be, of the seventy elders who went up on the mountain to this communion meal. We don't know if Caleb was among them, but Joshua certainly was, and it was likely that Caleb was as well.

[ 57 : 18 ] These were the only two who would enter the Promised Land. All the others agreed with the report of the spies that they were unable to conquer and were forbidden to go into the, even Moses himself, and were made to wander in the desert for forty years until that generation had passed.

And you will see other examples of this. If you look at Numbers 15, you'll find that they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day to make a fire.

One of the congregation, one of the people of Israel. And they don't know what to do with them, so they ask the Lord.

And the word is that he is to be stoned to death. Simply for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day, for breaking the Sabbath.

The Sabbath day is holy. How few people pay any attention, even among ourselves, to that nowadays. The holiness of the Sabbath day.

[ 58 : 29 ] Then we get something even more severe. And remember later on, Korah, Dathan and Abiram, in Numbers 16, Numbers 15 and 16, they rebel against Moses and Aaron's leadership.

Who are you to be standing above us in authority? We're just as good as you. And again, without you, you can read the story yourself when you go home.

What happens? The earth opens and swallows them. And the 250 of the princes of Israel who supported them are struck down by plague.

Later on, you come to the fiery serpents. And you remember how the serpents bit the people that they died because of their moaning against God.

Until they look on the brazen serpent. And you remember how the Lord Jesus Christ refers to that brazen serpent. That he must be lifted up in the same way.

[ 59 : 42 ] You see, the old covenant, the covenant established here, God's justice is severe in it.

What would happen if God's justice was equally severe with us nowadays? Isn't it of God's mercy that we are not under this covenant, but we are under a new covenant, the covenant of grace.

Where through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, although we sin daily in thought, word and deed, God's justice is not executed on us immediately because of our sin.

The children of Israel were told from the beginning, Be ye holy as I am holy. They were given laws and commandments to follow, to observe.

And they failed to do that. And you and I are no better. We fail constantly. We fail in our worship.

[ 60 : 54 ] We are here to worship this evening, to worship in spirit and in truth. And yet if God were to examine our spirit of worship.

In the hour since we came in, how many minds have drifted away to other things outside worship. How many thoughts have crossed your mind that have nothing to do with worshiping God in the last 60 minutes. And if God were to execute his judgment and his justice upon us, none of us would leave here alive.

But it is through his mercy, through the grace that is given, through the covenant of blood, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, that each one of us is enabled to draw near and to find forgiveness.

And this is what the writer to the Hebrews speaks about. That Christ is the mediator of a better covenant. As we look back in Moses and Aaron and so on, we see types of Christ.

[ 62 : 13 ] We see the shadows of the new covenant that were to come. But the fullness of the covenant comes with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The new covenant of grace. Otherwise you and I would have nowhere to go before God's justice.

It's a sad story, the story of Nada and Abiu, who shared in this first communion meal. Who saw God, who were in the presence of God, who were consecrated to the priesthood. And it's a warning to us that any of us can fall into sin at any time. Indeed, not only fall into sin, but our sinful nature is constantly present.

And I'm sure you're fully aware of that. And as we come to sing our final Psalm, perhaps as we look at the words of Psalm 130, not that we're going to sing it.

[ 63 : 22 ] But you notice how the writer there refers to the fact that if God should mark iniquity, who can stand against him? And it is of God's grace that he does not mark our iniquities.

Provided, of course, that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and we shall be saved. Let us join together and pray.

O Lord our God, we thank you that we can come to you this evening meditating on these words. That if your justice was rolled out on us, none of us would escape damnation.

But we thank you for a better covenant that was made through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the blood that was shed at the cross, through the atonement that was wrought.

And we have a mediator now who is on the right hand of the Father in heaven and who sits interceding for his people. We pray for any here this evening who are still struggling with their faith to come to us saving knowledge of you, to open their eyes to see you in your beauty and guide us and pardon sin through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[ 64 : 47 ] Let us conclude then by singing the final verses of this covenant Psalm, Psalm 111, verses 6 to the end of the Psalm.

He did the power of his works unto his people show, when he the heathens' heritage upon them did bestow. His handiwork's are truth and right, all his commands are sure, and done in truth and uprightness they evermore endure.

He sent redemption to his folk his covenant foray. He did command holy his name and reverent his all way. Wisdom's beginning is God's fear.

Good understanding they have all that his commands will fill, his praise endured foray. Let us sing these verses unto God's praise and conclusion.

He did the power of his works. He did the power of his works unto his people show, when he the heathens' heritage upon them did bestow.

[ 66 : 14 ] His handiwork's are truth and right, all his commands are sure, and done in truth and uprightness they evermore endure.

He sent redemption to his folk his covenant foray.

He did command holy his name and reverent his all way.

Wisdom's beginning is God's fear. Good understanding they have all that his commands will fill, his praise endured foray.

Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all now and forever. Amen.

[ 68 : 11 ] I believe there's tea and coffee available after the service for those who wish to remain online. Thank you.