

# OpenTheo

## Worship as Covenant Renewal

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### **Life and Books and Everything** - Clearly Reformed

The historic liturgy of the Christian church did not originate in evangelicalism, or in the Reformation, or in Europe. It grew out of Old Testament (and then New Testament) assumptions about what it meant for God's people to gather and renew the covenant.

## Transcript

[Music] Greetings and Salutations! This is Life and Books and Everything. This is Kevin DeYoung. Today I'm reading a new post that's up at [KevinDeYoung.org](http://KevinDeYoung.org) called Worship as Covenant Renewal.

Exodus 24 is a picture of Covenant confirmation. After initiating the covenant, Exodus 19, establishing the constitutional obligations of the covenant, Exodus 20, and applying the Constitution as case law, Exodus 21 through 23, God confirms the covenant with Moses. In addition to being a picture of the covenant confirmation for Moses and the people of Israel, Exodus 24 provides a striking picture of worship as Covenant Renewal.

Exodus 24 begins with a call to worship as the Lord summons Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the 70 elders of Israel to draw near. Moses then includes the people in what can be described as a service of worship, a ceremony of covenant confirmation later Renewal. And this service, this confirmation, this Renewal focuses on three elements.

The service centered on the book of the covenant. That's the name Moses gave to it explicitly. Moses told the people all the words of the Lord, the Ten Commandments, all the rules, applying those words.

Then later Moses repeated the essence of these instructions. Reading to people, verse 7 says, from the book of the covenant. Importantly, we see that Moses was not just passing on an oral tradition.

Already at this early stage in redemptive history, Moses had written revelation to share. Twice in this passage, the people respond to the Word of God with a commitment of

obedience. This is the heart of worship as Covenant Renewal.

God's Word is read and taught. That is the stipulations, the promises, the blessings and curses. God's people hear it, receive it, understand it, and respond.

The service also involved the blood of the covenant. With an altar in verse 4 sacrifices in verse 5, sprinkling in verse 6, blood not only accompanies the administration of the covenant, it makes the provisions of the covenant possible. The shedding of blood represents substitution.

After all, there are 12 pillars for the 12 tribes of Israel. It represents propitiation, hence the mention of burnt offerings and peace offerings. The blood of the covenant also pointed to consecration as the people were set apart by the words set apart for obedience to the Word.

Finally, the service included the bread of the covenant, as Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and the 70 elders beheld God in his glory. It says they ate and drank, verse 11. Covenant ceremonies often concluded with a meal.

We see this throughout Genesis and elsewhere in the Bible, eating and drinking was an expression of fellowship, a sign and seal of the closeness that people had with each other and with their God. In short, Exodus 24 is a worship service, the first official gathering of corporate worship in the Bible. It contains the basic elements of a public service and sets the pattern for biblical worship.

Think about it, there is a call to worship, an approach to worship made possible by a bloody sacrifice, the reading of God's Word, a response to God's Word, a fellowship meal, and the promise of God's presence as He draws near in worship. As we gather to rehearse the Lord's covenant promises and provisions, 1 Corinthians 11 tells us to do that, the same elements should be found in our services today. The historic liturgy of the Christian Church did not originate in evangelicalism or in the Reformation or in Europe.

It grew out of the Old Testament and then the New Testament, out of their assumptions about what it meant for God's people to gather and renew the covenant. The corporate gathering of God's people is not mainly for community or for fellowship or for moral instruction, though all of those are present. "We gather each Lord's day," Mike Horton writes, "not merely out of habit, social custom or felt needs, but because God has chosen this weekly festival as a foretaste of the everlasting Sabbath day that will be enjoyed fully at the marriage supper of the Lamb, God has called us out of the world and into His marvelous light, that is why we gather." Every Sunday we come to worship our covenant-making God, be reminded of His covenant promises and once again renew our covenant commitment.

The deepest and richest and most biblical worship will have a liturgy that reflects these

ancient and continuing realities. That's worship as covenant renewal. You can find it at [KevinDyoung.org](http://KevinDyoung.org) and until next time, glorify God, enjoy Him forever and read good books.

[buzzing]