

Text: Ex 24.7

This morning I want to give my annual challenge for adopting the Bible reading habit. I have several different Bible reading plans in the hall table and can print more if we run out. I'll explain each of them at the end of the message.

To prepare for this message, I searched the Bible for references to reading. I came up with 77 verses that mention reading, many instances referring to reading the Bible.

Most of the Old Testament references are to a well-used Hebrew verb, one that occurs in 824 verses, but only occasionally does it refer to reading. Here are some dictionary definitions of the word:

TWOT: *call, call out, recite (read)*.¹

Dict. of Biblical Languages: call, summon, name, designate, announce, invite, read aloud, appoint²

How does a word that means, basically “to call, to announce, to name” come to be a word used for reading?

“The meaning ‘to read’ apparently arose from the meaning ‘to announce’ and ‘to declare,’ inasmuch as reading was done out loud so that others could hear. This sense appears in Exod. 24:7. In several prophetic passages, the Septuagint translates *qara* ‘to read’ rather than ‘to proclaim’ (cf. Jer. 3:12; 7:2, 27; 19:2). *Qara* means ‘to read to oneself’ only in a few passages.”³

With that, we will turn to our text and find out who was reading what...

Read Ex 24.3-8, text 7

Proposition: God’s people are in a living relationship with God’s Word; they cannot afford to go on a “Word” fast — they need much Scripture.

I. The commitment of ancient Israel to the Word (Ex 24.3-8)

¹ Leonard J. Coppes, “2063 קָרָא,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 810.

² James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

³ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1996), 30.

A. The “back story” (Ex 20.18-24.2)

1. The people gathered at Mt Sinai to hear God thunder forth the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.1-17)
2. The people feared God’s voice, and begged Moses to speak to God for them (Ex 20.18-20)

Ex 20.18-20 ¶ All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance.¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.”²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.”

3. The rest of chapter 20 through the first 2 verses of chapter 24 record what God said to Moses (Ex 20.21-24.2) — mostly legal requirements

B. The response of Israel to God’s word (24.3-8)

1. The *aural/verbal* response (3)
 - a. Moses *told* the people what God said
 - b. The people *verbally* committed to obedience to the spoken word
2. Moses formalized the Word of God (4-6)
 - a. He wrote down what God said on the mountain
 - b. He erected an altar and a place of worship for the nation
 - c. He sent young men of Israel to make sacrifices on the altar

Note: these included *burnt* offerings and *peace* offerings

- 1) Burnt offerings indicate God’s total ownership of everything, including the worshiper.

2) “The peace offerings indicated right relations with God, expressing good-fellowship, gratitude and obligation.”⁴

d. Moses read the words he had written out to the people

1) This isn’t the whole of Leviticus

2) Rather, just the two-plus chapters between Ex 20.21-24.2

3. The people make a second firm commitment to God’s word (7)

Ex 24.7 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!”

4. Moses completes the covenant ceremony: this is the institution of the Old Covenant of Israel (8)

Ex 24.8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

C. Where did Israel’s vow take them?

1. Of this generation, all but two died in the wilderness (Caleb and Joshua)

a. The sins of the people during the subsequent years of wandering were many

b. They failed to keep the word read to them

2. Nevertheless, the covenant with God’s words became binding on the nation in perpetuity

3. The old covenant had weaknesses (God said a New Covenant would replace it), mainly the weaknesses were in the people

I am loathe to criticize the Israelites too harshly. How good are we at keeping God’s word? How well do we know God’s word? How much time do we take to read God’s word?

⁴ J. J. Reeve and B. C. Williams, “Sacrifice,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr et al. (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 2644.

II. The call to the church to read the Word (various)

A. The pattern of the synagogue [largely followed by early church services]

1. As seen in Antioch of Pisidia

Ac 13.15 After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, “Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.”

2. Incidentally mentioned during the Council of Jerusalem (Ac 15.21)

Ac 15.21 “For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

B. A survey of exhortations about reading in the NT

1. Second epistle Paul wrote

1Th 5.27 ¶ I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.

2. From the last epistles, during the first Roman imprisonment

Col 4.16 When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter *that is coming* from Laodicea.

1 Tim 4.13 Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.

C. The key for our understanding: unveiled hearts (2 Cor 3.12-18)

2 Cor 3.12-18 ¶ Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech,¹³ and *are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.¹⁴ But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.¹⁵ But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;¹⁶ but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty.¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

1. The synagogue practice of Bible reading continued
2. The understanding of Israel remained darkened (veiled)
3. The veil can only be removed one way: in Christ
4. We can read with unveiled faces, being transformed by what we read

III. The centrality of the Word to the Church (Jn 1.1-6, 14)

Jn 1.1-6 ¶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.⁶ ¶ There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.

Jn 1.14 ¶ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- A. What is a word? The representation of thought in all its various nuances and shades of meaning.
- B. What is the Word? The representation of God to man in all his aspects, meaning, message, character, person, glory ... and more.

C. The Word called his apostles to preach the Word (and write the Word) for our benefit

Conclusion:

Proposition: God's people are in a living relationship with God's Word; they cannot afford to go on a "Word" fast — they need much Scripture.

In keeping with this proposition, I have several different Bible reading schedules available.

A Bible-reading schedule can become discouraging if you miss a day or two or three or four...

- Don't be discouraged, just pick up your Bible and start again
- Set a Bible reading routine to begin your day (not a law, just a wise practice)
- Use a schedule as your guide, not as your master

And ... you can make your own schedule if you like

Above all, remember that you are in a living relationship with God and His Word, if you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. So, take up His Word, and read!