

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

Key verse Exodus 19:5,6

"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

We thank God for granting us to study the Book of Exodus to the end. Last week we learned through the construction of the tabernacle that we too may build God's dwelling place by absolutely obeying one word of God. Let us establish God's dwelling in God's way at all 1,700 Universities in Germany and Europe through early morning prayer and by forming 10,000 Bible study teams.

To conclude our Exodus Bible Study today, we want to look back at some important points that we have learned. Let us thereby renew in our hearts God's grace of salvation, which we also received in Jesus Christ, as well as God's hope and vision to be used by God as a kingdom of priests and as a holy nation and spiritual leaders like Moses.

1. God of salvation

Exodus begins with the account of Israel's oppression in Egypt. Once Joseph, one of the sons of Israel, had been sold to Egypt by his brothers. God was with him and made him the second most powerful man in the land. Because of a famine, the seventy physical descendants of Jacob came to Egypt and multiplied and became exceedingly strong, so that the land became full of them (1:7). Because the people had become so numerous, Pharaoh was afraid and had the Israelites oppressed with force. He even ordered all the newborn sons of the Israelites to be thrown into the Nile. In such a fatalistic time Moses was born and, by the faith of his parents, was first hidden and after

three months placed in a basket on the banks of the Nile. Through God's guidance he came to the court of Pharaoh, where he enjoyed the best training and grew into an Egyptian prince. But the Israelites were mercilessly enslaved and forced to serve in hard labour. Then the Israelites cried out to God. And God heard their wailing and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God looked upon the Israelites and took care of them. (2,23b-25).

As the Israelites cried and prayed to God in the midst of their need, God prepared a leader who would lead the people out of cruel oppression: Moses. After 40 years of palace training, Moses made a decision of faith no longer to live as "Prince of Egypt," but to belong to the people of God rather than enjoy sin for some time. One day Moses saw an Egyptian beat one of the Israelites. Then Moses killed the Egyptian and had to flee into the desert. The second 40-year training plan of God for Moses began in the Midian desert. For Moses, desert life may have seemed completely pointless. But Moses was to learn through it that he could not free his people with his own strength or wisdom. God educated Moses and taught him humility, faith and obedience. One day, when Moses was in the desert shepherding the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro, the LORD met him in a burning bush. Let us look at chapter 3 verses 4-5: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my

covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine." Through this encounter Moses received God's calling. He learned that this place, which he had for so long considered a cursed land, and where he had felt abandoned by God, was holy ground. God helped Moses to take off his dirty shoes of unbelief and to accept God's calling.

Let's read chapter 5:1: "Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'" God commanded Moses to bring plagues upon Egypt, which would lead Pharaoh to repentance. But Pharaoh was very persistent. Sometimes he seemed to repent. Sometimes he offered a compromise. But as soon as the plague was over, Pharaoh hardened his heart again and did not let the people go. Through the ten plagues God revealed that he is the sovereign, almighty and living God. The establishment of the Passover was the climax by which the Israelites would eventually enter the Exodus and come out of the slavery of Egypt. Let us look at chapter 12:13: "The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt." When the Israelites slaughtered the Passover Lamb according to God's command, and put the blood of the Lamb on the sides and the tops of the doorframes and held the Passover in their houses, the angel of death passed over the houses where the blood was spread, while all the firstborn Egyptians, both human and animal, were killed.

God's salvation of the Exodus began by holding the Passover. When the Israelites held the Passover and all the firstborn Egyptians, beginning with Pharaoh's first

son, were killed, Pharaoh finally consented. All the people of Israel went out with great plunder and made their way. God took care of them and divided even the waters of the Red Sea through Moses, so that they could pass through as on dry land.

God's grace of salvation was the beginning of a new story that God wrote with His people Israel. Now, through wandering in the desert, they would also receive God's training to be healed from their old inner slavishness and to grow more and more into the holy people of God.

Just as the blood of the Passover Lamb represents the beginning of the Exodus, so also for us the blood of Jesus, the promised Messiah, whom God sent into the world, represents the beginning of a whole new life. The Blood of Jesus shed on the Cross is my, and our sign, of salvation. We are all, whether we like it or not, under Satan's slavery. We cannot free ourselves from this captivity. John 1:29 testifies about Jesus: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ". And Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" Jesus is our true Passover lamb. He died in our place. He bought us and redeemed us with His holy blood. In the midst of all Satan's accusations, the blood of Christ is our firm confidence in salvation. But his grace of salvation is not the end, but rather the beginning of God's work in us. We are dearly bought by the blood of Jesus. A young man wanted to be used by God like his parents. But when he fought with his own strength, he experienced his own helplessness again and again. But the power of the blood of Jesus brought about God's salvation in his life. Now he leads a new life

as a shepherd and Bible teacher with the power of the blood of Jesus.

May God give us deep insight and gratitude for his grace of salvation. We were the slaves of sin and Satan would not let us go, but there is wonderful power in the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. This grace of God is the firm basis and the beginning of our new life.

2. God of hope

God led the Israelites by His mighty hand through the Red Sea like over dry land. So the Egyptians tried the same and drowned. After the Exodus the time of spiritual education for the Israelites began. The people were still deeply influenced by their slavish inwardness. God was patient with his people. Let us read chapter 15:23-25: "When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink. There the Lord issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test." God took care of them so that the inedible bitter water was transformed into delicious drinking water. When they came to Elim, God even surprised them with twelve unexpected springs of water and seventy palm trees that refreshed body and soul of the people. In the desert of Sin, the whole congregation of Israelites grumbled again. They wanted to return to the meat pots of Egypt. What did God do? He sent them quail in the evening and delicious manna in the morning. God also gave them the "daily bread training" so that they could collect only what they needed for the day. So they learned to live dependent on God on a daily basis. After they grumbled

again at Massa and Meriba, there was even the first fight against the Amalekites, who challenged Israel. Moses led the fight in prayer, together with Aaron and Hur, who supported his hands. This taught Israel that God the Lord is their banner, and that God gives victory when God's servants conduct the spiritual battle of prayer.

Finally, on the first day of the third month after the exodus from Egypt, the people came to the Sinai desert and camped there opposite the mountain. Let us read chapter 19:3-6: "Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

God reminded them of all his grace in saving his people from the hand of the Egyptians and carrying them on eagles' wings, bringing them here to Mount Sinai. God had also carried their grumbling and lamenting, their forgetfulness of grace. He had trained them in the desert to trust him alone and had provided them with everything they needed. Now God wanted to make a new covenant with them at Sinai. They were to be God's property, a kingdom of priests and God's holy people. And they replied unanimously: "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do".

First, you will be my treasured possession.

God had chosen and bought his people as his possession. To acquire them as his possession, God had invested everything to

save them from Pharaoh's bondage. They received the privilege of living with God and for God. God patiently carried their old slavish and sinful spirits and he trained them to make them his treasured possession before all nations. God's vision was to bless all peoples on earth through Israel. We are also dearly bought by God to be His possession before all nations. Sinful people say, "My life is mine. I can do what I want". But when we have become God's possession, we ask in all things for the will of God. We live to please God, to fulfill His will and to be His possession before all nations.

Second, you shall be for me a kingdom of priests.

God saved them so that they might serve the living God as kings and priests. God entrusted them with the privilege of interceding as royal priests for the whole world. They had previously had the identity of slaves. Their constant grumbling was part of their old slavishness. God saved them from the slavery of Egypt, so that they might not simply continue to live as before, but that they may receive a new identity: as kings and priests of the Almighty and Holy God! They were chosen as priests to pray to God and to intercede for their neighbors. Instead of living for their own advantage and gain, they were called to proclaim God's benefits to other nations and to live for God's glory.

Third, you shall be a holy people for me.

Israel was anything but holy. They were also anything but a "people". But God's vision was that these fugitive slaves should be a holy people. They should not serve foreign gods like the Egyptians or the gentile peoples and fall into idolatry. They should be holy because God is holy. God even decided to live among His people by building the sanctuary, the tabernacle. God helped them, as a holy people, to bring voluntary offerings

to the Lord so that the sanctuary of God could be built. He helped them to build God's house in God's way by obeying God's words concretely. When they later obeyed God's instructions exactly, as reported in chapters 35-40, the sanctuary of God, the tabernacle, could be built exactly according to God's plan, so that God's glory filled the whole tabernacle.

Here too, may we remember the grace of God, by which God saved us from the bondage of sin and called us to be God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy people. A young woman once led a desperate life, spending much time in front of the television. But God graciously intervened in her life and called her as a shepherdess and royal priestess. Now, out of gratitude for God's grace, she leads a happy life serving other people with the Word of God and through her intercession.

God also gave us a new life with his hope, so that we might live with a new identity and with a new purpose, to honor God, to serve God, to pray for young people and to be mediators between them and the holy God. We need God's help so that we no longer live with our old sinful natures, but fulfill the entrusted mission as kings and priests and on the entrusted campus, at all Universities in Germany and Europe and even in the Muslim world. Then we live as holy people, no longer to our own things, but to fulfill God's holy mission and honor God. Let us honor and glorify God by forming 10,000 Bible study teams, raising 100,000 Bible teachers, pioneering 1700 universities in Europe and establishing three base camps in the Muslim world. This year we can also glorify God by preparing the best environment for the GLE Forum 2019 and for the European Summer Bible Conference in Willingen, investing everything for the

spiritual growth of our next generation and students.

3. Moses' Leadership

God patiently trained Moses to grow into a leader for the people. God helped him to have a shepherd's heart for his people, although the people kept falling away, sinning, and forgetting God's grace. When Moses spent forty days on the mountain and God entrusted him with all the commandments and statutes, the people fell into idolatry under Aaron's leadership and worshiped an idol in the form of a golden calf. Moses came down from the mountain and saw how much the people sinned. The people lost the glory of God, and God even wanted to destroy the people. God planned to make out of Moses a new and great people. Then Moses went into pleading intercessory prayer. Let us look at chapter 32:31-32: "So Moses went back to the Lord and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." Here we see that Moses, through God's training, had grown into a spiritual leader with backbone who now interceded from the heart. Indeed, Moses even offered to God to remove his own name from the Book of Life if it would save the people. Through God's many years of training (40 + 40 years!), his inner man was transformed into that of a good shepherd and spiritual leader who prayed with the heart of God for his people and moved God's heart. Chapter 33:11a testifies: "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend." This is God's heart for each one of us to grow through spiritual training like Moses into spiritual leaders who deeply understand God's heart and intercede with God's heart.

We see among ourselves such a shepherd's heart, such intercessory prayer and such spiritual servitude in the servant of God, Missionary Peter. He was and is not content with his own salvation, but has been giving his life for almost 40 years now for the spiritual education and training of leaders. He serves the shepherds and the next generation with God's vision to raise up spiritual leaders like Moses among them. He is preparing wholeheartedly for the upcoming Global Leadership Empowerment Forum (GLEF 2019) so that the 50 participants of the next generation will grow into responsible spiritual leaders and excellent Bible teachers for their country and continent and lead an entire nation to spiritual exodus.

I too can learn true leadership from Moses and the servant of God. Moses received God's training for 80 years and grew into an influential leader. I still need at least 30 years of spiritual training so that I can discard all my self-centred and self-righteous attitudes, deeply understand the heart of God and use my life and house church for the spiritual exodus of the young people, starting at the Rhein-Sieg Campus, raising disciples of Jesus and spiritual leaders among them. I need God's training so that I can grow into a servant of the Word like D.L. Moody and serve my people and this generation with spiritual authority and authority like Moses.

Let us thank God for his great hope and his spiritual training so that we can grow in the spirit of a shepherd and responsible spiritual leader like Moses. Through the study of Exodus, we could learn how God served one man, Moses, with his vision, educating him for 80 years and making him the spiritual leader for the Exodus of the people. We have been bought and saved by the blood of the Lamb of God. This is not the end, but the beginning of a whole new life. Now, we can

grow through God's spiritual training in the deep love relationship with him, so that we understand God's heart, intercede faithfully for the young people, and be used as Moses was, as a spiritual leader for the spiritual exodus on our campus, for our college and university, as well as for Germany and Europe. May God help us to awake from spiritual slumber and grow through spiritual training into spiritual leaders who serve young people with God's hope and promise and lead them to spiritual exodus.

Let us read the key verses. "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."