

GOD'S HOPE AND THE COVENANT ON MOUNT SINAI

Exodus 19:1 – 24:18
Keyverses 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 teaching us through the five books of Moses his hope and vision for his salvation plan through the people of Israel as the kingdom of priests and the holy nation. We also get to know his absolute love. He made a covenant with them, and a slavish people became the people of God. Let us learn today the love of God in the new covenant in the blood of Jesus, accept his hope as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and learn through the Ten Commandments and the legal system of God spiritual discipline and faith obedience. May God work this summer powerfully in the hearts of the young people on campus and among the next generation through the study of the five books of Moses.

1. A kingdom of priests (19,1-25)

Let us look at verses 1 and 2: "On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain." A month and a half after leaving Egypt, the Israelites came to Mount Sinai. This was the mountain on which God Moses appeared in the burning bush and said to him (3:12): "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Let us read verses 3 and 4: "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.'" At first God reminded them of his judgment on the Egyptians and of his bearing love. God's love for them was like that of a strong eagle carrying its young. They had experienced heat, hunger, thirst and attacks in the desert. But God had carried them on his eagle wings. He went ahead with pillars of clouds and fire. He made the water in Mara sweet. In the Sin desert he gave them quails and since then bread from heaven every day. In Refidim he made water spring from the rock. When the Amalekites attacked them, he blessed Moses' prayer and gave them victory. They themselves had always grumbled. But God had been their strong stronghold. "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." This is God's admonition for his people to think of his bearing love. They themselves should also learn such bearing love in order to bring their spiritual descendants to God.

Let us read verses 5 and 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, you¹ will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.” Here God reveals his hope and vision to his people.

First: My property before all nations. The whole earth belongs to God. All people of all nations are his creatures. That is why it has a special meaning that he chose one people among all nations as his property. Israel was not particularly great. Even their history was very fateful. Their ancestor Abraham and his descendants lived as strangers in Canaan. Jacob came to Egypt with 70 relatives. Now they were escaped slaves on their way through the desert. But God had chosen them as his property. Among all nations they were his eyeball and his precious treasure.

Every man wants to be something meaningful. It used to be my dream to be a famous conductor like Karajan or a great political leader. But God made me His property through Jesus' death for my sin and His resurrection. Now I have a greater privilege to be Federal Chancellor than to be God's property. We believers are the people of property by the grace of God in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14). That is why a Bible teacher on campus is more important than many board chairmen and every participant in the upcoming Global Leadership Empowerment Forum is more influential than the participants in the G20 Summit. Let us read verse 5 again: "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".

Second, a kingdom of priests. Let us read verse 6: "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 here calls his people a kingdom of priests. This was God's hope for them. At that time their inwardness was anything but priestly. They had just moved out of slavery. In slavery they had developed a slavish mentality. Their hope was directed towards everything they had never been able to enjoy as slaves: their own house with swimming pool, a family with sweet children and always enough food in the fridge. For them, salvation from slavery was the end. But for God it was only the beginning. His hope and vision for his people was: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests". Now that they were free from bondage, he revealed his hope to them. He could use them to bring his salvation to the ends of the earth. He would educate and equip them and make them the preachers of his good deeds and the teachers of his word.

We must not cling to our petty bourgeois convictions and sin against God's hope. Our salvation from the slavery of sin through faith in Christ is only the beginning. God's people are a kingdom of priests. God's people are an exceedingly large army of prayer warriors and Bible teachers. A woman, when she did not know God's hope, sat in front of the television for hours after work and was inwardly desperate. When she accepted God's hope through Ezra 7:10 to be Bible teacher and royal priests for the whole world, she joyfully began to educate her Bible students and daughter through one-to-one Bible study, daily bread and Sabbath training, and prays with hope for her to be kingdom of priests. Our salvation is not complete until we have received God's hope. Some next generation UBF coworkers did not know God's hope. They identified themselves as believers, but they sought their identity in being doctors or economists. Finally, they wondered why they should stay in the church and work with their parents. The answer is: because of God's hope. God's servant M. Peter initiated the Global Leadership Empowerment so that the young people could seize God's hope and come out of their hopelessness and lack of identity. When they recognized God's hope, they became very cheerful and strong and began as self-motivated Bible teachers to realize God's vision with professionalism by forming Bible Study teams and working together spiritually. God's hope turns hopeless, slavish people into a huge army for world mission. It is never the external circumstances that make people miserable. It is life without God's hope. Let us read verse 6: "And you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to say to the Israelites." Let us seize God's hope and let ourselves and the next generation and the Bible students be equipped by God as a kingdom of priests.

Third, a holy people. God told them through Moses: "You will be for me a holy nation". Holy here means separate or different. God's people are different in every respect and in every area. A holy people lives according to the word of God. Even if they are considered mad, they live as God says. A young man came to study in a foreign country. Many of his fellow students gave up their life of faith and sought their own advantage. But he kept John 15:16 and decided to live as a holy people. During his studies he had to suffer a lot, but he stuck to his decision and lived as God's holy people. God blessed him to see God's vision with Ezekiel 37:10 and made him a Bible teacher and prayerfighter for world mission.

Let us read again verses 5 and 6. What was the prerequisite for them? None at all. They had already received the grace of God. But they should not rebel and show their trust by obeying the voice of God and keeping His covenant.

Let us consider verses 7 and 8: "So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.." When the people heard of the hope and vision of God, they said that they would gladly obey. God helped them by thunder, lightning, fire, smoke and the sound of the trumpet to recognize from the mountain how much to be afraid of Him. He also commanded them not to come nearer and not to touch the mountain, otherwise they would die. Not even the priests were allowed to come near. They should meet God with fear of God and hear His Word with reverence.

2. The ten commandments and the book of the covenant (20:1 – 23:33)

God wanted to use them as a kingdom of priests and holy people. But they were still a slavish people without discipline. How could they live in everyday life in the promised land as a kingdom of priests and holy people? God gave them ten commandments and holy laws out of His love to discipline them and help them live and grow as a kingdom of priests and holy people.

We would like to reflect in eight points on the significance of the commandments for their practical life:

First, to love God (20:1-11). The first four commandments helped them to love God. To love God meant to separate from all other gods, as the Samaritan woman separated from the men and accepted Jesus as God and became the living witness of Jesus for all Samaria. Loving God also means not replacing the invisible Creator with images, but honoring him as God and serving him (Rom 1:21ff). The commandment not to abuse God's name taught them not to be frivolous when it came to God and His work. And by sanctifying the seventh day and also helping their children and strangers to sanctify it, they grew in love with God who sanctified this day and gave it to them as a day of rest.

Second, to love one's neighbor (20:12-17). Through the next six commandments they grew in horizontal relationship with their neighbor as a kingdom of priests and holy people. Parents means to obey them as one obeys God. They should not kill, especially not remain indifferent, but love their neighbor and give him life. What about adultery? Adultery shows that someone has built his relationship with his spouse on feeling. A marriage that is founded in God and lives for mission does not break, but grows more and more in love. They should not steal what belongs to the other, but work themselves and rather lead a giving life. They should not lie: Lies break trust relationships, so they should not deal with lies. The greatest enemy in the relationship with one's neighbor is envy. They must not

envy their neighbor for house, car, woman, but trust in God who gives everything they need and bless their neighbor and pray for him.

Thirdly, the freedom to use justice (21:1-11). Slaves were released after six years. But if a slave loved his master, he was allowed to bind himself to him forever (21,5.6). God's people learned that freedom does not mean to be without commitment, but to bind oneself to the Lord forever.

Fourth, to take responsibility and be moderate (21:12-22:16). A kingdom of priests lives by the standard of righteousness. There was the death penalty for murder and manslaughter, but anyone who killed accidentally could flee to a free city. "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" meant that everyone was only responsible for the damage they had done. Anyone who had stolen something should give it back. Anyone who had damaged something was to replace it, even if no one had seen it. However, the injured party may not demand more than he is entitled to. The goal was the just compensation and the restoration of the love community.

Fifth, to keep God's church clean (22:17-19). 22,17-19 say. God's people are God's holy dwelling place. God taught his people to keep God's tabernacle and worship clean against all false doctrines that would defile them.

Sixth: Living with debtor awareness (22:20-26). Let us read 22:20. To accept the weak and needy does not come from the good heart, but from the grace of God. They had been helpless slaves in Egypt, but God had redeemed them in His grace. So they could understand those who still suffered from slavery and serve them with the grace of God and free them from slavery with the power of God.

Seventh: To live consistently (22,27-23,19). They should give God what he deserves. They should be consistent in judgment and stick to the truth at any price. They should also practice forgiveness consistently and help the donkey of the adversary. After all, they should consistently keep the Sabbath year and the three feasts of the year and thus clearly identify themselves as his holy people. By obeying these commandments, they became ever stronger in their identity as God's kingdom of priests and His holy people.

Eights: Obey the voice of God and do not compromise (23:20-33). God promised them the entry into the Promised Land and the expulsion of the nations before them. Then he admonished them (23:32,33): " Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you." The religious practices of the peoples were very attractive to them as former slaves. But in the conquest they could not compromise, but should be clear from the beginning, then God could use them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God gave his people the commandments to help them, who knew no rules and no discipline, to live in the Promised Land as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and to overcome all temptations to sin. The word of God was the best blessing of God for his people to heal them from their old inwardness, to discipline them, and to equip them for the life of self-denial and taking up the cross as a kingdom of priests and holy people.

1. The making of the covenant at Sinai (24:1-18)

Chapter 24 describes the historical event of the making of the covenant at Sinai. God had led the Israelites out of bondage and brought them to Sinai. They were a slavish, hopeless

people. But God made a covenant with them in his unconditional love. Through this covenant a slavish people became the people of God. A new, holy people was born, proclaiming God's wonderful praises to the whole world.

Let us see verse 3: " When Moses went and told the people all the Lord 's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do." Moses gave the people all the laws of God, all the promises and admonitions. The people reacted by unanimously agreeing to do all that God had said. Moses prepared the covenant. First he wrote down all the words. The next morning he built an altar at the bottom of the mountain and set up twelve stone altars, one for each tribe. Then he had young men from the tribes bring burnt offerings and thanksgiving offerings from young bulls on the altar. And he took half of the blood of the sacrifices and sprinkled it on the altar, and poured the other half into basins. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it again to the people. And they heard the words of God, and answered as before, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey."

Let us read verse 8: „ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." And Moses sprinkled the people with the blood of the basins. God had made a covenant with them. He was their God, and they were his people. They had been nothing but slaves, but God loved them and had made them his people through his covenant. He sealed the covenant with blood. This was a new work of creation. From then on Israel was his people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

This historical event founded the "old covenant". This covenant remained valid until God established the new covenant when Jesus shed his blood on the cross at Golgotha. In Matthew 26:26-28, at the Last Supper, Jesus took the cup with his disciples, thanked them and gave it to them, saying, " "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Jesus shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins. God made a new covenant in the blood of Jesus with the hopeless sinners enslaved because of sin and made them his people. Through the blood of Jesus, sinners have received forgiveness of sins and new and eternal life as his holy people and as a kingdom of priests. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9,10: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." The power of the blood of Jesus through the unconditional love of God makes hopeless sinners the royal priesthood.

The decision to make a covenant with the sinful people was God's decision out of his love. To be a kingdom of priests means to be a people of God's love and to practice God's love. A woman had great expectations of her children and told them to obey. But she was not willing to give herself for them. When they disobeyed, she blamed all the guilt on them. One missionary, on the other hand, decided to love the young people with the love with which God had loved him. He made a covenant with them and gave them God's words. Surprisingly, the intellectual students listened to him. When he asked them why they listened to him even though he could not offer them anything, they said: "Because we recognize your love for God and for us." This relationship grew into a beautiful, spiritually healthy community. The power of the blood of Jesus overcomes all walls and builds God's holy church.

Verses 9-11 describe how Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons and seventy of the elders of Israel ascended the mountain. There they saw God. Under his feet it was like a surface of

sapphire and like heaven when it is clear. He did not stretch out his hand against them, and they ate there in fellowship before God.

Let us see verse 12. God called Moses up again to the top of the mountain to receive the tablets of the law. Moses' servant Joshua went up with him. Joshua was ready to work with Moses and learn from him. He went one step further, so he was the one who could be used as a leader for the people of God.

Today we saw God's love, with whom he made a covenant with his people. A slavish people became the people of God. Through the new covenant in the blood of Jesus, God made a slavish people God's people. In the community and in the love relationship with God, the power of the blood works and makes hopeless sinners a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We have also learned that the life of discipleship is a life of obedience of faith, and that through his word God helps his people to live as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.