

## Exodus 19 v 1 to 8

### God's Treasured Possession

It had taken them three months of trusting God to get to this place, but they finally arrived. During those three months they had seen God at work.

They saw God's deliverance from Egypt, received his guidance on the way to go, saw his glorious victory at the Red Sea, received God's miraculous gifts of food and water, and they saw a prayerful victory won over the Amalekites.

They had now arrived at the place God had spoken to Moses about in Exodus 3 v 12:

#### Exodus 3 v 12

**And God said, '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.'**

Here in Exodus 19 they have reached the place where Moses had led them just as God had instructed him. Here Moses goes up the mountain to meet with God again and get further instructions.

What Moses was told by God to tell his people was something quite amazing, it was their position in his sight:

#### Exodus 19 v 5b to 6a

**"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."**

In order to maintain this position, they need to obey God fully and keep his covenant. We know the Israelites did not keep their part of the deal and ended up never seeing the promised land.

We live in a culture that is achievement driven, where we strive to be the very best that we can be in whatever we choose to do. The world and the people we know look on us and is either pleased or disappointed with our achievements.

We see this in all walks of life, from showbusiness where those involved work to achieve an Oscar, Bafta, and many others, to footballers who want to achieve player of the year or win the world cup, to those who work wanting status and promotions.

Who of us remember actors or footballers who have not won or been nominated for something? I am not belittling all that they have achieved but putting it alongside those in amateur dramatics and non-league football who do it because they love doing it regardless of any recognition.

As Christians we are not defined by what we have achieved but by who we are in God. It is not something we have earned or deserved. It is a free gift from God by what he has done for us.

God values his people not by what they have done or achieved but by their love for him and wanting to do the very best to please him. We will make mistakes along the journey but he sees our hearts and our desire to serve him the best way we can.

The Israelites were defined by who they were in God, in verse 6 we are told they will be his:

**Treasured Possession, Kingdom of Priests, Holy Nation.**

Look at these three titles in more detail

## 1. Treasured Possession

There are a number of ways in which we value the things we treasure, spiritual value, physical value, sentimental value or antique value, what someone is willing to pay for it.

The items I showed you in the children's talk fit these categories, for example:

Physical value – The watch £8,000

Sentimental value – The chicken priceless

Antique value - The books and rice bowl, who knows

Spiritual value – The Bible - priceless

The value of something is usually what the individual sees it as, for instance, someone might be willing to pay £m's for a painting that others would not even give it wall space.

I like the **McDonalds coffee advert**, which sums this up very well. If you have not seen it then it shows people buying all sorts of fancy coffees at other places that cost well over their price and serve it in different ways, with people saying 'I only want a coffee'. It finishes with showing their coffee simply served and at a much lower price.

If how much we are willing to pay for something determines its true value, then we must be incredibly valuable to God, He paid the highest price to save us the life of His only Son Jesus Christ.

Our God, the creator of the universe and all things in it, including precious metals like gold and silver, precious jewels like diamonds and of course us. Out of all of his creation he chose us to be his treasured possession.

Our worth is not based on what we think of ourselves or whatever other people think, or by our own good deeds, but solely on the price that God was willing to pay for us to have an eternal relationship with him.

We are of greater worth to him than the most amazing treasures we can imagine, because of the price he was willing to pay. Jesus proved that we are the Father's most treasured possession.

## 2. Kingdom of Priests

The purpose of the priesthood in the Old Testament, amongst other things, were to act as witnesses to the nations of the one, true living God. They were given access to God's presence in the tabernacle, where they were to perform the duties of atonement through sacrifice, worship, and prayer.

God required order in his house as found in Exodus 28, he gave his instructions concerning the duties and expectations of his priests. The very first priestly task instituted by God was to intercede on behalf of the Jewish people.

If the first task of this ancient priesthood was to enter the presence of God with all twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on their hearts, then let us consider what is on our hearts when we enter the presence of God to intercede?

In light of these qualities and responsibilities, how are we as a community of believers to be a kingdom of priests?

Firstly, we must be noticeably different; set apart from the people around us that don't have a relationship with Jesus.

Secondly, we have to live under the highest moral standards required by our calling, live holy lives that are different and that set us apart.

Thirdly, our mission as priests is also to be witnesses for God and to be Christlike in everything we do. Will the people we meet this week know what God is like by the way we represent him?

Lastly, like the priests of old, we need to act as mediators between God and those who don't know him. When we speak to people and they share their concerns and difficulties with us, we need to be sensitive to them and where possible meet the needs on God's behalf through the power of the Spirit or direct them to someone who can help them.

### **3. Holy Nation**

Israel had a priestly role within the whole world as the nation through which God would make himself known to all nations. They were to be set apart for the task that God had chosen them for.

In being set apart, God has called them to be a people consecrated to Him, a people wholly given over to him. The way they were to do this was by being fully obedient to him and by keeping his covenant.

They were not only to be a different nation they were to be a Holy Nation. This directly links them to God, who is Holy.

#### **Leviticus 19 v 2**

**'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy**

They were to be set apart for a special, sacred purpose to bring all the peoples of the world into a knowledge of God. In representing God, they also need to be holy.

As Christians, we are called to be the same as the Israelites. We are told by Peter in his first letter, who he addressed it to God's elect, exiles, scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, and of course Knaphill and New Haw:

#### **1 Peter 2 v 9 to 10**

**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, 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.**

Like Israel, we as God's people have been set apart from this world for a relationship with God and to fulfil his purposes.

Together, we are God's treasured possession, a Royal Priesthood and a Holy Nation, whether we are gathered for worship and fellowship on a Sunday or when we are scattered into the world at home or at work, we are God's special representatives.

I find this so amazing to know that we are God's Treasured Possession and he gave his son that we might have a relationship with him for eternity. What an amazing God we have.

A hymn that sums up this for me is 'And can it be' by Charles Wesley, in particular verse 1:

And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain?  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! how can it be  
That Thou, my God, should die for me?