

Andrew`s start:

400 years later – Ph. is afraid

Ph weapon: killing boys

One cute baby taken survives,

to Eg.palace, given Eg.name, educated in Eg. culture, Eg. gods

At heart: Israelite – leads to conflict, M. flees

From prince to humble shepherd in desert -- his life on hold

After 40 years, there God of Israelites meets M.

Has seen and heard: God`s response: to send M.

Command Ph to “let my people go SO THAT they may worship me

M. confused and scarred: excuses; God`s reply: I will be with you

Instruct you, work through you and Aaron

So, ch 5 is starting on a positive note: Moses, together with Aaron, is doing exactly what God asked him to do: confronting Ph. with God`s command to let the Israelites go out into the desert to worship Him.

But when we look at the last couple of verses, it`s all change already: M. is angry , frustrated, ready to quit: Why have you done this to us God, you have not rescued us.

That is clearly the wrong result. But WHAT went wrong?

Like so often, it is the communication that didn`t work well: the Israelites had picked up that god had seen their misery and had sent them M. to bring them out of slavery. They had also heard something of a land flowing with milk and honey -- so they were absolutely ready to leave there and then.

But that was selective hearing; because God had said: “bring my people out SO THAT they may worship me.”. God did not say he would lead the Israelite away from Egypt to because they were badly treated there and oppressed.; He said “Bring them out into the desert SO THAT they would worship, sacrifice , hold a festival to me. However it is translated, it put`s God a the centre.

With other words, the Israelites thought that their problem was their slavery. But God saw that the real problem was that the Israelites had forgotten Him; they had forgotten the story of how God had made a covenant with their ancestors, a covenant that bound them to God in an eternal relationship; a covenant in which God had promised to be with the Israelites always, everywhere, to care for them and provide them with all they need; a covenant which God had been absolutely faithful to, but Israelites had first neglected and then forgotten it. That is the problem HE wanted to address first of all.

So just when the Israelites have their suitcases packed, ready to leave, God says: Wait. He puts them into lock down.

God`s first step is to teach them who He is-- in order to win back their trust:

So he uses the ten plagues to demonstrate His greatness to them: only the first two miracles God performed was replicated by Ph. magicians - after that they could not compete anymore. Their response: that must be the work of God! Magicians first to acknowledge God.

When Ph pleaded for the frogs that were in the kitchen vessels and in the beds to be taken away, God said: o.k., YOU decide the time, and I will act then; it was God`s demonstration that He is Lord over time.

And He showed that He is (not bound by his own laws of nature) Lord over all space when the great darkness that he sent over all Egypt, a darkness so deep it could be felt, it was light where the Israelites lived.

In the last plague, God showed Himself as Lord over life and death; the Israelites experienced the God who has no limits, the god who is the only being who does not depend on anything else; they got a first taste of the God whose name is "I am who I am" -- far beyond human understanding. And that is what they needed to know before they could trust Him and follow Him out into a wild, dangerous, desert.

But why did God choose the desert to take them to?

It's partly geography: between Egypt and Canaan there is a lot of desert.

But there are other reasons: the desert is a quiet place with fewer distractions than in the hustle and bustle of Egypt; it is a good place for rebuilding a relationship: there is no way you can hide in a desert, there is no hurry to run around; instead there is time to listen, time to reflect, and time to rethink priorities.

The desert is also a place to learn that we are not self sufficient: difficult for a nation of nearly 1 million people to support themselves -- God is drawing them to a place where they realise that they NEED to depend on Him: for food for instance, or for water, and for direction

A good place to rebuild a relationship:

"I have chosen you for a special role, a special place in my plan.

I have chosen you SO THAT you would be my shop window: a place where other people can come and see and observe how God relates to his creatures. SO THAT you would show them the greatness of my love I want you to help them understand my grace and forgiveness,

and you will be the example of how I correct my people when they step outside my boundaries.

Through you, I want all generations and all nations to get know me, SO THAT they have the choice to worship me together with you.

This is the reason why God kept the Israelites waiting before leading them away from slavery; the delay was not the wrong result, it was God`s opportunity to knit Israelites closer to Himself

Last week Andrew said that the book of Exodus was the story of the Israelite nation -- but that it`s also our story.

Where do we see ourselves in it?

- Our nation is in a crisis;
- God sees what is happening and hears our cries for help;
- the media sees the problems as economic challenge, health probs, educational;
- God? Deeper problem of having pushed Him aside, forgotten.

God gives us some “desert-time”, to think, reflect ,reset priorities; To watch Him at work providing for us what we NEED

Are we willing to change our life style in order to be part of His plan?
Each individual to respond!

The goal: all nations and all generations to worship together before God -- like “amazing grace from 50 countries”.