

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS –

### PART ONE – THE PREPARATION OF THE MAN

The story of the Exodus could be considered as the greatest escape drama in history. Around two million people were rescued from slavery to one of the major empires of ancient times. How did it happen? Whom did God use to bring it about and above all, what does this remarkable event have to do with being a Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The book of Exodus, as part of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, was written by Moses, the central character. This Jewish tradition was confirmed by Jesus.(Jn.5:46,47) The central theme of this and every other Old Testament book, according to Jesus, was Him.(Lk.24:27,44) Its real meaning only becomes clear when Jesus Christ Himself is our teacher.(Lk.24:32,45)

The book begins by setting the scene. Some 400 years earlier, Jacob had moved with his whole extended family from Canaan to Egypt at the invitation of his son Joseph. At first they had enjoyed the very best conditions because of Joseph's favoured position as Pharaoh's prime minister. They had flourished and multiplied in the early days. After the death of Joseph and the coming of a new Pharaoh, times changed. The Egyptians became jealous and began to put more and more pressure on the Israelites. First they enslaved them as cheap labour for building great new cities, but still they were blessed by God. Next, persecution took a vicious new twist. The order was given for the midwives to kill baby boys at birth, but they listened to God rather than the government, and God continued to bless those who trusted Him. Finally the instruction was given to parents to drown their own new-born sons in the River Nile. Life to the godless Egyptians was cheap.(chapter 1)

As so often in history, God's solution for a desperate situation began with just one woman who believed in Him. Moses' mother, obeying at least the letter of the law, put him into a water proof cot among the reeds at the edge of the Nile and left his older sister to keep watch to see what God would do. When God solves a problem He does it brilliantly. The one woman in Egypt who could defy Pharaoh and get away with it, his daughter, was in the right place at the right time with the right attitude of heart. Miriam, Moses' big sister, must have been so excited as she went off with the princess' authority to find her mother who not only received her son back but was now paid to bring him up under royal protection! This is one of many stories in the Bible which foreshadow the idea of baptism as someone is put down into seeming death in water, only to be raised up to a wonderful new life. Moses therefore grew up with the love and teaching of his parents on the one hand but all the privileges particularly of education in the royal court on the other hand. He must have struggled to know in which world he belonged.

The conflict finally reached crisis point as a young man when he saw the ill-treatment of one of his people and took sides, killing the Egyptian in the process. He tried to fix God's problem his way. His attempt to hide the body failed. Word somehow got out about the murder, not just to the Israelites who rejected him, but more seriously to

Pharaoh who put out a warrant for his arrest and execution. Moses left Egypt in a hurry having failed in both his worlds. Away in the Sinai desert he again found himself standing up for those who were being bullied but managed to do it this time without murdering the bullies. He was rewarded with a new family, a wife and then a son, and began many years of life in obscurity as a nobody.

Meanwhile back in Egypt things changed. One Pharaoh replaced another, but life for the Israelites was still tough. Finally they remembered God who had never forgotten all that He had promised them. As soon as they called on God and handed their problem to Him He was waiting to begin to solve it His way.(chapter 2)

God's answer was a man, but first He needed to gain Moses' attention. He did it with a bush which burned, but did not burn up. It provided a compelling picture of the secret of the Christian life. The Lord was in the bush so the fire came not from the bush but from the Lord, as the secret of our lives is not us but the One who lives in us. When Moses started to seek, God was waiting to speak to him by name. Moses was available to learn some important lessons. The first lesson was about the difference between a holy God and a sinful man. The second was that he was dealing with the God of the Bible. The third lesson was about the wisdom, love, power and provision of that God. The fourth was God's plan to redeem Israel and give them an inheritance. The final lesson was that God intended to use Moses to accomplish this plan.

Moses began a series of objections. The first was, 'Who was Moses to do this?' The answer was very simple, God, not Moses, would bring this about. The second objection was, 'Who was God to do this thing?' The answer again was – the God of the Bible who had a detailed plan of salvation.(chapter 3)

The third objection was, 'What if the Israelites did not believe Moses?' The answer was illustrated in a series of demonstrations of God's power which could be repeated in future as needed. The fourth objection was, 'Lord, I am no talker!' The answer was easy, God would speak through him. The last objection was the real one, 'I do not want to do this.' The answer was the provision of a great orator, Aaron, his brother. Finally Moses gave in and set out for Egypt after settling a marital dispute. On the way he met Aaron who had obeyed God by going to look for his long lost brother from whom he had not even had a postcard! What a remarkable example of faith! As a dynamic team the two brothers began their ministry at the ages of 80 and 83.(chapter 4)

#### SOME QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY.

1. What similarities can you see between the Israelites' predicament then and the Christian church's today?(chapter 1)
2. How does the early preparation of Moses to serve his people parallel the way God prepares us for His service now?(chapter 2)
3. What means does God still use in our lives to gain our attention and reveal His plan for us.(chapter 3)
4. How do we make the same excuses to avoid God's plan that Moses made and receive much the same answers?(chapter 4)