

# Message for 2016 World Mission Report - A HOLY NATION

Exodus 19:4-6

Key Verse: 19:5-6a

**“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.”**

Thank and praise God who has used UBF for world campus missions and blessed us for the past 55 years. I thank God for all missionaries and leaders who have dedicated their lives to God’s calling.

Today’s passage that we read is God’s covenant with Israel. This covenant contains God’s love and hope for His people and His vision to save all peoples of the world through them. The hope and vision of God flows throughout the whole Bible.

With the rapid changes in this information age, the world is facing a decline in moral values and a strong current of secularization. In order to overcome the realities and challenges of our time, what do we need? We must have passion and spiritual authority that come from God. As we accept God’s great love and hope, I believe God will give us passion and spiritual authority to serve our time. Through today’s words of God’s covenant, may God reveal His love and hope toward us and renew our souls and minds.

## **I. God’s Deliverance and Love (4)**

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, they came to the Desert of Sinai. God called Moses from the mountain and gave him His words for the Israelites: **“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself”** (4). As God had promised Abraham, God sent Israel to Egypt and raised them to be a great nation (Ge 15:13). Due to the policy of a new Egyptian dynasty, however, they became slaves and suffered. Though they ate steak and pork chops beside cooking pots, their joy lasted for just a moment. God had seen their misery and heard them crying and came down to rescue them (Ex 4:7-8). God extended His mighty arm and judged Egypt with ten plagues. On the tenth plague, God killed the firstborn of Egypt, but He redeemed the descendants of Israel by the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex 12:23). God saved His people and liberated them from their oppression.

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God said, **“You have seen how I carried you on eagles’ wings.”** It is reported that eagles in Palestine have a wingspan up to 8-10 feet. An eagle protects its young under its strong wings, and when they grow, pushes them out of the nest. As the frightened eaglet falls crying, “Mom, please help me!” the mother eagle swoops down to catch the eaglet on its wings and soars (Dt 32:11). By repeating the training, an eagle raises its young to be the kings of the birds. In order to transform the Israelites who were weak and sick after a long period of slavery into a holy nation, God began to train them. God led them to the Red Sea, where they were trapped between the sea and the Egyptian army. When they cried out, God divided the water and enabled them to cross the sea as on dry land. In the desert, God produced water for them to drink and provided manna for them to eat (Ne 9:15). How strong and awesome is our God!

By saying, **“You yourselves have seen,”** God helps His people to remember His grace of deliverance and love. We, too, were slaves of sin. During my college days, outwardly I was an honor student, but inwardly I was enslaved by lust and fear of the future. We were in darkness with unsolvable sins, wounds, inferiority complexes, jealousies, addictions, etc. God saw our misery and heard the cries of our souls and came to rescue us. He redeemed us by the blood of Christ and liberated us from sin and death through His resurrection. How great was the freedom and joy we experienced on the day we met the crucified Lord and were born again! We should always remember the Lord who shed His blood on the cross and the grace of His great salvation. We should also remember how God has carried us on eagle’s wings by protecting us, providing for us, and training us.

### **II. God’s Covenant and Hope (5-6)**

After God reminded Israel of His grace of deliverance, He gave them words of His covenant. Read verses 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.”** Let’s think about God’s hope for His people revealed in these words in three aspects.

#### **1. God’s treasured possession.**

God said, **“...out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.”** There is nothing that is not the possession of God who created all things. But God chose Israel among all nations to be His special possession. The world chooses qualified and useful people. But God chose Israel, the weakest and fewest among

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the peoples, who had been slaves. God also chose us to be His special possession solely by His grace (1Pe 2:9). How immeasurable is God's grace! Here "treasured possession" refers to valuable treasures like diamonds which a king has acquired and keeps dearly (1Ch 29:3). God has purchased us by the blood of His Son and made us His treasured possession. John 1:12 says, "**Yet to all...who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**" Children are the objects of absolute attention and love. God keeps and protects us like the apple of His eye (Dt 32:10). How great a privilege it is for us to have the right to become children of God, the King of kings and the Lord of the universe! We should accept the noble status of ourselves and our brothers and sisters by faith.

### **2. A kingdom of priests**

God said, "**You will be for me a kingdom of priests...**" A priest meets God most closely, sees His glory, and experiences His grace. Therefore, the calling to priesthood is the highest blessing for a human. The duties of a priest are to worship God, intercede for people, and teach God's words (Lev chap. 9, 10:11). The unsaved peoples of the world are the lost children to God. How painful God's heart must be as He sees His lost children suffer and perish in in all kinds of sins, crimes and tragedies under the power of darkness! God wanted Israel to be a nation of shepherds and Bible teachers who would lead the peoples of the world to know God and the good news of His salvation. Apostle Peter reminded the Christians in the first century who were suffering under persecution that they were kingly priests, saying, "**You are...a royal priesthood...**" (1Pe 2:9). In any situation, we should not forget that we are kingly priests who have been appointed by God Himself.

World missions is the heartbeat of God. In the 1970s, we accepted God's desire and prayed for the peoples of the countries of the world, many of which we had never heard of, kneeling down on the beach of the East Sea of Korea. God has fulfilled our prayers by sending out 1,800 missionaries to 95 countries. Since it is God's will to save all peoples of the world, God listens to our prayers and He works. As we pray, God will bring a season of Christ to North Korea, the Middle East and China. God is calling missionaries to go to the places where the gospel has not reached, and He will open the ways for us to go out. We should persistently pray for the evangelization of 7,000 major campuses in 233 countries of the world by raising 100,000 missionaries in our generation and our children's generation.

### **3. A holy nation**

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God said, **“You will be for me a holy nation.”** God wants His people to reveal His glory by living a life separated from worldliness (Eph 1:4). In this world full of sin and evil, how can we who have weaknesses become a holy nation? God presented the secret in the words of His covenant.: **“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.....you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** God promised that, if His people obey His words and keep His covenant, they would be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These days materialism and relativism intoxicate people’s mind and value system. Through mass media and internet, people are exposed to an adulterous environment and the temptations of sin. In this atmosphere, many young people’s interests are having a good job, marrying a spouse of their dreams, and enjoying life with material abundance. As their inner persons remain powerless and sickened by sin, however, they suffer much in their family and social lives. Most of all, finishing life in vanity, depression and fear of judgment is the greatest tragedy. History testifies that the civilizations and nations that pursued material abundance and adultery weakened and perished due to the prevalence of sins that grew like a cancer. Satan tempts people to live their short lives for flesh and money that spoil and perish, and thus, leads them to eternal destruction. In our time, we should become watchers and salt and light of the world (Mt 5:13-14). For this we should stay awake. God said, **“If you obey me fully...”** The words of God the Creator and Redeemer are full of the Spirit and life (Jn 6:63). The word of God is living; it awakens our soul and spirit and judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Heb 4:12). When we hold on to the word and obey it, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us to put off our old self, which pursues desires of the flesh, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:22-24). We should fight the good fight against the evil spirits of materialism, relativism and sinful pleasure of our times with the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). We should awaken young people who are intoxicated by the poison of sin with God’s word and help them rise to be holy young men and women of Jesus Christ.

In his testamentary message to Israel, Moses said that the words of God are their life and their descendants’ life (Dt 32:47). The reason why UBF has been used as God’s instrument for this time is the love of the Bible and obedience to God’s word. Through the training in Bible study, reflection of, and obedience to God’s word, our members could be shepherds and Bible teachers anywhere, and thus live as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We must keep the spiritual

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legacy God has given us, that is, the love of the Bible and obedience to God's word, until the Lord comes.

God also said, **“if you...keep my covenant.”** Here, covenant can be compared to a marriage pledge between God and His people. In response to God's absolute choice and love, we make a pledge that we love God and do not put any idol in our hearts. This pledge is summarized in the first and greatest commandment; **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”** (Mt 22:37-38). Discarding God's covenant and following the world, Israel finally lost the great blessing of God's calling. But God did not change His hope of raising a holy nation. For this, God gave His only Son over to suffering and death. Before taking up the cross, the Lord prayed earnestly, with sweat like drops of blood falling to the ground (Lk 22:44); **“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me”** (Mt 26:39). How the Father's heart must have been torn as He was hearing the cry of His beloved Son! But God did not grant the Son's request, in order to save us. By giving His life, the Lord established the new covenant for us by His blood (Lk 22:20). Then the Holy Spirit came to dwell in us, so that our hearts may be transformed to love God (Jn 14:16). God first loved us with all His heart and with all His soul and with all His mind. It is proper for us to love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind. May each of us keep God's covenant which the Lord has sealed with His blood by giving all of our heart, soul and mind to God, discarding anything temporary that holds our hearts now.

What would God want earnestly from us, His beloved children, today? Isn't it that we become a holy nation after the hope of our Father and serve our times, believing in the Almighty God? In every time, there are difficulties and challenges. But holy people of God have overcome the world and served God's will by trusting God firmly in any situation. Caleb in the Bible is a good example. The ten leaders who had spied the land of Canaan saw the inhabitants of the land and fell into fear. So they said that they would die like grasshoppers that could do nothing but jumping. But Caleb said, **“Do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. The Lord is with us.”** (Nu 14:9). God said, **“But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.”** (Nu 14:24). According to God's promise, Caleb entered the Promised Land, and at the age of 85, he was full of passion and conquered the hill country where giants were living (Jos 14:10-14). Why did Caleb have a spirit and passion different from others though they all were in the same situation? God said, **“My servant Caleb follows me wholeheartedly.”** When Caleb loved God and followed Him wholeheartedly, God gave him passion and power to challenge and triumph by faith in God Almighty. The Bible reminds us that the real problem is

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not difficult realities but whether one is going the way of a holy nation by loving God and following Him wholeheartedly or not.

Praise be to God who saved us from sin and death to give us eternal life and the kingdom of God. Thanks be to the Lord, who is interceding for us at the right hand of God to lift us up from our weaknesses and failures (Ro 8:34). We, who are God's treasured possession, cannot give our new life to the things of the world that spoil and perish. May we devote our precious one life fully to our only eternal God, serving His glorious hope as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. In today's materialistic and self-centered world, what are people thirsty for and seeking most? It is true love—the love of Christ. Along with the new covenant, the Lord gave us a new command, **“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”** (Jn 13:34-35). May we fully restore our love for God, for God's word, and for our coworkers so that we may build up a community full of love. As we do so, I believe that God will give us unceasing passion and spiritual authority with which we can serve our times. In one mind and heart, let's serve the evangelization of the world campuses faithfully until we all enter into the Lord's glory and receive a crown of righteousness from Him.