

EXODUS 32:1-10 THE GOLDEN CALF

God made us to worship Him. As we saw in chapters 25-31, He was making it possible for Him to be among His people. He was to make the Tabernacle, sacrifices and offerings, and the priesthood, a place where the people would experience His presence. We pointed out that the Tabernacle was a picture of creation in that the outer courtyard was like the earth, and the Holy Place was the heavens and the Most Holy Place was the very abode of God. God's activity of work brings order out of chaos. In the middle of the desert was a beautiful place of refuge. This was all in the instructions that God was giving to Moses, to soon be carried out. This was all about order, beauty, and rest up through chapter 31. So, it gave us a reminder of creation. But after creation came the Fall. What follows in Exodus is also ugly. It is a fall from God's way of worship to man's way of worship. What a tragedy. This is Genesis all over again. Just like Adam and Eve, Israel was willing to forfeit a beautiful creation and reject the God of creation. But God is also a God of redemption, for as we see the promise of a Redeemer in Genesis, we see redemption in Exodus. All throughout the Bible we see the story of redemption. It occurs over and over again. There was creation, fall, and redemption. We thank the Lord for the story of redemption. We witness this in the section of chapters 32-34.

1. THE GREAT SIN

VV 1-6

A. IMPATIENCE

1

Delay of Moses

Moses has been on the mountain for over 40 days receiving instructions on how God will be among His people and how they are to worship Him. We are now at one of the great crises in the history of Israel. This chapter is quite baffling in what Israel does in light of what God has done for them and is going to do. They violate the very commandments God gave them.

The commandments are of loyalty and they break them.

In this first verse we see the Israelites are impatient. The idea of faith is to wait upon the Lord. Israel had waited for 430 years and now it has only been 40 days and they are impatient. They are ready to meet their own needs. They take the matter of worship in their own hands.

Gathering around Aaron

This is not a friendly gathering in that it is like a group of bullies surrounding their victim. They gathered around Aaron to threaten him. Maybe they are in panic as they fear they have lost contact with God. It was like they were saying, "Aren't you going to do something?" They were anxious, but it is still not an excuse for sin.

Representation of God

Come make us gods. They wanted to make a visible representation of the one true God. They weren't requesting a different God than the true God. They wanted something visible to give them hope. By

their actions they almost forfeit what they wanted most. The people wanted God's presence now. The very thing they want is the irony of idolatry. But God made His people to value Him, and long for Him and to be loyal to Him.

We cant make God out to be the way we want Him to be.

Making God in their own imagination

They went back to the pagan idea of making a god they could see. It was a polytheistic world and they had related to that when they were in Egypt, so they can make the true God in a way they prescribe. They were living for the image and not the reality. If their mediator Moses was not going to show up, then their image would be an inanimate mediator.

Disrespect for their mediator

They called Moses, this fellow Moses, which was an act of derision and contempt. It is quite ironic, for the man standing between them and the wrath of God was the mediator, Moses. Moses was ready to give his life for theirs if God would show mercy. What a picture of the ultimate Mediator, Christ Jesus. Though we are faithless, He is faithful.

We have to have the mediator. We cant choose our own mediator.

B. AARON'S INSTRUCTIONS 2-4

Why Aaron would do this, we don't know. Yes he was probably under pressure, but he should not have given in. He knew better. He facilitates the request, but he doesn't look good doing such a thing.

Forced offerings of gold

The people are commanded to give their gold. When God asked for gold it was a free will offering. They gave out of their own voluntary giving. Here, they are told to give.

Bull –the representative for God

Aaron made a bull or ox. It really wasn't a calf but it was probably resembling the bull god in Egypt. It might have reflected Baal worship in Canaan. It was widespread in that part of the world. He identifies it with the God that brought them out of Egypt. The bull meant power and domination. Just a few weeks ago they committed to not to have any other gods or idols. Now Yahweh is associated with a piece of gold. God had already beaten the pagan gods of Egypt. How ironic.

Manipulation for providing for their worship needs

The people wanted God's presence but they replaced the reality with an image. Hearts are restless until they find their rest in God. (Augustine) The image (whatever you live for) is a mirage (it looks like an oasis in a difficult world, as soon as you drink from its waters you wind up with sand.) We were made for God so we will never be satisfied with something other than Him. Everything we live for, other than God, is an image we have made. That is rebellion.

In fact they are turning the exodus experience on its head.

The very thing they wanted was the irony of idolatry. They devised a way to provide for themselves, when actually God provides all. They sought out a way to manipulate the power of the world to provide for their needs.

What happens when we seek out to meet our needs for ourselves?

This is the depth of the human problem. Idolatry is a terrible sin, and this exists today. It involves human desire. We want things and not just material

things, but also pleasure, comfort, and security and we are willing to do almost anything to get them which can be self-destructive and forbidden by God.

Where is your treasure? What does your life revolve around? What do you value the most? What's most important to you? What do you live for?

Where your treasure is, there also will be where your heart is. Do you live for material things? Idolatry is always trying to get our interest.

Put down the graving tools.

C. FALSE WORSHIP 5-6

Notice the comparisons to true worship. In this false worship there is the bull which is the tabernacle. There is an altar, offerings, and a feast. This is outright rebellion. This is a cult religion in the guise of worshipping the true God.

Altar

This altar would have been parallel to the altar that would be built for the Tabernacle.

Offerings

In 24:4-5—Moses rises early to sacrifice burnt and fellowship offerings. 32:6 is a reversal. Undoing what has been done.

Feast

The feast day comes and they worship their own god in their own way. Look what happens when God is worshipped in the wrong way.

Immorality

This is an orgy that resembled the worship of the fertility gods of the ancient Near east.

This all started with impatience and now look and see where it led to.

If we don't wait on the Lord we take matters in our own hands and it will lead to a wrong style of living.

D. EIGHT CONTRASTS TO GOD'S WAY

They provide what God had already provided. They take the initiative. They force the offering. Worship is thrown together. Overnight building of the bull. Invisible God becomes visible. Personal God becomes impersonal. Commandments are violated.

2. THE LORD'S RESPONSE

VV 7-10

God sees sin and its consequences long before we even know we need a Mediator.

A. GOD DISTANCES HIMSELF FROM THE PEOPLE

God tells Moses to see for himself what the people are doing.

They are no longer God's people as He has been saying all along.

Let My people go. He has had enough of them and now calls them Moses' people. This is a language of disowning them.

B. THE TURNING AWAY FROM GOD'S WAY

Here God nails them with their sin. They turned away from God.

They did it quickly. They were impatient.

C. THEY BROKE HIS COMMANDS

They turned away from the way He told them to do it.

They broke the commands. They broke the relationship with God.

C. WORSHIP OF AN IDOL

This was the particular problem. Idol worship is what God hates.

D. GOD KNOWS THEIR TRUE NATURE

He knew what was in their hearts. John 2:24-25 God knows man and He doesn't commit Himself to them.

E. THE WRATH OF GOD

God is threatening the Israelites by wiping them out and starting over again. This parallels God's curse in Genesis 3.

Simple justice demands that they be destroyed.

God says leave me alone. Don't come interceding to me. But that is exactly what Moses will do. God knows he will do that. God has been crafting Moses' heart by grace and he knew that Moses would come to Him and intercede.

Israel's action deserved severe punishment and anger from God. God is a just God. That is His character. He tells Moses that His promise will stand but that He will work through Moses to start up a new nation. God's plan will not be messed up. God is sovereign and He will do what he says. Israel could miss out on the blessing but God will do what He promises for His name's sake.

THE TRUE IMAGE

We know when man makes an image of God, it is wrong. But there is an image of God that is right, but it's not made by man, and actually the image is not even made by God. It is an image. Without this image, you cannot live for what really matters. Turn to Hebrews 1:1-ff This speaks of the image of the invisible God, an exact representation. We all need this image, Christ, the only image that satisfies the longings of our hearts. We need this image desperately. Look to Christ for rest. Abandon your images and run to Christ.

We know the redemption story comes in to play later in this section, but we will have to wait till next week. In the meantime we ask ourselves why do we need to hear the redemption story over and over again? Everyday we face the enemy. We rebel, but we are restored. How often He has delivered us from rebellion.

What needs to be seen is that the violation of the covenant brings consequences. Mankind deserves to be disowned and cutoff. When we understand this passage we realize how great grace is. Until we see how our own hearts resemble this sin, we cannot see the great mercy of God in Christ Jesus