

The Golden Calf

Purpose: to encourage the listeners to learn from the children of Israel in the wilderness and not slip into our old ways.

For those of you who know Christ, have you ever been tempted to go back to doing the things you used to do? Have any of you that are serving in ministry ever felt like quitting and returning to what you used to do? Perhaps you have felt that if the miracles that happened in the "bible days" were happening now, your faith would never be shaken.

After all that the children of Israel witness at Mt. Sinai, does it seem possible that they could turn away from God?

Reminder:

- The people have been delivered from Egypt by great miracles
- They have been sustained through the desert with water and food
- They have already defeated an enemy by God's power
- They have been brought to Mt Sinai, which is full of fire and smoke and they have seen lightening flashes, thunder and the earth is quaking
- They hear God speak to them directly from the mountain
- Their leaders have actually seen a manifestation of the glory of God (like the transfiguration of Jesus)
- And Moses goes up the mountain for instructions and has been gone for 40 days and 40 nights

What happens next?

Exo 32:1 - Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Exo 32:2 - And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me."

Exo 32:3 - So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron.

Exo 32:4 - And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

Exo 32:5 - So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *is* a feast to the LORD."

Exo 32:6 - Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

How could they do this?

- Because they were set on evil!
- They were impatient
- They were religious, but not righteous (after a life in Egypt)

- They wanted to worship their own way (calf)
- They had issues with Moses: probably thought that he was dead
- They were stiff-necked
- They went back to what they knew and were used to
- They were using a symbol (calf) to represent the true God

This is what God had warned them about before this – 20:3-6; 23:24;

What happens next?

Exo 32:7 - And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*.

Exo 32:8 - They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' "

Exo 32:9 - And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people!

Exo 32:10 - Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

God threatens to end His covenant with His people

- Because they have already broken the covenant that they made earlier
- Because they broke the very commandments that He had just given them

What happens next?

Exo 32:11 - Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

Exo 32:12 - Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

Exo 32:13 - Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.' "

Moses intercedes for the people!

- He reminds God of their history – "...you have brought out of the land of Egypt..."
- He reminds God of their testimony – "...He brought them out to harm them..."
- He reminds God of His promise – "...remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel..."

What happens next?

Exo 32:14 - So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

God turned from his wrath – and did not end His covenant with them

- Because Moses interceded – he stood in the gap
- God righteous judgment was avoided through the prayers of Moses
- We see in this act His justice and mercy

These are important lessons for us today:

1. We must understand what we are like without Jesus:
 - a. Sometimes believers are still set on doing evil – and can easily slip back into our old habits
 - b. They were impatient – we are often impatient when we want God to work on our behalf
 - c. We can become religious, but not righteous (living as still in the world)
 - d. We often want to do things our own way
 - e. Sometimes we have issues with leaders that are not our business
 - f. We can be stiff-necked – stubborn
 - g. When in the wilderness, sometimes we may be tempted to go back to doing what we were used to and know well.
 - h. We are saved by the intercession of a mediator

2. We must understand that Jesus is our mediator and still intercedes on our behalf!

Hebrews 7:25

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Romans 8:34

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Romans 8:26

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

3. We must understand the character of God:
 - a. His justice demanded that their sins be punished
 - b. His mercy meant that He did not want to end the relationship with His people
 - c. The way to deal with this problem was through the mediator. Moses both prayed for them and eventually made atonement for them through sacrifice.
4. We must understand that we must do better:

1Co 10:6 - Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

1Co 10:7 - And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY."

Let's learn from their mistakes and be careful while in the wilderness to not slip into our old ways.