

May 7, 2023

Exodus 32:1-20

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. 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." 2 So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." 6 And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" 9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you." 11 But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O 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? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" 14 And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

15 Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. 16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. 17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." 18 But he said, "It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear." 19 And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. 20 He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 1:22-25

1 Corinthians 10:6-8

Psalm 139:23-24

2 Peter 3:17

2 Corinthians 10:5

“The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.” - A.W. Tozer



The Haunted House Within Exodus 32:1-20 ESV

BIG IDEA: Because our hearts are perpetual idol factories and sin is utterly destructive, let us daily mortify the flesh and its temptations by offering our lives back to God in response to such amazing grace.

OUTLINE

1. The effects of Idolatry
2. The power of Intercession
3. Our need for a Substitute

“Do you mortify sin? Do you make it your daily work? Be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

- On the Mortification of Sin by John Owen

“The process of spiritual formation in Christ is one of progressively replacing...destructive images and ideas with the images and ideas that filled the mind of Jesus himself.”

- Dallas Willard

“What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration.”

- G.K. Beale

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“Overview. The Covenant at Sinai. The second half of Exodus focuses on the events at Mount Sinai and the content of the law revealed to Moses. The narrative includes: the preparation of the people (19:1-25); the Ten Commandments and other laws (20:1-23:19); the instructions for entering the land (23:20-33); the confirmation of the covenant (24:1-18); the instructions relating to the tabernacle (25:1-31:18; 35:1-3); the breach, intercession, and renewal of the covenant (32:1-34:35); and the assembling of the tabernacle (35:4-40:38).”

-ESV Study Bible

Today's scripture; Exodus 32:1-35 illustrates Israel's need for the sanctifying work of the Lord because the people of Israel break the covenant.

-ESV Study Bible

“While he was meeting with God, Aaron had led God's people into worshipping a golden calf. God saw what was happening and announced his intention to judge them: “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”

-David Murray. Exodus: Stories of Redemption & Relationship, page 199.

Praise to Jesus. Offer praise to Jesus whose sacrifice is sufficient because He is the better mediator for God's people. Give praise to Jesus who is the better servant who delighted in His Father's will with perfect submission (John 6:38). Offer praise to Jesus who is the better high priest who did not give way to the fear of man, but accomplished the work His Father gave him. (John 17:4)

Repentance through Jesus. Read Psalm 139:23-24. Reflect for a moment through prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of specific sins to confess and repent through Jesus.

Consecration for Jesus. Because of God's amazing grace to us in Jesus Christ, consecrate your heart and renew your mind and walk by faith. Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. Ask the Lord to transform and renew your thoughts, emotions, perceptions, fears, and joys by taking every thought captive making it obedient unto Christ.

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Is there anything or anyone that you have put your trust in this year other than the LORD?
2. What does idolatry do to us? What does it produce?
3. Why do people prefer to worship things and people rather than God? What are the stated and unstated demands of each? What does each promise and deliver? What are the eternal rewards of each?
4. How does human pride interfere with obedience to God? Why do we resist worshipping God in the manner He prescribed?
5. Read 2 Peter 3:17. Are you reminding yourself of the only sure foundation of your soul?
6. Along with praise and thanksgiving, confession, and prayer for your own needs, what percentage of your prayer time is spent in intercession for others?
7. In verses 21 through 24, we see Moses’ interrogation of Aaron. Aaron’s blame-shifting reminds us of the fall with Adam and Eve. Aaron’s attempts at self-justification and self-protection are a picture of how sin infects us and makes us think wrongly. How have you tried this week to justify or self-protect to avoid admitting the guilt of your sin before a holy God?
8. Why was Moses insufficient as a substitute to take away the punishment for Israel’s sins? How would you explain to a child that Jesus Christ was sufficient?

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Read Exodus 20:1-11 and 20:22-23. Ask your children if they know what idolatry is and which of the Commandments deal with idolatry. (*You will want to talk about how the 2nd Commandment deals with idolatry and how idolatry is worshipping anything else besides the one, true God.*)

a. Why do you think God repeats the 2nd Commandment in Exodus 20:22-23? (*Talk about how God knows our sinful hearts are easily tempted to worship other things in God's place.*)

2. Read Exodus 32:1. Why did the people ask Aaron to make an idol? (*In verse one we read that the Israelites saw that Moses was delayed and therefore they got impatient waiting for Moses to come with God's Commandments and Tabernacle instructions.*)

a. Ask your children if they have ever gotten impatient or tell them about times when you did.

3. What was God's reaction to the Israelites worship of the golden calf idol? (*He was angry and wanted to punish them.*)

a. What was Moses's reaction to God's righteous anger? (*He sought to be a mediator for the Israelites. He pleaded for God's mercy by reminding God of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He also reminded God of how He had saved the Israelites with "great power" and "a mighty hand" from slavery in Egypt.*)

b. Do you know what a mediator is? (*A mediator stands between two parties or people and helps them find a way to settle their conflict.*)

c. Talk with your children about how Jesus is the perfect mediator because of His death for our sins and how He forever stands between us and God to plead for our forgiveness.

d. If your children ask you about the tragedy of verses 25-29, then talk about how that is a picture of God's righteous judgment against the sin of the Israelites. You could also read Genesis 2:17 and Romans 6:23 and talk about how sin leads to death.

4. In Exodus 32:30-32, what was Moses' reaction to the Israelites' sin? (*Moses sought to atone for their sins and even offered to give his own life to save the Israelites.*)

a. How is Moses' reaction like what Jesus did for us in His life, death, and resurrection? (*Jesus freely offered His life for sinners like you and me.*)

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Ephesians 2:1-10

Hebrews 9:11-14

Some of the content for these questions and answers were taken from the book entitled Long Story Short by Marty Machowski. This is an excellent resource on the Old Testament for family devotions or Bible study.

FOR STUDENTS

1. Is there anything or anyone that you have put your trust in this year other than the LORD?
2. What did the manufacture of the golden calf demonstrate about Aaron and the people? Why did the people demand that Aaron make something physical to worship?
3. In Exodus 30:11-12 why was a ransom required? Of what was this ransom symbolic? Read Romans 6:23 and 1 Timothy 2:5-6 for further help with answering this question.
4. Read Exodus 20:4-7. What does this Commandment mean? How does it apply to us today?
5. What difference does it make to your view of your sin and yourself when you see sin as idolatry, and idolatry as adultery?
6. In what ways can we replace God in today's culture? In what ways can we reduce Him? Which is more attractive, and why?
7. Do you value leadership that leads where you need to go, or where you want to go? Would you appreciate Moses, or Aaron?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. The people got tired of waiting on the LORD (and Moses). In their impatience, they decided to take matters into their own hands, and things quickly turned disastrous.

Question: Have you ever been in a similar situation? Growing tired of waiting, and losing trust in God, you decided to take control of the situation but ended up making a bad decision? An ill-advised relationship? A rash acceptance of a job offer? Why is waiting on the LORD always the right course of action?

2. The text seems to imply that the people thought they could adopt new gods while keeping God as one of their gods alongside the others. We might call this syncretism or mixing pagan practices with our other biblical beliefs and practices.

Question: Is this true in your life as well? That is, you say you believe in God, but in reality, are you actually trying to serve other gods besides Him? Are you trying to uphold Christian beliefs, while adopting and mixing in other worldly beliefs and practices?

3. Aaron's justification of his actions is one of the most ridiculous and even comical statements in all the Scriptures: "Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" (v.24)

Question: But before we laugh too hard, we need to look in the mirror. In what ways do we also deceive ourselves? Or divert blame from ourselves? Or make lame excuses like "out came this calf" or "the fire made me do it." How are we too often guilty of self-deception or shifting blame for our sin? Deliverance can only come when we own our sin!

4. No sooner did the people give themselves over to the idol, they "rose up to play" (verse 6), or "got up to indulge in revelry."

Question: How does what we worship also ultimately affect our actions and behavior?

5. This was truly a national rebellion. It makes us wonder whether anybody initially stood up against the widespread idolatry and rebellion.

Question: In what ways are you standing up for what you believe as a Christian? Are you prepared to stand against the beliefs and values of the rest of our culture, or are you quietly going along with the rest of the crowd?

6. Moses interceded on behalf of the people, and God “repented” (i.e., had a change of heart or course of action), and His wrath was averted. In some ways, this gives us a picture of the gospel. Christ interceded for us, and it caused God’s wrath to be turned aside.

Question: Have you ever thought about the work of Christ on the cross as saving you and me from God’s wrath because He is just?

7. Moses’ reaction to the sin of his own people reveals that he (unlike Aaron) has begun to bear aspects of the LORD’s character.

Question: After you have begun to spend time with the LORD, you will start to think and look more and more like God. Are you seeing this happening in your life? Are you starting to have more and more of the character of Christ? Are you beginning to love what He loves and hate what He hates?



The Seventh Plague of Egypt, John Martin, 1823

About the artist and painting: The English Romantic painter John Martin was no stranger to death and despair. Out of the 13 children born to his mother and father, John was one of only 6 that survived childhood. He grew up in poverty, the son of a farm laborer. In 1813, John lost his grandmother, mother, father, and youngest son all in the same year. Despite his popular appeal to English society, he was never really celebrated much less even accepted by the art community. Yet he was somewhat of a revolutionary by choosing to paint very fantastic, biblical scenes and landscapes. One can't help but think John looked to the extraordinary aspects of the bible to deal with the harsh realities of life in a broken world.

His 1823 work, *The Seventh Plague of Egypt*, helps to capture the deliverance theme so prevalent in the Book of Exodus. In the painting you have these mighty structures of Pharaoh's palace, city, and pyramids all displayed in their grandeur. In Moses' day this represented to God's people Pharaoh's power and oppression towards them as he ruthlessly made their lives harsh. Yet God is breaking into these circumstances, "showing up" to bring about His deliverance. In this painting, over and above the Egyptian structures is something more magnificent, the storm of God: thunder, hail, and fire being poured down upon the oppressor and persecutor of His people. And your eye is drawn to the man standing on the left side of the painting, Moses, with outstretched arms looking to the LORD and His deliverance.

The purpose of Exodus:

“The original purpose of Exodus was theological, to teach God’s people about himself and their relationship to him.” - Peter Enns, NIVAC, 25.

“Exodus is about a man, Moses. He is central to the narrative in a way in which no single character, not even Abraham, dominates Genesis...Exodus is about a nation, Israel, moving from slavery in Egypt into freedom...but ultimately Exodus is about God, about the God of the covenant who has instituted a new relationship between himself and those whom he has called to be his people.”
- John Mackay, Exodus, 9.

“The whole story of Exodus is a covenant narrative. The God who pledged himself to Abraham and his descendants remained the faithful God. He had made promises and intended to honor them, and when his moment came, honor them he did...in a word, Exodus cannot be described simply as the book of the holiness of the Lord, nor simply as the book of the presence of the Lord, but as the book of the holy God present in all his holiness at the heart of his people’s life, their provident savior and friend, who makes provision whereby they, in all their unworthiness, may live safely with him.” - Alec Motyer, The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Exodus, 20, 23.

The setting for Exodus 1:1-2:25 is Israel in Egypt. The opening section sets the stage for the rest of the book by describing: the connection to the narrative of Genesis (Ex. 1:1–7), the oppression that has arisen under a new pharaoh (1:8–22), the preservation of Moses at birth (2:1–10) and later in Midian (2:11–22), and the declaration of God’s intimate knowledge of Israel’s suffering and God’s faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham and his descendants (2:23–25).

Exodus is a journey in two parts.

Part One: Egypt Exodus 1-15 Aug. 7th – Oct. 30th

Part Two: Sinai Exodus 16-18 Nov. 6th – Nov. 20th

Pause for Advent: Nov. 27th – Dec. 18th

Part Two Cont. Sinai Exodus 19 - 39 Jan. 8th – June 25th

Pause for Capital Campaign Series: Jan. 22nd-Feb. 12th

Pause for DNOW: February 19th

Pause for Missions Sunday: March 26th

Resources for further study:

Exodus: A Mentors Commentary by John Mackay

Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture
(Volume 2) (The New American Commentary) by Douglas Stuart