

Lesson 8 – Exodus 32-34

Text: Exodus 32-34

Main Characters: God, Moses, Aaron, Israelites

Key Passages:

- Exodus 32:4 – At the people’s request, Aaron creates a golden calf to be their god.

Main Storyline:

Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days, receiving His commandments and the terms of the covenant between the Lord and Israel on the tablets of stone. While Moses was on the mountain, the Israelites became restless, lost faith in God, and believed that Moses would not return to lead them. They asked Aaron to make them a god to lead them instead. Aaron told them to give him their golden earrings. The people complied, and Aaron used the gold to create a golden calf. When it was finished, he declared that the calf was the god that had brought it out of Israel. Further, he built an altar before it and held a feast. The people began to offer sacrifices to the golden calf and dance around it.

God, seeing all that was going on in the camp, told Moses to go back down the mountain because the people had corrupted themselves. God warned Moses that He was going to destroy Israel because they were so stubborn and disobedient and instead make a great nation out of Moses. Moses pleaded with God not to destroy Israel, and God changed His mind. Moses went down the mountain with the stone tablets, but once he saw what Israel had done, he became very angry and threw the tablets on the ground, destroying them. He ground up the golden calf and made the Israelites drink the gold they had used to make it. Aaron claimed, when Moses questioned him, that he had thrown the gold into the fire and the golden calf had come out all by itself. Moses told the righteous people (the Levites) to go out and kill many of those who had corrupted themselves by worshipping the idol. Three thousand people were killed that day. Moses went to God and tried to atone for the great sin of Israel.

God told Moses that He would send an angel to go with them and drive out the wicked people from Canaan, but that He could not go Himself, because He would destroy the Israelites. Upon hearing this, the people repented and mourned for what they had done. Moses began to meet and speak with God in a tent outside the camp. God spoke with him “as a man speaks to his friend.” Moses begged God to go with the people once again. God agreed to go with them, and He later told Moses to prepare two new tablets of stone to receive the covenant again. Moses went back to Mount Sinai for 40 days to receive it from God. When he returned to the camp, his face shone so brightly that Israel feared him.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) In order for our faith to remain strong as we face difficult temptations, we must remember the reason for our faith: God’s power and love for us (consider how Israel did not remember).
- 2.) Sin is always a misuse of the blessings that God has given to us; we must seek to use every blessing to glorify and honor Him, not to bring shame to Him (Ezekiel 16).
- 3.) God is patient and merciful, and hears our prayers when we petition Him (James 5:16). He is willing to forgive us as long as we repent of our sins.
- 4.) Committing sin is a serious matter. When we commit sin or witness others sinning, we must take serious action against it.
- 5.) Sin does not “just happen” as Aaron claims it occurred. We have the choice whether or not to sin; we must make the right decisions to avoid it (1 Corinthians 10:13, James 1:14-16).
- 6.) When we are disobedient to God, we allow enemies of God to mock Him because of our hypocritical, rebellious actions.