

Exodus 32

Let's review where we are at tonight:

Exodus 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.**

The LORD calls them "your people whom you brought out of Egypt". Had He already disowned them? Or is this an indication that He will disown them?

Exodus 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?

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

Did Moses change God's mind? Or was Moses inspired to pray exactly what God's will was...not to destroy them?

Numbers 23:19 "God *is* not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

(Exodus 32:17) And 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 noise of the shout of victory, Nor the noise of the cry of defeat, *But* the sound of singing I hear."

Strange that a seasoned warrior thought that some sort of war broke out in camp. Were the people howling or screaming uncontrollably? Probably.

(Exodus 32:19) So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf *and* the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

(Exodus 32:20) Then he took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder; and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it*.

(Exodus 32:21) And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a **sin upon them?**"

(Exodus 32:22) So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they *are set* on evil. **(23)** For they said to me, 'Make us gods that shall go before us; *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' **(24)** And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them break *it* off.' So they gave *it* to me, **and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out.**" **(25)** Now when Moses saw that the people *were* unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to *their* shame among their enemies),

Unrestrained = naked

Deuteronomy 9:17-20 (17) Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. (18) And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, **forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water**, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. (19) For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. (20) And the LORD was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.

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Deuteronomy 9:24-29 (24) You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you. (25) "Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. (26) Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand...'"

(Exodus 32:26) then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever *is* on the LORD's side—*come* to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

We don't know how many Levites there were for they were not counted as the other tribes were. But they were loyal to God and to Moses. This was certainly a wise choice! The choice is eternal life with Him or apart from Him.

(Exodus 32:27) And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.' "

The LORD directed Moses to kill those who sinned the great sin of idolatry. The instruments of His wrath were the Levites. It was a very difficult task considering that these men were told to kill those who were actually their brothers from the sons of Jacob. Those who were killed were kin, friends and acquaintances – none were spared who were idolaters and therefore enemies of God.

(Exodus 32:28) So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

(29) Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother."

The details of how they knew who to kill is not revealed. It is certainly obvious that all the children of Israel did not participate, for there were well over 1 million. But after the sentence was carried out, Moses tells them to "devote" themselves to the LORD and then He will bless them!

The Levites were chosen to be ministers of the Tabernacle (as we read in Numbers 1:49-54).

(Exodus 32:30) Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said **to the people**, "You have

committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

When Aaron allowed the calf to be created, it was all the people who gave assent and all the people who contributed their gold jewelry. That only 3000 were killed is a mystery. Some think that the Levites only killed a representative few.

But Moses tells them "Just because you weren't killed with the rest doesn't mean you are guiltless or beyond consequences". What they did was a **Great Sin**: it was, at its core, pride but certainly with layers of unbelief and ingratitude but certainly enhanced with lewdness and lust.

This great sin should lead to **Great Sorrow** (godly repentance). We're not told if they repented or not, but history has shown that the adult generation coming out of Egypt did not enter the Promised Land but fell dead in the wilderness as unbelievers.

And Great Sin also requires a **Great Sacrifice**.

By the way, the people were taught the consequences of idol worship:

Exodus 22:20 NKJV "He who sacrifices to *any* god, except to the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

What Great Sacrifice could Moses make?

(Exodus 32:31) Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! **(32)** Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

Perhaps Moses understood that the immensity of the sin would not be satisfied by the blood of a bull, goat or lamb. While he did not understand the messianic implications, he did understand the concept of authority and responsibility. So, Moses offered up his own life to save the people given into his care.

And about 1500 years later, another Jew named Saul wishes that he could be accursed instead of his brothers and sisters by ancestry who were just as stiff-necked, unbelieving people, demonstrated by their rejection of their Messiah.

Romans 9:1-5 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, **(2)** that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. **(3)** For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, **(4)** who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises; **(5)** of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.

And it must be said that before Paul could make that declaration, another Jew did offer up His body as a sacrifice for the sins of His people and for the whole world! This one was acceptable to the Father.

(Exodus 32:33) And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of

My book.

The LORD said “no” to Moses. As great as Moses was, his blood was not an acceptable because it was not spotless and without sin.

God’s book is the Book of Life. Some think that this is all symbolic. I happen to believe that there is a real Book (more likely a scroll).

Psalm 139 reveals that our names are written before we are born:

Psalms 139:15-16 NKJV My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. (16) Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. **And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were none of them.***

But some believe that God chooses who will be in the Book and therefore have eternal life with Him and there are those He doesn’t choose whose name is not written in the Book and therefore spend eternity out of His presence.

Some think that all of our names are written in the book and that from our own choices to reject God, our name is removed.

I think that only God knows the heart and only He knows the beginning to the end. Therefore, He knows if a person’s rejection of Himself is permanent or a temporary aberration.

Here’s another Scripture speaking of the wicked:

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.
([Psa 69:28](#))

And we already read in Revelation 3:5 about the overcomers:

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
([Rev 3:5](#))

([Exodus 32:34](#)) Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin."

The LORD basically dismisses Moses and tells him to return to the journey to the Promised land.

Perhaps for the sake of the fathers, the LORD spared the entire nation but that doesn’t mean that their sin would be ignored.

He ends the conversation with a promise: there will be a day that He comes to punish the wicked. In sparing the nation of Israel, He was telling Moses that this isn’t guaranteed. His grace is sufficient but it can be withheld.

(Exodus 32:35) So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

This may refer to the fact that an entire generation of adults who left Egypt with Moses and died in the wilderness; this might refer to the 3000 that just died because the word plagued can mean to kill or slay.

You may have had the thought, “boy, if I saw what the children of Israel saw, I never would have behaved like them! The Red Sea? The water from a rock? Manna and quail from heaven? And a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night? *What more could the LORD do to prove that He alone was the True God of Gods?*

Were the Israelites abandoning the LORD in favor of another God? **Or** were they trying to add an idol into the mix to hasten their plans to the Promised Land? I think it’s an interesting question **but** when you clear away all of the rationalizations and excuses, one obvious fact remains: one way or another, we have given up on God and turned to self as the master of our souls and life.

- (1) We have come to distrust Him with our lives and so, we take our lives back under our control.
 - a. Ananias and Sapphira kept back monies from the sale some land and tried to pass it off as the full amount. The truth caused both to drop dead at the apostle’s feet.
- (2) Perhaps, though, we still believe in Him but have lost confidence in His ability to ensure our passage into Heaven without some extra “work” on our part.
 - a. The Galatian Church became convinced that they had to add in certain aspects of the Mosaic Law to be saved. Paul came down hard on them for being so foolish to start their journey of salvation by faith only in Jesus then to add Moses into the mix thinking that they had to complete their salvation by adding to it.
- (3) Or perhaps still, we believe that no matter what we do, the love of God wins and in His infinite mercy we don’t get what we deserve or in His infinite grace we do get what we don’t deserve.
 - a. [Romans 6:1-2 KJV](#) What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
 - b. [Romans 6:15-16 KJV](#) What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. (16) Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

ALL of these responses to our dealings with God are filled with pride. People refuse to believe that there is Someone greater than themselves, who always works for their good and would never bring any difficulty or tragedy into their lives. These think they know better and can succeed in life without Him. These are the people who believe that God isn’t good because a good God would never cause any suffering, especially of the innocent.

Many of Children of Israel didn’t believe in the God of Moses or the forefathers. They didn’t think God was big enough to bring them into the Promised Land. They didn’t think God was big enough to keep them well fed, well hydrated, and protected from all their enemies. They even questioned His goodness and certainly questioned His integrity to say and do without changing His mind.

The Children of Israel were stiff-necked, prideful, rebellious, unbelieving, faithless and certainly sinful. Now, God did not overlook these things. God never winks His eye at sin. God never said, “Oh look at what those little boogers are up to now...ain’t that cute?”.

No, for all those who came before and all those who came after, it was blood that atoned for sin. It happened at the fall of mankind, and it happened 2000 years ago on a Cross. In between, God’s grace and mercy shone like a candle in a pitch-black room as He allowed for an innocent, pure animal to be killed as a substitute for a person’s sin. Though the flame was small, the light was sufficient to cast a shadow on the ritual so that some might come to understand that there was something better, something totally adequate to remove the stain of sin and replace it with a white robe of purity. Perhaps they didn’t understand how God would do this, but they had faith that what God allowed was an acceptable and satisfactory substitute.