**Exodus VIII The Golden Calf**

Summary of Exodus:

We saw the Exodus of Israel from Egypt.

The great events of the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea.

Moses is a prefigure of Jesus

God Passed Over our sins.

We were baptized into Moses/Christ and “Out of Egypt I called my Son.

Then we entered the Wilderness

God gave a covenant at Sinai, which is a pale shadow or the covenant we have in Christ.

God also gave a Law at Sinai, which is chock full of wonderful prefigures and foreshadows of what we have in Christ.

What have we learned from the Law so far?

We have learned how much we need Christ. Because “those who do these things shall live by them. We are incapable of obeying him fully and keeping the requirements of this covenant.

We have learned how utterly sinful sin is. We have learned how deeply we need, not only a new covenant, but new sacrifices and a new high priest.

We need Jesus!

Last week we looked at the Tabernacle.

Every item in the Tabernacle was a beautiful prefigure of the relationship we have with God.

The altar of sacrifice, which tells us that we need a sacrifice in order to enter the presence of God

The laver, which reminded us that a sacrifice is required, but a cleansing/baptism is required as well.

Then we enter the Holy Place.

The bread/Son on the right

The menorah/Holy Spirit on the left

The altar of incense in the center—the prayers of God’s people.

With God at the center in the Most Holy Place

But… The curtain with the cherubim is between us/our prayers and the presence of God, which is behind the curtain.

Only the high priest, only once a year… could enter the Most Holy Place

Where the cherubim protected the holiness of God’s presence, and the mercy seat between the cherubim.

For the Jews, the Tabernacle was about God dwelling with his people. Yes!
But it was also about the extremely limited access they had to his presence. They lived near God, but they were separated by at least three layers from him

But… When Christ died, a new way was given us, the curtain was torn in two and we walk boldly into the presence of God!

**Exodus VIII The Golden Calf**

Now, we go from the glory of the Tabernacle to the depravity of the Golden Calf.

The story extends from Ex 32-34

1. The golden calf is the story of the ever-present threat of apostasy—of going back to Egypt, or falling into idolatry, both to us individually, and to our fellowship. The threat of God abandoning us as his people.

“Once saved, always saved” is not taught anywhere in the Bible—certainly not in Exodus!

2. The golden calf is the story of Moses as intercessor for God’s people—as a prefigure of Christ, our mediator.

3. The golden calf is the story of God’s amazing mercy and patience with his people, despite their stubborn sin and desire to return to Egypt.

Exodus 32:1-6 Disaster!

Exodus 32:1 In the meantime (during the forty days, while Moses was on the mountain, with the earthquake, lightning, smoke)

The people (us!!!) ask Aaron to make an idol—a image of YHWH—for them to worship. How quickly we can turn!

“that fellow” v. 1 How soon we forget to respect those who lead us.

As the leader here, I hesitate to point this out, but here it is…

Note: The Ten Commandments, including the second commandment (do not make for yourself an image)!!! Surely they (and Aaron!) should have known better, as we know from God’s reaction.

Why a bull? The apis bull was the most common idol in Egyptian religions.

Exodus 32:2-6 Aaron (who should have known better) bows to pressure.

How complicit was Aaron? Did he bow to pressure from the people to create an image, or did he initiate the turn to idolatry?

This was not a complete return to the gods of Egypt, but the creation of an idol of YHWH v. 5. “a festival to YHWH” But the word gods is plural (v. 5, 8)

How utter (get it?) their turn to idolatry was is immaterial, as God tells them they have totally rejected him.

Moses had not yet even come back from the mountain to deliver the law to the people—just days after the awesome theophany on the mountain and the people’s insistence that (Exodus 24:3,8) The people said, “All that you have commanded, we will do.”

Already they had committed apostasy!! (Def: The act of completely abandoning a religion—in this case the worship of YHWH)

Like we saw earlier in Hosea 11:2 Even as you were coming out of Egypt, you were already looking back to Egypt.

Similarly, Even as Moses was receiving the law, already, you were turning aside to idols.

This was no minor, accidental one-off mistake.

This was the character of Israel, throughout its history (ex. Acts 7 Stephen’s sermon)(which makes what comes later so astounding).

But… There is a deep and abiding warning to us.

It is in our character to apostasize from God. Some of you will!

Hebrews 3:15-19 Do not harden your hearts as they did in the wilderness… Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were then not all those Moses led out of Egypt?... their bodies perished in the wilderness.

Folks, they did NOT enter the Promised Land!

v. 17-18 Disobedience = unbelief.

Heb 4:1-3 Sisters and Brothers, let us be VERY careful!!!

1 Cor 10:11-12 These things (the wilderness) are an example to US! If you think you stand, take heed lest you fall.

Even participation in the sacraments of baptism (ch 10) and the Lord’s Supper (ch 11) does not assure one of a secure resting place from the threat of leaving God and losing our place in the Promised Land.

Also note: Religious observance (ex the golden calf) can be the stumbling block. We can remain religious and still not enter that rest!

Psalm 106:19-26 v. 20 What would that bull be for you? A relationship? A job? Some form of pleasure?

That relationship “only eats grass”

What happened? V. 21 They forgot what God had done for them and the miracles in Egypt. They forgot what happened to Lovely last Sunday and what will happen to Jimmy this week.

v. 23 Had not Moses/Jesus… As we will see.

Acts 7:38-41 they/you turned your hearts back to Egypt

Brothers and sisters: Do not let your heart go back to Egypt.

Exodus 32:7-14 An amazing story. Moses, acting as a prefigure of Jesus, intercedes with God for the people.

v. 7 “your people” ouch! Here is God’s verdict. They have become corrupt!

v. 10 I am going to destroy them! Ouch! An aspect of God’s character we forget to our destruction.

v. 10 I will start over with just you. Like Noah before him, Moses is the only salvageable one (except perhaps Joshua) Q: Who will be OUR Moses?

An amazing, spectacular scene!!!! Moses as priest v. 11. Moses as Jesus

We have seen Moses as covenant-makes (prefigure of Jesus)

We have seen Moses as law-giver (prefigure of Jesus)

We have seen Moses as bread- and water-giver (prefigure of Jesus)

Now, we see Moses as intercessor/Savior!!!

Note the intimacy. change your mind/turn from your anger. V. 12

Moses uses logic on God!!! Think about what the Egyptians will say!

God, do not forget your promise to Abraham. Moses quotes the Bible to God!!!

We can be VERY BOLD in our prayers to God. He likes that!!!

He reminds God of Abraham who also convinced God to relent from destroying Sodom if there were only 10 righteous people there.

It happened v. 14. God listened to Moses and relented, as the Father will listen to his son.

What do we learn from this story? That the basis of our relationship with God and our covenant is God’s mercy and the intercession of Jesus Christ.

1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between man and God

Exodus 32:15-20 Moses loses his temper? Maybe. He is, after all human.

But what we learn is that God really hates idolatry—even if the idol is a representation of himself. Smashes the 10 commandment tablets (symbolically ending the covenant?) and grinds up the golden calf and makes the people drink it.

This is how God thinks about our rebellion! Let us reflect on this!!!!

Exodus 32:21-35

v. 22 Aaron blame shifts. v. 24 and out popped this calf. Aaron is really desperate here!!!

Aaron throws the people under the proverbial bus, whereas Moses is willing to take their punishment.

v. 30-32 A Garden of Gethsemane-like-moment by Moses. Offering his life for that of the people. If not, blot me out of the book!

Exodus 33

Exodus 33:12-23 Moses: I will rely on you!!

Ex 33:15 “If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”

Folks, we are going nowhere without God.

Exodus 34:1-10 A renewed covenant

v. 6-7 Based, not on our perfect obedience, but on God’s compassion, his grace, his abounding love and his faithfulness.

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The golden calf is the story of Moses as intercessor for God’s people.

The golden calf is the story of God’s amazing mercy and patience with his people, despite their stubborn sin and desire to return to Egypt.

Those who say the God of the OT and the NT are different have not read the Bible carefully!

Ex 34:15-26 A very brief re-reading of the Law, including parts of the 10 commandments and part of the Covenant at Sinai (do not read)

More important: Exodus 34:27-35

The covenant re-established. This time the basis is not entirely, “Now if you obey me fully and fully keep my covenant.”

It includes (Ex 34:6) “The LORD, YHWH, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness…

Summary:

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