

The Bible From 20,000 Feet Part 12: Exodus 32 - 40

Tuesday Night Bible Study, September 30, 2008

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- ISRAEL WORSHIPS THE GOLDEN CALF
- CONSEQUENCE OF THE GOLDEN CALF
- TWO PATHS BEFORE ISRAEL AND TWO PATHS BEFORE CHRISTIANS... PATH OF OBEDIENCE AND PATH OF DISOBEDIENCE

--ISRAEL WORSHIPS THE GOLDEN CALF

--shortly after God gave Israel the ten commandments and Israel affirmed their commitment to obedience, they lost faith once again...

--in many ways Israel's repeated lack of faith (both up to this point and all throughout their history) is another mark of authenticity of the Bible... it would be uncharacteristic for humanity to make up a story with so many failures...

--Exodus 24:3: "So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the Lord has said we will do.'"

--Exodus 32:1-6: "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.' 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.' 3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 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!'"

--Israel's tendency to quickly lose faith right after dramatic provisions from God (deliverance from Egypt, red sea crossing, supernatural mana, supernatural source of water, supernatural deliverance over Amalekites, dramatic appearance of God and warning at Sinai) is a picture of the weakness of our flesh...

--in our flesh we can turn from God as quickly as Israel did!

--Galatians 4:8-10: "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. 9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?"

--Israel's restoration...

--God expresses to Moses His reaction to Israel's rebellion without grace, and then Moses expresses to God the reason why He should be gracious in dealing with Israel.

--prophetic significance...

--intercession before this time... Job interceded for his friends and asked God to show mercy (Job 42:7-9) and from the time of Cain and Abel family sacrifices were offered on behalf of others.

--but this dramatic moment of Moses interceding for Israel is the first time intercession was made based on God's unconditional covenant in His plan of salvation. It was also the most dramatic deliverance up to this point that resulted from one person interceding.

--Exodus 32:7-14: "And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 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!'" 9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed 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. And I will make of you a great nation." 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? 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. 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.'" 14 So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people."

--just as Israel depended on the intervention of Moses so we depend on the intervention of Christ...

--**Christ "always lives to make intercession"** (Hebrews 7:25) for us... Christ is alive and sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven...and His one sacrifice covers all of our sins...yesterday, today, and tomorrow...**and turns away God's wrath!**

--it's easy to lose sight of the fact that without Christ the only real thing we would be accumulating in life is God's wrath...we would carry nothing from this life to eternity except the sentence of God's wrath!

--Romans 2:4-5: "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God..."

--Hebrews 10:11-14: "And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

--CONSEQUENCE OF THE GOLDEN CALF

--on Mt. Sinai Moses learned of Israel's rebellion through the Lord's response, and after interceding for Israel he descended the mountain... Exodus 32:14-19: "So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. 15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written. 16 Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. ... 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..."

--Moses then calls for repentance and the Levites, armed with swords, went through the camp and stopped the rebellion after approximately 3000 people were killed. (Exodus 32:28)

--Moses then returns up the mountain to meet with the Lord again...

--the Lord sends an unspecified plague upon Israel as a result of the idolatry (Exodus 21:35) though it doesn't appear to be life-threatening.

--right before Israel made the golden calf, God gave Moses detailed instructions (Exodus ch.25-31) for building the Tabernacle where God would dwell in the midst of Israel through the pillar of fire at night and the pillar of cloud in the day (Exodus 13:22)

--at the heart of the Tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant which was an earthly representation of God's throne in heaven. God instructed Moses to place the tablets of stone on which He inscribed the commandments inside the Ark.

--but now the tablets were broken and God commands Moses to lead Israel to Canaan without building the Tabernacle and without His presence in their midst... Exodus 33:1-3: "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' 2 And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. 3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for **I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.**' And when the people heard this bad news they mourned..."

--Moses meets with the Lord in a pre-tabernacle tent of meeting...

--Exodus 33:7: "Moses took his tent and pitched it **outside the camp, far from the camp**, and called it the tabernacle of meeting."

--this meeting place "outside the camp, far from the camp..." is in contrast to what it would be like with the tabernacle and God's presence appearing in the middle of Israel's camp.

--Moses then intercedes for Israel again and God gives them a second chance for His presence to dwell in their midst through the Tabernacle. (Exodus 33:12-17; 34:5-8)

--Exodus 33:17: "So the LORD said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing that you have spoken; **for you have found grace in My sight**, and I know you by name.'"

--God then commands Moses to make preparations for replacement tablets...

--Exodus 34:1-2: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. 2 So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.'"

--God then reviews the law that He previously gave Moses and renews His covenant to drive out the Canaanites before Israel...

--God would give them victory for the purpose of establishing a nation dedicated to serving Him... "But you shall destroy their altars [the Canaanite's], break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (**for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**)..." (Exodus 34:13-14)

--Israel now has replacement tablets and a renewed covenant for God to dwell in their midst through the Tabernacle. With this they begin construction on the various components of the Tabernacle.

--when all the Tabernacle parts are constructed, God commands Moses to assemble the Tabernacle. (Exodus 35-39)

--God's presence then fills the Tabernacle in Israel's midst.

--Exodus 40:34-38: "Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, **in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.**"

***"in the sight of all the house of Israel" rather than being far removed (Exodus 33:7) from Israel's camp.

--TWO PATHS BEFORE ISRAEL AND TWO PATHS BEFORE CHRISTIANS... PATH OF OBEDIENCE AND PATH OF DISOBEDIENCE

--God's covenant to form Abraham's descendants into a great nation for the purpose of preparing the way for the Messiah was unconditional.

--God's covenant to dwell in their midst in glory was conditional.

--so there were two ways forward for Israel... fulfilling their purpose in God's presence or fulfilling their purpose far removed from God's presence.

--in 1948 the world witnessed God gathering Israel back to the Promise Land and forming them into a nation once again to fulfill His purpose, but it happened with His presence far removed... and in prophecy (especially Zechariah 13-14) we read that when modern day Israel embraces Christ as their Messiah, He will return and His presence will be more glorious than anything that was ever seen in the Old Testament!

--and during the time of Christ God's presence was far removed, but He was still working in fulfillment of His unconditional promise to bring the Messiah to the world through Israel!

--it is the same in our lives...

--God's covenant to complete the work of salvation that He began in us is unconditional, but His working in our lives is conditional...

--when we rebel and sin we switch from being "vessels of honor" (2 Timothy 2:21) for God to work through to vessels of God's chastening (Hebrews 12:5-6).

--when we rebel and sin we grieve the Spirit and lose the sense of His presence.

--James speaks of God being jealous when we are in a state of rebellion, which parallels what God told Moses about His jealousy...

--Exodus 34:13-14: "But you shall destroy their altars [the Canaanite's], break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (**for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**)..."

--James 4:4-6: "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "**The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously**"? 6 But He gives more grace."

--and when we are in that state of chastening and being far from God because of sin, we are always only one step away from His refreshing presence... God is like the Father in the parable of the prodigal son with His arms stretched out waiting eagerly for his son to turn around and come back to Him... (Luke 15:11-24)

--and of course, even when we are not living in sin, there can be times when we don't sense God's presence...but that is another issue...like in Job's life...a period of refining our faith.