

KEEPING FAITH Sunday School- September 19, 2010

Unifying Topic: GOD VERSUS "gods"

Lesson Text

I. Devine Delays (Exodus 32:1-4)

II. The Real Thing (Exodus 32:5-10)

The Main Thought: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 32:8, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People look for guidance from someone, or something, they can trust. Where can we find a trustworthy guide for our lives? In the Ten Commandments, God laid out unimpeachable instructions for building a trusting relationship with Him.

Lesson Aim: To teach your students how to honor and revere God through keeping His commands.

Life aim: To teach believers how to build and maintain a healthy and sustainable relationship with God.

- 32 : 1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.
- 32 : 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.
- 32 : 3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.
- 32 : 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
- 32 : 5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord.
- 32 : 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.
- 32 : 7 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:
- 32 : 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
- 32 : 9 And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people::
- 32:10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

HISTORY:

Exodus 31:1-6 Moses is now at the end of the forty days of being with God on Mount Sinai receiving detailed instructions of the Law, as well as being given instructions as to the construction of the Tabernacle. Remember Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' arms during the Israelites' battle with the Amalekites (Exo.17:12)? Well Hur's grandson is called by name and appointed to make the furniture, engravings, and other artistic necessities requiring great craftsmanship. His name is Bezaleel—the first man ever spoken of as being filled with the Spirit of God. His filling was for service—not speaking, but working with his hands. This divine empowering wasn't restricted only to Bezaleel.

God put wisdom in Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, one of the least influential and honorable in Israel and others to carefully construct the tabernacle and its furniture, according to the precise instructions of God. God wanted every worker's labor to be blessed and be prompted by the Holy Spirit. God saw this work as just as spiritual, and just as dependent on the Holy Spirit's power, as the work Moses and Aaron did. It no doubt required long hours of exacting workmanship. God needs many dedicated Spirit-filled workers such as these, not just a few preachers. The "power" that we receive through the Holy Spirit is an "enabling", giving special abilities from the Lord for serving Him.¹ It is God's decision to gift a man, but it is man's decision to use those gifts to glorify God... Have you been blessed with talents and abilities? Do you use your gifts to glorify God? Maybe you play an instrument or sing. Maybe you have abilities as a carpenter or an architect or computer skills. Maybe you are blessed with a

¹ <http://rondaniel.com/library/02-Exodus/Exodus3101.html>

talent for cooking. Are you using these things only to benefit yourself? Or are you using them to bless God, His people, and His kingdom? This is something to pray about and commit to Him.

Exodus 31:7-11 The list of items to be built in the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings was given by God because God wanted the work organized and He attended to each detail as he related them to Moses.

- The tabernacle of the congregation, and
- the ark of the testimony, and
- the mercy seat that [is] thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, And
- the table and his furniture, and
- the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and
- the altar of incense, And
- the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and
- the laver and his foot, And
- the cloths of service, and
- the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and
- the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, And
- the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy [place]: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do."

Nothing should be forgotten or neglected. This reminds us that God wanted the tabernacle and its furnishings built according to a specific pattern. It was a deliberate model of a heavenly reality.

²The following lessons are suggested by *Vern Poythress* in his book, '*The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*.'

1. The tabernacle reminds us that God is the heavenly King.
2. The tabernacle reminds us that God provides for us.
3. The tabernacle reminds us that God's people have unique privileges.
4. The tabernacle reminded Israel of both their fallen condition and their hope for restoration. The tabernacle symbolized God's people corporately.
5. The tabernacle symbolized God's people individually.
6. The tabernacle pointed forward to the New Jerusalem, the final dwelling of God with human beings.
7. The tabernacle symbolized God Himself.

Exodus 31:12-15 Though God gave Israel a work to do in building the tabernacle He did not want them to do that work on the Sabbath. This command was strategically placed toward the very end of all the commands to build the tabernacle. The "*rest*" of God still had to be respected. God again repeats the law of the Sabbath. The keeping of the Sabbath was meant for the children of Israel and anyone who violated the Sabbath was to be cut off from among His people; indicating death. This sign of keeping the Sabbath shows the world that the Jews belonged to the Lord. This made them different from the rest of the world. How? It demonstrates trust in God. It was to be a rest centered on drawing near to God. It was "*holy to the Lord*", set apart for God's use.

Exodus 31:16-18 The Sabbath was to be observed throughout their generations, in every age, for a perpetual covenant - This was to be one of the most lasting tokens of the covenant between God and Israel.

- God gave us an example from the very beginning Gen.2:1-3. It was on the seventh day God rested. Has anything changed concerning this? No, because God has said the he will not alter what he has said (Psalm 89:34), so the Sabbath must still be his holy day. No again, because "*whatever God does, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it:*" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). God does not change.
- God gave the Sabbath day commandment to His chosen people Exo.31:12-17. It is a sign that He had distinguished them from all other people; and their religious observance of the Sabbath was a great example of their duty and obedience to Him. The Jews, by observing one day in seven, after six days' labour, testified and declared that they worshipped the God who made the world in six days, and rested the seventh; and so distinguished themselves from other nations.
- Isa. 56:2:
 - Blessed is the man who refuses to work during my Sabbath days of rest, but honors them.
 - Blessed is the man who checks himself from doing wrong.

² <http://www.deercreekchurch.com/pdf/ex-dt5.pdf>

The Ten Commandments, it is called which God had spoken upon Mount Sinai in the hearing of all the people were now written, in *perpetuam rei memoriam*—for a perpetual memorial, because that which is written remains. To keep God's Sabbath was to keep the covenant, since the Sabbath was now a sign of the special relationship between God and Israel. To disregard God's Sabbath was to disregard God's purposes for creation through His redemption of Israel. The 7th day reminds them that it is God that provides. An implied benefit is to be "*refreshed*." This point to the creation of man on the 6th day – and that God breathed into Adam and He became a living soul. To be refreshed in this context is to "*breathe in God's breathing out*". Deut 8:11-18: Remember, it is not our "*work*" that benefits us – it is **His** work.

"40" occurs at almost every new stage in Israel's history; e.g.

- at the flood • the time of the spies in Canaan • Elijah's journey to Horeb
- Jesus' time in the wilderness • and the time between His resurrection and ascension.

At the conclusion of the forty days and nights of communing with God upon Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses two tablets of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God because this written law testified the will of God concerning He and them, and would be a testimony against them if they were disobedient. Thus the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

LESSON:

Exodus 32:1-4 Devine Delays

Moses was delayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights (over a month). The people are beginning to wonder if Moses has died up on the mountain or something. ³The people become impatient in Moses' absence, and they begin doubting both he and the Lord. They can't see what Moses is doing or what the Lord is doing. ⁴How we handle God's ordained delays is a good measure of our spiritual maturity. If we allow such delays to make us drift off into sin or lapse into resignation to fate, then we react poorly to His ordained delays. If we allow such times to deepen our perseverance in following God, then they are of good use. The Israelites felt that they needed something more substantive to hold onto, something more present. So they ask Aaron to make them a god, a god who is there, a god who will lead them. Even though Israel had seen the invisible God in action, they still wanted the familiar gods they could see and shape into whatever image they desired. They wanted gods to go before them, undoubtedly to the Promised Land. They knew the Lord led them out of Egypt and they knew the Lord God had revealed Himself at Mount Sinai. Yet, they were willing to trust a god they could make to finish what the Lord had begun.

In response to this, Aaron displays weak leadership, tells them to break off the golden earrings from the ears of their wives and children. Here Aaron received a collection; an offering of gold to make an idol. The Lord had given the Israelites favor with the Egyptians, at their time to leaving, so that they gave them (silver, gold, and clothing) whatever they wanted (12:35). God had plans to use gold in the construction of the tabernacle. This wasn't the Spirit-inspired craftsmanship of Bezaleel and Aholiab to build an idol. It was the flesh-inspired work of Aaron. He thought it out, melted the gold, molded it, and fashioned it carefully with an engraving tool. Aaron was to be a leader, but instead he becomes a follower. He then builds a molten image of a calf and announced: "*These be thy gods, O Israel which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*" This statue of a calf did not exist the day before, and now they worshiped it as the god that brought them out of Egypt.

Exodus 32:5-10 The Real Thing

Aaron was flattered by the enthusiastic response of the people. When he saw their devotion to this idol, he built an altar before it. He began to organize the worship of the idol he had just made. He announces, "*Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.*" The next morning, the people offered and brought their offerings; sat down to eat and to drink; and rose up to play. "*Sitting down to eat*" refers to the people eating the "*peace offerings*", which were like a dinner with God. They served their idol with great energy and personal sacrifice. This is a tasteful way to speak of gross immorality among the people of Israel.

The "*cow*" or "*calf*" was one of the most popular idols in Egypt. They were closely connected to immoral sexual practices. They were violating God's command not to make or worship any idols or images. Even more disastrous, they were no longer worshiping the true God.

Now obviously God knew that this was going on and tells Moses to quickly get back down the mountain. They

³ <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/10449/exo026.html>

⁴ <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/0232.htm>

didn't wait long to go against God! In speaking with Moses, the Lord identifies the Israelites as "*you*" people – now they are *Moses' people*—The people you have led up out of the land of Egypt have fallen to depravity and have so quickly strayed from the path that I have commanded by making a molten image. In this, God suggested to Moses that He was disowning Israel. There is a problem. The people have "*corrupted*" themselves, and they have "*quickly turned aside*" from the Lord. God already knew from all eternity what they would do. He said, "*I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people.*" Then God announces judgment against these people. "*Now do not hold me back. My anger is burning over against them. I will consume them and I will then make a great people out of you.*" In other words, God was willing to wipe out all the Israelites, and just start over with Moses. Why does the Lord, the almighty God, need to tell anyone to "*let me alone*" in order to do something? Clearly, the Lord is inviting Moses' intervention.

SUMMARY:

The Bible describes how, after Moses had been on Mount Sinai for forty days, the Israelites became anxious and demanded that Aaron make a god for them. Their thinking was, to look for new leadership and new gods; something is better than nothing. Aaron instructed the Israelites to bring him the gold rings from the ears of their wives, sons, and daughters. The Bible then says that all the people broke off the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron, who made a golden calf from the earrings. The Israelites bowed down to the golden calf and made sacrifices to it. The idol became god to the Israelites. But the golden calf was a distraction from the real worship and from the lessons they were supposed to learn. It is not always the job of the leadership to keep the people from finding golden calves -this may be the only way they learn a hard lesson. It is also a clear lesson in keeping faith in the One true God instead of turning from God who has delivered you out of bondage. God cannot be compared to a molten image. God didn't tell Moses about the situation until it was too late to stop it. Now, God condemned the people due to their lack of faithfulness. Enraged, God planned to destroy the Israelites, and make Moses a great nation instead of them.

APPLICATION:

After receiving God's instructions, there will be a test to walk by faith. Keep your faith in what God has done, is doing, and is about to do. There is no god against the true living everlasting God.