

The Sin of Idolatry

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BIG SANDY, Texas—In 1 Corinthians 10:6-10, the apostle Paul listed five negative characteristics that were displayed by the children of Israel in the wilderness after they were delivered from Egypt.

- Lusting after evil things—Numbers 11:1-33
- Idolatry—Exodus 32:1-6
- Sexual immorality—Numbers 25:1-9
- Tempting Christ—Numbers 21:5-6
- Murmuring—Numbers 14:2-37

In last week's article, I combined the subjects of lusting, murmuring and tempting Christ. While the three subjects have some differences, they also have noticeable overlap.

In this week's article, I will talk about the subject of idolatry—with emphasis on Exodus 32:1-6.

Moses delayed his coming

Verse one begins with the phrase, "Moses delayed coming down from the mountain." Let's look at some background.

Exodus 19:20—"Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up."

Exodus 19:24—"Then the LORD said to him, 'Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them.' "

Exodus 24:1-2—"Now He said to Moses, 'Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.' "

Exodus 24:14—"And he said to the elders, 'Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.' "

Exodus 31:18—“And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.”

Aaron made gods

Exodus 32:1-4—“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.’ 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.’ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 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!’ ”

Aaron proclaimed a feast

Exodus 32:5-6—“So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.’ Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

God and Moses reacted

- *Exodus 32:7-10*—God’s reaction is listed.
- *Exodus 32:11-14*—Moses pleaded with God to show mercy.
- *Exodus 32:15-29*—Moses expressed his displeasure to the people.
- *Exodus 32:30-32*—Moses asked God to show mercy.

Aaron gave an excuse

Notice Aaron’s feeble excuse.

Exodus 32:22-24—“So Aaron said, ‘Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. 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.’ 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.’ ”

Moses made an offer

Exodus 32:32—“Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

New Testament reminders

Acts 17:16—“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.”

Acts 17:29—“Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.”

2 Corinthians 6:16—“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ ”

1 Thessalonians 1:9—“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

1 John 5:21—“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”