In our previous studies we saw Moses called to the summit of Mount Sinai, where he would receive the Ten Commandments and the plans for the Tabernacle. To the onlookers below, it appeared that the mountain top was on fire and the mountain itself was at least partially covered with smoke. Moses was up there for a long time:

Exodus 24:15-18

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. [16] And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. [17] And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. [18] And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

The Israelite nation, onlooking from the foot of the mountain, were led to believe that
Moses would not return, that he had either died up there, or God had called him home. Once again the people turned away from their true Deliverer and took a course of action that was deadly:

Exodus 32:1-10

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. [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. [3] And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. [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. [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. [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.

[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: [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. [9] And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: [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.

IDOLATRY

Here we see people who should have known better make a dreadful error in judgment. When Moses had been gone for weeks at a time, and no one knew where he would return, the people turned to IDOLATRY. **Idolatry is the consideration of God to be anything other than Who and What He really is.** In this case, the idol would be cow - a calf made of gold. The people knew they needed a leader to get them to the Promised Land, and if it were not Moses, well then, it would be a cow made of gold.

Aaron certainly should have known better. The older brother of Moses, Aaron had been in leadership during the entire emancipation from Egypt. He was God’s high priest, yet he meekly surrendered to the whims of the mob. Idolatry would be the nemesis of the Israelite people until the Babylonian invasion in 586 B.C.
When any person or groups of persons place someone or something ahead of God in their love and priority, calamity follows without question. Perhaps the sin God hates the most (He hates ALL sin) is idolatry.

DOUBT IS THE ROOT CAUSE

It began in the Garden of Eden: Genesis 3:1-4

   Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, [Yea, hath God said], Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

   [2] And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: [3] But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. [4] And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Has God REALLY said? Today it’s the same old question: critics deny the authenticity of God’s Word.

The people of Israel DOUBTED that Moses was alive, DOUBTED that God would bring them to the Promised Land. Doubt had to have a substitute. They replaced the Creator God of the Universe with a statue of a bull.

APIS was an alleged god in Egypt, the bull god. After all that God had done for these people, bringing them out of Egyptian slavery, getting them across the Red Sea, providing food and water, these people credited the false gods of Egypt with all these accomplishments.

While Moses was in the presence of God atop the sacred mountain, receiving even more precious and eternal gifts from Him, the people down below were making their own god. And God would not stand for it!

He informed Moses what was happening down below:

- “They have corrupted themselves....” Vs 7
- “They have turned away from the way I commanded them....” (Vs. 8)
- “They have made a molten calf and worship it....” (Vs. 8)
- “They have sacrificed to it....” (Vs. 8)

The result? God said His anger waxed hot against them! (Vs. 10)

Moses now showed again why he was such a courageous leader. He defended the
people! He almost challenged God by asking: *Exodus 32:12-13* Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. [13] Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

Moses’ argument contained these points:

1) God, if you destroy these people, the Egyptians will mock You and say it was all just a big joke, Your bring the people out of bondage, just to die in the desert.

2) You made a promise to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that you would multiply their families into a great nation.

Pretty brave prayer, I would say! But Moses loved the people and would have given his life for them. His challenge touched God’s heart: *Exodus 32:14* And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. The word “repent” as given here meant, “He changed His mind,” or “course of action.”

**NO ANNIHILATION, BUT JUDGMENT REMAINED TO BE SEEN**

*Exodus 32:15-18*

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. [16] And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. [17] And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. [18] And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

Sound carries in the mountains. Moses was descending Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments stones in his hands. He heard the reveling of the people down below as the worshiped their golden calf god. *Exodus 32:19-21* And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. [20] And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel
drink of it. [21] And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

To say that Moses was angry is an understatement! As kids say today, “He was torqued!” He jumped on his brother Aaron (whom he had left in charge): “What hold did these people have on you that you allowed this travesty, this sin, to take place?”

Aaron’s response was pathetic:  

Exodus 32:22-23  And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

[23] For they said unto me, 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.

Wow....Aaron tried to shift the blame on his brother, Moses. “Well, bro, if you hadn’t been up on that mountain so long, this wouldn’t have happened!” It is a sign of weak leadership when people try to blame others for their stupidities.

Sometime ago, a pastor friend of mind made a decision that was so mindless it was staggering. I asked him point blank: “What made you make that decision?” “Oh,” he responded, “it wasn’t I – it was the church board’s decision.” How pitiful! How weak? No....the decision was HIS, not the board’s. John Maxwell once said, “If you think you’re a leader, turn around. If no one is following you, you’re not leading....you’re just taking a walk!” Well....Aaron was just taking a walk!

Then....Aaron compounded his mindlessness with this hilarious line:

Exodus 32:24  And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

Yup, brother, we were just smelting down their jewelry and lo and behold this golden calf just walked right out! The truth was (verse 4): Aaron himself with special tools created the calf - all by himself!

Oh what a web we weave....
when first we practice to deceive!

Oh, the story gets even worse:  

Exodus 32:25  And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

5
It’s still true today: the farther away from God people get, it seems the more they feel the need to take their clothes off!

MAKE YOUR DECISION!

Moses had “had it” with the wishy washy flock! Make your mind, he is going to demand!

Exodus 32:26-27 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. [27] And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

I spoke one Sunday morning a few weeks ago about the “emerging church.” This is a breed of theologians and preachers who do not want to just cut and break with the Bible, but they want to skirt around it...change the Word so that it is “acceptable” to the crowd. In truth, it should be the other way around: Preach the Word so that we become acceptable to God!

Liberalism in the church is pathetic. Watered-down Gospel which becomes no gospel at all! As the journey to the Promised Land continued, Moses wanted people enroute who knew who they were and who God was. It was not a pleasant afternoon: Exodus 32:28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

Critics will say, “Well, that doesn’t sound very Christian!” Depends upon how you look at it. If my doctor tells me that I have cancer in my body, I want that cancer cut out and as fast as they can get to it. I don’t want the doc to put a band aid on my arm. I want the cancer gone! There were 3000 men in the traveling Israelites who could have ended the entire Jewish race had they been allowed to continue undercutting God’s Word. Moses knew that! And he got rid of the cancer.

THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES

Moses was not only a great leader, but he was an intercessor, a praying go-between for the people he led. Exodus 32:30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord;
peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

Moses would give his own life, if need be, to save the lives of the people he led. In this day when we hear of “pastors” who demand jet airplanes, exotic cars, and mansions, Moses stands out like a diamond against black velvet:

Exodus 32:31-32  And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. [32] Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

In effect, Moses was saying he felt responsible for those people. If they could not make it to the Promised Land, then “Lord take my life, but let these get through.”

Moses was referring to the “Book of Life,” which contains the names of the eternally saved. You will remember our oft-occurring drama, “Heaven’s Gates/Hell’s Flames.” People approached the angels with the question, “Is my name in the book?” Moses was willing to face eternal damnation if somehow it could save the plight of the people he was chosen to lead, the Israelites.

God’s response:  Exodus 32:33  And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. That’s a sobering statement! God deals with each person on the basis of his or her OWN LIFE. No one can change God’s opinion of you, but YOU! Moses could not give his life for the people; they were responsible for themselves.

As your pastor, I cannot help you at the Judgment Seat. I will do all I can here on earth to influence you for God and His Word, but I cannot help you once you’ve taken your last breath. You will be on your own. It will be the record of your life, not mine, that God sees. But, thank the Lord, those records can be expunged, wiped clean by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 32:34-35  Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. [35] And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Friend, you reap what you sow in life. If your life has been one of rebellion against God, there will be a price to pay. If it has been a life of “so what” to God, then His
response to you will be the same.

The forty years of wandering in the Sinai, those years of doubt, those times of rebelling against the One Who set them free from Egypt, would all come back to haunt the people again and again. No, Moses intercession kept them from immediately perishing, but there was a price to pay for that awful golden calf.

With today’s study, I am closing the book of Exodus. The remaining chapters deal with the positioning of the Tabernacle as the people continued wandering through the desert. Exodus opened in the brick yards of Egypt. But it closed with God’s presence with the people as they continued onward.

I encourage you to read and reread this marvelous book. God’s plan of redemption could not be made more clear to you as you study it.