

Exodus 32

Introduction

- We've been reading through the book of Exodus, the Biblical account of God delivering his people, Israel, from slavery and oppression under the Egyptians
- We learned about Moses, an unlikely servant with some serious baggage that God appeared to and called to partner with Him in freeing Israel from Egypt.
- When Pharaoh refused Moses's requests to let his people go, God cursed Egypt with a series of plagues that demonstrated his power, his glory, and how relentless he can be where his people are concerned. The last of these plagues – killing every Egyptian first born – caused Pharaoh to relent.
- We talked about how God showed up for his people after Pharaoh decided to pursue them out of Egypt.. He guided Israel with a pillar of clouds by day and one of fire by night, and parted the Red Sea to make a way where there was no way.
- This week we're jumping ahead a few chapters because of our snow day, but I want to give a quick recap of what we've missed:
 - Now that God has delivered his people and defeated his enemies, he's getting to work helping them set up society (separate from Egypt)
 - He provides for their basic needs: water from a rock, and mana raining from the sky
 - He gives the people laws:: The Ten Commandments as well as other instructions about things like property ownership, violent crime, indentured servitude, Sabbath, and so on
 - He teaches them to keep three annual festivals, so he's helping them develop cultural traditions
 - He provides precise instructions about constructing a tabernacle, an ark, an altar, designing priestly clothes, and making offerings – he's teaching them how to worship and glorify him.
- Key Verses:
 - Ex 19.5-6: "Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, 6 but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."
 - Ex 20.22-23: The Lord said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven. 23 You shall not make gods of silver alongside me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold."
 - Why doesn't God want us to make gods of silver and gold? Because we are God's image in the world!
- Tonight, we're beginning in Exodus 32, where Moses has been gone from Israel for about 40 days. He's been meeting with God on Mount Sinai, which culminates in receiving the Ten Commandments from God, written on stone tablets.

- Our story opens with the Israelites feeling a bit fed up with “this fellow Moses”’s absence, and turning to Aaron (who’s been left in charge) with their demands.

Reading/Comprehension

- Read Ex 32.1-6
 - According to the text, why do the Israelites want Aaron to make them a new god?
 - Why do *you* think the Israelites want a new god, beyond what is said in the text?
 - What did Aaron use to make the calf? Why is this significant?
 - *Recall that God made the Egyptians favorable towards the Israelites, giving them the gold jewelry when they left Egypt. They’re now worshipping a blessing that is from God, rather than worshipping He who provided it.*
- Read Ex 32.7-14 – pay attention to the details of Moses’s appeal to God
 - How does God describe the Israelites in v7, and why is that important?
 - What are the key themes/attitudes of Moses’s appeal to God?
 - *Praises God – “... with great power and a mighty hand”*
 - *Seeks to bring God glory and honor – “why should the Egyptians say [bad things about you]?”*
 - *Appeals to God’s faithfulness*
 - *Does NOT call God unreasonable, accuse him of being unjust, criticize his judgment, etc.*
 - *Moses is humble and willing to ‘take the fall’*
 - What results from Moses appealing to God? What does that tell us about the nature of God and about prayer?
- Read Ex 32.15-25
 - What is Moses’s first reaction to Israel’s sin in this passage, and why is it important?
 - *Moses smashes tablets, signifying that Israel has broken their end of the covenant with God*
 - How does Aaron respond when confronted by Moses? Does this remind you of anything you’ve read [in Genesis]?
 - *Adam and Eve also deferred blame, rather than owning up to sin*
- Read Ex 32.26-35
 - What were Moses’s actions in this passage? How did his reaction differ when he was on the mountain vs off? Do you feel each reaction was appropriate?
 1. Righteous wrath – ordering the death of 3000 ‘ringleaders’
 2. Seeking mercy and forgiveness before God

Key idea: Moses was never ‘lukewarm’ in his reaction to sin
 - What were God’s actions in response to Moses’s atonement, and what do they reveal about Him?
 1. He is just to punish those who sinned, ‘blotting them out of his book’ and sending a plague, AND
 2. He is merciful, promising to *uphold his covenant even though Israel broke it* and lead them to the promised land.

Interpretation Questions

- What is the significance of the Israelites worshiping the gold that God gave them earlier in the story, instead of God himself? What good things God has blessed us with that we idolize over him?
- How does Moses's appeal to God model how our own intercessory prayer should sound?
- How does Moses's intercession on Israel's behalf relate to the Gospel?
- Israel failed to uphold God's covenant and remain obedient to him – how does that relate to the Gospel?