

The Golden Calf

Exodus 24:12-18; 31:18 - 32:35; 34:1-7, 28-33



The Story

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on Mt. Sinai and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach the people."

So Moses went up to Mt. Sinai and left Aaron in charge of the people. Moses stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of stone. God's wrote His commandments on these stones.

The people grew restless waiting for Moses those forty days. They came to Aaron and said, "We do not know if Moses will come back. Make us a god to worship."

Aaron said to them, "Bring me your golden earrings." So all the people brought their gold to Aaron and he made a calf of gold. Aaron also built an altar before it. The people ate and danced before the golden calf.

The LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! The people are worshipping a golden calf."

Moses prayed for the people and asked God to forgive them their sin of worshipping an idol.

Moses went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. In his great anger at seeing the people worshipping the golden calf Moses threw down the tablets and broke them. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.

Moses commanded that all those

who still worshiped the golden calf be killed. About three thousand men were killed.

Moses and the people asked God for forgiveness.

The LORD said to Moses, "Come to Me on the mountain with 2 new tablets and I will again write the commandments. Let no man or animal be near the mountain."

Moses did as the LORD said and he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights and the LORD wrote the Ten Commandments.

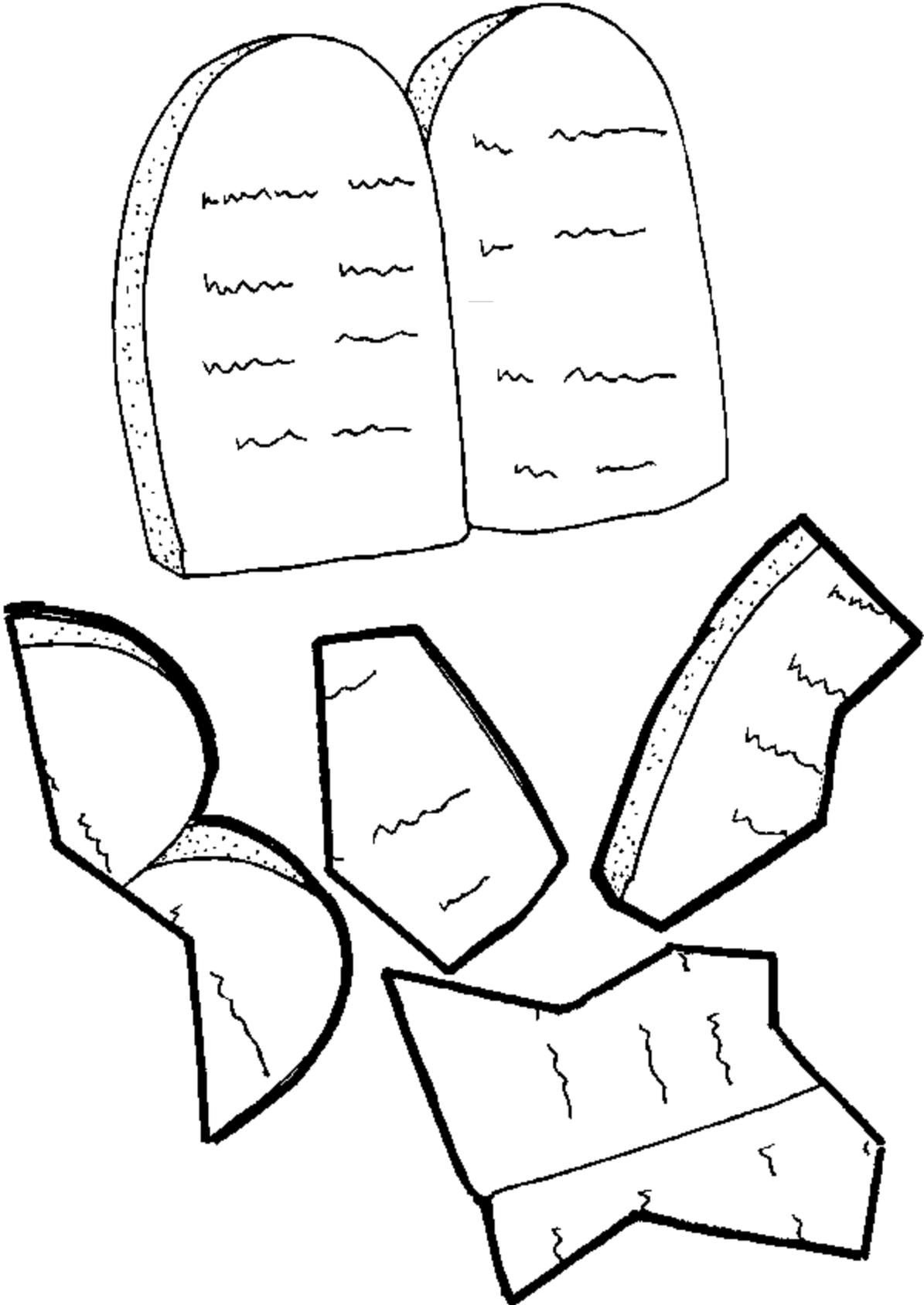
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When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

The Children of Israel committed the sin of idolatry.

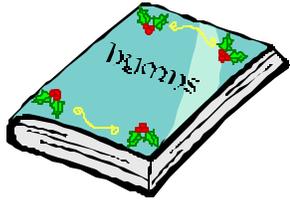
God commands that He be the most important thing in our life.

Activity One - Cut out and glue the broken pieces onto the tablet of stone.



Activity Two - Put an X on those more than God. Circle the things that

things which people could love help us worship God.



Passages

Matthew 4:10 - You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.

The First Commandment
You shall have no other gods.
What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.

(Sydow Catechism © 2000)

Hymn - TLH 430 v. 8

What is the world to me! My Jesus is my Treasure,
My Life, my Health, my Wealth, my Friend, my Love, my Pleasure,
My Joy, my Crown, my All, my Bliss eternally.
Once more, then, I declare: what is the world to me!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, today we learn about how quickly God's people turned to other gods. Keep anything from becoming more important to us than Jesus and His Word. Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior from sin. Amen.

The Golden Calf

Exodus 24:12-18; 31:18 - 32:35; 34:1-7, 28-33



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The LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! The people are worshiping a golden calf."

Moses prayed for the people and asked God to forgive them their sin of worshiping an idol.

Moses went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. In his great anger at seeing the people worshiping the golden calf, Moses threw down the tablets and broke them. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder. He then scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.

Moses commanded that all those who still worshiped the golden calf be

killed. About three thousand men were killed.

Moses and the people asked God for forgiveness.

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When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

The Children of Israel committed the sin of Idolatry.

God commands that He be more important than anything in our lives.

Activity One - Cross out the underlined word and write the correct word from the WORD BOX to make the sentence true.

1. Moses went up Mt. Horeb to receive God's commandments.
2. Joshua was left in charge of the people.
3. Moses stayed on the mountain 25 days and nights.
4. Aaron made a golden snake for them to worship.
5. Moses threw down the two tablets of plastic.
6. Moses face disappeared after he had spoken to the LORD.
7. God gave the 7 Commandments for all people to obey.

WORD BOX

calf

Aaron

10

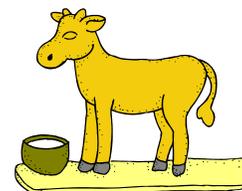
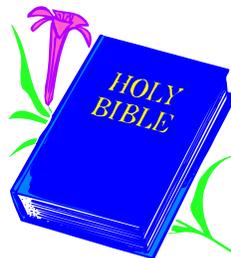
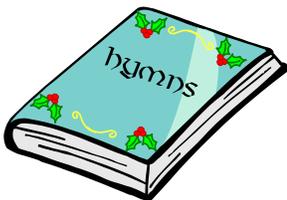
Sinai

stone

40

shone

Activity Two - Put an X on those things which people could love more than God. Circle the things that help us worship God.



Passages

The First Commandment
You shall have no other gods.
What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things. *(Sydow Catechism © 2000)*

Fill in the blanks of the First Commandment.

The First Commandment

You shall have _____ other _____.

What does this mean?

We should _____, _____ and _____ in God
above _____.

Matthew 4:10b - "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."

Hymn - TLH 430 v. 1, 8 Use a highlighter or yellow crayon to highlight each name of Jesus.

What is the world to me with all its vaunted pleasure
When Thou, and Thou alone, Lord Jesus, art my Treasure!
Thou only, dearest Lord, my soul's Delight shalt be;
Thou art my Peace, my Rest — what is the world to me!

What is the world to me! My Jesus is my Treasure,
My Life, my Health, my Wealth, my Friend, my Love, my Pleasure,
My Joy, my Crown, my All, my Bliss eternally.
Once more, then, I declare: what is the world to me!

Prayer

Dear Jesus,
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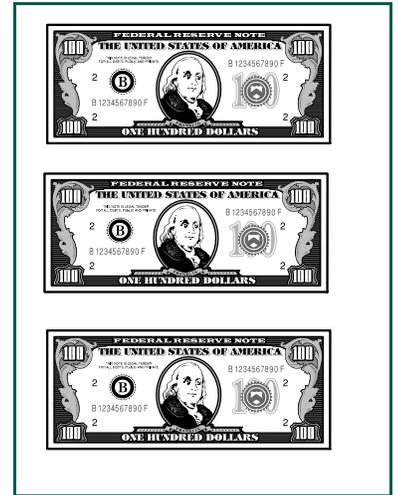
The Golden Calf

Exodus 24:12-18; 31:18 - 32:35; 34:1-7, 28-33

Look at the money pictured at the right.
How can this be a problem for Christians and others?
Which of God's commandments deals with loving anything more than God?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me to see how easy it is for things to become more important to me than You are. May I through the power of the Holy Spirit fear, love and trust in You above all things. Bless the Word we are about to study that we may grow in knowledge of You. Amen.



The Story - Exodus 24, 31, 34 excerpts

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on Mt. Sinai and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them."

So Moses went up to the mountain of God with his assistant, Joshua. Before he left Moses said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them."

Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain for six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

After God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of stone. God wrote His commandments on these

stones.

The people grew restless waiting for Moses those forty days. They came to Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us. We do not know what has become of Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt."

Aaron said to them, "Bring me your golden earrings." So all the people brought their gold to Aaron and he fashioned it and made a molded calf of gold.

Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

Aaron also built an altar before it. Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, ate and drank, and did sinful idol worship before the golden calf.

The LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 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!'"

The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and I will destroy them and make of you a great nation."

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? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains?' Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

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.'" So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. The tablets were written on both sides.

When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

But Moses said: "It is not the noise of the shout of victory, nor of defeat, but the sound of singing I hear."

When they came near the camp, they saw the calf and the dancing. In his great anger Moses cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.

Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so

great a sin upon them?"

So Aaron said, "Do not be angry. You know how evil these people can be."

Then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the Lord's side come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

Moses told these sons of Levi to kill those who still wanted to worship the golden calf. About three thousand men were killed.

Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day."

The next day Moses and the people prayed to the LORD to forgive them their sin of idol worship. God forgave them but did send a plague to the people because of this sin against the First Commandment, the sin of worshiping the golden calf as an idol.

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. Come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain. Let no man or animal be near the mountain."

Moses did as the LORD said and he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And the LORD wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony, the skin of his face shone from talking with the LORD.

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When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

Outer Aim - The children of Israel committed the sin of Idolatry.

What the Story Tells Us - Make these false statements true by crossing out the incorrect word(s) and writing the correct word(s) above them.

1. Moses went up Mt. Horeb to receive God's commandments.
2. Joshua and Hur were left in charge of the people.
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5. Aaron made a golden snake for them to worship.
6. When Moses saw the people worshipping the false god he threw down the two tablets of plastic.
7. The sons of Daniel helped Moses find and kill those who still worshiped the idol.
8. God told Aaron to come again to Mt. Sinai for new tablets of commandments.
9. Moses face disappeared after he had spoken to the LORD.
10. God gave the 7 Commandments for all people to obey.

Inner Aim - God commands that He be the most important thing in our lives.

What God's Word Tells Us - Compare our God and idols by reading Psalm 115:3-4 and answer the questions.

Psalms 115:3-4 - But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

1. Where is our God?
2. What does the true God do?
3. Of what are idols made?
4. Who made idols?

Your Turn - Think about Moses and Aaron. Compare how they were either good or poor leaders of God's people.

What did Aaron do that showed he was a poor leader of God's people while Moses was on Mt. Sinai?

How did Moses show he was a good leader of God's people in this lesson? (Try to name at least 2 examples.)

Passages

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me.

Matthew 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.

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Hymn - TLH 430 v. 1, 4, 8 Use a highlighter or light crayon to highlight each name of Jesus.

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When Thou, and Thou alone, Lord Jesus, art
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shalt be;

Thou art my Peace, my Rest — what is the
world to me!

The world seeks after wealth and all that
Mammon offers,

Yet never is content tho' gold should fill its
coffers.

I have a higher good, content with it I'll be:

My Jesus is my Wealth — what is the world to
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My Life, my Health, my Wealth, my Friend, my
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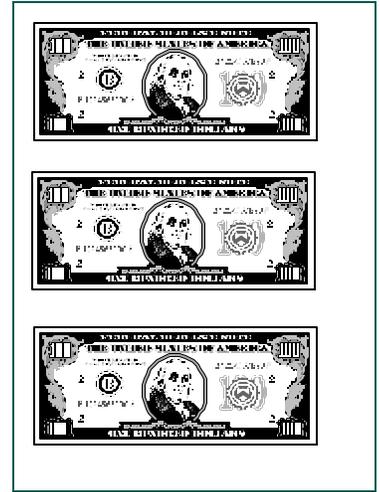
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What God's Word Tells Us - Think about Moses and Aaron. Compare how they were as good and poor leaders of God's people.

What did Aaron do while Moses was on Mt. Sinai that showed he was a poor leader of God's people?

What should he have said to the people when they came to him asking for a false god?

How did Moses show he was a good leader of God's people in this lesson? (At least 2 examples.)

Inner Aim - God commands that He be the most important thing in our lives.

Your Turn - Read and discuss the following Bible passage and how it applies to you and your life. Your teacher or you may even have some examples.

1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Passages

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me.

Matthew 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

The First Commandment

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The world seeks after wealth and all that Mammon offers,
Yet never is content tho' gold should fill its coffers.
I have a higher good, content with it I'll be:
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STORY

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TEACHER PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me to see how easy it is for things to become more important to me than You are. May I through the power of the Holy Spirit fear, love, and trust in You above all things. May the failings and unbelief of Your people Israel be a warning for me lest I also fall. Bless the word which I am about to bring to Jesus' lambs. Amen.

VOCABULARY

idolatry - the worship of a false (non-existent) god

golden calf - a false god worshiped by the Egyptians

rose up to play - a description of sexual immorality

OUTER AIM

The children of Israel commit the sin of idolatry

INNER AIM

Whatever is most important to us becomes our "god"

BACKGROUND

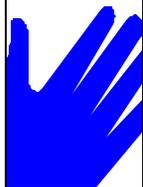
While these sacred transactions (the giving of the Law) were taking place on the mountain with Moses, a different scene was being played out in the camp of Israel. Moses was on Mt. Sinai for forty days and forty nights. Moses went up on the mountain to get detailed instruction about the worship life and ritual of God's covenant people.

The prolonged absence of Moses, who had been gone for over a month, awakened doubts and fears in the minds of the Children of Israel. The people feared the glory of Jehovah (Ex. 24:17). In their sinfulness, they desired a god that they could see and control. Note how the gods of men are physical in nature, i.e. able to be seen. The Israelites had been influenced by the Egyptians. The god Apis in the form of a calf represented the powers of nature. Their sin consisted in their not recognizing the presence of the unseen God. Their fears led them back to the unbelief of idolatry. We too make gods of whatever becomes most important in our lives. The modern idols of money, power, and instant gratification are just as terrible as the golden calf.

Aaron sought to compromise. He made the golden calf but proclaimed a "feast to Jehovah." Aaron gave in to the people and proved himself to be no leader of God's people. This worship was also accompanied by sexual sins and immorality.

God informed Moses of the quick apostasy of His people. "And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf, and worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'" (Exodus 32:7-8)

Moses interceded with God for the people (vs. 11-14). These people belonged to Jehovah. God's glory



was involved in their fate. God's gracious promises were pledged to bring the Savior from this people. However, Moses was not prepared for the sight that greeted his eyes (vs.19). Moses was filled with wrath. He broke the two tablets and summoned those who were on the side of Jehovah. The Levites slew 3,000 men. The golden calf was burned, and the powder put into the drinking water. Those slain remained naked, i.e. unrepentant. God warned that He would visit the sins of the people upon them. The Lord would not personally go into the midst of Israel. Now an angel, and not Jehovah, would be Israel's guide.

Moses asked the Lord's forgiveness for this people with an intensity unequalled except by Christ (Exodus 32:31-32). Moses was reassured by the vision of God's glory. This glory consisted of God's grace. The Lord consented to go before His people, and He would give them the rest of Canaan. Moses was only able to see the backside of God's glory (Exodus 33:21-23). We see the glory of God revealed in the face of His son Jesus Christ and in the cross.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, today we learn about how quickly God's people turned to other gods. Keep anything from becoming more important to us than Jesus and His Word. Take care of us and our families today. We thank You that You love us enough to forgive us when we do forget about You and do bad things. Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior from sin. Amen.

PRESENTATION

This incident sets the pattern for the Children of Israel's rebellious relationship with Jehovah. God had made them His own people, led them out of Egypt, and provided manna for them. Their reaction was one of unbelief and ingratitude. We see clearly in the account of Israel's wilderness journey man's sinfulness and God's undeserved grace. This pattern is carried out in the next stories of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness and even into the entire history of Old Testament Israel.

Review the account of the revelation of God's glory in connection with the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Read for yourself the detailed description of Israel's worship life in Exodus 22-31. All of this pointed to the coming of Jesus. It is obvious from this account that the Children of Israel could not be saved by the Law. They were guilty of gross idolatry even before Moses came down from the mountain with God's revelation of His holy Law.

Discuss with your children what led the people of God to ask Aaron to make for them a god in the form of a golden calf. Also pursue why Aaron gave in against better knowledge to this request of the people.

Tell the story by outlining what Moses saw when he came down from the mountain. Pagan idolatry was almost always accompanied by wild parties and orgies. Idolatry became an excuse for sexual immorality. The phrase "rose up to play" signifies sexual sins. The punishment was swift and severe. Three thousand people were killed because of their idolatry and nakedness.

When God told Moses that He was going to destroy this people and make a new people out of God, Moses interceded for the people. Moses appealed to God's gracious and merciful nature. Moses argued that Israel was God's special people; that God's own glory was involved in the fate of Israel; and finally that God had promised that He would give "the land" to this people and bring forth the Savior from them. This was indeed a stiff-necked people, and yet, God's gracious promises would preserve them.

APPLICATIONS

What are some examples of gods that can threaten our relationship with Jehovah? Mention things that can become more important than Jesus to the children e.g. money and possessions, fun, and especially the form of peer pressure.

What is the link between God's punishment for sin and His forgiveness? Why does it become necessary to punish transgressions as He did in the case of the Children of Israel? God is a just God visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. This is why God had to send Jesus to die for our sins. God could not simply ignore sin.

Paul applies this account in 1 Corinthians 10:6-7, "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.'" This is a strong warning against how idolatry can take over even God's own people.

With older children you might want to touch on the weakness of Israel's future high priest, Aaron, and how spiritual leaders sometimes tell people what they want to hear instead of rebuking them according to God's Word.

Emphasize that in spite of Israel's flagrant disobedience and God's righteous anger, Jehovah did not destroy this people but kept His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses interceded for the people appealing to God's grace and mercy. We also need to pray for one another as well as for ourselves throwing ourselves, upon the mercy of our Savior God.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Exodus 20:3 - *You shall have no other gods before Me.*

Middle any of the above and...

Matthew 4:10 - *Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'*

Upper any of the above and...

1 Corinthians 10:7 - *And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

HYMN CHOICES

"What Is The World To Me" (TLH #420:8)

"I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" (TLH #428)

"Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus" (TLH #409)