



### Exodus 32:1-34:35: A People Fit for Destruction

*The LORD told Moses, “Quick! Go down the mountain! Your people whom you brought from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. How quickly they have turned away from the way I commanded them to live! They have melted down gold and made a calf, and they have bowed down and sacrificed to it. They are saying, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.’”*

– Exodus 32:7-8 NLT

- **Will the real Israel please stand up?**

- They have pledged their allegiance 3 times

*All the people answered together and said, “**All that the Lord has spoken we will do.**”*

– Exodus 19:8 ESV

*And all the people answered with one voice and said, “**All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.**”* – Exodus 24:3 ESV

*And they said, “**All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.**”* – Exodus 24:7 ESV

- Moses returns to the mountaintop

*The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. – Exodus 24:12-13 ESV*

- He will remain there for 40 days and 40 nights

- **Out of sight, out of mind**

- Moses has been gone for over a month
- But he had left Aaron in charge

- The 70 elders had returned to camp
- The angel of God was still with them
- And the presence of God was still visible

*...the glory of the Lord settled down on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from inside the cloud. To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the glory of the Lord appeared at the summit **like a consuming fire**.*  
 – Exodus 24:16-17 NLT

- This is what they saw from the valley: A consuming fire  
**consuming** – אָכַל (*'ākal*) – to eat, devour, burn up, consume
  - This fear-inducing sight was still visible
  - They had clearly heard the Decalogue
  - They knew the terms of the covenant

***“Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.”*** – Exodus 19:5-6 ESV

*“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

*“You shall have **no other gods** before me.”* – Exodus 20:2-3 ESV

*“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. **You shall not bow down to them or serve them**, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God...”* – Exodus 20:4-5 ESV

- The finger of God  
*And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, **written with the finger of God**.* – Exodus 31:18 ESV
  - A statement of **ownership** and **authority**
    - The Law as not created by men
    - It was an extension of God Himself
    - So it was unalterable and non-voidable

***“You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.”*** – Deuteronomy 4:2 ESV

*“You must not worship the LORD your God the way the other nations worship their gods, for they perform for their gods every detestable act that the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters as sacrifices to their gods. **So be careful to obey all the commands I give you. You must not add anything to them or subtract anything from them.**” – Deuteronomy 12:31-32 ESV*

- **A dangerous change of mind**

*And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, **have corrupted themselves**. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” – Exodus 32:7-8 ESV*

*“All that the Lord has spoken we will do...”*

has become...

*“We will do whatever we want to do...”*

- God’s chosen people chose **autonomy**
- And God disavows His **chosen** people
  - o They become... *your people*  
*this people*  
*stiff-necked people*  
*corrupted people*
- What happened?

*When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. 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.” So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” – Exodus 32:1-2 ESV*

- o “make us gods”  
עָשָׂה לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים – *’āśâ ’elōhîm*  
Literally: “make [to] us gods”
  - This statement is packed with meaning
  - A classic Freudian slip  
a slip of the tongue that is motivated by and reveals some unconscious aspect of the mind – Merriam-Webster Dictionary

- Harkens back to Genesis 3

*But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**” – Genesis 3:4-5 ESV*

- Satan was promising them god-likeness
  - ~ The ability to decide what is right for themselves
  - ~ The freedom to set their own rules
  - ~ What was behind the Israelites’ demand?

### 1. A god of their own making

- They weren’t satisfied with Yahweh
  - He was too demanding
  - His rules were too restrictive
  - He cramped their style
  - He was difficult to relate to
- So they decided to remake their Maker

*Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up **foolish ideas of what God was like**. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, **they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.** – Romans 1:21-23 NLT*

- They wanted a god they could control
  - All idols are man-made
  - They...don’t exist without men
    - ...are totally dependent upon men
    - ...are replicable and replaceable
    - ...exist for the benefit of men

“Beware of manufacturing a God of your own: a God who is all mercy, but not just; a God who is all love, but not holy; a God who has a Heaven for everybody, but Hell for none; a God who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time, but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a god is an idol of your own, as true an idol as was ever molded out of brass or clay. The hands of your own fancy and sentimentality have made him. He is not the God of the Bible, and besides the God of the Bible there is no god at all.” – Rev. J.C. Ryle – “For Those Who Are Not Christ’s”

- They celebrated their freedom...**from God**
  - They feasted their independence
  - But not from Egypt and slavery
  - They were free to do as **they** pleased

*So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. **And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.** – Exodus 32:3-6 ESV*

- They sat down to eat and drink
- Here is how Stephen described it

*So they made an idol shaped like a calf, and they sacrificed to it and **celebrated over this thing they had made.** – Acts 7:41 NLT*

- They rose up to play
- Paul was more blunt

*As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did... – 1 Corinthians 10:7-8 NLT*

*And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them **and I may consume them,** in order that I may make a great nation of you." – Exodus 32:9-10 ESV*

## 2. An appeal to God's faithfulness

- Moses intercedes for the people
  - He focuses on the bigger picture
  - He desires to respect God's reputation
  - He hones in on God's covenant promises
  - He puts his hope in God's faithfulness

"Moses knew that God was great. He was well aware of God's holiness and transcendence. He was intimately familiar with God's power. But he had also grown to understand God's unwavering faithfulness. With the plans for the Tabernacle in his hands, Moses longed to see it take form in the valley below so the people might know and experience the joy of God's presence. So, he went to the mat with God and urged Him to display His faithfulness once again – in a big way." – Ken Miller, *Devotionary™ on Exodus*

### **3. Discussion questions**

- Share one way you experienced the faithfulness of God this past week?
- Why is God's faithfulness one of His most overlooked attributes, and how can we develop a greater awareness of it?
- How are we guilty of "manufacturing a God of our own?" Why is it important to accept God as He is and not try to make Him into the God we would like Him to be?



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FALL SERIES 2023 – WEEK 10 HOMEWORK

**WEEK 10: *All to the Glory of God* – Exodus 35:1-39:43**

Here we have the concluding chapters of the book and they contain the actual construction of the Tabernacle that God had designed and ordered to be built. The people are still camped at the base of Mount Sinai and are still a long way from their future home in Canaan. But the Tabernacle will serve as the dwelling place of God and the central focus of their community as they make their way across the wilderness to the shores of the Jordan River. One of the things we want to focus on in this lesson is the intricate detail and matchless beauty God designed into His earthly dwelling place. This structure would be like no other in their community. It was a tent and designed to be portable, but it was also a sanctuary, a temple to the one true God of the universe. Filled with precious metals, exotic timbers, expensive jewels, and fine fabrics, this holy place was designed to reflect the glory of God – down to the last detail.

- Read Exodus 35:1-39:43. What jumps out at you in these passages?
- This week's Devotional™ reading covers pages 381-416. There is a lot in these passages, but continue to look for how it all points to God. What does it reveal about Him?
- In chapter 35:1-30, Moses records the free-will offering that the Israelites gave. It seems that the people gave willingly and generously. How much of what they do you think was motivated by the events in chapter 32?

Why do we tend to be more generous with God when we've screwed up and received His grace and mercy?

Why don't we tend to give without some kind of incentive?

4. Exodus 35:30-35 describes the work of Bezalel and Oholiab. Go back and look at Exodus 31:1-11. Why do you think God set apart these two men and what is significant about the role they played in the construction of the Tabernacle?
- In chapter 36, verses 1-7, Aaron reveals that the people gave far more than was needed to complete the Tabernacle. What does this tell us about God's provision and the peoples' willingness to play a part?
  - Go back and scan over Exodus 36:8-39:31. Look for anything that alludes to God's glory or is a visual symbol of His holiness and transcendence. Make a comprehensive list of what you find.

What are some practical things we can do in our lives that would demonstrate our understanding of God's transcendence, glory, greatness, and worthiness of our honor?

- Exodus 39:32-43 records Moses' inspection of the completed Tabernacle. Why is it so significant that the people had followed God's directions to the letter? What would it have conveyed if they had taken liberties or shortcuts with God's plans?

As the temple of the Holy Spirit, what are some ways we play fast-and-loose with God's plans for our own lives?