

Exodus 62 – Golden Calf: Struggle of Faith on Earth

Exodus (Names) – Changing the World
Dr. Leon L. Sanders Exodus 32:1-16

Golden Calf Ignorance

- Ignorance (our worldview) prevents us from clearly understanding this event
- The issue is not, one God or many gods, but *faith*
- We struggle with faith now as they did then



Proper Perspective is Essential

- The people heard God speak His Ten Words directly, did not want to hear God again and appointed Moses as their intercessor
- From Exodus 20:22 to 31:18, except 24:12-17, Moses received detailed instructions from God followed by the acceptance of the people to the Law ratified in a covenant meal between Christ and the elders

Covenant Meal

- Though Moses placed the covenant meal early in his writings (24:1-11) it was impossible for them to know the Law as Moses did not receive it until going up to Mount Horeb
- The covenant meal would have more significance to them after the golden calf event demonstrating God's forgiveness and mercy undergirding the Laws

Moses and Joshua Go Up

- Moses leaves Joshua further down the Mount and he goes up alone to receive the pattern of the Tabernacle and the Law which he placed earlier in Exodus (31:18)
- Though the process took 40 days, it was less than 40 days before the people had a crisis of faith considering the time required to make the Golden Calf from wood overlaid with molten gold

Disputed Section of Exodus

- Chapters 32-34 historically disputed since they put Aaron (Levitical priesthood) in bad light; therefore, many believe it was added much later illustrating the later corruption of the priesthood (Poss. Post Babylon)
- Actually, priesthood experienced corruption early on with the offering of "strange fire" and their degradation during the "Judges" period (Le 10:1-3)

Chiastic Structure of Text

- Chiastic (χιαστικό) shows symmetrical unity of a text repeated in reverse order
- Here it highlights man's sin and God's forgiveness
- Necessary as people did not how *unholy* they were

There is another manner in which the narrative may be viewed which may indicate a conscious unity behind it. This pattern centers around the sequence in which key persons and items are introduced. It may be set out as follows:

- A: People rebelling, v 1
- B: Aaron's role, vv 2E
- C: Calf produced, v 4
 - D: Two tablets intact, vv 15-16
 - D': Two tablets broken, v 19
- C': Calf destroyed, v 20
- B': Anger at Aaron, vv 21-24
- A': People judged, vv 25-29

People Without Faith in God

- After Moses had been absent for some time people came to Aaron, as directed, believing Moses was dead
 - Terminology showed Moses was an outsider (stranger)
 - He was simply an intercessor between them and God
 - Manifestation of God still present and awe(full) to them
- Their plan was to make an object as intercessor to God

Bull Denoted Strength

- Many ancient & modern cultures use bull symbol
- Visualization is a powerful focus for unity even today
- Israel used bulls as unifier to prevent reunion with Judah despite this lesson (1K 12:26-32)



Aaron Provided Alternative

- Aaron not yet chosen as priest, but he acts as a priest
- The idol, denoting God's limited attributes, is made
 - As God's image is a creature of nature, He is not God
 - In limiting God they were worshiping Satan (1Co 30:16,22)
 - This step would have prevented the Messiah, salvation
- Man, left to his flesh will always reject God

Festival Proclaimed

- After presenting the Golden Calf Aaron proclaimed a festival to help people forget their fear of God (Ex 31:10, Ex 3:7)
- The fury, still present on Mount Horeb, which they believed had consumed Moses, left them isolated
- They needed a symbol of national unification to survive
- A festival to honor god and relieve their fears to instill in them trust in the strength of their god (bull) {Satan} (Deu 23:21,23)

Sacrifices Not Unique to Israel

- Noah instituted the Ascending Offering before Babel (Ge 8:20)
- Communion Offerings (meals) with gods were common and probably began at Babel
- People had not yet received God's instructions (Law)
- People communed with god then celebrated their unity with song, dance and alcohol (I doubt open orgies)

People Did Not Understand God

- People did not understand that God is:
 - Creator of all: visible and invisible
 - Beyond this creation (cannot be contained by creation)
- Their experience with God during the past months was not a theological treatise on the doctrines of faith
- They did not meditate on the first Four Words of God

They Tested God – God Tests Them

- They tested God, finding Him inadequate since He:
 - Let them be overtaken by Pharaoh's army
 - Let them run out of water
 - Gave them manna rather than "real" meat
 - Left them leaderless (Assumed God killed Moses)
- God tests them to show them depth of their sinfulness and ignorance of God (Unholiness)

God Informs Moses of Their Sin

- God now tests Moses' faith by saying:
 - His (Moses) people whom he led from Egypt were worshiping a Golden Calf as the intercessor of God
 - He (God) would eliminate them and make a nation from Moses since they were *always* "stiff-necked" (sinful)
- Moses showed his faith in God by appealing to God's mercy and longsuffering; i.e., forgiveness

Testing of Moses

- Issue was never that God would destroy the Hebrews
- Issue was the testing of Moses' faith so Moses would demonstrate his faith in God's immutable character (De 2:18)
- Moses "reminds" God of His covenant with Abraham, their leaving Egypt was the initial part of this promise

Moses Tempted to Replace Abraham

- God offered Moses the position of Abraham, father of the people of God; yet, Moses concerned for God's honor rather than his own importance (No Messiah)
 - Nations would reject God if He destroyed Hebrews
 - God would be a liar if He reneged on His covenant
- Moses defended God's honor while the Hebrews demonstrate that God has no honor

Mirrors Two Great Periods

- This episode of waiting for God mirrors two great periods of time in biblical history, with man's failure
 - Israel waiting for Messiah to come
 - Church waiting for Christ to come
- People during these periods with more knowledge; yet, collectively Israel and Christendom failed in faith by erecting idols of unity (False Gnostic doctrines)

Waiting for Messiah

- Jews were to wait for their Messiah as prophets foretold
 - They rejected classic idolatry after Babylonian captivity
 - They made Bible their idol mixed with Gnostic philosophy after their Babylonian experience (Talmud)
 - They only saw Messiah as a man in "their image"
- When Messiah came as God, they killed Him on stauros ushering in New Covenant and Church Age

Christians to Await Christ's Return

- Since Christ's ascension Christians have been waiting for His return impatiently (Ac 1:9-10)
 - When it was not according to their timetable there were rumors that they had missed His return (1Th 4:13-18)
 - Christ warned believers not to lose faith in His coming (2Th 2:15-18)
- Many have developed deceiving doctrines rejecting His Word, altering it according to their understanding (2Ti 4:3-4)

Significance of Golden Calf

- Mirrors sin: Adam's and ours
 - God gives His Word
 - Man given space to digest His Word
 - Satan tempts man to doubt God
 - Man in his understanding follows Satan, rejecting God
- Christ makes a clear statement to man's inability to remain faithful. "Will He find faith on earth?" (2Th 1:4)