

Exodus 32- Israel's "First" Worship Service

Summer 2002

Propositional Statement: As the people of God, we approach God through a Mediator. The people of God in Exodus 32 were given access to God, as he prepared the way for them to approach him, as well as a mediator. *How much more* do we have a Mediator who does not change, who ever lives to intercede for his people.

Key Verse: Ex. 34:6-7

FCF: We tend to approach God in our own ways. We have a tendency to do things as we please. We need to understand the importance of a Mediator between sinful man and a holy God. We need to know that what God provides for our worship is indeed what we need! We must appreciate God's grace and mercy to us in Christ!

Introduction-

1. The Law (Ex. 20) and the laws (Ex. 21-23).
2. Israel affirms the covenant with God (Ex. 24)- v.7-8: *The he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.'* And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, *This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.'*
3. (Ex. 25-31)- Offerings of worship, the Ark of the Testimony, Table of Showbread, Gold Lampstand (furnishings for God's Tabernacle or presence among his people); The building of the Tabernacle, the court, garments for the Priesthood, Aaron and his sons consecrated to represent the people before the LORD, Altar of Incense, Bronze Laver, Holy Anointing Oil, and artisans Oholiab and Bezalel, and the Sabbath Law...but stop!!!
4. Chapter 32- Worship of God in substitution of what God has commanded, and without a mediator, approaching God immediately and directly through an idol of their own making!

I. A New Image (Ex. 32:1-6)

- a. God has taught the people how they may worship him. They make substitutes: a false image to represent the Living God- v. 4 (rather than the Ark of the Testimony that served as God's throne on earth).
 - Israel was not worshipping the *wrong God*, but the right God, *wrongly!* Ex. 20:4-6. They were worshipping YHWH falsely- ~ and without a Mediator.

- As later Israel wanted a human king, not the invisible divine king in 1 Samuel 8, so now they want a god 'with a face' -- albeit gold, like all the pagan nations around them.
 - b. Substitution feasts- v. 5-6. Pagan revelry (cf. 32:25) – God's purpose was to release Israel from Egyptian bondage in order that they might hold a feast for God in the wilderness (Ex. 5:1). Here, Israel has already become like her pagan neighbors.
 - c. The calf was an *accessible God* that was convenient for the people. They made their own mediator, rather than serving the one chosen by the LORD to represent them.
 - Calf, or young bulls- The Egyptian Apis and the Phoenician Baal were both pictured as bulls, a common representation among many peoples of that day for fertility and strength- Idolatry was accompanied by sensual, lewd dances which formed a part of the fertility cult (*rose up to play- v. 5*).

II. A New Nation of People the LORD will Make (Ex. 32:7-10)

- a. No special favor to Israel-- it was by grace they had been delivered and saved from Egypt (Ex. 20:1).
- b. *Your people* (God speaking to Moses), *you* brought out of Egypt...
- c. God desires to act in immediate judgment because of their stubbornness, or because they are a *stiff-necked people* (v. 9-10).

III. Moses: the Mediator of God's People (Ex. 32:11-14, 30-32)

- a. Moses intercedes on an undeserving people:
 1. Moses bases his intercession on God's covenant promises to his people (v. 11-13). He intercedes back that the *stiff-necked people* are *your people*-- that is belonging to God.
 2. God *repents, or changes his mind*- v. 14.
 1. A mystery how this can occur (Dt. 29:29). Difficult concept for some people.
 2. Effectual power of prayer in the presence of the unchanging, all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present God. This is how God reveals himself to his people -- and this is how we, by faith, are to understand him. God repented, relented, changed his divine mind.
 - a. Jesus prays "If it is possible that this cup should pass...but not as I will." God answers prayers, but we do not know his purposes--we are not God.

3. Moses preaches repentance to the people and the need for atonement for their sins (v. 30) (the reason why God had taught them about the Tabernacle and the Priesthood).
4. Moses asks the LORD if he may die (*be blotted out of God's book*) on behalf of the people. Moses wants to make atonement for their sin against the Living God (v. 31-32).
5. Like Paul in Romans 10, he desires to be *cut off or blotted out*, if the remainder can live! What love! But as good a Mediator as Moses' was, he was still a sinner and could not represent the people as a perfect Mediator, nor a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the people.

IV. The Judgment of God on Law-Breakers (Ex. 32:15-29; 33-35)

- a. God answers Moses' prayer by not destroying the people (he has mercy on some, although all are deserving of judgment-- God does not finally reject his people) (v. 35).
- b. This generation (except for a small remnant) eventually dies in the wilderness as recorded in Numbers 14- Ex. 34.

V. Behold your Compassionate and Faithful God!

- a. Read Exodus 34:6-9- Thank God for his grace that the covenant he makes with his people is maintained from God's side – not the people's side! It is by grace!
- b. The limitations of Moses' Mediatorship points forward to a greater Mediator who can make full atonement for sin (Read: Heb. 3:1-6). Jesus our Mediator!

VI. Contrast Today with Israel's Time Period

- a. A temporal Mediator- imperfect.
 - b. A temporal intercession for God's people- imperfect.
 - c. A temporal worship place- imperfect.
 - d. A temporal and ongoing washing away of sin- imperfect.
- a. A permanent Mediator- perfect (1 Tim. 2:5).
 - b. A permanent intercession for God's people- perfect (Heb. 7:23-25- *Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since he lives to make intercession for them*).
 - c. A permanent worshipping of God in spirit and truth- perfect.
 - d. A permanent atonement made by Jesus Christ on our behalf- perfect-

Read Hebrews 10:5-18