

18-19 Bible Study #20

2/12/19

AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

EVIL

Original Sin

Cain

Fratricide

Enoch

Murder/Polygamist

Lamech

Ham

Nimrod

Tower of Babel

Lot

Sodom & Gomorrah

Adam & Eve
1 Commandment
Walking with God

GOOD

Abel

Seth

Enoch

Noah

Shem

Abraham

Covenant

Circumcision

3 Promises

Isaac

Jacob

Joseph

Moses

The Law

The Tabernacle

David

Solomon

The Temple

Kings

Prophets

God Dwelling Among His People

God Leaves the Temple

Jesus the Word Became Flesh

Exodus 32

The Golden Calf

Exodus 32

- **Father's review to set the stage for the *golden calf story***
 - He wants us to remember the importance of *Moses* going up to the top of the mountain for the second time
 - After the first time, (**Exodus 24**) *Moses* came down and led the people in consenting to the *Sinai Covenant* with God (**Exodus 19-24**)
 - The people signed up, had a meal in His presence, and thus became a “covenantal family”
 - After these events, *Moses* was called back to the top of the mountain for seven days (7 was a sign of the covenant)

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- After the seven days, *Moses* entered the “cloud” where he stayed for 40 days and 40 nights
- As we saw earlier, it was during this time that *Moses* was given the blueprints for the Tabernacle (**Exodus 25-31**)
- This covenant meant that **God was going to dwell among His people**
- In that culture, to sit down for a meal was seen as a sign of friendship and agreement (this was totally different than a contract since a covenant had a degree of perpetuity)

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- After agreeing to the Covenant, ***Israel*** was **not** taken up into the clouds with God, instead, God came down to live in their midst
- All of the Covenants made with God had the same pattern
- Father wants us to see that these Covenants were a restoration of a relationship
- This should remind us that (according to *Saint Athanasius*) that salvation and creation were the same thing
- Salvation was the restoration of creation
- This will be finally fulfilled in the final Covenant established by Jesus

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- Jesus became the reunification of God and man (the good news)
- The purpose of these covenants was not to provide a bunch of eternal rules that God established requiring everyone to obey
- The purpose of the *Sinai Covenant* was the reestablishment of the relationship of creation
- It was to reestablish His original plan (the Garden of Eden **Genesis 3:8***)
- All of these stories throughout salvation history are about God coming to the earth to dwell among His people

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- This includes the *Garden of Eden, the Sinai Covenant, the temple of Solomon, the incarnation, and the second coming of Jesus*
- In the *Eucharist*, we are able to participate in the incarnation
- This is critical because, unlike the angels, we have bodies
- One of the major heresies from the early church was “dualism” (the idea that salvation was the escaping of our spirits from our bodies in this world to go somewhere in the clouds)

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- That was the pagan understanding of salvation
- Our understanding is the resurrection of the *Garden of Eden*
- *Moses* was on the mountain for 40 days and nights to obtain the plans for the earthly dwelling place where God could live among His people
- Let us turn to the story of the Golden Calf event*

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- **Exodus 32:1-3**

- In this first section, we see the people asking *Aaron* to “make them gods”
- Based on the context here it most likely meant, “make us a god (singular) who shall go before us”
- Remember, that all of the gold rings came from the people despoiling the Egyptians just before they left on the night of the *Passover*
- God was like a loving Father who gave His people all that they needed to make a proper offering to Him (for the tabernacle)
- Again, this is what “tithing” is all about *

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- **Exodus 32:4**

- *Aaron* fashioned an idol using a “graving tool” (carving tool)
- At this point, make a note to look at **Jeremiah 46-49**
- The prophet *Jeremiah* was prophesying to the people of *Judah* (South) during the time from king *Josiah* to king *Zedekiah* and into the *Babylonian* captivity

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- He condemned some of the nations around *Judah* including the *Egyptians, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Edomites* who were about to be in big trouble when the *Babylonians* arrived
- *Amos* and *Isaiah* also prophesied against these nations because they had knowledge of the God of *Israel*, but did nothing to accept Him *

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- **Jeremiah 46:13-18 ***
 - Jeremiah said that your **calf *Apis*** has fled
 - Again, **Apis** was a major god in the Egyptian pantheon
- Here (in **Exodus 32**) *Aaron* made a molten calf which was an image of the Egyptian god *Apis* (a god of fertility)
- Most likely *Aaron* took some wood and fashioned in into an image of a calf and plated it with gold
- Then the people rose up “to play”
- That meant that they had a religious orgy because that was they way a fertility cult worked *

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- **Exodus 32:5**

- Father again addressed the plural of gods here indicating that *Apis* could have been an image for all of the gods of *Egypt*
- He suggested that a better way of translating it would be: *“This is your god O Israel who brought you up out of the land of Egypt”*
- We should look back as here an echo to **Exodus 20:5** where we see what the people of Israel had agreed to *

Exodus 20

- ***Exodus 20:1-2***

- Look at this language
- Father Sebastian used the divine name *Yahweh* to emphasize the divinity and to offset the RSV translation “the Lord God” or “the Lord your God” which seems a bit generic
- Remember, whenever we see those words in all caps in the RSV they are a translation of the divine name *Yahweh*
- This is the personal God of the Israelites, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Exodus 20 (Cont)

- Moses further pointed out that this is an action of God when he said the word “your”
- This was an action of the God of the Hebrew people
- We will see this as an identification over and over in the Old Testament
- He is no longer just the God of *Abraham*, but the God who “brought them out of Egypt” *

Exodus 20 (Cont)

- ***Exodus 20:3-4***

- Therefore, he told them, “you shall have no other gods before me”
- You had better not make an image which you will bow down and worship (otherwise you will be in big trouble)
- They all agreed not to do this

Exodus 20 (Cont)

- ***Exodus 20:23***

- This meant that the *Hebrews* must not worship a *pantheon*
- They were to worship the one God, the God of *Abraham* who brought them out of *Egypt* because He was the only God who existed
- Think back on Father's discussion on how one converts a polytheist to monotheism
 - They must be convinced that there is only one God they must be concerned about (the most powerful God)
 - And, that the other gods were powerless before Him
- *Yahweh* did this with the *Hebrew* people who agreed to worship only Him

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- **Exodus 32:4**

- Some have suggested that the sin here was that *Aaron* made an image of *Yahweh*
- It is true that since God is a Spirit we are not to make an image of Him, but that is not what was going on here and throughout the Old Testament
- The main problem with the *Hebrew* people is that when they worshiped foreign gods they often made images of them
- There is not a single example in the Old Testament of the *Hebrew* people making an image of *Yahweh* *

Exodus 32(Cont)

- **Exodus 32:5-6**

- *St Ephraim* speculated that *Aaron* agreed to make the people an Egyptian god to prevent them from returning to Egypt
- He may have thought that this might delay them and if *Moses* returned, he could take care of the situation
- This obviously was a very bad idea
- His motive might have been good but what he did was very wrong and he ended up creating a new problem *

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- He soon realized that this created a new problem as the people began to “worship” the Egyptian god, *Apis*
- They even began to say that he had brought them out of Egypt
- *Aaron* proclaimed that the next day would be a feast to Yahweh
- Instead, they rose up to play, which meant that they were participating in an orgy *

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- **Exodus 32:7-10**

- Look at how God reminds them of the Commandments
- He pointed out that the people had made a molten calf which was an image of the Egyptian god, Apes
- Then he told *Moses* that they worshiped it and not Him, and even said that it was this god who brought them out of *Egypt*
- This was a very big problem for they had broken the first of the 10 commandments

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- Father asked, “what happened here?”
- If we look at **Exodus 32:4** (without the Protestant interpretation problem) there is no doubt that they were not only making an image of the god *Apis*, but, they were worshiping this image
- This will be the problem for Israel throughout the Old Testament
- They constantly returned to polytheism and worshiped foreign gods

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- Father reminded us that the purpose of the Old Testament was God revealing to them that there was only one true God to be worshiped
- And further, that all the other gods were no gods
- It is this revelation that the incarnation is all about
- It is about the revelation of God living among His people
- We will now turn back to the “covenantal problem”
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Exodus 32 (Cont)

- God calls the Hebrew people, “your people”
- Then, He tells Moses to step aside because He is going to consume them in His wrath
- God is not breaking His covenant at this point; He is in fact keeping it
- The people were not supposed to worship foreign gods and so their worship of this Egyptian god was incredibly insulting and furthermore, they even said that he was the god who saved them from the Egyptians

Exodus 32 (Cont)

- This was not only insulting, it was blasphemous
- At the same time, God is keeping his covenant with Abraham by promising Moses that He will raise up a new nation for him
- Basically, God is saying that He will start over with the many sons of Abraham
- Moses, in one sense, will become a new Noah
- But, Moses will try to save his people*