

Exodus - Week 10

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2024 - JUSTIN BRANCH



Summary - “The Story Continues”

We have seen an incredible journey so far in our study of Exodus. We have seen God’s people, the Israelites, enslaved to Egypt and an evil ruler. Out of this God raises up Moses in the most troubling of circumstances, takes him out of Egypt, and tasks him with the job of confronting Pharaoh and telling him to let God’s people go. Pharaoh rejects Moses’s demands and God intervenes with ten incredible and miraculous plagues that destroy Egypt at every level and cause Pharaoh to finally relent and let the Israelites go. In a last second attempt of a power grab, Pharaoh chases down the Israelites only to face God’s miraculous power and control again. God parts the Red Sea and the Israelites escape to freedom while Pharaoh’s army is completely destroyed. The Israelites are free of Egypt, but are now living in the wilderness and are being led by God Himself with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The Israelites are already beginning to grumble and wish that they could go back to Egypt where they had regular meals. God, in His mercy, answers their grumbling with the miraculous supply of mana or bread from heaven each and every day. God is beginning to unite His people together for His purposes and is preparing them for the promised land that was promised through Abraham. Part of this preparation is establishing rules and laws among the people that will honor and glorify God among the nations, but it is also to establish proper worship among the people as well. As we jump into chapters 32-33 this week, we will see that it doesn’t take very long for the sinful and rebellious hearts of the Israelites to begin pushing against these laws and worship in some pretty extreme ways. As you study this week, think about your own heart and where you are with the Lord. Are you following well or are you in rebellion? If you are in rebellion, what do you need to do to repent and set your heart before the Lord in proper worship?

Scripture - Read Exodus 21-33 in your Bible this week

We may have jumped from chapter twenty and the Ten Commandments, to chapter thirty-two, in which Israel worships the golden calf; however, it is important to understand what all was taking place in between these chapters. During this time the commands and law of the Lord had been given to Moses who had then given them to the people of Israel. Everyone in Israel had heard the commands of the Lord and had agreed to follow them, thus confirming this new covenant (the law) between God and Israel. Moses then went back up on the mountain to be given the tablets of the law by God himself, and would also be given detailed instructions regarding how, when, and where to worship the Lord and what this would look like for the people of Israel. While Moses is on the mountain being instructed by God Himself on proper worship, Aaron is down below, leading the Israelites into the false worship of the golden calf. Take the time this week to dive into these chapters to see what God was preparing for His people and what they settled for instead. When compared to God’s glory, God’s holiness, God’s righteousness, and what He desires in worship, we clearly see the sin and emptiness of the golden calf and why their worship of it angered God so.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Exodus 21:33; Psalm 115:4-8; Proverbs 14:12; Matthew 22:34-40; Romans 1; 1 Corinthians 10; 1 John 5:21

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)



Key Thoughts

Ever wonder how long the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness following the parting of the Red Sea and their freedom out of bondage from Egypt. It had only been three months! Only three months had passed since the events of the Exodus so there is no way they had forgotten in that short period of time how God had gone with them and before them every step of the way – yet here they are in Exodus 32 demanding of Aaron, “...make us gods who shall go before us.”

They did not want to wait in the wilderness of Sinai any longer. God was on top of the mountain with Moses. They hadn’t seen Moses in 40 days, and they had no idea when he was coming back. So to them, if anything was going to get done, they needed to take matters into their own hands.

The problem was not that the Israelites had forgotten what God had done, or how He had gone before them. The problem was that they didn’t want to wait for God to lead them... simply and sadly, they were revealing they had a lack of faith in God, His timeline, and His plans for them.

The Israelites’ desire to move without God exposed their lack of faith in Him, causing them to turn their eyes from Him and led them to place their faith in something else.

Deceptions of Idolatry #1: Idolatry deceives us into placing our faith in the created rather than in the Creator (Exodus 32:1-4a).

God’s people were no longer trusting and waiting on God (the Creator) who had already so faithfully gone before them – they now chose to put their faith in themselves (the created) and what they thought was the best plan of action to move them forward out of this waiting and this wilderness.

The Israelites wanted things their way, in their timeline, and now in one moment, their choice to place their faith in themselves has led them to break the first two commandments God had given them back in Exodus 20:1-6

Not only were the Israelites choosing to now place all of their faith in this idol as if it were God – they were also bestowing all of the glory that was due to the eternal, holy, living God (big “G”) to this fashioned by human hands, non-living (little “g”) god. This calf had not delivered them from Pharaoh, this calf hadn’t parted the sea, this calf didn’t, wouldn’t, and couldn’t have a relationship with the Israelites – but yet the people were giving it the glory God deserved and was owed.

Deceptions of Idolatry #2: Idolatry deceives us into attributing God’s glory to something or someone else. (Exodus 32:4b).

Key Thoughts

The Israelites didn't just fall into idolatry with this golden calf – no – remember - idolatry begins in the heart! This has been a slow fade since the beginning of Exodus – this outward action of creating this physical idol was just illuminating and exposing the condition that already existed inside the hearts of God's people. (See Exodus 14, 16, and 17)

The Israelites desired those idols of the heart more than the freedom God had provided and His promise of what was on the other side of their waiting and wandering. Sadly, they desired their convenience over His covenant and the provision of the here-and-now over the promise of what's-to-come.

Deceptions of Idolatry #3: Idolatry deceives us into desiring what we want more than what God wants for us. (Exodus 32:5).

Any of our demanding and desiring of what we want for our lives over what God wants for us – is a symptom and a warning flag that idolatry has made its way into our hearts.

We must be aware and alert! The idols that we encounter in our lives, and wrestle with day-to-day – aren't often as easy to spot as animals forged in gold. They can be seemingly innocent and good things - like family - that we hold too tightly to.

Idols are so good at disguising themselves that they can not only disguise themselves as good things, but if we are not careful, they can slip into our worship disguised as spiritual things as well.

Deceptions of Idolatry #4: Idolatry can deceive us by masking our flawed worship as faithfulness. (Exodus 32:5-6).

We cannot expect God to be blessed by and accept our worship when it is planned, executed, and offered up with raised hands, but our hearts are still bowing down to idols!

If our worship is truly to be for God and to God, then it must be done how God wants it! Any other way is not faithfulness to God and all of our standing around the altar singing and bringing offerings is sadly just flawed worship to the idols of our hearts!

We become like what we worship.

- This golden calf had ears, but it couldn't hear - God's people had ears but they were deaf to His commands for them.
- The calf had eyes, but it couldn't see - God's people had eyes but they had turned them from God and were blinded by their idolatry unable to see the errors of their ways.
- This golden calf wasn't alive - and in their corrupted hearts as they worshiped their idols - the Israelites were spiritually dead. They had become like what they worshiped.

Key Thoughts

Moses in his plea to the Lord reveals his heart to be merciful, patient, and compassionate toward the Israelites - these are all character traits of God, who he had been worshiping. Again, we become like what we worship. (Exodus 32:7-14)

Make no mistake, their idol worship wouldn't come without consequences. (Exodus 32:15-35)

We've highlighted the 4 ways that idolatry deceives us, but now we will see in verses 27-29 that idolatry doesn't only bring deception, idolatry also brings death. God's commandment to put nothing before Him is serious business – and if we allow the idols of our hearts to take root in our lives then it will certainly lead to spiritual death. In the case of these Israelites, it led to their physical deaths.

Having faced the consequences of deception, and death – they would now have to face a third (and I would argue the most devastating) consequence of idolatry...distance from God. (Exodus 33:1-6)

Songwriter Ross King puts it this way in his song, Clear The Stage...

"Anything I put before my God is an idol
Anything I want with all my heart is an idol
Anything I can't stop thinking of is an idol
Anything that I give all my love is an idol"

We still serve a God who desires to have a relationship with us, who wants to dwell not only with us, but in us! But He will not share our hearts or His glory with idols. (Exodus 33:7-11)

We still have an intercessor, like Moses was for the Israelites who pleads to the Father on our behalf – but today it's not Moses – It is Jesus Christ, God's Son, the ultimate and final intercessor who took the wrath and the consequences of our sin upon His shoulders so that we can have the idols of our hearts removed and know what it's like to worship God the way we were created to...and - so we can be near God - and dwell in His presence in this life and for all eternity. (Exodus 33:12-23)

It's time to let Christ deal with any idols that may be lurking in our hearts. Church, this is serious! Idolatry brings deception, death, and distances us from God. We must let God remove the idols from our hearts and lives.

Reflect & Respond

Have you ever been at a place where you're tired of waiting on God? You know God is real, you've seen Him at work, but man – where you're at now is not where you want to be. God feels distant, and those that you trust to lead may seem absent or lack understanding. You're not sure what is ahead of you, and you feel like you're not making any progress. Any movement you do experience feels like you're operating only with step-by-step instructions but what you desire is the full picture. You're tired of waiting! Have you ever felt like that?

Are there areas in your life where you desire what you want more than what God wants or has planned for you?

How about you? In your life are you placing the highest value on God's presence, and His nearness over everything else? Or are you letting the idols of your heart bring deception, death, and distance?

What is it that you are wanting with all your heart? What is it that you can't stop thinking of or talking about? What idols are hiding in your heart?

Additonal Thoughts