The Golden Calf

Exodus 32; 34

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered to Aaron and said, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, we do not know what has become of him."

Aaron answered them, "Take off the rings of gold and bring them to me." He received the gold from their hand and made a golden calf.

They said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.[1]

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people."[2]

Moses went down from the mountain with the two tablets[3] of the testimony[4] in his hand. The tablets were the work of God; the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. As soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

He took the calf and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me." All the sons of Levi gathered around him.

The next day, Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up on Mount Sinai. "If I have found favor in your sight, O LORD, please go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our sin."

And God said: "I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels. The people shall see the work of the LORD."

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony, he did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

Explanatory Notes

[1]Sinful worship practices. [2]Stubborn. [3]Slabs of stone. [4]The Ten Commandments.



He received the gold from their hand and made a golden calf.

For Reflection

1. The people of Israel had time on their hands as they waited for Moses to come down from the mountain. How did they misuse their time?
2. What other gods do we sometimes worship?
3. Because of Jesus, why do we need not fear punishment over the commandments we have broken?

Words to Remember

Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." *1 Corinthians 10:7*

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