**THE GOLDEN CALF**

Sunday School Lesson 10

*Wandering in the Wilderness*

Exodus 32

3/9/2025

**Lesson Review:** Last week, our lesson from Exodus 20 was on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord. First, we noted that the Lord commanded Israel to have a proper \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Him. The Lord requires \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ worship from His followers. The Lord also requires \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to be a part of our worship of Him. This is why He required Israel to keep the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ day. It was not meant to be a punishment toward them. We also noted that the Lord commanded Israel to have a proper relationship with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In Exodus 20:12, the Lord emphasized the proper \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the family – father, mother, children. He also expects for there to be a proper \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the family. The third thing we noted was that the Lord commanded Israel to have a proper respect for their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We are called to love our neighbor. We should make sure that we have a respect for our neighbor’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. There should also be a proper respect for our neighbor’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. A false witness against our neighbor is evil and hurtful. Lastly, we should have a respect for our neighbor’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. There is no reason to covet what they have. We should be content with what the Lord has given us. For today’s lesson, we are jumping forward to Exodus 32 where we find a people who have already forgotten who God is and how to worship Him. Instead, they choose to create a golden calf and foolishly worship it.

1. **THE PEOPLE FINALLY FOUND THEIR CHANCE TO REBEL AGAINST GOD’S LEADERSHIP.**
2. **Notice that Israel did not seek leadership from Aaron. They demanded for him to make them new gods to go before them.** *Exodus 32:1a And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; 24:14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. 15 And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.* The Lord had left Aaron in charge while He took Moses up into the mountain to speak with him. The people certainly knew that Aaron was in charge. Yet, they had no desire to follow Aaron. They did not come to Aaron to inquire of what had happened to Moses. They saw that Moses had delayed, and they took that delay as their opportunity to rebel against God. This had been in their hearts the whole time. They refused to follow Moses, and they regularly questioned and doubted God. They wanted Aaron to make them new gods to lead them. It’s likely that they thought that God had taken too long.
3. **Notice that the people were ready to leave Moses behind, even though he had brought them out of Egypt. They showed no concern for his well-being.** *Exodus 32:1b for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 11 And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?* In one verse, we see the people ready to cast aside Moses. They did not know what became of him, and they weren’t going to bother to find out. They even acknowledged that he was the one who had brought them out of Egypt. Perhaps, they were saying this in a derogatory manner because many of them would have chosen to go back to Egypt if they had the chance. On the other hand, when God was ready to destroy Israel, Moses interceded on their behalf. Moses provides us with a great example of leadership.
4. **Notice that the people had just agreed to obey the Lord, and they were already looking to break the command that He had given to them.** *Exodus 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 24:3b and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.* What’s incredible is that their request went against the first thing that God spoke to them about. He told them not to go after gods and not to make any images of Him. In Exodus 24, we see that they clearly agreed to follow the Lord’s commands. It seems that there agreement was in word only. It’s not a coincidence that their request defied His first commands. They were turning their backs on God and breaking their covenant that they had made with Him. They were a very stubborn people.
5. **AARON SQUANDERED HIS CHANCE AT LEADERSHIP BY GIVING IN TO THE PEOPLE.**
6. **Notice that while Aaron did not agree with the people, he did nothing to stand up to them and stop them from their foolishness.** *Exodus 32:3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4b And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: 21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? 22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.* When the people made their request unto Aaron, he could have and should have stood up to them. Instead, he went along with their request. He knew that they were doing wrong and were set on mischief, but he was likely afraid of the repercussions of standing up to them. This is why Moses asked Aaron what the people had done to him to make him do such a thing. Moses could not comprehend why Aaron would agree to create this golden calf. We do not even find that the people threatened Aaron. It is interesting to think about Aaron’s weak leadership when we consider how Moses relied upon his brother.
7. **Notice that Aaron tried to blend their idolatrous worship with the worship of the true God.** *Exodus 32:4b and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord.* When the people saw the golden calf that Aaron made, they declared that the golden calf was the god that brought them out of Egypt. The Egyptians were known for having many idols that they worshipped as gods. One very common idol that they worshipped was a bull. It seems that Israel was embracing the paganism of the Egyptians. Aaron did not agree that the calf was their god. Instead, he told them to make a feast unto the Lord. Aaron was trying to blend their false worship with the true God. Of course, we know that this is an abomination to the Lord. He hates false, idolatrous worship. Aaron was trying to ride the line between what he knew was right and what he knew would make the people happy. A good leader does not operate in such a way. A good leader will commit himself to doing that which is right. He will not squander opportunities to follow God.
8. **THE PEOPLE HAD WASTED SO MANY PREVIOUS CHANCES TO WORSHIP GOD PROPERLY.**
9. **Notice that this was the first time that the people had sung since the crossing of the Red Sea.** *Exodus 32:6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* Throughout the wilderness journey, the children of Israel had been a complaining and unhappy people. They rarely praised God or celebrated what He had done. The last time that we saw them praising God was when they crossed over the Red Sea. They sang songs of praise unto the Lord. Yet, those songs did not last. Imagine the anger of the Lord when He hears them singing happily to a golden calf. How incredibly hurtful and disrespectful must that have been! This is a sad picture of how many Christians behave today. We have so many opportunities to praise and thank God, but we end up showing more appreciation toward others. We end up finding more happiness in all the wrong places than we do in God. Of course, their worship was sensual and foolish. The people danced nakedly as they supposedly “worshipped” their god. Satan loves for people to create a sensual, foolish worship. He knows that it is empty and vain.
10. **Notice that the people had so many opportunities to see God and His presence, but they still chose to create some visible image of a “god” instead.** *Exodus 24:9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: 10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. 16:7 And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord;* God wanted the people to see His glory and His presence. We have seen that throughout this lesson series. Unfortunately, the people did not really want to see God. When we consider why they made a golden calf, many people argue that they made it because people feel a need to want to see God. This is not true in this case. They did not want to see God. They wanted to make their own image of what God should look like to them. The presence of the true God was too frightening for them! As a result of their filthiness and rebellion, they ran away from His presence.