

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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How Will You Worship the Next Time? (Part 5)

Exodus 24:1-2, 9-11

Last month we finished up with some thoughts about The Contributors to the Mixed Up Worship. We will pick up with that discussion now. Exodus 32:1 states plainly that the people came to Aaron and demanded that he make gods that they could see. They apparently were tired of living by faith and being different from the Egyptians. The Egyptians had a host of gods, each represented by an idol of some kind. The Israelites wanted what everyone else had. Even though they heard God Himself speak the ten commandments, and even though they received some other commands from Moses after they said that it was too much to hear directly from God, they refused to obey God. They said in Exodus 24:3, *“All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.”* This would involve the ten commandments that they themselves heard God speak in Exodus 20:1-17, and also what God told Moses from Exodus 20:22-23:33. They heard God Himself, and Moses repeating what God said, said that they would obey, and then did not obey and asked Aaron to make a god that they could see. They were directly disobeying God and God’s man. They also were going back on their promise to obey God.

It was bad enough that the people wanted an idol, but it is even more unbelievable that Aaron would do what they wanted. I am not sure where the 70 elders fit in the account, but since they are not recorded as trying to stop the idolatry, I include them in this sin. They could have been among those asking for the idol, and they could have helped Aaron in fashioning the idol. But nothing in the passage indicates that they tried to stop Aaron or did not participate in the idolatry. It is bad enough that the people wanted the idol, but it is worse that Aaron and the 70 elders made it. The people had heard

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God from the mountain, but Aaron and the 70 elders had both heard and seen God. We covered in detail the events of Exodus 24 where it says twice, *“They saw God.”* Aaron and the 70 saw God to some extent, so they knew that nothing on earth, even made with gold, could represent God. They had also heard the commandment not to make an image to supposedly represent God. The people’s desire was wrong, but Aaron’s deed was doubly wrong. He had seen God. Why would he give in to what the people wanted? Could fear of death be enough to make him forget what he had heard and seen and give in to what the people wanted? I do not know. It is beyond my comprehension to try to understand Aaron’s actions. I would like to think that his sight of God would have been enough to rebuke the people for their desire and refuse to make the idol for them. But it was not. He gave the people what they wanted. In this episode, Aaron is a sad character. He shows no desire to stand up for what is right, and no desire to rebuke the people’s sin. But his attitude and actions are still prevalent today. There is much application to make at this point, but let us go on to the other parts of this Mixed Up Worship. We will try to make some application on several points at one time.

We have mentioned some of this already, but notice The Circumstances in the Mixed Up Worship. Exodus 32 begins by saying, *“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount.”* It must be understood that the thought of Moses being delayed is from the viewpoint of the people. Remember the sentence begins with *“the people saw.”* It is in the minds of the people that Moses is taking a long time. However, God had never told the people or Moses how long it would take. Back in Exodus 24:18 we are told that Moses would be in the mount for forty days and nights. However, that is recorded when Exodus was written which was after these events had occurred. The people did not know that it would be forty days. Moses would return when God was finished giving the law. The people should have responded with patience and an attitude of worship, not with impatience and a desire for idolatry.

It is interesting that the root meaning of the word delayed is “to be ashamed and disappointed.” It is the same word used in Genesis 2:25 where the Bible says that Adam and Eve were naked “*and were not ashamed.*” Perhaps the people were wondering, “How many laws will we have to obey?” “Does God think that we are bad enough to keep Moses up there this long?” I do not know everything that the people were thinking, but because of their desire that is expressed later in the verse, I think that their view of Moses’ delay is a result of their disappointment and shame in the laws that Moses was receiving. I think their idolatry was perhaps a result of their perception that God was being too hard. They wanted an easy way. They did not want to obey a bunch of rules.

What I have just stated is the modern mentality of most people. I grew up with children and young people saying, “Why do we have all of these rules?” To be honest, the rules never bothered me, whether they were my parents’ rules, the school’s rules, or the church’s rules. I knew enough to realize that my parents, school, and church were only trying to protect us from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sadly, most of those who complained about the rules are no longer in church and following God. If they are in church, it is a church that lets them live the way they want to live. There is a major problem with someone not wanting to obey rules. It is a problem of the heart. As we see here, and in what we have mentioned from earlier chapters in Exodus, God is a God of rules. He expects His people to live a certain way, and He will tell them what to do and what they are not to do. I would not use this as the only description of the Bible, but it is true to a great extent—the Bible is a rule book. Much of the Bible does give specific commands to the believer as to what God expects of His people. The Bible is not just a rule book. There is much comfort and blessing that comes when we read and study it. But you will not read it long until you find that there are rules that God expects us to obey, and there are consequences if we do not obey them. For one to say that he wants a religion or denomination without rules is to say, whether he realizes it or not, that he wants a religion without the true God and without the true

Word of God. You can find religions and denominations that say you can live any way that you want, but they are not true to the Bible. God’s Word tells us how we should live our life. A true believer will desire to find out what God wants and will endeavor to live a life that is pleasing to God. He will stumble along the way because he still has a sin nature, but his overall attitude will be one that wants to obey everything that God says.

Something else that we can discern about the people is an attitude of impatience. We mentioned it in passing earlier, but we need to focus on it again now because impatience is a sin that all of us must deal with from time to time. Remember, God never told them how long they would be at Sinai. He never told them how long Moses would be on the mount. What we do know is that God had some instructions to give to Moses and the nation. What we do know is that three times the people said that they would obey all that God had said (Exodus 19:8; 24:3; 24:7). It did not matter how long Moses was gone. The people should have obeyed God and kept their promise to Him and not desired an idol. Their impatience with God led them into idolatry.

Impatience is always wrong. We must realize and keep before us that God is always right and always does everything right at the right time. One thing that I have learned and have tried to remember is that God’s clock does not always run like my clock and God’s calendar does not always work like my calendar. His ways are beyond mine. One vivid example of impatience in the Bible is Abraham and Sarah. God told them that they would have a child. For whatever reason, Sarah thought that it should have happened already, and following the example of the people around her, suggested to Abraham that he have a child with Hagar. Abraham should have said no, but he went along with the idea and had Ishmael with Hagar. That was never God’s plan. The son was to be between Abraham and Sarah. They became impatient with God and caused problems between Sarah and Hagar and between Isaac and Ishmael. The problems in the Middle East today between the Arabs and Israelis are a result of Abraham and

Sarah's impatience. Impatience is always wrong and always results in great problems. We must be patient with God. He knows what He is doing.

Something else is said by the people that has always intrigued me. At the end of the verse they say, "*We wot not what is become of him.*" The word wot means "to know." Part of me wants to make fun of the people because they say that they do not know what happened to Moses. They do know what happened to him—he is on the mountain. He is there because they could not tolerate hearing directly from God. I have mentioned this, but have yet to quote the verse. Notice Exodus 20:19, "*And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*" That always struck me as an odd thing to say. They had just heard God speak, but did not die. Why did they think they were going to die if He continued to speak to them? Also, God wanted them to hear Him. Did they not think that He would keep them alive, so they could obey what He was telling them? Somehow it seems to me that it was a lack of faith on their part. Nevertheless, Moses goes up the mountain on more than one occasion. Now they say they do not know what happened to him. We will continue next month.