

## Mistakes At The Foot Of The Mountain (Exod. 32) Pleasant Plains 5-1-2016PM NICK ANGEL

- **\*Read Exodus 32:1-10\*** By the time we arrive at the foot of Mt. Sinai here in **Exodus 32**, Moses and Joshua have been up on the mountain for some lengthy amount of time. In fact, it had to be long enough for God to share with him the many ordinances that were contained in the Law. All the way back in **Exodus 24:12**, we see the Lord tell Moses to come up to Him on the mountain and spend some time with Him. Fast forward to **Chapter 32** and the people are still waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain.
- As was the pattern with this people...when they had any time to themselves, they were bound to get into some kind of trouble. This instance was no exception. In our opening text, in just 10 short verses, these people have angered the Lord to such an extent that God says that He is basically going to destroy these people and start all over again with Moses and Joshua. Thankfully, Moses was able to talk God off of His total destruction of the people, but the Lord did not spare them all together.
- The Levites were called together by Moses and they went about and killed those men that continued to behave wickedly in the sight of God. 3,000 men were killed in that one day. **(32:25-28)** Even beyond that, God continued to punish those who had transgressed against Him at the foot of the mountain.
- This is a pretty intense chapter filled with a lot of action and much death. What caused all of this to take place? What would God's anger be so greatly kindled against His chosen people? There were some great mistakes that were made at the foot of the Mt. Sinai. This evening, I would like for us to boil the happenings of this chapter down to 4 mistakes that were made so that by the people and Aaron during this chapter. Each of these mistake leave us with some important lessons for us to learn.

### **I. The people lacked patience.**

- A. It seems from **Exodus 24:18** that Moses was on the mountain for 40 days and nights, and apparently the people thought this was too long for him to be gone. The people lose their patience with Moses and God and demand that another God be made for them. **(32:1)**
- B. We will talk a little more about this god that they make in a moment, but for now let's just focus on the fact that these people just flat out were tired of waiting on the Lord and Moses to come back to them. It has become apparent to us through the read of these people on this journey that they were not a people of great patience whatsoever. They were a impatient people, and per usual, when people become impatient... they usually make poor decisions and this chapter is no exception.
- C. The impatience of the people led them to foolishly create this idol and nothing could anger God more than for His people to break one of the first 2 commands that would be contained within His Holy Law. Their impatient minds didn't allow for them to trust in God in His time.
- D. How easy is it for us to do the same thing today? It is easy for us to become impatient with things in this life. Maybe we're waiting for a good opportunity to present itself for us. Maybe we pray about it...We wait for it...we keep waiting for it...but we never seem that good thing coming our way. Its easy for us to become impatient and maybe take matters into our own hands and do something foolishly. Maybe its a work opportunity. We keep our heads down and try to do what is right, but we see another person prosper even though they don't do things the honorable way. What is the temptation? To leave the straight and narrow and do whatever we have to do in order to get ours right? David would write in **Psalms 37** that we be better than that. **(Psalms 37:7-11)**
- E. It might shock some people to find out that "Patience is a virtue" isn't actually in the Bible. But **Romans 12:12** is, and Paul tells us to "**rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.**" May we learn from the impatient of this people so that we don't make the same mistake.

### **II. The people made God into their own image.**

- A. The impatience of the people led them to beg Aaron to make for them a god that would lead them from here on out. To these people, it seemed as if Jehovah and abandoned them. They wanted not just a new leader, but a leader that they could see and observe. Thus, we see the golden calf being born from the gold which was collected from the people.
- B. We might shake our heads and scoff at the people for this obvious mistake, but let's consider the fact that this would have been something that wasn't so far fetched to these people as it might be to us. We must remember that these people had lived in Egypt for generations and they were immersed in a culture of idolatry and carved and molten images. Not only had they come out of a place where idols were common place, but the land they were going and traveling through was deep in idol worship.
- C. Even more evidence to connect this action to Egypt was the choice of a calf. Calves/bulls were symbols of strength and fertility, so what better to represent the God that had brought them out of slavery than a bull. Thus, we have the people wanting to fashion a god for themselves, and the result is a golden calf that was supposed to represent the almighty God of heaven. Their background in Egypt and their experiences helps us to see how this happened, yet, it does not at all excuse their poor decision.

- D. While we don't see many who are fashioning golden calves today, we do see many who try to fashion God into something that He just isn't. Some try to make God into nothing more than a supernatural hippie who loves and accepts everyone unconditionally. Others try to shape God into grumpy and hateful ogre who will kill anyone at the drop of a hat. Still others try to shape God into a God who calls all of the shots and doesn't give any else a say in their salvation or decisions.
- E. None of these images of God are accurate according to the Bible. While God does love everyone, He is also a God of severity to those who do not obey Him (**Rom. 11:22**), He is long suffering and doesn't desire for anyone to perish. (**II Pet. 3:9**) God will not unfairly judge us, but He will repay all of us based upon our deeds. (**Rom. 2:6**) May we not make the same terrible mistakes that these people made and try to shape God into someone that He just isn't.

### III. The leadership failed to stand against sin.

- A. What we have with this occasion is a classic case of peer pressure. The people grew restless and impatient and they go to their leader and demand that he do something about them "Not having a god". Nothing in the text gives us any indication that Aaron tried to reason with the people, or that he prayed to God and asked for guidance.
- B. Instead, it seems that right away, Aaron gave into the people's demands. Yet, not only did he give into the people's demands, but he took an active part in the idolatry that the people wanted to partake in. Aaron tells the people to give to him their gold rings, he put together a mold of some sort, and then he created the golden calf. (**32:1-4**)
- C. Then Aaron took it a step farther and declared that the golden calf was actually God. He even instituted a feast that was to take place for the golden calf. The people feasted, brought offerings, and then they rose up to play. God says to Moses that the people had corrupted themselves. (**32:5-7**) All of this was done by the people and the result from **v.25** is that Israel was made a mockery by the nations that were around them.
- D. Aaron's great failure in his role as a leader for Israel should serve as a great reminder to those of us who are in leadership roles of what can happen when those in those positions fail to stand up for the right thing and give into sin. Shepherds, preachers, parents, and others are charged with the responsibility to make sure that those they watch over stay free from danger and sin. (**Heb. 13:17**) We must be true to not give into the pressure that might be pushed upon us by those who want to get involved in things that we ought not be involved in. If we fail to be transformed into the image that God would have us be and instead give into the conformity of this world then the results can be disastrous. (**Rom. 12:2**)
- E. Because of Aaron's failure to stand strong against sin many of the people who were put in his charge were punished and killed because of the sin that he let take place under his watch. What a humbling reminder for all of us who are in positions of leadership to never allow peer pressure to push us to a place where we give opportunity for sin to take hold.

### IV. The leadership made excuses for sin.

- A. After Moses and Joshua come back down from Mt. Sinai, Moses questions Aaron concerning what could have been going through his mind for him to allow these things to have taken place. (**32:21**)
- B. Aaron responds with nothing but excuses. First concerning the people's actions... Aaron says that there was nothing he could do to stop the people from doing what they did because he said that they were "prone to evil." (**32:22**) Furthermore, concerning the calf... Aaron tried to explain this away by saying that he just threw in the gold and out popped this golden calf.
- C. Neither of these excuses were legitimate, or worthy of God overlooking the sin that had taken place within the camp of Israel. The people and Aaron still sinned against God, and they were going to be held accountable for it, and they paid the price with their lives. (**32:25-28**)
- D. When mistakes are made, it is always a temptation for us to try and make excuses and not make a big deal out of the mistakes and sin that have been made and committed. We must recognize the how much God hates sins and how much He will not allow for it to be a part of His people. Leaders must do everything within their power to not allow sin in the first place, and if it happens then we need to own it and do what is necessary to rectify it.

This chapter in the journey of the children of Israel is certainly full of lessons for us to consider. Plenty of blame can be laid on everyone involved, and at the end of the day, it must be evident to us that God demands respect and obedience, and when those things are missing... bad things happen. May God help us to be patient, to respect Him for who He is, and may God help us who are leaders to lead in the godly way that He demands of us.