

## **WORSHIPPING THE GOLDEN CALF.**

– EX. 32:1-6, 30-35. – JULY 27. –

**"Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." – Ex. 20:3.**

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS became the foundation, or basis, of the Law Covenant between God and Israel – Moses being the Mediator. These commandments were written on parchment, and added to them were about seventy enactments, or explanations in accord with them, based upon them, and these all, recorded in Exodus 20-23, constituted what was termed the Book of the Covenant. After the people had assented to the Law and the Covenant based upon it, Moses killed an animal, which represented himself, the Mediator of that Covenant, and he sprinkled the blood of the animal upon the Book of the Covenant, which represented the Lord and his faithfulness to all of his promises; and he sprinkled of the blood also upon the people – probably not upon the two millions, but upon representatives of the whole, the heads or chiefs of the tribes. Thus in type, or symbol, Moses stood pledged to God on behalf of the people, and to the people on behalf of God that the provisions on both sides should be carried out.

It was after this solemn and significant ceremony, that by the Lord's direction Moses went up into the mountain as the people's representative – for communion with the Lord, and to receive from him the Decalogue written on tables of stone, which the Jews traditionally claim were of sapphire. His mission lasted forty days.

This absence of their leader, in whom they reposed great confidence, might have resulted in great blessing to the Israelites had they been in a proper condition of heart. Altho, under the circumstances, forty days – nearly six weeks – would seem to be quite a considerable absence, without communication, it might have had the effect of impressing upon the minds of the people the fact that, after all, not Moses but God was their leader, and that he had merely used

Moses thus far as his servant, and that if anything had befallen this servant the Lord, who had begun the good work of their deliverance, in fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was abundantly able to provide them another leader, and that nothing could have happened to Moses aside from divine foreknowledge and ability to prevent. This would have been a great lesson of faith and patience, beneficial to them for the remainder of life. But, instead, they had "an evil heart of unbelief," which quickly forgot the Lord's deliverance from the Egyptians, his leading through the Red Sea, the destruction of the hosts of Pharaoh in pursuit of them, the Covenant promise which he had just executed with them, and the manna which they were gathering daily; all these mercies of God were evidently underestimated – not fully and rightly appreciated, and their measurable unthankfulness and ingratitude became the basis of their fall into sin and idolatry, in gross violation of the covenant they had just made.

Ingratitude toward God would naturally mean ingratitude toward the servant whom he had used for their deliverance; hence the disrespectful language in which they referred to their great deliverer as "this [R3046 : page 221] Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt" – the man who was to lead us into the land of promise, and who now has gotten lost himself in the mountain. The wide difference between the character and disposition of Moses and that of the majority of the Israelites is shown by the fact that at this very time, while they were thus speaking lightly of him, Moses was importuning the Lord for them. The Lord made known to Moses in the mountain that Israel had gotten into serious sin, and by way of testing his fidelity as their appointed mediator, whose blood had typically sprinkled the people and thus pledged itself on their behalf, the Lord proposed to him the blotting out of the entire nation of Israel, and the taking of Moses as the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the head of a new nation. But faithfully Moses had plead for those whom he represented. He thus showed himself a worthy type of the great

Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus our Lord, who has made mediation for the sins of the people – reconciliation through his blood.

The conduct of the Israelites in this matter shows up the weaknesses of the fallen human nature. They wanted to worship, and they desired to gratify this natural inclination in connection with fallen tendencies. They would worship God, but they would have an outward emblem or sign representing him – additionally, no doubt, they craved some gratification of lewdness and licentiousness, which were marked elements of the idolatrous worship of Egypt, with which for a long time they had been in contact. They appealed to Aaron, Moses' brother, as second in command of the host – telling him of their religious sentiments, their desires for worship, their need of some external sign or representation of God, and that this was the more necessary in view of the long absence of Moses and the possibility that he would never return to the leadership, and that the people must have something upon which to center their attention, either a living man representing God, or an idol, an image, representing him, etc., etc. The weakness of Aaron, in contrast with the strength of his brother Moses, is very markedly shown in this incident, and clearly exemplifies the wisdom of God in the choice of Moses to be the leader of the people, even tho at the outset the latter in meekness ignored his own abilities and suggested to the Lord his brother Aaron for the leader.

Whether Aaron really entered into the spirit of the people, and concluded with the leaders who appealed to him that it would be the wisest thing to make the image, or whether he did it as an expedient to hold the people in check until Moses' return, by conceding the demands which he really did not approve, we are unable to determine. It is possible that his course in calling for the earrings, etc., was first of all with a view to dissuading the people from the course suggested, by making it cost them considerable sacrifice in the way of their personal adornments. It may be, too, that he trusted that during the time necessary to the engraving of the moulds, the melting of the jewels, and the moulding of the calf, Moses would appear and re-

assume the leadership and command the people. However, whatever were his thoughts and motives, he displayed a weakness of character far from commendable, one [R3047 : page 221] which should teach all who providentially come into places of influence and power amongst God's people, that there is but one right way to do; namely, not to participate in sin – not to become a participator in wrong, but meekly yet firmly to stand up for principle, for righteousness, at any cost – leaving the results with the Lord without fear, knowing that he is the real Leader of the people, and that attempts to compromise with wrong would be at the expense of divine approval, and therefore too costly to be considered for a moment.

The golden calf having been made, the next thing in order, of course, would be an altar for sacrificing to it, which accordingly was made, and then the program of a "feast to Jehovah." This shows that the idolatry here started was not different from the kind practiced today in Christian churches, where images, pictures, crucifixes, etc., are worshiped. Those who use these assure us that they do not worship the crucifixes, statues, etc., but merely use these as symbols or emblems of the Lord, and that their worship is to him. So evidently the Israelites were not worshiping the golden calf as being their god, but as merely to represent God; for the program which drew them together to the worship distinctly specified that it was a feast unto Jehovah – altho Jehovah did not acknowledge their feast nor accept the worship connected therewith, because it was in violation of the principles and regulations which he had enjoined.

Full of religious fervor, the people arose early on the morning of the feast, offering to the Lord burnt offerings which he could not accept, and peace offerings under conditions upon which he could not be at peace. The burnt offerings were entirely consumed, but the peace offerings were eaten by the people, and constituted their feast. The day was given up to revelry; they sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play – dances and supposedly lewd conduct, after the manner of heathen, – professedly to the honor of God. It was at this juncture, at

the close of the forty days, that Moses reappeared in their midst, and soon caused consternation by his proper and emphatic denunciation of the proceedings and of all who were instrumental in their inauguration. As he came down from the mountain he heard the shouts of the people, but discerned that they did not indicate either victory or dispute in warfare, but rather that they were voices of singing and revelry, and as he came in sight of the golden calf and the idolatrous worship, and realized how quickly and grossly the people had violated the divine command on the subject, he dashed the tables of the Law upon the rocks and broke them in fragments – symbolically thus intimating an illustration of the failure of Israel to keep the Law, and ultimately the complete failure of the Law Covenant, as we know it did fail in respect to Israel in general at our Lord's first advent.

The revelers were disquieted by the appearance of the great commander and his indignant rebuke of **[R3047 : page 222]** their irreligious fervor. Aaron came in for his share of this, but promptly acknowledged his error, pleading as an excuse the demands of the people, his own weakness in the matter being too evident to require pleading. The one man stood up against a nation of two millions of people, denounced their sin, announced himself as being on the side of the Lord and thoroughly opposed to such infractions of his Law, and called upon such of the people as were on the Lord's side to desist from sin and come to his side in opposition to it. Altho overmastered and cowed in the presence of their God-appointed leader, the chief men of all the tribes except one seem to have resented Moses' reproofs. That one tribe was the tribe of Levi, typical of the household of faith from which the royal priesthood is now being selected. This tribe, altho to some extent led astray with the rest, and to some extent leaders, through Aaron, in the wrong course, was at heart on the Lord's side; and when the rebuke came and the Lord's will and way were clearly set before them through the Mediator, they promptly came to the side of the Lord on the question. The leaders of the other tribes were not ready to admit that their course was a wrong one, not willing to submit themselves promptly, and the result was the destruction of

about three thousand of the leaders in the wrong way, and the full return of the remainder of Israel into harmony with the Lord and with acknowledgement of their transgression. On the next day after this punishment of the leaders Moses more fully explained to the people the enormity of their sin, and went up again into the mountain, for them, as their representative, to make an atonement for them with the Lord.

This incident well illustrates the general tendency, more or less, of fallen man to substitute something of his own creation, either as instead of the Lord or in addition to the Lord, as an object of worship. The worship of the golden calf symbolizes or pictures in a general and very forceful way the worship of the mammon of wealth, of earthly riches, honor, influence, etc. At our Lord's first advent he found Israel nominally worshipping Jehovah, nominally very zealous of his worship, but really worshipers of mammon, worshipers of riches and honor of men, of dignities and titles, of place and position. The Pharisees, who were confessedly as well as professedly the most religious class of Jews at that time, the holiness people, our Lord accused of "covetousness – which is idolatry" – and in the Emphatic Diaglott translation this statement, "for they were covetous," is rendered, "for they were money-lovers." (Luke 16:14; Col. 3:5.) It was to the whole nation in general, and to the Pharisees in particular, that our Lord declared, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" – thus implying that they were worshipers of the Mammon of wealth in its various forms. Referring to one form of Mammon he again said to them, "How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not that honor which cometh from God only?" He referred to another form of mammon-worship, and the prevalent but erroneous thought that it was compatible with the worship of God, when he said, "Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers," and he denounced such religion and mammon-worship as hypocrisy. The antitypical Mediator, who fulfilled the Law on behalf of true Israelites, and who declared that, so far as that people were concerned, the tables of the Law and the Covenant based upon them were broken, – dashed

to pieces, – fully explained that their difficulty consisted in worshipping the golden calf, worshipping mammon, bowing down to the opinions of men, traditions of the elders; their love of the praise of men and titles, and honor of man, and their love of wealth, had to do largely with their reprehensible course in the sight of the Lord and their inharmony with their Mediator when he appeared. As Moses, the typical mediator, called for those who were on the Lord's side to come to him, so Christ called for all the "Israelites indeed," the household of faith, the Royal Priesthood, to come to him; and as there was in the type a destruction of the leaders of the remainder, so there came a time of trouble upon the remainder of the house of Israel which resulted in the complete overthrow of their national polity, the destruction of their city, etc. And as the typical mediator then went up into the mountain to make reconciliation for their sins, so Christ as the High Priest ascended to make atonement for the sins of the people.

We may draw another lesson still closer to ourselves and in full harmony with the foregoing. We may remember that natural Israel and the first advent of our Lord were patterns of spiritual Israel and the second advent of Christ; that as he came to his own professed Israelites, yet found them unready to receive him, so at his second coming professed spiritual Israel, styled Christendom, will be equally unready to receive him; and that as he found only a remnant of the whole of natural Israel ready for the higher plane of the Gospel age, so in the end of this age he will find only a little flock in all ready for the higher plane of the Kingdom – ready for the change to glory, honor, immortality and joint-heirship with himself and participation in the Kingdom work. As this class was the stone of stumbling and rock of offense to literal Israel, that was but the foreshadowing of how the same class would be a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to spiritual Israel; as it is written, "He shall be for a stone of stumbling and rock of offense, to *both* the house of Israel." As the natural Israelites stumbled because they and their leaders were outwardly loyal to the Lord and his purposes, yet really were selfish and self-willed, and therefore not ready to receive him and to fall in line with

his reproofs and corrections in righteousness, so likewise it will be with the leaders and the masses of nominal spiritual Israel at the second advent of the Lord; so that now, as with Israel, only a remnant will be found, only the Levites – on the side of the Lord; and the time of trouble which came upon natural Israel for its overthrow was typical of the great overthrow and great time of trouble, "such as was not since there was a nation," about to come on nominal Christendom for its complete overthrow as a social financial, political and religious institution. But following this trouble the antitype of Moses will have the full command, and will, indeed, lead the people through the wilderness, and altho during the Millennial age of their leading they will experience **[R3048 : page 223]** chastisements for their wrongdoing, these chastisements will be corrective rather than destructive, to the intent that they may learn well the lesson of our Golden Text, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

We have seen that one of the principal difficulties in the way of Israel at the first advent was the fact that they were mammon worshipers. Is this also illustrative of the condition of nominal spiritual Israel at the present time? Is it, or is it not, true that nominal Israel of to-day blends the worship of God and the worship of Mammon? Is it, or is it not, true that while nominally worshiping Jehovah the vast majority are bowing down to the golden calf of wealth, honor of men, dignity, titles, etc., etc.? We fear that it is only too true that there never was a time when money, influence, power, and honors of men were more exalted or worshiped or more striven for than at present. We are not making wholesale condemnations, nor suggesting that no excuse or allowance should be made in this matter. On the contrary, we would claim that it is true of many to-day, as it was true of Aaron, that they are led, yea, almost forced, into the positions which they occupy in respect to the worship of Mammon, in respect to their obedience and servility to the popular sentiment – to the general craze for the worship of the golden calf; the worship of great human institutions; the worship of wealth; the worship of titles and influence, and the tendency to be



identified with these and in some measure to share in the glory, both by contributing to and by participation in their revels.

It is nearly nineteen centuries since the New Covenant was sealed with the precious blood of our Mediator, and he left his people and ascended up on high, – going up into the mountain, into the presence of God. His absence was longer protracted than had been expected, and meantime many of those who had trusted in him and waited for him and expected his coming again to lead his people into the land of promise, have ceased to expect him, and are claiming that he will not come again to lead and deliver them – are claiming that it is necessary that other leaders should take charge and deliver the people. The heads of the various parties in conference have decided, not that Mammon shall be to them instead of God, but that Mammon shall be the representative of God, to lead the people to success; that Mammon shall convert and civilize the world; that Mammon shall bring in for the groaning creation, in a natural way, the various blessings craved, and cause the earth to blossom as the rose. Meantime the leader whom God had appointed to bring the deliverance returns, is present. He is justly wroth and indignant at present conditions. He has set up his standard of truth and righteousness, and is even now standing at the gate of the camp, and is calling, as did Moses in the type, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him." (Exod. 32:26.) Let all who are truly the Lord's, however much they may have been entangled with the popular fallacies of our day, with its love of money and titles, its selfishness, love of honor of men, etc., – let all of the true-hearted be prompt to take their places on the Lord's side. Shortly the great time of trouble is to begin, which will mean the complete overthrow of all who uphold the worship of Mammon, however much they claim that it is really the worship and service of Jehovah.

Moses as a Mediator showed himself grandly as a man, and beautifully typified the faithfulness of our Lord and Redeemer. How pathetic is Moses' plea – "If thou wilt forgive their sins – ." He left the

sentence incomplete, as tho it were beyond thinking that God could permit such an infraction of the Covenant he had just made. But Moses proceeds and expresses to the Lord his willingness, his preference, that if Israel's sin cannot be forgiven he also may be blotted out of the book of life. We exclaim, Noble man! Pure patriot! And we take to ourselves a lesson of unselfish devotion to others. But when we look from Moses the type, to Jesus the antitype we see the same lesson brought out in a still more pronounced form. The Mediator of the New Covenant realizing that it is impossible for God to forgive sin, to blot out sin, gave his own life as the redemption price for sinners. He actually did what Moses proffered to do and meant, for he gave not merely a prospect of life and a temporary existence such as Moses possessed, but he gave his all, with his rights to eternal life as a man, on our behalf. But tho the Father was pleased with his devotion – indeed, had foreseen it, and had made this arrangement for the cancelation of man's guilt and sentence of death, yet he purposed that the great Mediator of the Covenant, through whose blood – death – it was sealed, should not suffer everlasting extinction, but that on the contrary he would reward him for his nobility and devotion, both to men and to God's Law, by raising him from the dead to a still higher plane of life – to glory, honor and immortality. – Phil. 2:5-11.

And as the Lord said to Moses, "Go now; and lead the people unto the place" designated, so he has appointed that our Mediator who has actually given his life for us and has received the new life with superior power and glory, should be the leader and the commander of the people, and bring whosoever of them wills back into full accord with God, back to the Edenic conditions, the land of promise. But as the Lord said to Moses in respect to the people and their sin, so it will be with mankind; viz., "Their sins shall be visited upon them." They will receive stripes or chastisements in proportion as they participated willingly or knowingly in a course of sin. So it will be during the Millennial age; altho the Lord will forgive the original sin, and remit its penalty of death, nevertheless, to whatever extent men have sinned wilfully, on their own account, against light and knowledge and

opportunity, in that same proportion they are personally responsible, and will be obliged to suffer stripes of chastisements even while being brought by the Redeemer back from the plane of death to the plane of perfection, harmony with God and everlasting life. And those who will not profit by the lessons, who will not obey that great Teacher and Leader, the antitype of Moses, shall be "cut off from amongst the people," as the Lord has declared. – Acts 3:23.

