

A Apostasy:

❖ Aaron's weakness (Exodus 32:1-5)

- Although the Hebrew word *elohim* is the plural of “god,” it is commonly used to refer to the one God: “I am Jehovah your God [*elohim*], who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 20:2).
- In Moses' absence, the people asked Aaron to make them a visible *elohim* whom they could worship. (Ex. 32:1). They had soon forgotten the commandments they had received and their commitment to obey them (Ex. 24:7).
- Aaron's initial hesitation in attempting to negotiate with the people (Ex. 32:2) led him to lead the apostasy rather than eradicate it.
- Instead of reminding them of the prohibition against making idols, Aaron made them a golden calf, and declared, “This is your god [*elohim*] O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!” (Ex. 32:4 MEV).

❖ The Feast of the Calf (Exodus 32:6)

- By making an idol in the shape of a calf, the Israelites reduced the Almighty God to the image of an animal, worshipping the creature instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:23).
- They irrationally thought that a carved image would be capable of leading them. They may even have thought that *elohim* himself had become a calf! (Ex. 32:24)
- In fact, they turned from worshipping God to worshipping demons (Deut. 32:17). While they were worshipping God, they grew morally, for they became like God.
- By worshipping demons, they began to degrade themselves, for they resembled the demons they worshipped.
- When we do not give our hearts to the Creator, but instead serve some other idol (and there are many), sooner or later it will lead us to moral degradation.

❖ The corruption of idolatry (Exodus 32:7-8)

- To bow down before an image (even if it represents God Himself, Christ, or His saints) is to disobey God's Law (Ex. 20:3-6) and, therefore, to enter into sin and corruption.
- What is 21st-century idolatry? Idolatry is worshipping something that replaces God. An idol is anything that captures our imagination, affection, time, and mind more than God, and that enslaves our thinking.
- What idols do we worship? You can make your own list. Some suggestions: pride, money, power, sex, food, work, social media...
- What does worshipping these idols entail? Our personality, way of thinking, emotions, and even our social life are transformed. We exchange authentic relationships with God for hollow and meaningless interactions that cannot save us.

B Intercession:

❖ “Turn from your fierce anger!” (Exodus 32:9-29)

- God told Moses that “Go down, because YOUR people, whom YOU brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.” (Ex. 32:7).
- Moses reacted appropriately: “They are not my people, but yours; it was not I who brought them out, but you” (Ex. 32:11). God was asking him to let him destroy Israel (Exod. 32:10), but Moses refused to grant such permission.
- God's wrath was just, but Moses knew that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13). After interceding for Israel, and confident that God had appeased his anger, he (angry) descended from the mountain. (Ex. 32:12-15). Seeing the apostasy, he broke the symbol of the covenant: the stone tablets (Ex. 32:19).
- After listening to his brother's weak excuses, Moses acted decisively to stop the rampage (Ex. 32:20-28).

❖ “Blot me out of the book you have written!” (Exodus 32:30-32)

- With his first intercession, Moses prevented the destruction of the people. But it was clear that God could no longer bless them after this sin. Therefore, he decided to make a second intercession (Ex. 32:30).
- Moses was willing to lose his own salvation if the people were not forgiven (Ex. 32:31-32). However, this was not a normal forgiveness Moses was asking for, for he did not use the usual Hebrew word for “forgive.” He asked that God “bear” the people's sin.
- This implied that God would take sin upon himself and bear it, paying its price: death (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 6:23). This is precisely what Jesus did on the cross. He took our sins upon himself so that he could die the death we deserved (1 Pet. 2:24).