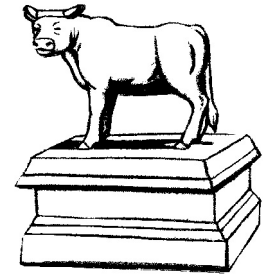


# Church of God Sunday School

## THE GOLDEN CALF

Exodus 24:12 — 34:35



Moses had been gone for forty days and forty nights. He was talking with God and receiving the laws of God for His people. How wonderful it must have been for Moses to spend so much time with God! However, the children of Israel grew tired of waiting for Moses to return from Mount Sinai.

The people went to Aaron and asked him to make "gods [idols], which shall go before us," because they said they did not know what had happened to Moses, their leader. Some might have thought that he had died.

Aaron knew better than to worship idols, but he was moved by the people. He told them to bring him the golden earrings that were in their ears. When he had received them, he melted them down. Then he created an idol "with a graving tool." He made a golden calf! (How do you think God felt when Aaron did that?)

When the people saw the golden calf, they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Aaron built an altar before the calf and proclaimed a feast to the Lord for the next day. How sad and angry that made God!

Early in the morning, the people arose and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings to the golden calf. They sat down and ate and drank. They got up and began singing and dancing around the calf and corrupting themselves in sin. Their sins stirred God!

Up on the mountain, Moses had received God's commandments. God had written them, with His own finger, on two tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18). God told Moses to get down from the mountain, for the people had sinned and were worshiping "a molten calf." God's anger burned so hot against the Israelite people that He was ready to destroy them and make a great nation out of Moses and his children.

But Moses pleaded with the Lord on Israel's behalf. He told God the Egyptians would say that He

had only brought the Israelites out of Egypt to kill them in the mountains. Moses told God to remember His promise to His servants—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: "I will multiply your seed [children] as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." The Lord accepted what Moses said. He turned from the judgment that He would have brought upon Israel.

Moses and Joshua then went down from the

mountain. (Joshua had traveled part way up the mountain and waited while Moses talked with God.) Moses carried the two tables of stone containing God's commandments. Moses and Joshua heard the people shouting.

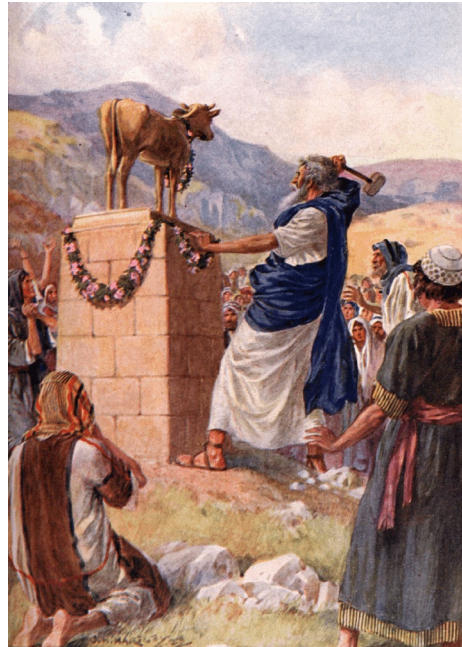
Joshua spoke first. "There is a noise of war in the camp." Moses told Joshua that it was not a shout of victory or a cry of defeat, but it was the sound of people singing.

As Moses drew near the camp, he saw the golden calf. He saw the people dancing and rejoicing. Moses became very angry at Israel! He was furious at how quickly the people had turned to worshipping an idol. How soon they had forgotten all the miracles God

had done for them!

Moses threw down the tables of stone and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then, Moses went right to work. First, he took the calf and burned it in the fire. Next, he ground it into powder. Then, he scattered the powder in the water. But that was not all—Moses made the Israelites drink that water.

Next, Moses dealt with Aaron for making the calf: "What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" Aaron made excuses, saying that the people had asked for gods, so he had given in to them. He said to Moses, "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief." (What kind of a



leader was Aaron?)

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me." All of the sons of Levi gathered around Moses. Then Moses commanded them: "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour."

The sons of Levi did as Moses commanded them. About three thousand men died that day because they had sinned against God.

The following day Moses told the people, "Ye have sinned a great sin." Moses went back to the Lord and pleaded for Israel: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold." Moses asked God to forgive them, but "if not, blot me . . . out of thy book which thou hast written."

The Lord said to Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." The Lord sent a plague on the people "because they made the calf." God also told Moses that He would not go before them, but He would send an angel before them instead. The next time God visited the camp, He would remember and punish them for this sin.

How this sin must have grieved God! He had made Israel His people, but they had rejected Him. So, God turned away from Israel (Acts 7:42), giving them up to the sin of idolatry. This sin would be a plague to Israel for many, many years. When the people heard all that God had said, they mourned. Moses put the tabernacle outside of the camp. All who wanted to seek God had to go outside the camp to the "tabernacle of the congregation."

Moses went into the tabernacle, and the cloudy pillar came down and "stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses." God spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

God told Moses to cut out two tables of stone, like the first ones. God said He would again write on these tables. Moses cut the stone tablets and went, once more, to the top of the mountain to receive God's laws. God descended in a cloud upon the mountain. For another forty days and forty nights, Moses was with the Lord. That time, the people did not complain or try to worship another god.

When Moses talked with God, he asked God, again, to pardon the people's great sin. Moses asked God to come back among them. God agreed to come back among the people if they would worship no other gods.

At last, Moses came down from the mountain. He did not know that his face shone from being in God's presence. The people were afraid to come near him. When they told him how his face shone, he put a veil over his face. Then, he told them all that God had said to him on Mount Sinai.

**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."*  
—Exodus 20:4



**MATCHING**

Draw a line from the name to the words that best describe it

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Moses           | punishment           |
| 2. Aaron           | 10 Commandments      |
| 3. golden calf     | an idol              |
| 4. Israel          | melted for an idol   |
| 5. Joshua          | Moses' brother       |
| 6. tables of stone | used to make an idol |
| 7. golden earrings | Moses' helper        |
| 8. plague          | God's true people    |
| 9. graving tool    | burned in the fire   |
| 10. graven image   | Israel's leader      |

