

REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD

Lesson Aim: To recognize rebellion, show its results and learn the only remedy for it.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson and insert the questions and answers given below for class discussion or for specific application

Introduction: Israel heard Moses recite the LORD's law and agreed to obey it to make a covenant with the LORD. Moses went up Mt Sinai to receive the law from the LORD, which He wrote on two stone tablets. While Moses was in the mount for 40 days, the Israelites told Aaron to make them an image of the LORD, which violated the second command. This was clearly an act of rebellion against the LORD. "If we sin willfully after that we have received the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Heb 10:26-27a).

What is rebellion? 32:1-19

Rebellion against the LORD is to disobey His command. It is the same kind of sin as witchcraft. The LORD told King Saul to destroy all the Amalekites and their possessions for mistreating Israel when it came out of Egypt. He did not do all that the LORD told him and Samuel told him that his sin of rebellion was the same as witchcraft (1 Sam 15:1-23). When Israel made a golden calf to represent the LORD and worshipped it, they broke the very law that they had agreed to obey at the time Moses ascended Mt Sinai to receive the laws from the LORD on tables of stone. They committed the sin of witchcraft, which made the LORD angry. He threatened to abandon them and start a new family with Moses. However, Moses did not agree to this. He said it would not be for the LORD's honor. The LORD used this to test Moses' heart and Moses proved that he was not interested in his glory, but only in the LORD's glory. He had no self interest; he was not rebellious. When Moses came down the mountain and saw the immorality of the people, he broke the stone tables on which the LORD had written His laws. His act symbolized what the Israelites had done to the LORD's law (32:15-19). They were rebellious. How is it with us? Are we interested in the LORD's glory in what we do, or are we interested in our glory. If we seek our glory, we have the spirit that leads to disobedience and rebellion. We must not let that spirit prevail in us.

What is the punishment of rebellion? 32:20-24

Moses broke up the golden calf, burnt it, ground it to powder, spread on the water and made the Israelites drink it (32:20). Then he rebuked Aaron for his part in this sin and did not listen to his lame excuses (32:21-24). We must not tolerate idolatry in our lives and must rebuke it in the lives of fellow believers. Anything that we love more than the LORD is an idol, whether it be an object that we can touch or an idol in our heart. We must destroy it and not make excuses for having it.

What does rebellion do to our fellowship with other believers? 32:25-29

Israel's rebellion brought disunity to the nation. Not everyone worshipped before the golden calf. Some were abhorred by it. When Moses called for those who were on the LORD'S side to separate themselves from their brethren and stand by him, the sons of Levi came forth (32:26). Then Moses gave these men a commandment from the LORD. He told them to kill all those that rebelled by worshipping the golden calf. Their obedience caused about 3,000 men to die (32:27-28). This drastic action was needed before they could ever expect the LORD to return His blessing back to them (32:29). Rebellion destroys unity among the LORD's people. We must not blame the separatists. They are separated from the world and separated to God (Rom 12:2; 1 Jn 2:15-17). They are the LORD's servants that He calls on

to deal with trouble-makers in His churches. They forgive those who give evidence of repentance, but seek the removal of those who refuse to repent. They make it possible for Him to restore His blessings and bring unity and fellowship among the believers. They are the LORD's warriors and He blesses them for their work.

How serious is our rebellion in the LORD's eyes? 32:30-33:3

Even though the sons of Levi killed the most rebellious of the Israelites, this action did not restore the fellowship between Israel and the LORD. As a result, Moses went up the mount to plead earnestly for Israel in order to restore that fellowship (32:30-32), but the LORD'S holiness would not allow Him to fellowship with such stiffnecked people lest He destroy them (32:33 - 33:3). It was better for them that He not be close to them as long as they were not fully repentant. We must not look on our sins of disobedience lightly. Rebellion offends the Lord deeply. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31), We must obey His commands to have fellowship with the LORD.

What is the LORD seeking from those who have rebelled against Him? (33:4-11)

The people heard about the LORD's attitude toward them and it broke their hearts. Many repented of their pride and humbled themselves before the LORD (33:4-6). As a result the Lord allowed those who were sincere to come to Him at the tabernacle of the congregation. Nevertheless, this tent was carried outside the camp by Moses, because some still had a rebellious spirit and the LORD would not dwell in the camp with them (33:7). However, the people saw the pillar of cloud above the tent come into the tent and Moses talked face to face with the LORD, that is, he talked directly to the LORD (33:8-11). So what does this mean to us? The LORD will count us to be rebellious, if we sympathize with those who are rebellious and He will cease to have fellowship with us as well as them. We both must repent of our rebellion with a broken heart before His fellowship will be restored to us. Instead of siding with a rebellious believer, we must separate from him, not treating him as an enemy, but as a brother or sister, so that he or she will feel the loss of fellowship with the LORD and with believers (2 Thes 3:7-15). Hopefully this will cause this believer to repent of his or her rebellion and do it with a humble heart to obey the LORD. Then fellowship with the LORD and His people will be restored (2 Chron 7:14; Jam 4:8-10).

What is the result of fellowship with the LORD? 33:12-23

When one is right with the LORD, fellowship with Him is enriched with joy and many blessings. Moses was in fellowship with the LORD and he asked three things of Him, all of which were granted. First, he asked the Lord to show him His way (33:13). The LORD promised to be with him and bring him rest, that is, he and the Israelites would be brought to the Promised Land (33:14). Second, he wanted the LORD to confirm His promise to go with him, because without His presence and grace, he would surely fail. The LORD graciously confirmed it (33:15-17). Third, Moses asked to see the glory of the LORD and once again the LORD granted his request after making certain limitations and necessary preparations for Moses' safety (33:18-23). There is a place of fellowship with LORD. We must seek that place with humility and obedience so we can enjoy the fellowship of the LORD and receive answers to our prayers.