

GOLDEN CALF

Exodus 32

Lesson Memory Verse: John 4:24 "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Lesson Aim: To show the students that there are two types of worship in this world: the true and the false. Therefore, they should be taught how to worship God in the true way.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY - HE - SEE - WE - BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): A story is told about a man who went to church with an angel as his guide. Every seat in the church was filled, but there was something strange about it all. The organist moved his fingers over the keys, but no music came forth from the pipes. The choir arose to sing, and their lips moved, but not a sound was heard. The pastor stepped to the pulpit to read the Scriptures, but not a verse was heard. The congregation joined in repeating the prayer, but as they sat with heads bowed and with lips moving, nothing was heard. The pastor again stepped to the pulpit, and went through all the motions of preaching, but the man with the angel heard nothing.

So he turned to the angel and said, "What does this mean? I see that a service is being held, but I hear nothing."

The angel replied, "You hear nothing because there is nothing to be heard. You are seeing this service just as God sees it. These people are not putting their hearts into it, and so God hears nothing. He hears only that which comes from the heart, and not that which comes from the lips only." God wants Christians to worship Him in spirit, which is the true way to worship Him.

HE (for Authority): Jesus tells us how we are to worship God in the true way. Open your Bible to our memory verse in John 4:24. (Have one of the students read it.) When Jesus says, "God is a Spirit," it means that God does not have a body. He is like wind in that respect. You cannot see the wind, but you can feel it, and you can see it moving the leaves in the trees. God is like this, but He is more than this, because He is a person, and the wind is not. So then, when we worship God, we must worship Him "in spirit" because He is Spirit. This means we must worship Him with an attitude of love and joy for Him and for the things that He has done for us. God's Holy Spirit is the One who helps us have this attitude, because He gives us love and joy (Gal 5:22, 23).

Our memory verse also says we must worship Him "in truth." We worship God without images or pictures of Him, because no one has seen Him. He is invisible. If someone makes an image of the true God like so many false religions make of their gods, it would not please Him, because it would not tell the truth about Him. It would be like someone putting a picture of some ugly looking creature on Facebook and putting your name with it. We must worship God according to the truth that we find about Him in the Scriptures. We worship Him because He is with us wherever we go. We worship Him because He loves us and wants us to be with Him forever. We worship Him because He is so powerful that He created all things, even the planets and the stars. We worship Him, because He will forgive our sins when we repent and receive Jesus as our Savior. We must worship God in the truth that we know about Him.

WE: You can fool me, and you can fool your mother and father, but you can never fool God. He knows when we are worshipping Him with an attitude of love and joy. He knows when we are worshipping Him in truth. True worship of God "in spirit and in truth" is best shown by joyfully serving Him (Mt 4:10).

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

In our lesson today we will see how the people of Israel "worshipped" the Lord in the wrong way and what had to be done to correct it.

I. The Cause of False Worship (32:1-6)

It had taken Israel about 45 days since leaving Egypt to reach the Sinai wilderness. They had heard the law from the Lord at Sinai. Then Moses went up the mountain to receive the law from God on tablets of stone. He was away for 40 days (Ex 24:18). Aaron was left at the camp to watch over Israel. Since Moses

was delayed in the mountain, the people went to Aaron and asked him to make them gods that they could see (32:1). They wanted an image to worship just like the Egyptians. They were not satisfied to worship God in spirit and in truth.

God created man with a desire to worship, but when sin entered his heart, he did not want to worship God in the right way. So Aaron did what the people asked. He took their gold earrings for an offering, and from them he made a golden calf. Aaron was not trying to give them a false god, but just an image of God which they could see and bow down to. Was this worshipping God in truth? (No.) They thought they were worshipping God, but they could not worship Him when they were disobeying the truth that God had told them. Which commandment were they disobeying? (The second commandment - Ex 20:41.)

WE: Whenever we disobey God's Word, it is impossible for us to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. We must confess our sins to God and turn away from them before we can properly worship God.

II. The Curse of False Worship (32:7-10)

God told Moses that the people had corrupted themselves (32:7b). What does it mean to "corrupt themselves?" (It means they had become wicked.) When we worship God in a wrong way, we are corrupt. We are wicked. God had told them not to make any idol (image), but they did it anyway. He calls them a stiff necked people (32:9). What does it mean to be "stiff necked?" (It means they would not bow their heads and obey God's commands.) As a result they were cursed, and God wanted to kill them.

WE: We must not try to worship God with a stiff neck of stubbornness. He will reject our worship and will punish us for disobeying His commands.

III. The Cure of False Worship (32:11-35)

There are three things we must do to worship God in spirit and in truth.

A. Ask for the Forgiveness of God (32:11-14)

Israel had sinned, and God was ready to destroy the whole nation for their false worship, but Moses begged God not to do it. Moses asked God to forgive Israel, and God said He would not destroy them.

WE: We must be forgiven by God for disobeying Him before we can worship Him, because our sins greatly displease Him. But instead of Moses (or Mary), we have Jesus Christ in heaven asking God to forgive us when we confess our sin. The Father will listen to His Son, because He died for our sins. If we confess our sins, trusting in His Son, we will be forgiven so we can worship God. (Ask three children to each read one of these Scripture passages: 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Jn 1:9.)

B. Attack the False Worship of God (32:15-24)

When Moses came down the mountain, he saw the people dancing and singing in nakedness around the golden calf (32:18,19,25). Moses became angry at their false worship and took the two flat stones on which God had written the Ten Commandments, and he cast them down from the mountain. This broke the two precious flat stones which God had given to him (32:19).

WE: This pictures a lesson for us. Whenever we sin, we are breaking God's precious Word. We must be careful not to sin and break His Word.

Then Moses attacked the false worship in another way. He had the golden calf smashed, ground up into powder and sprinkled in the water. Then he made the false worshippers drink that water (32:20).

WE: We must get rid of our false worship. Make sure you do not keep it around to tempt you to sin again. If it is a dirty book, a magazine with sinful pictures, a pack of cigarettes, some illegal drugs, an iPad that you use to see sinful things, what should you do? (Get rid of it.) It will take you away from God.

C. Avoid the False Worshippers of God (32:25-35)

Moses saw these false worshippers were uncontrolled and shameful in their conduct (32:25). So Moses called for the people who loved God and hated sin to come to him. When they did, he told them to destroy all the wicked false worshippers. There was no hope of helping them, and they would corrupt the camp.

WE: We are not to destroy false worshippers today, but we are to stay away from those that want us to worship with them. This is dangerous, because it will lead us to false worship. We should never to accept an invitation from them to join them in their false worship services (2 Cor 6:14-18; 2 Th 3:6,14). A pastor translated 1 Cor 15:33 this way: "Make no mistake about this: bad company is the ruin of good character."

Many of these Israelites agreed and sympathized with the false worshippers who were destroyed, so God would not forgive them. Moses asked God to do so, but God said He would not. Instead He would send sickness to them (32:30-35). God does not approve of anyone that looks kindly on false worship.

WE: God knows our hearts. He knows whether or not we want to worship Him with a right attitude in our hearts. No one can fool God. We need to love God and rejoice in all that He has done for us. The Spirit will help us do this when we are surrendered to Him. When we let Him rule our lives, we will be able to worship God in spirit and in truth.

BE (for Action): How can we worship God in spirit? (We must love God and rejoice in His love for us.) How can we worship God in truth? (We must worship Him sincerely and obey His Word, which is the truth.) We can know God by looking at Jesus' life, because He revealed who God is. When we sin, we cannot worship God in spirit and in truth. Sin will allow false worship to come into our lives. We must ask God for His forgiveness so we can worship God in truth and with the right spirit.

Do you know of some sin in your life that keeps you from worshipping God in spirit and in truth? If so, this is the best time to ask God to forgive you. Then you will be able to worship God with a joyful spirit that is full of love for Him. (Give the children an opportunity to confess their sins to God before you dismiss the class.)