

EVILS OF IDOLATRY (Exodus 32)

I. One breaks a vow to God when being idolatrous.

- A. God made a promise to the Hebrews that if they would obey His voice, they would be his own possession and blessed by God (Exodus 19:5-6).
- B. Notice verse 8.
 - 1. The people said they would do anything God asked of them.
 - 2. All that God asked of them they said.
- C. How quickly they forgot their vow.
 - 1. Moses was gone for a short time and they forgot about God and His hatred of idolatry.
 - 2. They should have remembered God's feelings about idolatry when thinking about Egypt.
 - 3. Everyone of the plagues that God sent against Egypt was aimed at not only the people but one or more of their false gods they worshiped.
 - 4. He was showing His might in comparison to the impotence of the Egyptian false gods.
- D. Today, whenever we put something before God and His kingdom, we commit the sin of idolatry.
 - 1. When we do that we have broken the vow we made to God.
 - 2. When we committed our lives to Him at baptism we essentially said we are putting Him above all else
 - 3. God demands first place and deserves it.

II. Man becomes degraded.

- A. We become like that which we worship.
 - 1. Exodus 32:6 says that the next day they had a feast for the idols and the people "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 10:7 tells us this was idolatry.
 - 3. Many commentators believe that the last phrase, "rose up to play," involves sexual immorality that was prevalent in the worship to idols.
- B. It is interesting to note that the stories behind the idols of old and the Greek and Roman mythology of years past has the gods acting like people.
 - 1. They did the things that most of their creators wanted to do.
 - 2. Thus, because the worshipers believed the gods did those things, they felt they could as well.
- C. Leslie G. Thomas wrote, "People who worship licentious gods become licentious in their lives; people who worship Jehovah sincerely tend to be holy..."
- D. God wants us to be like Him, but we can't be when we are serving something else.

III. God is robbed of His glory.

- A. They pictured God as a cow; how ridiculous is that?

- B. Notice what the Psalmist said...(Psalm 106:19-20).
- C. Part of the mystery of God is the fact we don't know what He looks like.
 - 1. Some people cannot deal with this, so they have to create an image of Him.
 - 2. This, of course, is a great lack of faith on their part.
- D. This was also a problem of the Gentile world (Romans 1:22-28).
- E. God cannot be encompassed in a material object and He is robbed of His majesty when it is attempted.

IV. The consequences of idolatry are great.

- A. It infuriates God (vs. 7-10).
 - 1. God was ready to destroy the Israelites.
 - 2. After all He had done for them, they were quick to turn away from Him, thus incurring His wrath.
- B. It hurts the leaders who really care (vs. 19).
 - 1. Moses could not believe the people were doing what they were doing.
 - 2. He was so angry that he threw down the tablets on which God had written.
 - 3. Elders who care about their flock are hurt and angered when sin comes out in the lives of the sheep over which they tend.
 - 4. Moses had given much effort to lead them and elders who care give much effort in tending the flock and it leaves them saddened and angered that those they lead would act that way.
- C. Punishment always follows (vs. 20, 25-28).
 - 1. People had to drink golden water and 3,000 people lost their lives.
 - 2. Sin deserves and gets punishment.
- D. God's people give ammunition to the enemies of God (vs. 25).
 - 1. We add fuel to the fire of those who hate God.
 - 2. It gives them more reason to not be obedient to God.

From a manuscript by James Meadows in the 1997 ETSOP lectureship book entitled "Studies in Exodus."