

# Lenten Devotional

## 2020

Thursday, April 2, 2020  
Day 32, Exodus 32

### Intercession

*The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." (Exodus 32:30)*

What is going on? How could Israel live through the whole Exodus and see God's glory and then do this? These are questions we are tempted to ask, but shouldn't. We shouldn't because by asking those questions we are falsely placing ourselves on the side of right. You and I don't live on that side of the street. You and I have violated the terms of our covenant with God just as grievously as these people, and we don't have hundreds of years of slavery as an excuse.

All human sin is ultimately idolatry. We place our worship and trust in things—anything—but God. Effectively Israel saw their leader go up on a burning mountain which they saw the Lord descend on and not return (40 days and nights is a long time). We can imagine that they had concluded that things had not gone well with that god (they have shown already a lack of understanding of YHWH). However, there are things that they can do: craft a new god to carry the divine name YHWH and make Aaron the new leader (he's the better talker anyway). This new team will lead them to the long awaited promised land—and maybe with less friction than they had with Moses. No wonder they took time to revel, they had much to celebrate. How often do you and I attribute what belongs to God alone to other things, people, or philosophy? All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

But, God is unique and irreplaceable. He knows exactly what is happening in camp. That thing is nothing but an idol, it cannot save Israel from the wrath of God—remember he alone is to be worshiped. And, so, the wages of sin is death. The tablets lay broken as a symbol of the broken covenant between YHWH and Israel. Brothers kill brothers and 3,000 are laid to death. God wants to start over with a new Abraham type in Moses. How will the story move forward?

In steps Moses. He steps onto the tracks of God's anger and says, "no." These sinful Israelites are God's people, but they are Moses's too. As bad as they are, he loves them. He also loves God. He is just as concerned for God's reputation as he is for Israel's longevity. He take both God and Israel in his heart and refuses to let go. If God is determined to destroy Israel he will have to destroy Moses too and with him the hope of the promise dies. Moses is willing to be cursed for the sake of his kinsmen according to the flesh. He gives up his life to save theirs—thus he is able to make atonement for them and to satisfy God's wrath.

Moses is not the Messiah. He is just a sinful person like you and I. He could intercede for his people, but he couldn't atone for them. But, he points to the one to come, Jesus. Where Moses offered to be cursed for the people, Jesus was cursed. Jesus takes on the Law's just penalty for being violated even though he himself had not violated it. This is what made him uniquely qualified to both intercede for us and atone for us. Thanks be to God.

### Prayer

Saviour, thank you for standing between us and the demands of the Law. Thank you for taking on the just punishment that belongs to us and not you. You have become sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. We can only worship you. Amen.