

AUGUST 7, 1988

THE BROKEN COVENANT

Have you ever had to wait for someone to come back after they have left to go do something. Most of us don't do that very well. We tend to become impatient, especially if we had something that we want to do or somewhere else to go. Five minutes seems like an hour and an hour seems like a day. We start to lose interest in the project if the person is gone for more than two or three days and if it last more than a month, then it is almost as if the person were not coming back. We go about our regular routine and do not let the absence overly influence us.

The Children of Israel had come to the base of Mt. Sinai with Moses and had seen the awesome power of God as the mountain quaked and burned and as the lighting and thunder filled the air. They had been warned not to approach lest they die and they had watched Moses go up on the mountain to talk with God. They waited and they waited some more. A day passed, then a week and then five weeks and they figured that Moses either went down on the other side of the mountain and wasn't coming back or that perhaps he had died on the mountain.

EXODUS 32:1 How many times have you heard people say, "Don't just stand there, do something?" Or maybe you have heard them say, "I'd rather do something, even if it is wrong, than to do nothing." I believe that the church operates on that basis today. We want action! We want to be doing something! Being action oriented is a good trait provided that we do the right thing. The fact that we are impulsive needs to be recognized and we need to make allowances for than in financial matters especially. Our children are often noticed as being impulsive and we as parents are there to tell them, "No, you can't have a .22 rifle, you are only six years old." On the other hand, we do need to be able to take

decisive action in certain situation. Wisdom helps us to sort out when it is best to wait or best to act.

After nearly forty days of Moses being gone and not having the influence of his leadership, the people started to act out of fear and emotion. They demanded action from Aaron. They already knew what they wanted--they wanted evidence of some supernatural assistance and they thought that having an idol would be the answer. "Make us gods" they said, "which will go before us." People want leadership and they will follow a strong leader and will even follow him down the wrong road, knowing that it is the wrong road.

EXODUS 32:2-6 What kind of leadership did Aaron offer? He found which way the crowd was headed and just went along with the crowd. That is NOT leadership. True leadership requires that a person take a stand, even if it is unpopular and say "no" to things that are obviously wrong. It is great if you can get people to do what is right and like it; however, the true test of leadership is getting people to do what is right and not whether you are liked or not. Aaron may have been afraid that the people would attack and maybe even kill him. A true leader must have the attitude of being a sacrificer and not just a survivor.

These people were willing to pay something for supernatural leadership, they were ready to donate their golden earrings to the cause. Maybe Aaron thought that this would discourage them from their demands – it didn't. He had enough gold to make two golden calves and announced to the people that these were their gods that brought them up out of Egypt. Maybe he intend these statues to just represent God to the people. It did not work! The people were ready to

worship the object and, in fact, did. Even though Aaron declared that there would be a feast to the Lord, the fact of the matter was that the people offered sacrifices to the calves.

They did not stop with the sacrifices, they also had a celebration or party which was to eat of the food that was offered to the idols. This was a typical practice and apparently there was nothing particularly wrong with eating at the feast (the error was to whom the offerings were made). The celebration did not stop there, however. We are told that the people rose up to "play" which is just a convenient way of saying that they engaged in an orgy. This practice was typical of the heathen "worship" practice that involved fertility rites. The pagan symbols evoked pagan religious practices.

You know, if something such as this were to happen today, people would just say that the party just got out of hand and it is just one of those things. We just have to overlook this sort of thing--they just had too much to drink or something. Is that a good way to view such an event? **EXODUS 32:7-10** Sin is serious! This particular passage shows us how serious God is about sin. First, notice that God denies association with them. That which is holy cannot be associated with the blatantly unrighteously. God did not call them His people but call them Moses' people. Second, we see that the responsibility is placed directly on the people themselves, "they have corrupted themselves". I was not someone else that came in to lead them astray. They had no one to blame but themselves. So many times we want to find someone else to blame when we do wrong and sometimes that is the case; however, in many cases, the fault is all our own. Third, the people did not waste any time in getting into trouble, they quickly turned aside. This tendency is still around and we see people who felt love and affection for their fellow man during the Sunday morning worship time, having harsh words with

someone who breaks in line at the cafeteria less than an hour later.

This particular action by the people was particularly offensive to God since they set up a replacement for God and gave credit to the substitute for the great things that God had done for them.

Just how serious did God find this sin? He was ready to eliminate all of them and start over with Moses – He would make a great nation from Moses. He didn't do that because Moses was not a selfish man. Moses was not looking for any such honor, he wanted to do what was right for the nation of Israel and the Kingdom of God. This is a mark of a great leader: he doesn't think of his own ambitions but is concerned for his people.