
Friday, March 10, 2023 • Read Exodus 32:1–9

Questions from the Scripture text: What do the people say in v1? To whom do they gather? What do they ask him to make them? Whom do they say brought them up out of Egypt? What do they say about him? What does Aaron tell them to do in v2? What do they do (v3)? What does he make in what way (v4)? What do they say about the calf? What did Aaron build before it (v5)? Unto Whom did he proclaim a feast? When did the people rise the next day (v6)? What did they do in the morning? What did they sit down to do? What did they arise to do? Who sees this (v7)? To whom does He speak? Where does He tell Moses to go? Whose does He now call the people? What does He say they have done to themselves? What else does He say that they have done (v8a)? What did they make (v8b)? What did they say that this was to celebrate (v8c)? What does Yahweh say that He has now seen about this people (v9)?

How does the famous incident of the golden calf connect to our lives today? Exodus 32:1–10 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these ten verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **worship that is according to the desires, designs, or delights of men provokes the hot wrath of God.**

Faith vs. Sight, perception vs reality. v1. We must live by faith (taking God at His Word), not by sight, since it is by God's Word that we are aware of the Lord Jesus in glory, Whom we cannot see (cf. 2Cor 5:6–7). That's the problem in v1. They already have the ten commandments, in addition to all the other instruction. And Moses is literally on the mountain getting the words of God for them.

But they don't see him, and so they come up with a plan to have a visible way of worshiping the invisible God. This constantly threatens Christian churches today. Biblical worship in the New Testament has lost much of the visible. No designated physical structure, no consecrated furniture, no divine decorations, no sacrifices, no anointings, no candles/candle lighting, no incense burning, no designated liturgy, no annual feasts or days, no priestly choirs or musicians. Even the sacraments require just a loaf of bread, a flask of wine, and a flask of water... a meal with a bit of bread and sip of wine, and pouring of a little bit of water. There's much less visible/outward glory in biblical worship, this side of the cross.

Having to worship by faith is a great challenge in Christian worship. Even those who are genuinely regenerated only know Christ by the Spirit's blessing and sustaining their faith; we are led in worship from heaven by Him Whom we believe, though we do not see Him (cf. Heb 2:11–13; Heb 12:22–25; Jn 20:29). And those who are not regenerated by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit cannot know Christ at all. So, there's a perpetual temptation to add that which is visible, that which feels meaningful—to become impatient like Israel at the bottom of the mountain.

Man's wisdom is folly. v2–5. Aaron's plan is to involve the entire community in sacrificial giving. Husbands and fathers are going to lead their families in it. They are going to give gold, which is their best. They are going to give earrings, which are symbolic of devotion and dedication (cf. 21:6). Isn't this wise? Isn't this wonderful?

Isn't this wicked! When man comes up with his own way of worship, however wise and meaningful it seems, what it ends up is producing clever, sincere offense to God.

You might think that the problem is that they are worshiping someone other than Yahweh. You would be wrong. Aaron's declaration at the end of v5 is, "Tomorrow is a feast to Yahweh." They were celebrating a great moment of redemption (v4b) in the name of Yahweh. Analogous practices continue today in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Celebration days of His works of salvation are invented in His Name, with visible traditions that grow up around them. What *the high priest of Israel* started here would plague them for centuries and ultimately destroyed them (cf. 1Ki 12:28, 2Ki 17:20–23). Even the best-seeming worship traditions that were initiated by the highest clergy of church history are idolatry.

Self-directed worship leads to self-indulgent worship. v6. With their manmade religiosities out of the way in the morning (v6a), they proceeded to their favorite part of their new holiday: the holiday meal and the holiday amusements (v6b). Sometimes, self-indulgence is not so overt as gluttony, drunkenness, and frivolity. Sometimes, it's the manufacturing of spiritual/emotional euphoria or sentimental traditions. But it is this temptation to find our pleasure in ourselves rather than in God Himself that the apostle zeroes in upon, when warning about the idolatry of this event. 1Cor 10:7 chooses not the fabrication of the bull but the self-indulgence of the day as the hallmark of the idolatry: "the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

God hates man-made worship. v7–9. The wording of Yahweh's response in v7 is shocking. Suddenly, He's cutting Himself out of the descriptions of Israel's identity and Israel's deliverance. "Your people," He says to Moses. "Whom you brought out of the land of Egypt," He says to Moses.

How to worship is a divine prerogative. If we come up with our own way to worship, we put ourselves in the place of God. We may still be using His Name about it ("tomorrow is a feast to Yahweh"), when in reality God has quit using His own Name about us ("your people whom you brought"). If we will not have Him as the only inventor of worship, then we will not have Him as our identity or our Redeemer. The reality will be that we are our own people, not His—despite all our feelings and words and claims to the contrary.

The Lord summarizes what they have done in v8 and gives a sobering assessment in v9: "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people." In other words, this is not an "honest mistake," but an indicator that despite all that God has done, this desire to have their religion be all about themselves is actually indicative of their core nature, which is their perpetual problem. When we discover that something we thought was ok is actually idolatrous, we would like to think that it is an anomaly. But let us learn to accuse ourselves properly and to recognize that it is a symptom of hardness at the heart of who we are. When we come to the Lord's fury in v10, we will discover just how seriously we ought to take this.

Mercifully, New Testament worship is led by Christ from heaven. It consists almost entirely of the Word, as it is read, sung, prayed, preached, heard. And even the simplicity of the sacraments is designed to turn our attention away from ourselves to Christ. May His Spirit use that reality and this Scripture to direct our worship by Him, depend our worship upon Him, and delight our worship in Him.

Who must determine how we worship? How should we think and feel about the worship that He has commanded? What (WHO!) should be our desire in that worship? How do we know that we have Him (hint: same place we get our instructions)? What habit do you have of preparing for public worship, and reflecting upon public worship, with this in mind?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You that You have saved us for Yourself and given us the right way of worshiping You. We thank You that You Yourself are the identity of Your people, You Yourself are the Savior of Your people, and You Yourself are the reward of Your people. Forgive us our sins and deliver us from all manmade worship we ask, through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP81A "To God Our Strength" or TPH81A "Sing Aloud to God Our Savior"

For more Hopewell @Home devotionals, please visit hpwl.org/hah

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Exodus 32:1-9. These are God's words. No. And the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron. And said to him, come Make us gods that shall go before us. For us for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt.

We do not know what has become of him. An Aaron said to them, break off the golden earrings, which are on the ears of your wives, your sons and your daughters. And bring them to me. So, all the people broke off the golden earrings, which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.

And you received the gold from their hand. Any fashioned it with an engraving tool and made a molded calf. Then they said, this is your god of Israel that brought you out of the land of Egypt. So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it And Aaron made a proclamation and said tomorrow.

Is a feast to Yahweh. Then they rose early on the next day. Offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings and the people. Sat down to eat and drink. And rose up to play. You always said to Moses, go get down. For your people whom you brought out to the land of Egypt of corrupted themselves.

They've turned aside quickly out of the way, which I commanded them. They made themselves a molded calf and worshiped it and sacrifice to it. And said, this is your god of Israel. That brought you out of the land of Egypt. And you always said to Moses, I have seen this people.

And indeed a test. It's stiff neck to people.

So far the reading of god's inspired and They're at work. Important and helpful for us to Notice what led? To this great sin. By Aaron and buy the people, the church with him. And that was that they could no longer see, the one whom God had appointed. To lead them.

Hebrews describes the church in two phases. One is being under Moses as it was a servant in the house. The other as being under Jesus, who is a son over the house? And almost at the very beginning of this church, Moses was up on the mountain where they couldn't see him.

And where, He was gone long enough that they decided. To have church as it were. Of their own accord. When the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain. They gather together to Aaron. They make their proposal. And they say for this Moses the man who brought us up on the land of Egypt.

We do not know what has become of him. Will we have a very similar problem? Don't we? Or maybe not a problem. We are in a similar situation. We do not see the Lord Jesus. Who is the head of the church on earth? As Jesus himself, told the apostles in John, 20 for 29.

The blessed are they who haven't seen believed? How much more blessed are? Those who not having seen? Would believe in the Lord Jesus, or as Peter says by the spirit not having seen him, we love him. And of course, Peter is talking about half of the church at that point because he actually had seen him And yet, we believe in him and we do not see, we love him and we do not see Since the principle of faith, we walk by certainty of what God has said.

We are more sure of the reality that is spoken to us and recorded for us in the scriptures. Then we are of what we can see. We must not walk by sight. It is walking by sight that leads. The nation of Israel here. Or results in is there sinfulness.

That leads them? Is walking by site that is the mechanism by which they're sinfulness leads them. Into worshiping in the manner that seems best. To them. In a matter that God hates no matter that is. We'll see in The next passage. He hates so much that he is ready.

To burn them up entirely in his wrath. Reduce the number of his people back to one. And start over. With Moses. So, we must live by faith. We must Walk by faith. There's a sense in which this is an even greater danger to us now, Biblical worship in the New Testament, has lost much.

Of what was visible and Accessible by our senses, perceptible by our senses. In the Old Testament. There's no designated physical structure. No tabernacle or temple physical, tabernacular, Temple that we can see. There's no consecrated furniture. There are no divine decorations. There are no sacrifices, no anointings. No candles and candlelight no incense burning.

No designated liturgy. No annual feasts or days? No priestly choirs, or musicians. As you hear those things. You probably realize. These are the very things that so many have added back. Into the worship of God. Forgetting about Jesus Christ who is now not on Mount Sinai but on Mount Zion.

As for this Jesus, we do not know what has become of him. He's not visible to us. And so there's the temptation to take that, which is perceptible to the senses that God has removed. So that we might instead worship through Christ that we might have him in his place in our worship.

Not obscured and hidden from our eyes. By. Special structures and special furniture. And decorations and sacrifices the mass. And anointing ceremonies and Candles and candlelight burning incense and and very formal forward liturgy. An annual feast and annual days. Acquires and musicians. All of the things that God removed. So that worship would be by faith.

Led by Christ in Christ joined to Christ and we perceive by the word. Even the sacraments that he has given us, Are much less for outward, glory and perceptibility. Just all you need for all of the sacraments. If you're going to have them all in one service, A loaf of bread, a flask of wine, a flask of water.

A bite of bread and the sip of wine, the pouring out of a little bit of water. There's much less visible or outward glory. Umbilical worship this side of the cross. There's more fullness and there's more efficacy. Because there's Christ. It's all right, at the beginning of our passage.

We see this is extremely relevant to us, isn't it? Doesn't just Some obscure disconnected. Episode in the history of Israel that we read and we taken as historical information, or we struggle, shoulders, and things. How does this supply to us? We are almost in this situation more than they were.

Jesus has gone higher. He is less visible. He's been gone longer. And so, the temptations. To fall into the same center, very strong.

Having to worship my faith is, the challenge, is the essence of Christian worship. Even those who are regenerated, only, no Christ. By the Holy spirit's blessing and sustaining are faith are conviction. Of what his word says. So that we are convinced of what we don't see. For sure, if some things that aren't don't even yet exist,

We're led and worship by Jesus from heaven. Those who are not regenerated. Those who don't have anything. Then the substance of Christian worship isn't perceptible to them. Without faith. They may come. They may have the deeds of their hearts exposed by the word, but largely, the worship itself should be unintelligible to them.

These people are not. There's nothing to it. There's nothing here. The unbeliever should think. Especially the gospel hypocrite. The falsely called Christian should think. Is it coming to a biblical worship service? You're right. There is nothing there. People there who are United to Christ. They are the body. They are the temple.

There's the word of god. Which is something except for to him because he lacks the spiritual life and faith is nothing. But the worship is in heaven, where we are seated with Christ, where we are led by him, where he says, behold on and the children whom you have given me where he declares his father's name to his brethren where he sings, God's, praise.

In the midst of the assembly where he speaks, In the morning is, See that you do not refuse him who speaks from Heaven.

And so this is the real question and worship faith. Versus sight. It is important question because man's wisdom is folly. Aaron's plan. Has Anne appearance of wisdom. He says, break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, your daughters. And bring them to me.

He decides to involve the entire community in sacrificial giving He enlists husbands and fathers. To lead their households in their own houses participation. In the sacrificial giving of the entire community. You directs them to give that which is their very best the gold. Specifically earrings, which we've already seen in chapter 21 and verse 6.

Or symbolic of devotion, and dedication a commitment, that would not be broken. You can see the wheels turning. God is the one to whom our commitment cannot be broken. We have these visible representations of our belonging to our household but we need a visible representation of our belonging to god.

Even God in heaven. I'm glad on the mountain with Moses. Was accommodating the weakness of faith. Lee has been giving, Moses all this time that took so long that they wondered about, it instruction for a tabernacle that had a lot of visible representation. Of God's commitment to them, God's grace, to them, God's presence with them, God's forgiveness of them, God's consecration of them.

He being Yahweh, who sanctifies Israel,

So, what Aaron? Gives them. What he comes up with here in? Verse 2. Looks so why? So wonderful. Looks. In reality, it's so wicked, isn't it? When man comes up with his own way of worship, he usually does not first Come up with. Children's church and laughing, fits and rock bands and things that you can look at and say, That's obviously not worship.

How ridiculous? He usually comes up with things that have an appearance of wisdom. And spiritual meaning. And yet, man's wisdom is, Folly. We might think that the problem is. That they're worshiping someone other than Yahweh. But since we Read your way, where you see. The word represented by all caps as it is, at the end of verse 5, you can hear it in the reading, couldn't you?

Tomorrow is a feast of Yahweh. They were celebrating a great moment of redemption. God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt? Verse 4 and that's God singular. Even though it's No, it's Elohim, which has a plural form but that's how God appears. It is still the one god Yahweh.

Whom they are claiming to worship. Celebrating the great act of his salvation so far. And I'll just practice this continue today and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Annual celebration days of his. Works of salvation are invented in his name. Visible traditions grow up around them.

And this wasn't, Invented by some obscure. Member of some tribe in the nation of israel. This was Instructed by the high priest. The one whom God had just given. Moses on the mountain. Instructions about how to ordain him. The high priest. To put it in historical context. Aaron was the pope of Israel.

I'm boy, did he? Anachronistically fulfill that title.

It was indeed this. Use of a calf this. Announcement. God, who brought you up out of the land of Israel? This institution of a feast unto Yahweh. All of this is repeated by Jericho in the first. First Kings 12:28.

After all that. Had been done the establishing of the kingdom, the establishing of a new kingdom in the North tearing the The nation or most of the nation away from the house of David. There are other things that he could have declared but he uses this line. From Exodus 32.

To show how long standing. Worship tradition. Of the celebration of God's redemption. It was. Well, it stood for a long time further. After durable, and first Kings 12. 1917. Versus 20 to 23 explaining. Writing the epitaph. The words. On the

Gravestone. Of Israel and has been destroyed the northern kingdom. Says they never departed from what gerbone, the son of knee bat led them in. But really, They never departed. From what Aaron, the brother of Moses and the high priest of Israel led them in Wisdom. Is. Even the best seeming worship traditions.

Even initiated by the highest clergy and the nearest to God in church history. Or idolatry are folly. Well, not only as men's wisdom folly. But self-directed worship. Leads to self-indulgent. Worship. They rise early the next day or 6:00 and they get the religious stuff out of the way. David Rose early on the next day.

Offered burnt offerings and offered Pete and brought peace offerings probably while they were offering the The offerings. There were those of them who had spiritual sensibilities and and we're very sincere. Thinking about, yes, we need forgiveness for our sins. There's a substitute, there's a sacrificer's blood. Yes, we have fellowship with God, through the sacrifice of peace offerings and but they get their religiosity out of the way.

And once they're consciences are quieted and their, spiritual sensibilities are satisfied. They could finally get to what they really want to do. The people sat down

to eat and drink and they rose up to play. Is it any different now? On the holidays, where if you have a service that morning, You rise up early in the morning and you get the religious stuff out of the way and then you go have the great big meal, the feast and then you have all of the entertainments.

In fact, in 1 Corinthians 10, When the apostle, by the spirit is writing about the things that happened to Israel and they were destroyed in their unbelief But he says those were written down for our instructions. He says in first Corinthians 10, The one line from this incident that he select as an example is.

The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. You see there's a self-indulgence that Wants to enjoy things that God actually created food and drink to be enjoyable. And there are things like fellowship and dancing. Not what most of us, consider dancing now. But There are, there are things that are appropriate ways to enjoy God's goodness.

But we're trying to enjoy him and those things. But if it's not him himself, that we enjoy even in our worship, What is going to restrain? Ourselves indulgence when it comes to enjoying the rest of his creation, the rest of his good gifts. So, you see how they came up with worship, that would make them feel a certain way and satisfy certain needs.

And it was focused on. What they felt they needed. And that goes hand in hand. With a life that is really just self-indulgence. You can give lip service. To go out of being, the good giver of all things. Thing seem like, All things bright and beautiful. This is my father's world.

But really just a self-indulgent person, finding religious words. To plaster onto yourself indulgence. Self-directed worship leads to self-indulgent worship. You know, we're really in danger of this. When we don't feel like going down there on the Lord's day, God, the sun became a man. He secured our salvation. He he died on the cross was again from the dead.

He's about to lead. From heaven. Worship in the assemblies on Earth. He's giving us the means by which he personally does that we get to come and enjoy Union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. And that worship that has been facilitated and consecrated unto God by what Jesus has done.

They say, yeah, but it doesn't feel as good as I wanted to And I don't like the The feelings that I get when I have to gather with those people. And I don't get anything out of the preaching. And the songs are strange and, and And we walk by sight.

Not my faith. And then, having had self-indulgent. Thoughts of God's worship. Are we surprised then? When we coming to the rest of our lives. And we find it almost impossible. To deal with our self-indulgent tendencies. And the rest of life, the people sat down to eat and drink and grows up to play.

And God hates it. God hates that worship. It's not just the substance of the response in verse 7, but the wording of the response in verse 7 is pretty shocking, isn't it? You always said to Moses, go get down for your people. Whom you. Brought. Out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

They're down, there's saying that they are. Holding. A worship service to the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt. He basically says,

They have brought themselves to where they are. You brought them. To where they are. This is Mark, this is closer to your character Moses than it is to theirs. Your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt verse 8, they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them.

You see God's salvation? God's way is not just a way of being forgiven. It's a path that that has its conclusion in perfect, holiness forever and enjoyment of him forever. Being delivered from Egypt was to be the start of a path. That has its conclusion in being joined to your way and walking in his ways.

And so, he basically disowns Israel. Says your people. Whom you have brought out of the land of each one. Moses intercedes for Israel. As the Lord is going to tell him not to but he does anyway and we'll get to that. There's good reason for it. He has good Bible reasons for When Moses entries, he's forever.

He's going to turn that language back around. You know your people and you brought them out. But the wording of verse 7 doesn't a correspond to the worship.

Versus one through six.

When we worship the way we want to, we say we are our own god. Who want our own way to our own end.

It is a despising of God's glory. A rejection of him. And although we won't admit that, it's a rejection of him as savior. You can't have God and partial ways. Can you? So if you reject his divine prerogative, to be the one who comes up with how to worship, Then you're putting yourself in the place of god.

If we come up with our own way to worship, we put ourselves in his place. We may still be using his name like Aaron did tomorrow is a feast of Yahweh. When in reality, God has removed his name from us, your people, Moses whom you brought up If we will not have him as the only inventor of worship, Then we will not have him.

As our identity. His people. Or a redeemer. Him, he saved. The reality will be that we are our own people not his Lord summarizes what they have done. Turned quickly out of the way. That I commanded them and need to give Moses some of the details Moses and privy to the details.

But then he gives a very sobering. Assessment in verse 9. You always said to Moses, I have seen this people. And indeed. It is a stiff necked people, he doesn't say. This is a new strange development. He says what has come out of them at the bottom of this mountain to be their own god?

And serve their own purposes because they want to worship in their own way. And not have me at all. This is actually indicative of what's Really in their hearts. It's not anonymous mistake. It's not something about what you can say, like, we always do. Went out of the overflow of our health mouth, the heart speaks and say, oh I didn't mean it, that's not me.

No, it is. It's more you than, The you that you're able to make a peer usually?

So let us learn to accuse ourselves properly. When we discover that something we used to think was okay. Is actually a dollar dress. When something that meant so much to us so many times. What we discover from the Bible. It wasn't invented by God. It was invented by men.

And maybe even God has done us much good in it. But let us be willing to give up our stubborn hearts. Less what God says in verse 9. End up being truth of us that we show ourselves to be a stiff. Necked people. Because when we see and hear that, God did not invent it instead of repenting and falling on our face beforehand and pleading that for the sake of his name, he would forgive us that we have done this, all our lives long and restore us to playing biblical worship.

Simple biblical worship. What is the usual reaction? Not that the usual reaction is To come up with clever, sounding theological arguments for why you can keep doing the stuff. That means so much to you. And what is that? If not. I have seen this people and indeed, It is a stiff.

Necked people. The harder you pull. On them to go in the right direction. The stronger that neck gets, It's an image drawn from the way a mule responds. What does God says, His be not like senseless force or mule? Who have to buy pain? Be pulled out of the wrong way.

But receiving instruction, The words of God. Would overrule. All right, Dollar Tree. Mercifully New Testament worship is led by Christ from heaven.

And it's simple on earth, precisely. So, that he wouldn't be. We wouldn't be distracted. From him. But by his word, read and song and prayed, preached and hurt by simple sacraments. That are very unimpressive. In the visible tangible. Actions that are done. But direct us instead to an invisible, heavenly infinitely.

Impressive reality. God has given us worship. That is designed by its simplicity.

God has given us worship, that is designed. By its simplicity to address. The very weakness of our hearts. That this passage exposes. As for this Jesus. We may have him. Only by faith. For now. Thank God, the spirit. Increase that faith, even by blessing this portion of his word to us.

Let's pray. Our gracious God and our heavenly Father. We thank you. That you have given us your son? Our Lord Jesus. To be the one who is the leader of your church. It was not merely a faithful servant in the house. But the sun, the air, the glorious one.

And the perfectly righteous one. Who is over your house? And we pray that you would deliver us from self-indulgence of life. In parked and especially by delivering us from self-indulgence and worship. And grant to us to walk and live and worship by faith and not by sight. We ask it in Jesus name, amen.