

Who Is On The LORD's Side?

Long Beach Alliance Church • April 15th, 2012 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin — and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"

~Exodus 32:31-32 (NASB)

1) The Chaos Of Sin Amongst God's People

- A) After destroying the golden calf which Aaron made as an idol of representative worship for the people (Exodus 32:1-20), Moses asks Aaron why he would participate in such insanity as a leader of the people (32:21).
- B) Aaron's answer is simultaneously truthful and ridiculous (32:22-24). Sin never "just happens," but is the result of a systematic and slow turning from God (cf. James 1:13-15).
- C) Moses sees, despite getting rid of the object of the sin (golden calf), there was still chaos among God's people which brought the mockery, disrespect, and derision of Israel's enemies (Exodus 32:25). Rather than being a beacon to other nations, God's people had become a joke.
- D) In the face of sinful chaos, Moses calls to Israel for everyone who is willing to stand with God (32:26), to which only his own tribe (Levites) positively respond.

2) Judgment Against Rebellious Sin

- A) Moses delivers God's shocking command to his Levite brothers, 'strap on your swords and cut down all those who rebelliously sinned against God, even if they are your family or friends' (32:27).
- B) Moses commends his fellow Levites for their dedication to God in carrying out this purifying judgment amongst the people of Israel (32:28-29).
- C) The "moral" of this difficult story is clear, God's people are supposed to be different. We are not just "good people," we are "God's people!" God's chosen people are to be distinctively dedicated to God's plans, accomplished in God's way, and all for God's glory!

3) The Shadow Of Substitutionary Atonement

- A) Despite these purifying efforts (removal of the idol, removal of the rebellious), Moses recognizes that God's holiness still leaves the people in a terrible predicament of facing God's wrath. So, Moses goes to God to "make atonement" (payment) for the sins of the people (32:30).
- B) Moses' approach with God should serve as a textbook example of confession and appeal for forgiveness (32:31-32).
- C) But then Moses does something extraordinary. Knowing that God does not need to forgive the people, and knowing something about God's methods for extending forgiveness (the whole tabernacle/sacrifice details from Exodus 20-31), Moses offers himself as an acceptable atonement (32:32).
- D) Moses understood that he hadn't sinned with the idol, and that perhaps his own sinless state would be an acceptable sacrifice to the LORD. Like a good shepherd, Moses was willing to give his all for the people (cf. John 10:11).
- E) While God did not accept Moses' atonement offer (Exodus 32:33-34), and punishes the people (32:35), Moses' offer foreshadows Jesus' sacrifice (cf. 2nd Corinthians 5:20-21).