

- Having this understanding makes the people's behavior even harder to understand.
1. If they just wanted a leader, why didn't they just ask Aaron to be their leader?
 - Why did they prefer a calf made of gold for their leader?
 - The true motivation of the people is found in **three clues**...

The First clue... comes in the last verse.

- a. Vs. 6... we're told the Israelites made their sacrifices, then sat down to eat and drink and then rose up to play.
 - The eating was a natural result of the sacrifices
 - After a bunch of animals were sacrificed, the people would roast and eat the meat
 - They've been living on manna now for several months straight.
 - So the chance to eat some meat was high on their priority list.
- b. Then it says they rose up to "play"
 - The word in Hebrew means sexual promiscuity.
 - The kind of play involved here is not something you find on a playground (hopefully)
 - The people feasted then engaged in a mass orgy.
 - In fact, in v.25 Moses sees that the people were uncovered or without clothing.
 - So our **First Clue**... is that the people were intent on feasting and sexual immorality.

The Second Clue... comes from a poetic commentary on this moment in Psalm 106

- a. The psalmist comments on this incident and says...Psalm 106:13-14
 - The psalmist says the reason the people rebelled was because they craved intensely in the wilderness.
 - What did they crave?
 - The classics...meat and sex
 - So the second clue is that it was a craving of the Flesh that drove the people in the rebellion.
- b. But why did they request a golden calf then?

The Final Clue... taken from Paul's first letter to Corinth... **1 Corinthians 10:1-11**

- a. Paul begins by reminding us that the people of Israel had all experienced great manifestations of the Lord.
 - They had seen the sea divided and the pillar of cloud
 - They ate the manna and drank from the rock
 - In fact, Paul says the fire that followed them to protect them from their enemies was Christ Himself, the Angel of the Lord.
- b. Then Paul turns to make his point that their exposure to these incredible manifestations of God didn't protect them from falling to the temptations of their Flesh.
 - And as a result of their cravings they were laid-low
 - Paul says some of them were idolaters, because not all Israel participated in the event.

- Then he repeats that key phrase from chapter 32
 - Finally, Paul links this occurrence with several other notable examples of Israel's rebellion in the desert.
- c. In v.8 Paul refers to an incident in Numbers 25 when Balaam told Balak to weaken Israel by enticing the Jewish men to have sex with Moabite women.
 - The women agreed to allow the men to come into them if the men first agreed to worship before their god Baal.
 - As a result of that sin, God struck down 23,000 who participated in this sin.
- d. In v.9 Paul refers to Number 21 when the people grumbled over the miserable food the Lord was providing them.
 - In response, the Lord sent fiery serpents into the camp to kill the people with their bite.
 - Only if the people looked upon the bronze snake on the pole would they survive.
- e. In v.10 Paul references Numbers 16 when the nation again is called greedy for wanting meat instead of manna.
 - So God sends an angel to take the life of many at the outskirts of the camp with a fire.

What's the common denominator? ...in all Paul's examples

- a. Fleshly desires for sex or food
 - Why is Paul raising this concern for the church in Corinth?
 - Because the church was playing with fire.
 - They were going to the local pagan temples in Corinth to enjoy a nice night on the town.
 - The temples were the best place to buy a nice steak dinner.
 - But they also featured idol worship and prostitution.
 - b. So Paul reminds the church that even though they had liberty to eat the meat in that place, they should think twice about subjecting themselves to such temptations.
 - The Israelites had seen great things from God, but they still fell into sin propelled by their fleshly desire for good food or physical pleasure.
 - Paul wanted his readers to consider that they could fall in the same way if they underestimated the power of the flesh to draw us into sin.
 - So with all three clues, we can come to a better appreciation for what The Israelites were doing with that calf.
2. We know the Israelites didn't reject the Lord as God, but they wanted a leader.
- They had become impatient waiting for Moses to return down the mountain.
 - So they ask Aaron to make a god, a leader, someone they can sacrifice to.
 - Worshipping bovines was a common practice in the Egypt they left behind, something the Jews would have been familiar with.
 - Egypt worship practices also involved sacrifices, which then led to eating lots of meat and sexual acts of worship.

3. So the Israelites had spent 40 days eating manna and waiting for Moses to return so they could have a sacrifice and the meat that it offered, and they had cravings.
 - Without a leader, there was no one who could lead worship.
 - This is before the priesthood, so the only representative of God the people had was Moses.
 - Without Moses, there was no one to perform the sacrifice and permit a feast.
 - So they ask Aaron to give them an excuse to sacrifice and feast, and Aaron obliges.
4. Their fleshly cravings led them into idolatry, the sin of making graven images.
 - And next time, we will see the Lord respond

Biblical Concepts we can Learn thru the Israelites.

1. The Lord has reinforced throughout the ages and with every dispensation that His grace would not be fully realized until Christ.
 - a. The earlier manifestations of His grace served to regulate man's relationship with God for a time.
 - But none of them were intended as a true solution to man's sin.
 - They couldn't address the fundamental problem created by Adam's fall in the Garden, which is the power sin holds over us.
 - Sin defines our nature and therefore our behavior.
 - Earlier dispensations served to contend with man's sin and mitigate against its effects to a degree.
 - But they could not remove sin
 - They regulated man's fellowship with God for a time until the greater revelation of God was made available.
 - Therefore, each new dispensation revealed more of the Lord and His plan
 - b. That plan was culminated in the dispensation of grace in Christ, but until that moment God designed each earlier dispensation to make clear its inadequacy.
 - The Lord always demonstrated the weakness of prior dispensations by showing the continuation of sin's power.
 - After each new dispensation arrived, the protagonist inevitably succumbed to sin's power, demonstrating that the work of God was still incomplete.
 - But when Christ came, that pattern changed.
 - Jesus lived a sinless life, showing sin had no power over Him.
 - Then He died and rose again, conquering the penalty of sin, that is death, thus proving He could be the solution to our sin.
2. So in Exodus, we're studying the dispensation of Law and the covenant that brought the Law.
 - a. And therefore we must expect at some point to see the pattern described re-emerge.
 - The arrival of the dispensation of Law must include an example of sin's continuing power over our protagonists (main Character), the nation of Israel.
 - God must show us that the Law was incapable of addressing the root cause of sin or breaking its power over men.
 - b. The story of Israel at the base of mountain is that account.
 - This story shows us the inability of the Law to create righteousness.

- Proving what Paul teaches, that the Law did not come to produce righteousness.
- Because it is weak and worthless in that regard, as Hebrews says.

So turning back to our story in Chapter 32...

Moses has been on the top of the mountain for forty days, and the people below have grown impatient

1. They are being deceived by their own flesh, which is craving for meat and sexual pleasure, leading them into idolatry.
 - So they request a new leader to represent God.
 - The new leader will preside over their sacrificial offerings, which then makes possible the feast that follows, which is what they seek after.
 - So Aaron complies and makes an idol and an altar.
 - The people then celebrate with a feast and debauchery.
2. As we rejoin the narrative, let's also consider how these circumstances mirror the time in the Garden, when Adam and Woman fell.
 - As we noted last week, both scenes begin as relationships based upon a covenant with the Lord.
 - In both cases, God provided them with all the food they needed.
 - And in both cases, what God provided wasn't good enough.
 - Both craved after prohibited things and sinned.
 - And as a result, both traded what they had for judgment and exile.

Verses 7 - 14...

We must imagine that Moses was surprised and very disturbed to hear the news about the people.

1. The Lord says that Moses' people are corrupted.
 - Notice the Lord isn't calling Israel "His" people.
 - He is calling them Moses' people now.
2. He says they have turned aside from the Law they agreed to follow, barely forty days after the agreed to observe it.
 - Moses hears they have made an idol, worshipped it, and sacrificed to it.
 - How disheartening it must have been for Moses to learn this.
3. This moment is all the proof we need to know the powerlessness of the Law to produce righteousness.
 - The people had been given the Law, they had agreed to it, and it was no doubt fresh on their minds.
 - Furthermore, they had experienced remarkable manifestations of the living God.
 - Finally, they had first-hand evidence of the Lord's presence through the manna and the cloud covering the top of the mountain.
 - Nevertheless, they quickly decided to follow their flesh instead of obeying the Law.
 - We've never seen the manifestations these people saw
 - So how could we expect anyone to be sanctified by follow a Law that Israel couldn't follow for forty days?
 - Clearly the Law does not have the power to put an end to sin much less bring righteousness.