

## Exodus 31

- We've studied the design of the tabernacle and its furnishings
  - And we took time to note many ways in which God carefully designed these things to reflect the person and the work of Jesus
    - The tabernacle came as part of the Law which was given to Israel by the covenant
    - After finding so many pictures of Christ in the tabernacle confirms for us that the tabernacle like the rest of the Law and the covenant that brought them were intended to point to Christ
    - While they serve other purposes within the nation of Israel, their ultimate purpose was to bring men to Christ
  - The Law and the sacrificial system conducted in the tabernacle were parts of a temporary dispensation, one that acted as a custodian Paul says
    - The Law gave opportunity for men to have a relationship with the Lord while they awaited for grace to be available
    - Once grace was available through Christ's atoning work, then the Law and the sacrificial system no longer provided for that relationship
    - The Father would only be found through the Son
      - He was no longer to be found through the pictures or shadows of His Son that He provided in the Law or elsewhere

**Heb. 10:1** For the Law, since it has only a **shadow** of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

- But each time the Lord brings a new dispensation (a change in the way God regulates His relationship with man), He follows that change with clear evidence that the new dispensation wasn't the solution to our sin
  - Each dispensation is accompanied by a failure of sin that demonstrates the dispensation is sufficient to address the problem of sin
    - The first sin was the beginning of the pattern

- God created Adam in perfection, but Adam fell
- Then God set men outside the Garden under new conditions, but then Cain killed Abel
- Then God flooded the world and saved Noah to repopulate the world, but then Noah got drunk in his tent
- Then God called Abraham and promised him a son, but then Abraham sinned with Hagar
- After each new dispensation, sin raises its ugly head again, proving that the hero of the story wasn't the solution God had promised
  - And now we're focused on Moses and the nation of Israel
  - God has delivered a new dispensation in His Law and the formation of the nation of Israel
  - Is the Law and Israel the solution to sin? Will this dispensation finally resolve the problem of sin? No
  - And so we await the fall of our heroes, as God's pattern requires

[Ex. 30:22](#) Moreover, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

[Ex. 30:23](#) "Take also for yourself the finest of spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred and fifty, and of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty,

[Ex. 30:24](#) and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin.

[Ex. 30:25](#) "You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

[Ex. 30:26](#) "With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony,

[Ex. 30:27](#) and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense,

[Ex. 30:28](#) and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand.

[Ex. 30:29](#) "You shall also consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy.

[Ex. 30:30](#) "You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister as priests to Me.

[Ex. 30:31](#) "You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations.

[Ex. 30:32](#) 'It shall not be poured on anyone's body, nor shall you make any like it in the same proportions; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you.

**Ex. 30:33** 'Whoever shall mix any like it or whoever puts any of it on a layman shall be cut off from his people.'

- The final instructions the Lord gives Moses concerning the design of the tabernacle are for the anointing oil used to consecrate the tabernacle and the incense burned on the altar of incense
  - There were five ingredients for the anointing oil or perfume
    - Four spices and fine olive oil
    - The spices mentioned largely originate from Arabia and lands in the east
    - So how did Israel get their hands on these things while in the desert?
      - They would have brought these things from Egypt
      - Egypt was a world power and conducted trade with many other nations
      - The goods Israel plundered from Egypt included these items
  - The perfume was mixed by the hands of a skilled apothecary
    - And then this oil was used to anoint the sanctuary, all the items in it and the priests themselves
      - But this exact recipe for the perfume couldn't be used for any other purpose
      - Nor could a lay person create this recipe for themselves
      - This particular oil could only be used according to the Lord's instructions and for the holy purposes God had determined
- Anointing oil is a picture of the Spirit working to designate something or someone for the work of the Lord
  - When the Spirit anoints someone or something for service to God, it is holy or consecrated
    - Holy means set aside from sin

- For example, each believer is anointed by the Spirit with a spiritual gift
- This gift is an ability reserved for use in service to God
  - That ability is holy, or set apart to glorify God
  - As we use that gift in service to the Body, God is glorified by it
- But God alone brings an anointing by His Spirit
  - God controls who, when and how an anointing takes place
  - In this case, the Lord designated that the oil, which pictures His Spirit, would only be used to anoint the priests, tabernacle and its furnishings
  - Collectively, these three things represent the many aspects of Christ's ministry, as we've already seen
    - And so we see the Holy Spirit pictured by the oil anointing Christ as pictured in these items
    - In fact, the word Messiah means Anointed One
  - Jesus was the One selected by the Father to be the solution to sin
    - Only Christ would once and forever solve the problem of man's sin
    - He would withstand its temptations in life
    - And He would conquer its power by His death
- Even the prohibition against counterfeiting the oil or misusing it teaches us concerning Christ
  - The Father alone will designate the Messiah
  - Anyone may claim to be the Messiah, but only Jesus had the Father's anointing

[Luke 3:21](#) Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,

[Luke 3:22](#) and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

- Secondly, just as Israel was not permitted to counterfeit their own version of the anointing oil, men cannot take God's place in anointing God's work
  - God anointed His Son as Messiah, and He is still at working anointing men and women for ministry in the church
  - We can't counterfeit the Holy Spirit and bring an anointing to someone outside God's will
- But many men have tried and are trying to do this very thing
  - False teachers and charlatans use the power of persuasion, convincing displays or supernatural power, and other techniques to mimic the Spirit
  - And they do so to gain followers, fame, money or whatever they want
    - Turn on your television and you can see them at work most any night
  - We can also see one of them at work in the book of Acts

**[Acts 8:18](#)** Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

**[Acts 8:19](#)** saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

**[Acts 8:20](#)** But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

**[Acts 8:21](#)** "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

- So the perfume oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit anointing Christ as the one and only Way and of the anointing of God's people according to God's will
  - Then the Lord directed Moses to use additional spices to create the incense to burn upon the altar

**[Ex. 30:34](#)** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take for yourself spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each.

**[Ex. 30:35](#)** "With it you shall make incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, and holy.

**[Ex. 30:36](#)** "You shall beat some of it very fine, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I will meet with you; it shall be most holy to you.

[Ex. 30:37](#) “The incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD.

[Ex. 30:38](#) “Whoever shall make any like it, to use as perfume, shall be cut off from his people.”

- Each of these spices are similar to the ones used for the perfume in that they originate from Arabia and India and were rare
  - Once again, Israel brought them up from Egypt
    - The incense was also to be mixed by an skilled apothecary
    - These ingredients were beaten into a fine powder
    - Several of them were made from plant resin, so they had volatile oils that burned easily
    - Salt was added, as a preservative and as a symbol of holiness
  - The incense was to be burned twice each day in the altar of incense we learned about last time
    - The burning incense was the means by which the priest of Israel made intercession for the nation of Israel according to the Law
    - The rising smoke was a pleasing odor which represented how the prayers of the saints please the Lord
      - Three time we read in Revelation that the prayers of the saints are like incense

[Rev. 5:8](#) When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

- Like the perfume, the incense may not be used anywhere else nor may it be made for personal use
  - The picture is of Christ again, our intercessor representing us to the Father
    - Because Jesus speaks for us and represents us to the Father, the Lord consider our requests

- But if we seek the Father in any other way, our prayers are not heard
- The Father only hears what His Son represents to Him and unless the Son knows us, the Father never hears us
- This is why Hebrews says that without faith (in Jesus) it is impossible for us to please God
  - And even more, the Bible teaches that the prayers of those without the righteousness of Christ are futile

[Psa. 34:15](#) The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous  
And His ears are open to their cry.

[Psa. 34:16](#) The face of the LORD is against evildoers,  
To cut off the memory of them from the earth.

[Psa. 34:17](#) The righteous cry, and the LORD hears  
And delivers them out of all their troubles.

[Prov. 15:29](#) The LORD is far from the wicked,  
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

[John 9:31](#) "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.

- While any man can mix incense, only the method God prescribed will please Him
- And many men can pray, but only those who pray to Jesus in faith will please the Father and be heard
- Now that we're at the end of the description of the tabernacle and all that is in it, we might image that Moses was beginning to wonder about the work ahead
  - We've heard God mention using skilled craftsmen several times in the course of his instructions
    - Where was Moses going to find men with these particular skills?
    - The Israelites were skilled laborers but they had probably never attempted anything so exacting and intricate
  - In the next chapter, the Lord tells Moses where he can find the skilled workman he will need to construct all that the Lord specified

[Ex. 31:1](#) Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

[Ex. 31:2](#) "See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

[Ex. 31:3](#) "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship,

[Ex. 31:4](#) to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,

[Ex. 31:5](#) and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.

[Ex. 31:6](#) "And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you:

[Ex. 31:7](#) the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent,

[Ex. 31:8](#) the table also and its utensils, and the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense,

[Ex. 31:9](#) the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils, and the laver and its stand,

[Ex. 31:10](#) the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, with which to carry on their priesthood;

[Ex. 31:11](#) the anointing oil also, and the fragrant incense for the holy place, they are to make them according to all that I have commanded you."

- Even while Moses is on the mountain receiving these instructions, the Lord has already selected and equipped the men Moses will need to accomplish this work
  - First, the Lord selects Bezalel, who is the grandson of Hur
    - You will remember that Hur is the name of the one of the men who held up Moses hands in the battle against Amalek
    - Now his grandson has been selected to lead all the construction of the tabernacle
    - The Lord has not only selected this man but equipped him for the duties he will be assigned
      - This man will have the ability to design in metal, to cut stone and to carve wood
      - These are the basic building materials in the tabernacle
      - And with his skills, he will oversee all the work
  - Secondly, the Lord will raise up Oholiab to work under Bezalel

- Plus the Lord will raise up other craftsman to work along these men
  - Collectively, the camp of Israel will find every construction talent they require to obey God's instructions
- By these words of assurance God gave Moses, we can take away three essential lessons concerning our service to the Lord
  - First, God chooses men to serve Him
    - Bezalel and Oholiab were never asked to enlist in God's work crew
    - At this point they don't even know they've been selected, do they?
    - Moses will have to deliver this news to them when he returns, and I suspect they might be surprised to hear it
      - Leadership among God's people is a privilege and it can take various forms
      - But it comes from the Lord, and when it comes, it's an offer you can't refuse...literally
    - Men are called to acknowledge the call of God
      - First we recognize it in ourselves and respond in obedience
      - Secondly, we recognize it in others and respect that calling as from the Lord
  - Secondly, when the call comes, we can't allow our fears or doubts to become an excuse for not obeying God's call
    - The instructions God gave to Moses give every impression that neither of these men were skilled artisans prior to the Lord's call
      - The sense of the passage is that God had equipped these men specifically for this task
      - We should imagine they were surprised themselves to discover they could perform these duties
      - I wonder if they hesitated to follow Moses' orders when they first heard the news?

- But like Moses himself, scripture demonstrates that the one God calls, He will also equip for that calling
- These men couldn't use their previous inexperience as an excuse
  - They had all the experience they needed, because God gave them that expertise supernaturally by the Holy Spirit
  - Likewise, we are given gifts at the point of salvation which become our means to serve and glorify God
    - So these men couldn't have refused their assignment on the basis of skills or preparation
    - Neither can we turn our backs on the Lord's call simply because we lack the pedigree or training we assume is necessary
    - We will work for the Lord using the gifts and talents He has given us
  - Remember, God isn't in the habit of calling qualified men who can then glorify Him by the use of their skills
  - Rather, He equips unqualified men to glorify Him by their obedience
- Finally, God raises men up to work in partnerships of one kind or another
  - Just like God brought Moses the 70 elders, now he's bringing two craftsmen and a host of others to join in the work
  - When the work matters to God, He will ensure the resources are there to get that work accomplished
    - He'll bring the materials, the expertise, the hands and the feet
    - Each person who is called must labor, certainly, but the work will never languish for the want of supply
- Now, having set forth how the work will be accomplished, the Lord returns briefly to the topic of the Sabbath

[Ex. 31:12](#) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

[Ex. 31:13](#) “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

[Ex. 31:14](#) ‘Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

[Ex. 31:15](#) ‘For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death.

[Ex. 31:16](#) ‘So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’

[Ex. 31:17](#) “It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.”

- As Moses’ forty days on the mountain comes to a close, the Lord reminds Moses of His instructions concerning the sabbath
  - We’ve studied the principle of the sabbath, its meaning and its relationship to Christ in a previous lesson
    - So in this passage, we’re only going to look at a few new details
  - First, Moses is told the Sabbath instruction, which the Lord had previously given Moses, was now to be a sign for the covenant
    - Every covenant included a sign of some kind
      - A covenant was similar to a contract, in that it was a solemn agreement between parties
      - Like any agreement, the parties needed some kind of memorial or evidence that a covenant exists
      - Like a signature on a contract, the sign of a covenant reminded both parties that the agreement was in force
    - We’ve seen signs in earlier covenants
      - The sign of the Noahic covenant was the rainbow
      - The sign of the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision

- And now we're told that the sign of the Mosaic covenant between the Lord and the people of Israel would be the Sabbath day itself
- We now learn that the Sabbath day was included in the covenant so that it would become the sign of the covenant
  - As long as this covenant remains in effect between the Lord and Israel, the requirement for the Sabbath remains in effect
  - Even though the Messiah has come and fulfilled the Law for believers, the nation of Israel is still observing a Sabbath
  - Indicating that the covenant is still in effect for that nation
  - As you may know from the Revelation study, that the Mosaic covenant is the cause for the Jews experiencing Tribulation in a future day
    - And its result is a glorified nation that will finally embrace their Messiah
- Furthermore, we learn something about our New Covenant when we consider the sign of the Old Covenant
  - The sign given in the New Covenant is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every new believer
    - Like all covenants, the New Covenant is forever, and therefore so is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
    - But that indwelling is also called the circumcision of the heart in scripture

[Col. 2:9](#) For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

[Col. 2:10](#) and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

[Col. 2:11](#) and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

[Col. 2:12](#) having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

- What does it mean that our covenant has as its sign a type of circumcision?

- It teaches us that the New Covenant is connected to the Abrahamic covenant, not the Mosaic covenant
- Abraham's covenant included a promise to produce a seed that would bless all the nations on the earth
  - Jesus was that Seed and that blessing was the New Covenant described in Jeremiah 31
  - We are being invited into the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant even while Israel is still waiting for it
- Paul describes this temporary reversal of fortune in Romans 11
  - He taught that the Gentiles are being grafted into the promise given to Abraham while Israel has been hardened for a time
    - And as we enter into the New Covenant, we receive the sign of the New Covenant, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the circumcision of the heart
    - Spiritually speaking, the Holy Spirit cuts away the veil over our heart that original sin deposited, thereby allowing us to know the Lord
    - Like the foreskin removed in physical circumcision upon Abraham's entrance into his covenant
  - But the Mosaic Covenant plays no part in our relationship with Christ, since He fulfilled that covenant on our behalf
    - We trace our salvation to a promise given to Abraham
    - Not to a covenant given to Israel through Moses
  - As Paul taught in Galatians

**[Gal. 3:17](#)** What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

**[Gal. 3:18](#)** For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

**[Gal. 3:19](#)** Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

- The second reason the Sabbath is discussed at this point in Exodus is to help us see an important connection between the tabernacle and the Creation story
  - In v.17 the Lord repeats that the Sabbath was to be observed because the Lord Himself rested after the six days of Creation
    - The Lord wants us to see a connection between those two moments
    - And there is a strong connection
  - If we look at the creation account and the time of Israel at the mountain, we find a long list of parallels
    - In both cases the subjects of the stories is how God made a way for made for fellowship with man
      - In Creation, the Lord created the world and made a Garden and created Man in the garden for fellowship
      - In the wilderness, God created a covenant and made a tabernacle, and created Israel for fellowship
    - In both cases, the Lord's Spirit is said to be involved in the Creation process
      - In Genesis, the Spirit of God is central to formation of the Creation and the breath of man
      - In Exodus, the Spirit empowers the workmen to build the structures
    - In both cases, the narrative progresses through seven stages, each one beginning with the words, "And the Lord said"
    - In Creation, God made Adam and Woman according to a specific pattern, which was the likeness of God
      - The Tabernacle was made according to a specific pattern, which is the tabernacle in Heaven
    - The Garden contained gold, and precious jewels, and Cherubim guarded it
      - The tabernacle contained gold and precious stones and Cherubim guarded the mercy seat

- When the work was finished in Creation, the Lord inspected it and pronounced a blessing upon it (“very good”)
      - When the tabernacle is finished in chapter 39, the Lord has Moses inspect it and pronounce a blessing
    - God rested on the seventh day of Creation
      - And now the Lord is reminding the Israelites that they must rest on the seventh day, even while they work to build the tabernacle
- Why does God want us to make this connection?
  - The answer comes from one more important comparison between the Creation account and Israel’s time in the wilderness
    - After the Creation was finished, the Man and Woman fell to disobedience because of an animal that tempted them to sin
      - When Adam and Woman fell they violated the terms of the covenant they were given in the Garden
      - They were told not to eat of the fruit, and so long as they obeyed that command, they could enjoy the fellowship God established for them
    - But when they disobeyed, they violated the covenant and they suffered a great penalty
      - That penalty involved both an immediate consequence and a long term consequence
      - Immediately they suffered the penalty of leaving the place God prepared for them
      - In the future they would suffer the penalty of the curse, when their physical bodies died
  - In the same way, there will be a fall following the establishment of the covenant between Israel and the Lord
    - They nation of Israel will be tempted into sin by Satan hiding in the image of an animal
    - And by their fall, the nation will violate the most important and most basic of the commandments in the Law

- They will break the covenant and they will suffer a great penalty
  - The penalty will include both an immediate consequence and a long term consequence
  - The Lord will pronounce immediate punishment and long term punishment
  - In fact, the covenant itself has provision for curses against Israel for their failure to keep the terms of the covenant
- We study that rebellion next in chapters 32-34, but first we need to set the stage for the transition of Moses leaving the mountain

**Ex. 31:18** When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

- Most has been on the mountain for forty days and forty nights
  - That time period corresponds to chapters 24-31
  - While Moses has been on the mountain, the people of Israel have lacked their leader
  - And without the leader, they begin to revert to old thinking and old behaviors

**Ex. 32:1** Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

**Ex. 32:2** Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

**Ex. 32:3** Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.

**Ex. 32:4** He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."

**Ex. 32:5** Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."

**Ex. 32:6** So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

- We remember that when Moses went up the mountain that Joshua accompanied him half way
  - So both of these men have been away from the camp for forty days
    - How did the Lord sustain these men during those forty days?
    - The same way the Lord sustained the nation of Israel...manna
    - Every morning the manna has been coming reliably
  - But while they've been gone, the nation has become impatient
    - The text says they encouraged Aaron, who had been left in charge, to make a golden calf idol for the nation
      - They say they don't know what happened to Moses
      - As if to suggest he isn't coming back
    - But why does Moses' absence lead the nation to want a golden calf of all things?
      - Realistically, how do they expect a golden calf to lead them anywhere?
      - There is more going on here than meets the eye
      - And it makes their sin even more troubling
      - And it will lead to another connection to the Creation story in the Garden
- First, let's take note of what Aaron does in response to their request
  - Later we're going to hear him retell this story to Moses in a creative way
    - We'll wait until then to consider Aaron's role in this plan
    - For now we'll just examine his actions
  - First, he directs all the people to produce gold by giving up the gold in their ears
    - Perhaps Aaron thought this would cause the people to rethink their commitment to the plan, since they were begin asked to give up substantial wealth
    - Whatever he may have thought, the people didn't hesitate

- The text says that they tore off their rings and handed them to Moses
- Next, Aaron melted them down, and fashioned the gold into a golden calf
- Then he built an altar before the calf
  - And of course an altar implies that they performed a sacrifice before the calf
  - And in v.6 we see the offerings taking place
- Finally, Aaron announces that a feast will take place tomorrow in honor of the Lord
  - Aaron tells Israel that this calf was the Lord who lead Israel out of Egypt
  - Israel is not worshipping the calf as if it were a different god
    - They are worshipping the true God, Jehovah
  - They have created a graven image of God
    - Remember the purpose of this calf: to replace Moses
    - Moses was the visible representative of God
    - Since Moses was gone, the people wanted someone or something else visible to replace Moses as God's representative
- Having this understanding makes the people's behavior even harder to understand
  - 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 comes in the last verse I read
  - In v.6 we're told the Israelites made their sacrifices, then sat down to eat and drink and the 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
- 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
  - The psalmist comments on this incident and says

[Psa. 106:13](#) They quickly forgot His works;  
 They did not wait for His counsel,  
[Psa. 106:14](#) But craved intensely in the wilderness,  
 And tempted God in the desert.

- 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
- But why did they request a golden calf then? We get the answer from our final clue, taken from Paul's first letter to Corinth

[1Cor. 10:1](#) For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;

[1Cor. 10:2](#) and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

[1Cor. 10:3](#) and all ate the same spiritual food;

[1Cor. 10:4](#) and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

[1Cor. 10:5](#) Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

[1Cor. 10:6](#) Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

[1Cor. 10:7](#) Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY."

[1Cor. 10:8](#) Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.

[1Cor. 10:9](#) Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.

[1Cor. 10:10](#) Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

[1Cor. 10:11](#) Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

- Paul teaches the Christians in Corinth a lesson by drawing a comparison to the people of Israel who rebelled in Exodus 32
  - 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
  - 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
  - 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
  - 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
  - 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?
  - 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
  - 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
  - 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
  - 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
  - Their fleshly cravings led them into idolatry, the sin of making graven images
    - And next time, we will see the Lord respond