

# Exodus 31-32

## August 21, 2011

### Introduction:

- In **Exodus 31** God finishes His instructions for Moses and gives him the **10 Commandments** on two tablets of stone. In **chapter 32**, we see what takes place at the end of the days that Moses is on the mountain and on the day that he returns to the camp.

When speaking with someone, we usually say some the most important things first and last. What is the first and last thing that God told Moses to do?

- **First**, God told Moses to take an offering (for the Tabernacle and its furnishings – Exodus 25:1-9). The last thing God spoke to Moses about was keeping the Sabbath holy (31:12-17).

### 31:3-6 What do we learn about our talents and gifts in chapter 31 verses 3 to 6?

- The gifts and skills we have come from God. God gives us *the wisdom, the understanding, the knowledge, the craftsmanship, and the skill*. He gives them to us to use for His purposes, not just our own.
- **Verse 3** says *I have filled Him...* and **verse 4** says *to make*. We learn that when God wants to do something, He has already gifted someone to do it. God used the artistically-advanced Egyptians to train the Jews for His purposes.

### 31:12-17 What do we learn about the Sabbath in verses 12 to 17?

- The Sabbath would be a sign and reminder of the covenant between God and His people; they were to keep His Sabbath forever. The Sabbath was intended for them to completely rest (31:15,17) and to spend time with God (31:13 – *that you may know that I am the LORD*). Keeping the Sabbath would be a weekly reminder to them that they are *sanctified*: they are “set apart” for God and belonged to Him (31:13). Sabbath keeping was a **BIG DEAL**; the punishment for breaking the Sabbath was death (31:14-15).

### Did Jesus do away with the Sabbath?

- **No**. Jesus *did* permit doing good (healing) on the Sabbath (John 5:10,16). Jesus permitted minimal work to feed yourself on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). He also permitted doing “**emergency**” work on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8-12).

### Why don't we keep the Sabbath, which is Friday dusk to Saturday dusk, today?

- We worship now on **Sunday...the Lord's Day...**the day Christ rose from the grave. Sunday is a holy day, not a holiday. It is the Lord's Day, not our day. It is a weekly reminder that we are set apart to be His; we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). It is a day to know that HE is God, not us; it's all about HIM, not us.

**31:18 & 32:15-16** Notice how the Ten Commandments were given: on two stone tablets, engraved on both sides, engraved by God Himself.

### 32:1-10 Who can tell us what happens in chapter 32 verses 1 to 10?

- With Moses gone for **40 days** (24:18), the people fear that he has died and press Aaron to make them a god (idol). Aaron asks for their earrings and uses the gold to create a golden calf. He tells the people that this calf is their god. The people begin to “party” (32:6 – *they ate, drank, and rose up to play*). God then tells Moses that He will destroy the people and restart the nation with Moses.

Interesting note: the earrings were Egyptian (3:21-22). In Genesis 35:1-4 the Jews had earrings and those earrings were connected to idol worship. They removed and threw them away when they dedicated themselves to the Lord. The Jews were instructed to use earrings as the mark of a permanent slave (21:1-6).

**What are some of the other ways that God's people were to be different from everyone else?**

- The men did not cut their beards (Leviticus 19:27). One of the reasons that Joseph's brothers did not recognize him is because he looked like an Egyptian (shaved face).
- The males were circumcised. Joseph likely exposed his circumcision to his brothers to prove who he was (Genesis 45:1).
- The Jews kept the Sabbath.
- The Jews had unique dietary restrictions (they didn't eat "unclean" foods).

**32:11-14 What happens in verses 11 to 14?**

- Moses seeks to talk God out of exterminating the Jews.

**Did God actually "change His mind", or was He trying to get something out of Moses? Explain.**

- The all-knowing, eternal, unchanging, infinite God does not get advice from men. Moses did not have a better idea than God so that God took his advice. It only *appears* to Moses that God has changed His mind. Notice in **verse 7** that God tells Moses that these are *Moses'* people and that *Moses* had brought them out of Egypt. Moses learns the lesson and tells God in **verse 11** that they are *God's* people, not his, and that *God* was the one who had brought them out of Egypt. Moses would be completely overwhelmed if he thought that these **2.5 million people** were his responsibility. He later strikes a rock in anger and it costs him the privilege of taking them into the Promised Land (Numbers 20:8-13). At this point Moses entirely realizes that what goes on with Israel is about God and His reputation, not about Moses. **Test passed!**

**32:15-29 What takes place in verses 15 to 29?**

- Moses goes down the mountain and rejoins Joshua and they go back into the camp. Some of the people (about 3,000 – 32:28) are having a wild party and worshiping the golden calf. Moses, in anger, throws down and breaks the two tablets. He confronts Aaron who tells him he just threw the gold into the fire and "out came this calf". Moses asks who is on the Lord's side and is joined by the Levites. He instructs them to go and execute the idol-worshipping partiers. Moses breaking the Ten Commandment tablets was a picture of Israel breaking the laws on those tablets (in particular, they had made a graven image of god and worshiped it).

**What are your thoughts about what Aaron said in verse 24?**

- Isn't it just like sinful man to completely deny his wrongdoing? He blames the people for his failure to lead in verses 22 to 23 and then he makes up a complete lie to try to avoid responsibility for making the calf and the altar (32:4-5).

**Do you think that most people own up to or deny their wrongdoing? Explain.**

- More often than not, people do something like what Aaron did. We completely deny doing it *or* we blame others to avoid responsibility for our sin and to justify the wrong that we have done. Almost every sin has a lie attached to it. Most sinners will lie about it until you completely demonstrate that you have proof of their sin.

**What do we learn from verses 23 and 25 about leadership?**

- As a leader, it was Aaron’s job to listen to God, not to these carnal people. Rather than doing the right thing and calming the crowd, he failed and tried to appease them instead. A leader must do the right thing, not the convenient or popular thing. If a leader is not willing to make the right decision and allow some people to be unhappy and dislike him, then he forfeits his right and his ability to lead.

### **32:30-35 What happens in verses 30 to 35?**

- Moses returns to meet with God to tell Him about the idol and the partying (as if God didn’t already know). Moses asks God to forgive them. God does forgive them but there are consequences for their sin (32:34-35).

### **32:32-33 How would you explain the “blotting” of people’s names out of God’s book in verses 32 and 33?**

- This apparently is the first reference to the **Lamb’s Book of Life** (Revelation 20:12 & 21:27). In the end, those who are saved are the people who have their names in the **Lamb’s Book of Life**. Here in Exodus and in Revelation 3:5 we see that names that are in the Book can be removed from the Book. God desires for all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4 & 2 Peter 3:9). Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29 & 1 John 2:2). God puts everyone’s name in the Book of Life because He made them knowing He would have to save them. God created every person **for heaven, not hell** (Matthew 25:41). Those who are saved in the end are people whose names have **remained** (not been blotted out) in the **Book of Life from the foundation of the world** (Revelation 13:8 & 17:8). Those who reject God’s provision for salvation and forgiveness in Christ eventually have their names **blotted** out of the Book of Life.

### **How did Moses do as a leader in chapter 32?**

- *Great! He loved the people and petitioned God for them (32:11-13,30-32). He stood up for righteousness and obedience to God. Moses removed the evil men and their influence from the people. Moses listened to God.*