

Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Apostacy and Intercession – 6-12 September 2025

Christ would have our minds continually directed to the work of intercession that He is performing in heaven. We do well to learn that Moses reflected this intercession in pleading for Israel during their apostacy. “And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written” (Exodus 32:31-32). “In the prayer of Moses our minds are directed to the heavenly records in which the names of all men are inscribed, and their deeds, whether good or evil, are faithfully registered. The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God. If any of these depart from Him, and by stubborn persistence in sin become finally hardened against the influences of His Holy Spirit, their names will in the judgment be blotted from the book of life, and they themselves will be devoted to destruction. Moses realized how dreadful would be the fate of the sinner; yet if the people of Israel were to be rejected by the Lord, he desired his name to be blotted out with theirs; he could not endure to see the judgments of God fall upon those who had been so graciously delivered. The intercession of Moses in behalf of Israel illustrates the mediation of Christ for sinful men. But the Lord did not permit Moses to bear, as did Christ, the guilt of the transgressor. “Whosoever hath sinned against Me,” He said, “him will I blot out of My book.” {PP 326.3}.

Sunday: Failed Leadership – Read Exodus 32:1-6; how was it possible for Aaron’s leadership to fail so spectacularly? How could Aaron, a leader, have been so weak? In what ways might Aaron have sought to justify in his own heart his terrible actions? Aaron later repented and was forgiven but let every Adventist minister learn from the record about Aaron’s policy of compromise. We are told: “Aaron had thought that Moses had been too unyielding to the wishes of the people. He thought that if Moses had been less firm, less decided at times, and that if he had made a compromise with the people and gratified their wishes, he would have had less trouble, and there would have been more peace and harmony in the camp of Israel. He, therefore, had been trying this new policy. He carried out his natural temperament by yielding to the wishes of the people, to save dissatisfaction and preserve their good will, and thereby prevent a rebellion, which he thought would certainly come if he did not yield to their wishes. But had Aaron stood unwaveringly for God; had he met the intimation of the people for him to make them gods to go before them to Egypt with the just indignation and horror that their proposition deserved; had he cited them to the terrors of Sinai, where God had spoken His law in such glory and majesty; had he reminded them of their solemn covenant with God to obey all that He should command them; had he told them that he would not, at the sacrifice of his life, yield to their entreaties, he would have had influence with the people to prevent a terrible apostasy. But when, in the absence of Moses, his influence was required to be used in the right direction, when he should have stood as firm and unyielding as did Moses, to prevent the people from pursuing a course of sin, his influence was exerted on the wrong side. He was powerless to make his influence felt in vindication of God’s honor in keeping His holy law. But on the wrong side he swayed a powerful influence. He directed, and the people obeyed” – Ellen Gould White {3T 298.3}.

Monday: Idolatry and Evil – Read Exodus 32:6; where did their idolatry quickly lead them? The worship of the golden calf was heathen worship which has drawn men from the worship of the true God. The calf was a representation of the sacred bull called Apis, which the Egyptians worshiped, and with which the Jews had necessarily become very familiar in their long sojourn in Egypt. Apis was considered as the visible manifestation of Osiris, which was identified with the sun or sun-worship. Thus, the worship which the Israelites paid to the golden calf was really the Egyptian form of sun-worship – that form of idolatry which has always stood foremost as the antagonist of the true worship of God. It is indeed significant that just at the time when God manifested Himself to the Israelites in a peculiar manner, and made known to them His Sabbath, they should have fallen back into the old sun-worship, whose chief festival day – Sunday, the first day of the week – has always contended for supremacy with the day specially distinctive of the worship of the true God. The sun-god, Osiris or Apis, was the patron god of the Egyptian kings, and stood for Egypt. So the worship

of the calf signified that the Israelites, forgetful of the covenant that they had made with God, were sinking back to the level of Egyptian life. It was the very worst manifestation of the spirit which led them so often to long for the flesh-pots of Egypt. It is significant of the sensuality to which people naturally sink when they turn aside from the worship of one the true God – the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – who can be worshiped only in the beauty of holiness.

Tuesday: Corrupting Themselves – Read Exodus 32:7-8; why did God send Moses back to the camp of Israel? Notice the language between God and Moses about whose people they were that corrupted themselves with idols. First, God calls the people Moses' people: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (Exodus 32:7). Second, Moses calls the people God's people: "And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?" (verse 11). God mercifully gave Moses a taste of intercessory work. God calls faithful ministers today to intercede so that as a church we repent of our idolatry. "Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" (Joel 2:17). In Exodus 32:7, the word rendered "corrupted," that "Thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves", is the same that is used in Genesis 6:1-12, where we read that the earth was corrupt, "for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." This explains the terrible anger of the Lord, and why He desired to consume the people at once. We note that the golden calf was later ground into powder. The grinding of the calf to powder was a fitting emblem of the weakness of all that are called gods, when brought before the God of Heaven and earth.

Wednesday: God's Righteous Wrath – Read Exodus 32:9-29; what lesson do we learn from Moses' reaction to Aaron's excuses? There is so much apostasy in our church today and much brought about by ministers who like Aaron fail in their leadership. If you are a faithful minister, like Moses, ask your other erring ministers, the Aaron-types, "What did this people unto thee, that thou has brought so great a sin upon them?" (Exodus 32:21). Let not the faithful Adventist ministers continue to be silent about these modern idols in our worship, peradventure people will turn to God, and corrupt ministers may also repent, as did Aaron.

Thursday: Intercession – Read Exodus 32:30-32; how far did Moses go in his action of intercessory prayer for sinners? While Moses had been communing with God for forty days and forty nights on the mount, apostasy had developed in the camp of Israel. In an agony of spirit over their waywardness, he had besought God most earnestly to forgive and to heal. So great was Moses' love for those who had sinned, that he was ready to lay down his own life in their behalf. It was in connection with this experience that Moses was given a glimpse of the glory of God. Hidden in a cleft of the rock, the man of faith beheld his Lord (Exodus 34:6-7). "Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. And he said, If now I have found grace in the sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance" (verses 8-9). In response, the Lord promised to renew his covenant-relationship with Israel, which had been broken at the foot of Sinai through apostasy. And it was on the strength of this promise given at the time the glory of the Lord passed before him, that Moses afterward pleaded the long sufferance, the mercy, the willingness to forgive, revealed by his God. His strong faith was recognised and honoured. "The Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word," and he added in this connection the wonderful assurance to which I am calling your special attention: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:20-21). Like unto Moses, may we not expect that God will reveal Himself in a marked manner through His chosen light-bearers, as they yield themselves fully to Him and to His service? Those who love souls more than they love themselves, those who are jealous for the honour of God's name in the earth, will be found at this time giving the loud cry of the third angel's message. They will permit in their lives nothing that can separate them from the source of their power. Like Moses, their faces will light up with the glory of God, and the earth will be lightened with the glory of God. Then shall the end come.