

HOME GROUP QUESTIONS FROM SERMON 19th May 2024

“Changing God’s mind?”

Exodus 32 v1-14 (English Standard Version)

1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” 2 So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” 3 So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden[a] calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” 5 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.” 6 And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

7 And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” 9 And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”

11 But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” 14 And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

Footnote. [a] verses 4 and 8 - Hebrew cast metal

These questions relate to the sermon (10.30 service) on Sunday 19th May 2024 (available on the church website).

Feel free to pick and choose questions / sub-questions as appropriate for your group’s interest, preferred study style and time available. They are simply there to facilitate good discussion / reflection. Do not feel you must go through all of them.

- (1) Opening Icebreaker. 'God is perfect in every way and cannot make a wrong or bad decision'.**
- (a) If you believe this statement about God, what do you think of the idea that we might be able to get God to change His mind?**
- (2) 'What on earth were the people thinking'! In v1-6, the Israelites decide to build a molten image of God in the form of a golden calf?**
- (a) What initially prompted them to do this, especially given God had always provided for them since bringing them out of Egypt?**
 - (b) Why did they think this was going to satisfy their desires and needs? And what does this tell us about their relationship with God?**
 - (c) Are there times when you have wanted God on your own terms, and built your equivalent of a golden calf? What might be your golden calves?**
- (3) 'I've had enough!'. In v7-10, God vents His anger to Moses at what the people have done and says he will consume (i.e. destroy) them.**
- (a) In building the Golden Calf, the people are not explicitly abandoning God and worship of Him. Why then is God so angry with the people? Think of what the Bible overall, including the Old Testament up to this point, say most matters to God.**
 - (b) How do you understand the severity of God's judgement on the people?**
 - (c) What does this tell us about how we regard God and our regard for what matters to Him (e.g. obedience, heartfelt worship, holiness)?**
 - (d) How might you explain God's judgement here to a non-Christian today?**
- (4) 'God, you cannot be serious!'. In v11-13, Moses implores God not to carry out his intention to wipe out the people who have sinned.**
- (a) What are the key characteristics of Moses' pleading? Look at each verse in turn.**
 - (b) What does this tell us about Moses' understanding of and relationship with God?**
 - (c) Think of a time when you have interceded for someone or a situation, especially if a wrongful / sinful act might have taken place. How does the way Moses prays here compare with how you pray? What might you do differently in future?**
- (5) 'It's not quite what it seems!'. In v14, we are told that God relented from his initial judgment.**
- (a) What were the conflicting obligations (relating to God's character) facing God?**
 - (b) In relenting as He did, what does this tell us about God, His relationship with us, and how He builds His kingdom?**
 - (c) What might this teach us about the circumstances in which God might withhold an initial pronouncement of judgement?**
 - (d) What advantage might we have that wasn't available to Moses? Look at Romans 8:34.**
- (6) Final Reflection.**
- (a) After studying this passage, to what extent do you think it is about changing God's mind Vs understanding the character and mind of God?**