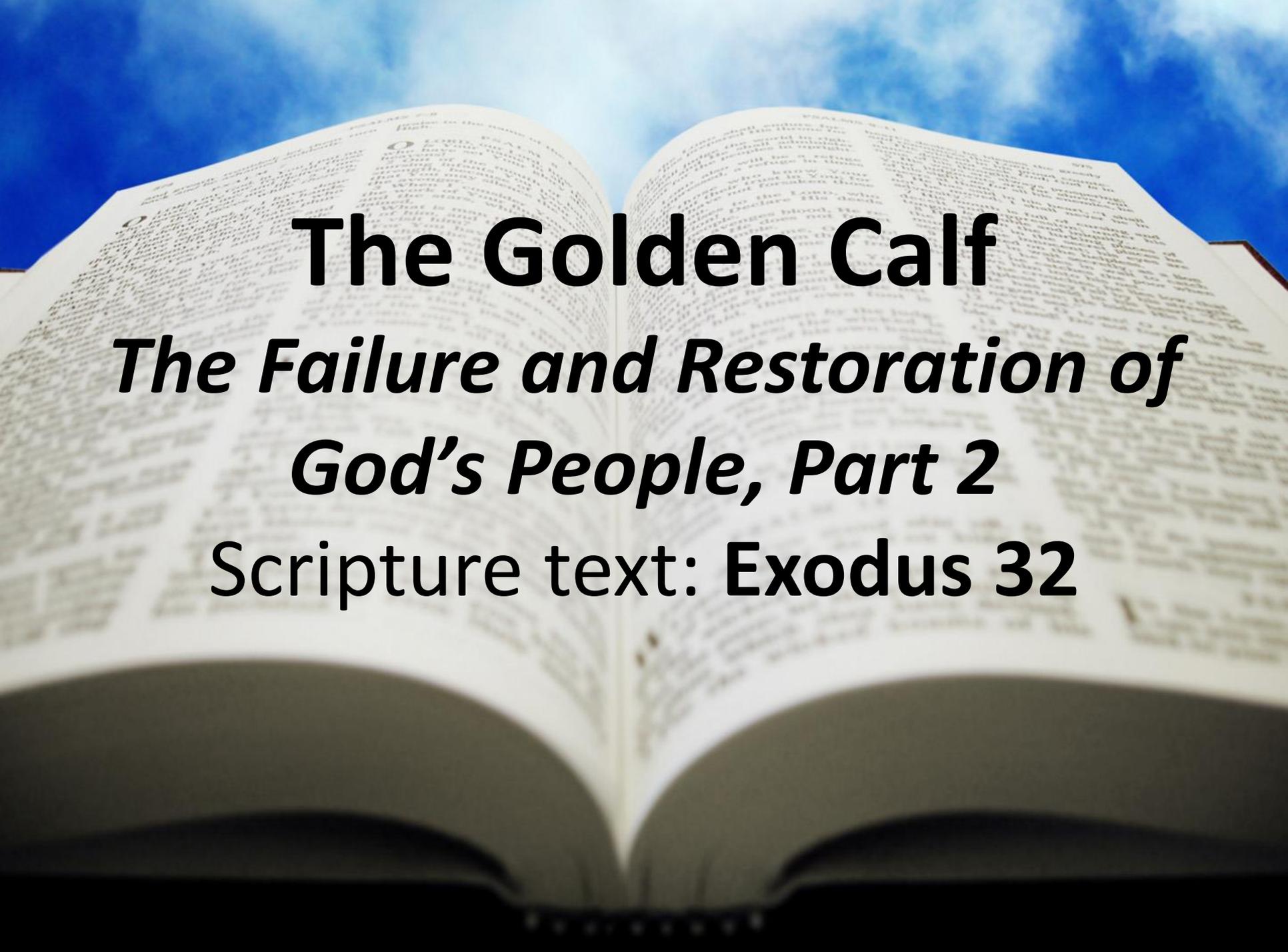


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church  
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, and the background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid on the center of the Bible.

# **The Golden Calf**

## ***The Failure and Restoration of God's People, Part 2***

**Scripture text: Exodus 32**

## ***God's wrath judging (vv. 15–35).***

In His grace, **God forgave their sins**, but in his **government, He had to discipline the people**. How many tears have been caused by the painful consequences of forgiven sins! **Moses had a right to be angry and to humble Aaron and the people**. By breaking the two tables of the Law, written by God, **Moses dramatically showed the people the greatness of their sin**. Instead of confessing his sins, **Aaron made excuses**. He **blamed** the people for their depravity (v. 22), Moses for his delay (v. 23), and the furnace for its delivery of a calf!

As Moses descended the mountain with the two tablets of the Decalogue (*Exodus 31:18 And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.*) he rejoined Joshua, who apparently was partway up the mountain and was not aware of what the Israelites were doing.

Joshua thought that the camp was under military attack. However, **Moses knew from what God told him** that the people were singing and **were involved in drunkenness and immorality.**

In anger Moses at the foot of the mountain did four things. **First, he smashed the tablets of the Law**, symbolizing the people's breaking of the covenant. **Second, he burned the idol**, reduced it to powder, spread it on water (a mountain stream, Deut. 9:21), and made the people drink it. By this action he demonstrated both the powerlessness of the calf-idol and God's wrath. Though the burning would not have demolished the gold idol, it was smashed till it was crushed into tiny pieces. **Drinking it symbolized that the people had to bear the consequences of their sin.**

**Deuteronomy 9:19-21** For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. **But the LORD listened to me** that time also. And the LORD was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I **prayed for Aaron also** at the same time. Then I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small, until it was as fine as dust. And I **threw the dust of it into the brook that ran down from the mountain.**

**Third, Moses summoned Aaron to give an account of what had taken place.**

**Aaron's excuse was as ludicrous as the people's actions.** He blamed the people (vv. 22–23) and then in a lie he suggested that the idol “just happened”: I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.

Aaron, however, had actually shaped the idol himself (v. 4). **God was so angry with Aaron that He was ready to kill him (Deut. 9:20).**

**Fourth, Moses judged the unrepentant.** Moses rallied before the camp **all who had not been involved in worshiping the calf.** The Levites responded as a group. These were commanded to go ... through the camp and kill any who persisted in idolatry. Three thousand Israelites were killed by swords. Others, however, died by a plague (v. 35). **After completing this gruesome task the Levites were set apart to the Lord.** Later they were assigned the **responsibility of carrying the tabernacle** (Num. 1:50–53).

**Numbers 1:50-53** But appoint the Levites over the **tabernacle of the testimony**, and over all its furnishings, and over all that belongs to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and **they shall take care of it and shall camp around the tabernacle**. When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down, and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death. The people of Israel shall pitch their tents by their companies, each man in his own camp and each man by his own standard. But **the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony**, so that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the people of Israel. And **the Levites shall keep guard over the tabernacle of the testimony.**"

## ***The renewal of intercession by Moses (32:30–35)***

Though the major instigators of the plot were put to the sword (except for Aaron, for whom Moses interceded, Deut. 9:20) Moses recognized that **the nation as a whole shared the guilt**. Therefore **he again entreated the Lord for atonement for their sin**. Moses told God that if He refused to forgive His people **he would prefer to have his name removed from the book** God had written (Ex. 32:32). Some say this was the book of life (Rev. 20:15; 21:27) that lists believers' names but, more likely, **it was the census of the people**.

After dealing with the people, **Moses returned to the Lord on the mountain and offered to give up his own life that the people might be spared.**

**Romans 9:3** For I could wish that I myself were **accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers**, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

When a person dies, his or her name is removed from the book of life (Ps. 69:28; Ezek. 13:9).

**Psalm 69:28** Let them be blotted out of **the book of the living**; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

**Ezekiel 13:9** My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not be in the council of my people, **nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel**, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

**The book of life** (or “the living”) should not be confused with **the Lamb’s Book of Life**, which **records the names of the saved** (Rev. 21:27; Luke 10:20).

**Revelation 21:26-27** They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but **only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

**Luke 10:19-20** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and **nothing shall hurt you.** Nevertheless, **do not rejoice in this**, that the spirits are subject to you, **but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**"

Moses' statement probably indicated he was willing to die a premature death (but not suffer eternal torment in hell). He did not want to be associated with a sinful, unforgiven people.

Rejecting Moses' offer, God promised to punish the sinners (by premature death). Some died of a plague (Ex. 32:35) and **all fighting men (except Joshua and Caleb) died later in the desert** (Deut. 1:35–36; 2:14).

Yet God said Moses would lead the nation (the younger generation) to the land promised them (Ex. 32:34). (On God's angel see 33:2.)

**Deuteronomy 1:35-38** 'Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers, **except Caleb** the son of Jephunneh. **He shall see it**, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, **because he has wholly followed the LORD!**' Even with me the LORD was angry on your account and said, 'You also shall not go in there. Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.'

**Deuteronomy 2:13-18** 'Now rise up and go over the brook Zered.' So we went over the brook Zered. And the time from our leaving Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the brook Zered was **thirty-eight years, until the entire generation, that is, the men of war, had perished from the camp**, as the LORD had sworn to them. For indeed **the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from the camp, until they had perished.** "So as soon as all the men of war had perished and were dead from among the people, the LORD said to me, **'Today you are to cross the border of Moab at Ar.**