

The Golden Calf.

JULY 8. B.C. 1491. EXOD. xxxii : 15-23.

Golden Text, I. John 5 : 21.

AFTER God's covenant with Israel had been ratified, as we saw in our last lesson, he commanded Moses to come up to him, into the mount, where he would receive from him the tables of the law, Ex. 24 : 12. Moses left Aaron and Hur to attend to necessary business in his absence, and, taking Joshua, he ascended the mount, where he remained forty days, Ex. 24 : 13, 14, 18. The Israelites grew impatient, spake disrespectfully of him, 32 : 1, sent no one in search of him, or if they thought him dead, certainly did not mourn for him. Neither did they ask advice from Aaron or Hur, but instead, boldly told Aaron to make them gods, v. 1. He consented, provided they would bring him all the golden ear-rings of their women, v. 2, thinking perhaps, that this might not be readily agreed to. However, they brought the jewellery, and Aaron made of it, a golden calf, which the people worshipped. The calf was one of the gods of Egypt, called Apis. The Lord warned Moses, v. 7, and if it had not been for his intercession, Israel had then been destroyed, vs. 10-14. V. 15, *turned*—from interceding to go down. *Testimony*—law—tables—of stone, the work of God, Ex. 31 : 18. V. 17. *As they shouted*—the usual accompaniment of idolatrous worship, 1 Kings 18 : 28. V. 18, *for mastery*—not the shout of a victorious army, *overcome*—defeated. V. 19. *Moses' anger*—a righteous indignation, Eph. 4 : 26—*waxed hot*—was intense—*brake them*—the people had broken the covenant, they were not worthy of this holy law, Amos 8 : 11-12. V. 20, *burnt it*. It had probably a wooden core, which had been covered by thin plates of gold. The wood was burnt, and the gold filed or beaten to pieces. Deut. 9 : 21, *drink of it*—a mark of contempt for such a god. V. 21. *What did*—Moses knew that Aaron had been forced to act as he did. V. 24, *there came out*—the result of my work was this calf. V. 25. *Naked*—R.V. "were broken loose" from the submission they owed to God, *unto their shame*—proclaiming themselves ingrates to their Divine protector, and to Moses, their devoted leader. V. 26, *the Sons of Levi*—Moses' own tribe, who were first to repent of their sin, Ex. 2 : 1. V. 27. *Slay*—Deut. 33 : 9. The severity of the punishment shows God's hatred of idolatry, 1. Cor. 6 : 10. Men may be guilty of idolatry, when they love anybody or anything more than God, Eph. 5 : 5; 1 John 5 : 21. Aaron should have dared to stand alone for God, at any cost, like Paul, Acts 20 : 23-24; Dan. 3 : 17, 18; 6 : 10. We show ourselves to be on the Lord's side when we obey his word, John 15 : 15. Israel was saved by Moses praying for them, we are saved also only through the intercession of Christ, the One Mediator, 1 John 2 : 2.

God's Presence Promised.

JULY 15. B.C. 1491. EXODUS xxxiii : 12-23.

Golden Text, Matt. 28 : 20.

THERE was mourning in the camp of Israel. Three thousand of the leaders of the rebellion against God had been slain by the Levites. The next day, Moses assembled the people and reproached them for their great sin, 32 : 30. But he did not drive them to despair. He promised to try to make atonement for them. He went back to the mount, and confessing their guilt, he pleaded for them. If God would not forgive, he did not wish to survive, ch. 32 : 31, 32. The Lord answered by commanding him to lead the people as before, but he himself would not go up in the midst of them, and as they have sowed, they shall reap. He will yet visit their sin upon them. An angel will now go before them, but not himself. A beginning of punishment is inflicted, a plague by which many suffered, chap. 32 : 33-35. Israel was deeply grieved at this answer, ch. 33 : 4, and Moses moved the "tabernacle" away from the camp, to show the people how deeply they had offended. The cloudy pillar by resting upon it, showed God's approbation of this removal. V. 9, *whom Thou wilt send*—Moses wanted no other angel than the great angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ, for a leader—*by name*—as Christ said, he knows his sheep, John 10 : 14—*Thy people*—Deut. 9 : 26. V. 14. *My presence*—manifested by the glory of the Lord in the tabernacle, ch. 40 : 34, 35. *Rest*—peace in Heaven of which Canaan was a type. Moses never entered Canaan, yet God's promise was fulfilled, Dan. 12 : 1. V. 17, *this thing also*—God himself remaining with his people, v. 16—*found grace*—Israel is forgiven for the sake of Moses, as we are forgiven for the sake of Christ, Acts 15 : 11; Rom. 3 : 23. V. 18. *Show me thy glory*—Moses' prayer being heard, he is emboldened to ask something more. Comp. Abraham pleading for Sodom, Gen. 18 : 23-32. God encourages this boldness, Heb. 4 : 16. *Make thy glory visible, and enable me to look upon it*. V. 19. *My goodness*—this is an aspect of God that man can see, and ought to see, Ps. 34 : 9, *the name*—ch. 34 : 6. *I will be gracious*—God's sovereignty affirmed. He is not accountable to any man for the bestowal of his favours, Rom. 9 : 15. V. 20. *Thou canst not*—only in Heaven can we see God as he is, 1 John 3 : 2. A sinful man could not see God and live, Hab. 1 : 13. V. 21. *In a cleft of the rock*—type of Christ, 1 Cor. 10 : 4; Cant. 2 : 14. God himself protects those who are thus hidden. *My face shall not be seen*—afterwards, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses did see his face, Matt. 17 : 3. Thus Christians in glory will find in Christ's presence "fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore," Ps. 16 : 11.