

Catechism Story 17

*The Ten Commandments and the Close of the Commandments
Memory Verse and Catechism Prayers from Congregation at Prayer*

BIBLE STORY: THE WORSHIP OF THE GOLDEN CALF Exodus 32:1-14

Central Thoughts

- The children of Israel broke the Ten Commandments by worshipping a golden calf idol.
- The children of Israel were selfish and wanted to do whatever they wanted to do.
- The Law threatens punishment to all who break the Ten Commandments.
- The Law promises a blessing to all who keep the Ten Commandments.
- The Law shows us our sin and how much we need our Savior Jesus Christ.
- Jesus kept God's Law for us.
- Jesus saved us from eternal punishment by dying for us upon the cross.
- God's Word calls us to confess our sins and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

Discussion Questions

What had the Lord God done for the children of Israel before He gave them the Ten Commandments?

He had brought them out of slavery in Egypt.

Why had God saved them from slavery?

He loved them and had promised them salvation through the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Why did God give them His Law?

Because He loved them and desired to save them.

What did the children of Israel say about Moses when he delayed coming down from the mountain?

We do not know what has happened to him.

What did the children of Israel ask Aaron to do?

Make them a golden calf to worship.

What terrible thing did Aaron say about the golden calf he had fashioned?

That the golden calf was the God who had brought them out of Egypt

What did the children of Israel do with the golden calf?

They worshiped it, sacrificed to it, and ate, drank, and played around it.

What did the golden calf represent in the children of Israel?

All of their self-centered, selfish, covetous, sinful desires

What did God say to Moses about what the children of Israel had done?

They have corrupted themselves and are a stiff-necked (or stubborn) people.

What does God threaten to do to the children of Israel?

Destroy them with His wrath.

What do the Lord's threats cause Moses to do?

He prays to the Lord to save the Children of Israel from their sins according to the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is what the Lord wanted Moses to do.

Did the Lord want to destroy the children of Israel?

No, He wanted to save them.

Why doesn't the Lord destroy them?

He had promised them salvation in the coming Seed of Abraham, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why does God give us the Ten Commandments?

Because He loves us and desires to save us from our sins.

What do the Ten Commandments teach us?

The Ten Commandments teach us what is good and right, what God's gifts are (e.g., God's name and prayer, God's Word and preaching, parents and civil authority, life, marriage and family, property and possessions, and a good name and reputation), what God wants to protect and bless, what we are to do and not to do, what it is to love God and what it is to love our neighbor. Finally, the Ten Commandments teach us that we are sinners and that we need Christ, our Savior, and His forgiveness. The Ten Commandments call us to repentance, they teach us to confess our sins, to pray for God's forgiveness, and to pray for God's strength to keep the Ten Commandments and to lead a holy life of love toward God and love toward our neighbors.

What does God's Law and the threat of punishment create in us?

Fear of God's wrath, a knowledge of our sin, and a need for salvation in Jesus.

Who has the Lord raised up for us to save us from our sins, to pray for us, to speak to God for us, to intercede for us, to forgive us our sins, and to strengthen us to keep God's Law?

Jesus

How did Jesus keep God's Law and fulfill the commandments for us?

He died upon the cross. By His death upon the cross He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength; and He loved us in place of Himself. In His death upon the cross, He took all the punishment that we deserved for our sins upon Himself. In Jesus we have the promise of the forgiveness of all our sins, and deliverance from slavery to sin, death, and the power of the devil.

Meditation on the Bible Story

The golden calf was a false god, an idol that Aaron and the children of Israel had fashioned for themselves. The golden calf represented all of their selfish desires to have whatever they wanted and to do whatever they pleased. The golden calf represented all the covetous desires of their sinful flesh. They worshiped their own lusts and desires by eating, drinking, and playing around the golden calf. By their sin they had rejected their Lord and the only true God. Moses prayed for their salvation on the basis of God's promise to save them—a promise that was made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the same way, we confess our sins and pray for forgiveness on the basis of God's promise to us in Jesus.

God gave us His Law because He loved us. The Ten Commandments are good. They teach us what is right and wrong, what we are to do and not to do. They threaten God's punishment when we break them and God's blessing when we keep them. They teach us about God's good gifts that He wants to protect. They teach us what it means to love God by trusting in Him, praying to Him, and listening to His Word (Commandments 1-3). They teach us how to love our neighbor by honoring our parents and civil authorities (4th Commandment), by helping our neighbor in every physical need (5th Commandment), by leading a pure life of love for our spouse (6th Commandment), by helping our neighbor improve and protect his possessions and income (7th Commandment), by defending our neighbor's good name (8th Commandment), and by guarding our hearts from selfish desires so that we are helpful to our neighbor in every way (10th Commandment).

We are sinners who cannot lead a holy life or save ourselves from our sin. The Law always accuses us of sin and threatens us with punishment because we are all sinners. The Law cannot save us. It can only show us our sin. We need Christ. The Ten Commandments call us to repentance. They call us to confess our sins and to flee to Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the strength to live a holy life. Jesus died for us upon the cross. He fulfilled God's Law for us. He forgives us. Through faith in Jesus we are justified. That means He declares us righteous, holy, pure, and acceptable to God because of what He has done for us. Jesus has delivered us from slavery to sin, death, and the power of the devil by His forgiveness. His forgiveness is our only strength to lead a holy life of love for God and love for our neighbor.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord Jesus, save us from making and worshipping false gods like the golden calf. Thank You for the Ten Commandments. Without God's Law we would not know what is right or wrong, and we would have no knowledge of our sin and how much we need You. Thank you for dying upon the cross to save us from our sins. Forgive us every day and strengthen us by Your forgiveness to love God and our neighbor faithfully. In Your name we pray, Amen.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE CLOSE OF THE COMMANDMENTS

(See Catechism or Congregation at Prayer for the Week)

Prayers on the Close of the Commandments

Almighty God, You threaten to punish all who break Your commandments. Therefore, help us to fear Your wrath and not do anything against them. But You also promise grace and every blessing to all who keep Your commandments. Therefore, forgive us our sins and strengthen our faith in Jesus, so that we love and trust in You and gladly do what You command. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, apart from You we have no life or salvation, therefore You are a jealous God, desiring us to fear, love, and trust in You above all things. You punish children for the sin they share in and have committed from their fathers, that they might be brought to repentance and faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. You show love and mercy to those who love You and keep Your commandments, therefore, grant us true repentance and forgive us every sin against Your holy Law that we might cheerfully love You and gladly do what You command, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



The Worship of the Golden Calf
Exodus 32:1-14