***Exodus***

***Apostasy and Intercession***

Lesson #11 for September 13, 2025

Scriptures: Exodus 32:1-32; Psalm 115:4-8; Isaiah 44:9-10; 54:4; Romans 1:22-27.

1. We have talked about apostasy. What intercession was needed? With Whom? Why?
2. Try to imagine yourself camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, watching Moses travel up into the cloud, even into the fire, and being gone for 40 days. What would you think? Moses had been your only visible link to God. Is it any wonder that they became impatient, fearful, and insecure? Did the cloud stay on the top of the mountain?

**The Golden Calf and Apostasy**

**Exodus 32:1-5**: 1 When the people saw that Moses had not come down from the mountain but was staying there a long time, they gathered round Aaron and said to him, “We do not know what has happened to this man Moses, who led us out of Egypt; so **make us a god to lead us.”** [What about the fire/cloud?]

2 Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold earrings which your wives, your sons, and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.” 3So all the people took off their gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4He took the earrings, melted them, poured the gold into a mold, and made a gold bull-calf.

The people said, “Israel, this is our god, who led us out of Egypt!”

5 Then Aaron built an altar in front of the gold bull-calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to honor the Lord [*Yahweh*].”—American Bible Society. (©1992). The Holy Bible: *The Good News Translation*®\* [*GNT*] (*Today’s English Version*) [*TEV*], Second Edition, Exodus 32:1-5). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV*\*or *GNB-TEV*\*].†‡

1. While Moses was with God in the “fire” on Mount Sinai, Aaron made an idol for the Israelites to worship. They did that even after miraculously crossing the Red Sea on dry land and the Egyptian army being drowned in front of their eyes, being guided and protected by the pillar of fire at night and the pillar of cloud in the day, receiving the miraculous water, and getting almost daily manna.
2. Having made the golden calf to worship, to what did it lead?

**Exodus 32:6**: Early the next morning they brought some animals to burn as sacrifices and others to eat as fellowship offerings. The people sat down to a feast, which turned into an orgy of drinking and sex.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\* [That is what they did in fertility-cult worship!]‡

**Psalm 106:13,21-23**: 13 But they quickly forgot what he had done

and acted without waiting for his advice….

21 They forgot the God who had saved them

by his mighty acts in Egypt.

22 What wonderful things he did there!

What amazing things at the Red Sea!

23 When God said that he would destroy his people,

his chosen servant, Moses, stood up against God

and prevented his anger from destroying them.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*

**Psalm 115:4-8**: 4 Their gods are made of silver and gold,

formed by human hands.

5 **They have mouths, but cannot speak,**

**and eyes, but cannot see.**

6 They have ears, but cannot hear,

and noses, but cannot smell.

7 They have hands, but cannot feel,

and feet, but cannot walk;

they cannot make a sound.

8 **May all who made them and who trust in them**

**become like the idols they have made**.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*† [Compare Psalm 135:15-18.]‡ [Do any people, even Christians, bow down to idols today?]‡

**Isaiah 44:9-10**: 9 All those who make idols are worthless, and the gods they prize so highly are useless. Those who worship these gods are blind and ignorant—and they will be disgraced. 10It does no good to make a metal image to worship as a god!—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] The golden calf resembled the Egyptian bull god, called Apis [*sic*], or cow god, called Hathor [*sic*]. This was a blatant transgression of the first and second commandments *(Exod. 20:3–6)*. This violation could not go unpunished because it openly broke their relationship with the living Lord. Instead of worshiping their Creator, the Israelites worshiped their own creation, which could not see, hear, smell, speak, care, love, or lead.―*BSG*\* for Monday, September 8.‡§

1. This worship of the calf was a direct disobedience of the first of the Ten Commandments.

[BSG:] The Creation order was reversed: instead of understanding that they had been created in God’s image, they now made a god, not even in their own image—which would have been bad enough—*but in the image of an animal*. This was the god whom they wanted to serve? Thus, they had greatly sinned against the Lord *(Isa. 31:7, Isa. 42:17)*.―*BSG*\* for Monday, September 8.‡§

[BSG:] Moses had been absent from the camp of Israel for only 40 days, and what happened? God’s people had turned away from Him and worshiped a human-made idol, a golden calf. After so many mighty signs, experiences, and miracles, how could they have done that?

There could be many answers, and perhaps some truth in them all. Did the people not understand who God really was? Or were their powerful experiences with Him overshadowed by their carnal and sinful desires? **Did they not appreciate what God had done for them and, instead, took it all for granted?** Was their understanding clouded, marred by their everyday preoccupations and old sinful thinking? Were they simply ungrateful for God’s merciful actions on their behalf? Had they so quickly forgotten the mighty acts of God *(Ps. 106:13, 21–23)*?―*BSG*\* for Sabbath Afternoon, September 6.†‡§

1. ***What should Aaron have done?***

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] Such a crisis demanded a man of firmness, decision, and unflinching courage; one who held the honor of God above popular favor, personal safety, or life itself. But the present leader of Israel [Aaron] was not of this character. Aaron feebly remonstrated with the people, but his wavering and timidity at the critical moment only rendered them the more determined. The tumult increased. A blind, unreasoning frenzy seemed to take possession of the multitude. There were some who remained true to their covenant with God, but the greater part of the people joined in the apostasy. **A few who ventured to denounce the proposed image making as idolatry, were set upon and roughly treated, and in the confusion and excitement they finally lost their lives.**

Aaron feared for his own safety; and instead of nobly standing up for the honor of God, he yielded to the demands of the multitude.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 316.2-317.1.†‡

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1410&index=0>]‡

[From the *Adult* ***Teachers*** *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide=***T**-BSG:] **Aaron could have prevented the golden calf apostasy if he had stood firm for God and His truth.** He should not have yielded to the people’s demands for a visible god or gods. When disrespect was shown for God and His servant Moses, Aaron should immediately have stopped the uprising. Instead, he listened to the rebels and made a false proposition. In the time of Moses’ absence, Aaron should have functioned as a strong leader, not fearing even his own death. God always intervenes to defend His cause, and Aaron should have trusted Him.―*T-BSG*\* 146.†‡

1. God called the attention of Moses to the camp below.

**Exodus 32:7-8**: 7 The Lord said to Moses, “Go back down at once, because your people, whom you led out of Egypt, have sinned and rejected me. 8They have already left the way that I commanded them to follow; they have made a bull-calf out of melted gold and have worshipped it and offered sacrifices to it. They are saying that this is their god, who led them out of Egypt.”—*GNB-TEV*.\*

[EGW:] As they [Moses and Joshua] drew near the encampment, they beheld the people shouting and dancing around their idol. It was a scene of heathen riot, **an imitation of the idolatrous feasts of Egypt; but how unlike the solemn and reverent worship of God!** Moses was overwhelmed. He had just come from the presence of God’s glory, and though he had been warned of what was taking place, he was unprepared for that dreadful exhibition of the degradation of Israel. His anger was hot. To show his abhorrence of their crime, he threw down the tables of stone, and they were broken in the sight of all the people, thus **signifying that as they had broken their covenant with God, so God had broken His covenant with them**.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 320.1.†‡

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1429&index=0>]‡

1. What could God and Moses do to bring Aaron and the children of Israel back to God?

[BSG:] Moses sharply rebuked Aaron for surrendering to the demands of the people. “ ‘What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?’ ” *(Exod. 32:21, NIV)*. Aaron tried to excuse his transgression by (1) blaming others, and (2) by magic: “ ‘I threw it [the gold] into the fire, and out came this calf!’ ” *(Exod. 32:24, NIV)*. What made matters worse was that Aaron himself had been greatly honored of God, having been given many privileges, which included going on the mountain with Moses and the 70 elders *(Exod. 24:1)*.

What a dark irony! By claiming that a miracle had happened, Aaron wanted to trick his brother (notice how one sin leads to another; in this case, idolatry to lying). However, Moses was not fooled as he saw how wildly the people behaved. The negative consequences were evident, and Moses had to stop the rebellion immediately.―*BSG*\* for Wednesday, September 10.‡Ω§

[T-BSG:] “And the Lord was very angry with Aaron” *(Deut. 9:20)*, **but his life was spared because Moses interceded for him.** Aaron sincerely repented of this grievous sin, was restored to his leadership position, and later was anointed as the high priest *(Exod. 40:12–15)*. God’s grace and mercy are amazing!―*T-BSG*\* 146.†‡§

1. And what happened next to Israel? Did Israel insist on leaving God?

[BSG:]By turning to an idol, the Israelites were in the process of divorcing themselves from the true God, the One who had delivered them from Egypt. The Lord squarely placed the blame on them, saying that they have “corrupted themselves” *(Exod. 32:7, NKJV)*—even crediting this statue with having delivered them from Egypt. What a direct contradiction to what God said to them *(Exod. 20:2)*! This denial of God’s presence and mighty acts was a serious matter. Their thinking and feelings were distorted and completely corrupted.―*BSG*\* for Tuesday, September 9.‡§

1. How could the children of Israel have done this while Moses was on the top of the mountain in God’s presence which was visible to every one of them as fire on the mountain?
2. ***What could God do with those ungrateful rebels in the desert? God said that He would destroy Israel and make a great nation out of Moses’s descendants. Then, did Moses intercede with God for Israel and for Aaron? Was God “testing” Moses in front of the whole universe, showing the loyalty of Moses to the cause of God in the great controversy between God and Satan over the character and government of God?***

**Exodus 32:12,28-29**: **12 “Why should the Egyptians be able to say that you led your people out of Egypt, planning to kill them in the mountains and destroy them completely?** Stop being angry; change your mind and **do not bring this disaster on your people**….”

**28** **The Levites obeyed, and killed about three thousand men that day. 29Moses said to the Levites, “Today you have consecrated yourselves as priests in the service of the Lord by killing your sons and brothers, so the Lord has given you his blessing**.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*†

[BSG:] “When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain” *(Exod. 32:19, NIV)*. Breaking the tablets containing the Decalogue was an external sign of breaking its content. God rebuked Moses for it, but later He commanded Moses to chisel two tablets to replace “ ‘the first tablets, which you broke’ ” *(Deut. 10:2, NKJV)*. God Himself would rewrite the commands.―*BSG*\* for Wednesday, September 10.‡§

[EGW:] Love no less than justice demanded that for this sin judgment should be inflicted. God is the guardian as well as the sovereign of His people. **He cuts off those who are determined upon rebellion, that they may not lead others to ruin.** In sparing the life of Cain, God had demonstrated to the universe what would be the result of permitting sin to go unpunished. The influence exerted upon his descendants by his life and teaching led to the state of corruption that demanded the destruction of the whole world by a flood. The history of the antediluvians testifies that long life is not a blessing to the sinner; God’s great forbearance did not repress their wickedness. The longer men lived, the more corrupt they became.

So with the apostasy at Sinai. Unless punishment had been speedily visited upon transgression, the same results would again have been seen. **The earth would have become as corrupt as in the days of Noah.** Had these transgressors been spared, evils would have followed, greater than resulted from sparing the life of Cain. **It was the mercy of God that thousands should suffer, to prevent the necessity of visiting judgments upon millions. In order to save the many, He must punish the few. Furthermore, as the people had cast off their allegiance to God, they had forfeited the divine protection, and, deprived of their defense, the whole nation was exposed to the power of their enemies.** **Had not the evil been promptly put away, they would soon have fallen a prey to their numerous and powerful foes.** It was necessary for the good of Israel, and also as a lesson to all succeeding generations, that crime should be promptly punished. And it was no less a mercy to the sinners themselves that they should be cut short in their evil course. Had their life been spared, the same spirit that led them to rebel against God would have been manifested in hatred and strife among themselves, and they would eventually have destroyed one another. **It was in love to the world, in love to Israel, and even to the transgressors, that crime was punished with swift and terrible severity**.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 325.2-326.0.†‡ [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1448&index=0>]‡

1. ***What do you think God wants to teach us from this lesson of terrible apostasy?***
2. It is amazing that after having experienced God’s leadership through Moses and having seen God in the mountain, Aaron could so readily accede to the demands of the people. Also amazing is the fact that people were willing to donate jewelry and other object of great value to make this pagan idol.
3. Do you think you could have contributed to the pagan idol and then have said: “This is your God, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt”? (Exodus 32:4, *NASB*)

**Idolatry in the Temple in the Days of Ezekiel**

1. A thousand years later in the days of Ezekiel, he was shown a vision in which he was carried back from Babylon to Jerusalem and witnessed the many ways in which those who were in Jerusalem were directly defying God in the way they worshiped in the temple in Jerusalem!

**Ezekiel 8:1-18**: 1 On the fifth day of the sixth month of the sixth year of our exile, the leaders of the exiles from Judah were sitting in my house with me. Suddenly the power of the Sovereign Lord came on me. 2I looked up and saw a vision of a fiery human form. From the waist down his body looked like fire, and from the waist up he was shining like polished bronze. 3He stretched out what seemed to be a hand and grabbed me by the hair. Then in this vision God’s spirit lifted me high in the air and took me to Jerusalem. He took me to the inner entrance of the north gate of the Temple, where there was an idol that was an outrage to God.

4 There I saw the dazzling light that shows the presence of Israel’s God, just as I had seen it when I was by the Chebar River. 5God said to me, “Mortal man, look toward the north.” I looked, and there near the altar by the entrance of the gateway I saw the idol that was an outrage to God.

6 God said to me, “Mortal man, do you see what is happening? Look at the disgusting things the people of Israel are doing here, driving me farther and farther away from my holy place. You will see even more disgraceful things than this.”

7 He took me to the entrance of the outer courtyard and showed me a hole in the wall. 8He said, “Mortal man, break through the wall here.” I broke through it and found a door. 9He said to me, “**Go in and look at the evil, disgusting things they are doing there.” 10So I went in and looked. The walls were covered with drawings of snakes and other unclean animals, and of the other things which the Israelites were worshiping.** **11Seventy Israelite leaders were there, including Jaazaniah son of Shaphan. Each one was holding an incense burner, and smoke was rising from the incense. 12God asked me, “Mortal man, do you see what the Israelite leaders are doing in secret? They are all worshiping in a room full of images. Their excuse is: ‘The Lord doesn’t see us! He has abandoned the country.’ ”**

13 Then the Lord said to me, “You are going to see them do even more disgusting things than that.” 14So he took me to the north gate of the Temple and showed me women weeping over the death of the god Tammuz.

15 He asked, “Mortal man, do you see that? You will see even more disgusting things.” 16So he took me to the inner courtyard of the Temple. **There near the entrance of the sanctuary, between the altar and the passage, were about twenty-five men. They had turned their backs to the sanctuary and were bowing low towards the east, worshiping the rising sun.**

17 **The Lord said to me, “Mortal man, do you see that? These people of Judah are not satisfied with merely doing all the disgusting things you have seen here and with spreading violence throughout the country. No, they must come and do them right here in the Temple and make me even more angry. Look how they insult me in the most offensive way possible! 18They will feel all the force of my anger. I will not spare them or show them any mercy. They will shout prayers to me as loud as they can, but I will not listen to them.”**—*GNB-TEV*.\*† [Compare Ezekiel 20:1-44.]‡

1. Were Moses and Ezekiel correct about God’s reputation being soiled by His people? Did God have to shield His people in order to protect His own reputation?

**Ezekiel 20:8-44**: 8 “But they defied me and refused to listen. **They did not throw away their disgusting idols or give up the Egyptian gods. I was ready to let them feel the full force of my anger there in Egypt. 9But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name, for in the presence of the people among whom they were living I had announced to Israel that I was going to lead them out of Egypt**….

13 “But even in the desert they defied me. They broke my laws and rejected my commands, which bring life to anyone who obeys them. They completely profaned the Sabbath. **I was ready to let them feel the force of my anger there in the desert and to destroy them. 14But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name among the nations which had seen me lead Israel out of Egypt**….

**22 “But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name among the nations which had seen me bring Israel out of Egypt**….

25 “**Then I gave them laws that are not good and commands that do not bring life. 26I let them defile themselves with their own offerings, and I let them sacrifice their first-born sons. This was to punish them and show them that I am the Lord….** [Compare the Greek translation in Acts 7:42.]

**32** “**You have made up your minds that you want to be like the other nations, like the people who live in other countries and worship trees and rocks. But that will never be.”** [Compare the Greek translation in Romans 1:18-28.]

39 The Sovereign Lord said, “And now, all you Israelites, suit yourselves! Go on and serve your idols! **But I warn you that after this you will have to obey me and stop dishonoring my holy name by offering gifts to your idols….**

**44 “When I act to protect my honor, you Israelites will know that I am the Lord, because I do not deal with you as your wicked, evil actions deserve.” The Sovereign Lord has spoken.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*†‡

1. ***Are they images that we worship?*** ***Do we have idols in our day? If yes, what are they? Remember that idols that we worship represent things we value most. Consider, for example, cars, homes, buildings, bank accounts, sex, fame, etc.***

[BSG:] **An idol is something that replaces God**, and even though we know it is not right, we still worship it, often repeatedly. It captures our imagination, affection, time, and mind more than does God. It can even enslave our thinking. In fact, we become what we behold, and **we will rise no higher than whatever “god” we serve.**

If God is not at the center of your life, then other gods will fill His place. If we do not enjoy and cultivate God’s living Presence, we will enjoy and devote our lives to something or someone else. What we substitute for Christ may have different appearances: pride, self-centeredness, money, power, sex, food, TV, drugs, alcohol, impure thoughts, pornography, pleasures, work, sports, family, video games, films, shopping, ideas, politics, music, position, titles, grades, and so forth. The list has no end.

We are very creative and inventive in this regard. **We can turn anything that is good, beautiful, and meaningful into an idol.** Idolatry is extremely dangerous because it transforms our personality, our way of thinking, our affections, and our social life. It changes our identity and replaces genuine personal relationships with hollow and ultimately meaningless interactions that, in the end, cannot save us.―*BSG*\* for Tuesday, September 9.†‡

[BSG:] **Humans are geniuses at fabricating their own idols. They create their own gods,** which is bad enough, but then they go and serve those gods. The Creator is replaced with things that, sooner or later, lead to moral degeneration.―*BSG*\* for Monday, September 8.†‡

1. ***What did Ellen White say about idol worship in her day and our day?***

[EGW:] …. **Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal. Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to exalt the human.**—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*\* 177.1.†‡ [The biggest idol is self!]‡

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p88.768&index=0>]‡

1. ***Is having a “wrong conception of God and His attributes” really “as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal”?***

**Intercessory Prayer**

[BSG:] While Moses was still on Mount Sinai, God said that He would destroy the rebels and make Moses’ posterity into a great nation. But that was not what Moses wanted. Instead, he pleaded with the Lord, pointing out that the Israelites were not Moses’ people—**they were God’s**. He, **Moses himself, had not brought them out of Egypt, but God had done it through His mighty works.** And so **Moses pled with God**, stressing His early promises to the fathers. **Moses was truly working as an intercessor between God and humanity.**

After the “Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people” *(Exod. 32:14, NKJV)*, Moses returned to them. There is no record—unlike what would happen in Exodus 34:29, 30—that his face shone from the presence of the Lord. His face probably reflected his anger.―*BSG*\* for Wednesday, September 10.†‡§

1. Did Moses really want his name removed from the list of God’s people? Or, was he “interceding” for the people?

**Exodus 32:30-32**: 30 The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a terrible sin. But now I will again go up the mountain to the Lord; perhaps I can obtain forgiveness for your sin.” 31Moses then returned to the Lord and said, “These people have committed a terrible sin. They have made a god out of gold and worshiped it. 32Please forgive their sin; but if you won’t, then remove my name from the book in which you have written the names of your people.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*

[BSG:] What should this story [of Moses interceding on behalf of Aaron and the people] teach us about the power of intercessory prayer? Whom should you be praying for right now?―*BSG*\* for Wednesday, September 10.‡

1. Are there different types of prayer? If yes, what are they?

[T-BSG:] There are four basic kinds, or types, of prayer. First, there is the “**prayer of praise**” **or “prayer of thanksgiving,”** wherein we thank God for the marvelous things He has done. In the prayer of thanksgiving, we express our gratitude for who God is and for what He does in our lives and the lives of His people, thus praising Him with joy for His numerous blessings. Second, there is the **“prayer of repentance,”** wherein we humbly ask God for forgiveness for our sins. Third, there is the **“prayer of supplication,”** wherein we pray for specific things for ourselves, such as wisdom, the Holy Spirit, joy, love, health, peace, patience, spiritual gifts, financial resources, food, safety, protection, and so on. Finally, there is the **“prayer of intercession,”** wherein we pray not for ourselves but for others, requesting for God to mercifully intervene and give them special “blessings” or “needed things,” such as guidance, conversion, children, parents, marriage, family, communities, institutions, prosperity, success, and so on. We also may pray for the sick, persecuted, hurt, poor, students, colleagues, baptisms, supervisors, government, and so forth. Moses’ prayer was an intercessory prayer for sinners, given that he prayed for those who erred, petitioning God to forgive their sin and not to abandon His people *(Exod. 32:31, 32)*.

Important as they are, intercessory prayers are surrounded by mystery. On the one hand, God will do the maximum for every person or people to save them because He loves them. [Think of Job!] **On the other hand, intercessory prayer allows God to do more for people in their given situation**. This is a tension, and we are not able to resolve it now. The good news is that we do not need to do so. Thus, we do not need to know precisely how intercessory prayer functions, but God’s Word testifies that it works, and our experience confirms it. What we need is to pray as an obedient response to His instructions. We do not need to understand every puzzle in life in order to pray! We need to accept God’s lead, trust Him, follow, and pray.

God respects people’s choices because God never forces anyone to follow Him. He guarantees their freedom; yet, we are encouraged to pray for people, even for our enemies. **This is another apparent contradiction that we are unable to solve or explain because we do not see behind the veil, where a spiritual battle is taking place**. One can but dimly understand it when reflecting upon it in the context of the great controversy, as we observe the spiritual warfare between the forces of good and evil, truth and lie, light and darkness, Christ and Satan. These glimpses of insight help us to trust that our Lord will do His best to save everyone.

**Behind the curtain of the unseen world exist rules that regulate how the powers of good and evil interact.** Theologians speak about God “permitting” Satan to act. John Peckham calls these regulations “rules of engagement.” (See Peckham, *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018], p. 58.) **The devil is permitted to act, and he has real power, although restricted, under these “rules of engagement” *(see Job 1, Job 2:6)*. These rules have been decided upon, with input from the heavenly council (representatives of all heavenly beings), Satan, and God. These regulations mean that God has given Satan certain “privileges,” or better yet, “permissions,” to fully demonstrate what his “reign” would look like, allowing everyone to compare the two sides.** [See Job 1 & 2.]

These regulations also mean that God does not always get what He desires *(Isa. 30:15, 18; Isa. 66:4; Ezek. 18:23; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 18:14; Matt. 23:37; Luke 7:30)*. Moreover, God also is restricted in His actions. God cannot act against these “rules of engagement” because He keeps His promises. “A genuine love relationship requires the possibility that creatures might reject God’s ideal will.”—Peckham, *Theodicy of Love*, p. 139. **God will not restrict our freedom to choose one side or the other because it would prevent the full blossoming of love between God and His created creatures.** We are unable to solve this apparent contradiction because we do not see behind the veil of this spiritual battle. However, God is committed “to the flourishing of love and the covenantal rules of engagement.”—*Theodicy of Love*, p. 140.―*T-BSG*\* 146-148.†‡Ω§

1. It is absolutely essential that we think of these problems in the light of our understanding of the great controversy between God and Satan over the character and government of God.
2. Are we ever tempted to worship the created thing instead of the Creator?
3. What do you think of Moses’s action, demanding that the instigators of the evil be killed?

[BSG:] Why is substitutionary atonement the only correct model of atonement? Why is any theory of atonement that denies, or downplays, the substitutionary foundation of the gospel a grievous theological error? Read 1 Peter 2:24. How does it powerfully reveal the idea of Jesus as our Substitute?―*BSG*\* for Friday, September 12.‡

1. Substitutionary atonement is a model of the plan of salvation in which Jesus dies in our place and carries our sins with Him. The death of Jesus was not a way to deal with our past sins, **but instead, a** **demonstration of the terrible results of sin** so that we can see that the life and death of Jesus give us a choice: 1) We can choose to live lives as close as possible to the example of Jesus and live forever; or 2) We will die the death that He died, separated from His Father, the only source of life.

**1 Peter 2:24**: Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that you have been healed.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*

1. ***Have we learned how to die to sin? Or, do we want to die forever?***

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