



## The Golden Calf

Jeff Bullard died this week. Jeff grew up less than a block from my house. He was two years younger than me, so I did not know him that well, but I knew him. He was a good person. I am left wondering if he knew God. Did he have a relationship with Jesus? Was he born again? I haven't seen him in years, so I have no idea where he was spiritually, but I hope he had been born again and has gone on to be with Christ in heaven. Life is short, and death is often a surprise. Our next door neighbor dropped dead a couple of weeks ago while at the gym. It was a total surprise to everyone. It happens. Things like this should make us wonder if we are ready. Ready to

leave this earth. Ready to meet Jesus face to face. Will we rejoice, or will we run away when we see Him?

When Moses went up on Mt Sinai, the people of Israel grew tired of waiting on him to return, so they built themselves an idol, a golden calf, and begin to worship it. When Moses returned, his anger burned against them for not waiting on him, and for their turning to an idol. He gives them a choice – choose God, or choose death. Most of them chose God and Moses, but some did not, and they were put to death that day. This is an amazing story, and if you have not read it recently, I urge you to do so. (Exodus 19-32) Interestingly, it has profound applications for us today.

As Moses went up on the mountain, so Christ has left us and gone to heaven. And just as Moses returned, so Christ will return, either at our deaths or at the second coming (whichever comes first). When Jesus returns, will he find faith or idolatry, worship or wild partying? Will Jesus be interrupting our festivities, or will we rejoice at His return? Will we be glad to see Him, or ashamed? Will we be too busy with work, or will we welcome the opportunity to spend time with our Lord and Maker? This is the first application of this story. Are you ready for Christ to return to get you. Are you ready, now, today, this very minute? And if not, what do you need to do about it?

Another application of this teaching has to do with the golden calf that they made and worshipped when Moses was away. What idols have we made to meet our needs while we wait on God to do something in our lives? Are we using money to meet a need that we should be waiting on God to meet? Are we doing something in our own strength rather than waiting on Him to do it? Have we fashioned a golden calf somewhere in our life that we look to for security, identity, answers, significance, provision, etc.? Is it our job? Our marriage? An affair? A bank account? A ministry? A trip? Our friends? Something else? Are we looking to anything other than God for our significance, our source of identity, our security, our hope, to answer our questions, etc.? If so, we have become idolatrous while Jesus has been away, and we need to repent, turning away from it, and we must look to God to meet our needs and provide these things.

Just as the Israelites turned away from God at the base of Mt Sinai, and made the golden calf, so many of us have turned aside from truly following God while Jesus has been away, and we have fashioned for ourselves a golden calf of evolution, money, sex, work, "tolerance", power, position, a cause, a philosophy, or some other modern form of the golden calf. We are looking to this modern golden calf rather than waiting on God. What area of your life are you waiting for something to happen in? Are you waiting for a job? Waiting for your marriage to become what you want it to be? Waiting on your children to do something? Waiting for something at work? Waiting for something in your ministry to happen? What are you waiting on today? Are you waiting on God, or are you trying to do it yourself in some way? Are you trying to meet the need in your own power, with your own resources? Are you making a golden calf in some area of your life? If so, I urge you to repent. Jesus is coming back. One way or another, you are going to meet Him face to face. The same "gold" can be used to honor God or to make an idol. What are you doing with the resources God has given you? I urge you to do what you need to do to make yourself ready for His return in your life. Take a hard look at your life. Search out the golden calves you have made, and grind them to powder as Moses did. Turn to God, and He will heal you. He will deliver you.

*Yet those who wait for the Lord  
Will gain new strength;  
They will mount up with wings like eagles,  
They will run and not get tired,  
They will walk and not become weary.  
Isaiah 40:31*