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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**“THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS”**

**Acts 7:29-43**

***Acts 7:29 "Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons."***

Earlier in the chapter, the leaders of the temple were questioning Stephen, and in answer, Stephen started relating the history of the Hebrew family as far back as Abraham. We ended where Moses had killed the Egyptian and had been found out. In this lesson, Stephen relates how Moses went to the desert, and walked across it. Fleeing to Madian or Midian, Moses encountered God, who appeared to him in the wilderness. He met Zipporah, Jethro's daughter. Soon after, they were married. Moses spent forty years in Midian near Mount Sinai. During his stay, he had two sons.

***Acts 7:30 "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush."***

***Acts 7:31 "When Moses saw [it], he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold [it], the voice of the Lord came unto him,"***

***Acts 7:32 "[Saying], I [am] the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold."***

***Acts 7:33 "Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground."***

Again, then, the Lord initiated a relationship outside the promised land. This occurred when Moses was eighty years old. This is the burning bush that did not burn up. Stephen is giving to these Jewish leaders an even better detailed happening than, perhaps, even they could have given. He explained to Moses that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Stephen, explains, here that Moses was frightened at the sight of God. Moreover, the land where God appeared to Moses was holy ground because of God’s presence. Land is only holy if God is present; a church is only holy if Jesus is in its midst. This is one of the most important things for us to remember in our churches today. We take God far too casually. If we want the Lord to be with us in our services, we must keep it a holy place. Wherever God is, is holy ground.

***1 Timothy 3:15 “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”***

***Acts 7:34 "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt."***

God sent Moses to return to Egypt and deliver his people from bondage. Here, Stephen is reminding these Hebrews that once before God had heard their cries and sent them a deliverer to take them out of Egypt (type of the world). Jesus was a deliverer, also. Jesus delivers all who will follow Him from a life of sin unto their own promised land (eternal life with Him).

***Acts 7:35 "This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send [to be] a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush."***

***Acts 7:36 "He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years."***

We see that Moses was not only to deliver the Hebrews, but was also to rule over them, as well. Moses' power was not his own. He was a very meek man. His power was that of God in him. God empowered Moses to do the things necessary to deliver the Hebrews. This man whom the Israelites had rejected was God’s chosen deliverer to lead them out of Egypt and in the wilderness for forty years. Thus, when the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus whom God had sent, they were following in the footsteps of their ancestors. We remember from our Exodus teaching that God brought them out with a mighty hand. God brought ten plagues on the Egyptians (demoting their worldly gods). Each plague showed the helplessness of an Egyptian god when facing the true God. Three million (approximately) Hebrews walked through the Red sea on dry ground and all of the Egyptians chasing them were drowned. The miracle of the forty years of wandering was that God miraculously sustained and provided for them.

***Deuteronomy 7:15 “And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.”***

***Deuteronomy 29:5 “And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.”***

***Nehemiah 9:21 “Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.”***

***Acts 7:37 "This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear."***

Up until now, these leaders in the temple could not find anything wrong with what Stephen had said, because this is what they had been taught from their youth. Everything Stephen had said so far, was leading up to the next few verses. This, they will not accept. This one, spoken of that would come from their brethren that they were to hear, is Jesus Christ the Messiah who they have rejected. Moses told the Israelites that God would raise up another prophet like him from among the people, a prophecy that was fulfilled in Jesus.

***Deuteronomy 18:15-18***

***15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;***

***16 According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.***

***17 And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.***

***18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.***

***Acts 3:22 “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.”***

***Acts 7:38 "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and [with] our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:***

In Acts the Greek term (ekklēsia) sometimes possesses its general sense of congregation or assembly. Here it is used for the gathering of the nation of Israel when it received the Law. In Acts 19 it is used of the town meeting of the unbelieving mob of Ephesus (vv. 32, 39, 41). The 111 other occurrences of the word refer to the church of Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus Christ the Lord was actually the doer (worker) part of the Godhead.

***John 1:3, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made***."

***John 5:36 “But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.”***

***John 9:4 “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”***

In the verse above, we see that it was actually Jesus Christ (Word) who was in the church in the wilderness and wrote the ten commandments on the stone. JESUS IS THE WORD. He is the written Word and the spoken Word.

***Acts 7:39 "To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust [him] from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,"***

***Acts 7:40 "Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for [as for] this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."***

***Acts 7:41 "And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands."***

They soon forgot the mighty works of God in bringing them out of Egypt. As we have said so many times, Egypt is a type of the world. Stephen said here that they had turned back to the world (Egypt) in their hearts. Jesus says your heart will be judged. They are guilty of turning from the true God back to a sinful world life style. So many people are like this today. They walk with God, but when He delays His coming, many go back into a worldly life.

***Acts 7:42 "Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices [by the space of] forty years in the wilderness?"***

***Acts 7:43 "Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon."***

This reference to the book of the prophets is found in Amos. Because of their unfaithfulness to God while Moses was on the mountain, God would not accept their burnt offerings to Him. This speaks of God's great displeasure with the Israelites worshipping false gods. It, also, teaches against astrology. God allowed them to wander forty years in the wilderness, until the old ones died off and a new generation came on.

***Amos 5:25-27***

***25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?***

***26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.***

***27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.***

Remphan or Rephan probably comes from the Egyptian name for the idol god associated with the planet Saturn. This is the star Amos mentioned. We may not call our false gods by these names, but there are plenty of them around today, as well. The children of Israel would not get out of one mess until they were worshipping some other god. Moloch was just one of the false gods they worshipped. This Moloch, here, is the same as Molech in the Old Testament and is a Canaanite title for deities to whom human fiery sacrifices were offered.

***Leviticus 18:21, "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord."***

The Jewish ancestors were unwilling to obey Moses and turned to idolatry, scorning God. In the same way, their descendants in Stephen’s day were unwilling to obey Jesus. And by scorning Jesus, their Messiah, they too had scorned God. You see, God is a jealous God. He will not allow His people to worship other gods. We see in verse 43, that the very reason they were captured and sent to Babylon was because they worshipped other gods. God is still jealous and will not allow us to hold anything or anyone (even ourselves) ahead of Him.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What land did Moses flee to?
2. How many sons were born to him there?
3. What was the name of Moses' wife?
4. Who was her father?
5. How many years did Moses live here?
6. Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush?
7. Why was Moses to take off his shoes?
8. What had God heard that caused Him to send a deliverer to His people?
9. What is Egypt symbolic of?
10. In what way was Moses like Jesus?
11. Where did Moses' strength come from?
12. What did the ten plagues do, besides free the Israelites?
13. What miraculous thing happened at the Red sea?
14. Who had prophesied and called Jesus a Prophet?
15. Who received the lively oracles?
16. Who put the ten commandments on the stone?
17. Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Word and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Word.
18. What evil thing did the people talk Aaron into doing?
19. Which does God teach against; astronomy or astrology?
20. God is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God.