

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 378

Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8

Verses: Acts 7:23-36

Topic: Stephen's Sermon part 3 – Moses The Rejected Messiah

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Acts 7:23-36 MKJV And when a period of forty years was fulfilled to him, it arose in his heart to look upon his brothers, the sons of Israel. (24) And seeing one being wronged, he defended him. and avenged him who was oppressed and struck the Egyptian. (25) For he thought his brothers would understand that God would give them deliverance by his hand. But they did not understand. (26) And the next day he appeared to them while fighting. And he urged them to peace, saying, Men, you are brothers, why do you wrong one another? (27) But he who wronged his neighbor thrust him away, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? (28) Will you not kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday? (29) And Moses fled at this word, and became a temporary resident in the land of Midian, where he fathered two sons. (30) And forty years being fulfilled to him, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in the desert of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in a bush. (31) And seeing it, Moses marveled at the sight. And as he drew near to see, the voice of the Lord came to him: (32) saying, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." But Moses trembled and dared not look. (33) Then the Lord said to him, "Loosen the sandal on your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (34) "I have seen, the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their groan; and I came down to pluck them out. And now come, I will send you into Egypt." (35) This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge? God has sent this one to be a ruler and a redeemer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the Bush. (36) He brought them out after he had worked wonders and miracles in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness forty years.

Here the punch line is: "This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge? God has sent this one to be a ruler and a redeemer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the Bush."

Moses is being deliberately portrayed as the "rejected Messiah", as was Joseph who was rejected by his brothers who were the patriarchs, and as was Jesus who the Sanhedrin had crucified. In verse 51 Stephen will call them "stiff-necked and uncircumcised" and accuse them of resisting the Holy Spirit. Now he builds the case toward that point.

Moses is described as a ruler and redeemer – that is as Lord and Savior. Also like Jesus Moses worked "wonders and miracles".

The location of Moses' miracles is significant: In Egypt, the Red Sea and the wilderness. The miracles all occurred outside the Promised Land. God was thus not confined to the Temple Mount or the borders of Israel but could work mightily

anywhere at all. This may seem an almost silly point today but it was of great significance then when various “gods” ruled over cities and nations and these “gods” were thought to only have power in those specific areas. YHWH was thus the universal God who worked miracles even in Gentile areas.

Even today people believe that God is more powerful in church than at home or at work and even that there is more power at the front of the church than the back! Yet God’s miracles seldom occurred in “holy places” such as the Temple! Most of the Bible’s miracles occur in ordinary places such as homes and on hillsides and rivers and in public baths and at sea and even in profane places such as leper colonies or near herds of swine in Gentile regions such as Gadara – and so on. I do not know of any “holy hot spot” (in Scripture) where more miracles occurred than elsewhere.

Jesus deliberately knocks the idea of “holy hot spots” on the head when he preaches against the towns such as Capernaum “in which most of His mighty works were done” (Matthew 11:20-24). It is not the place that works miracles but God in that place. And if God is not honored in that place after the miracles have occurred – then it faces judgment. A tragic modern day example is Rwanda, which had a mighty revival, then backslid into anarchy. Miracles can occur anywhere that God wants to perform them.

The miracle that gets the most attention in this passage is the burning bush (verses 30-35) e.g. “And forty years being fulfilled to him, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in the desert of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in a bush.” The Sanhedrin were Sadducees who only believed in the books of Moses, and were anti-supernatural not believing in angels, demons, or the resurrection, they also did not believe that God directed events or intervened in history. They were also highly ceremonial and did not believe in personal encounters with God, correct ceremony was sufficient to appease the remote Deity in their view.

The only way to defeat them was to argue on their own turf so when Jesus confronted them He also used the burning bush incident (Luke 20:34-38) and His punch line was: Luke 20:37-38 MKJV But that the dead are raised, even Moses pointed out at the Bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. (38) For He is not God of the dead, but of the living. For all live to Him.

Stephen uses the burning bush incident to defeat them in 4 ways:

- a) The timing was providential and obviously directed by God. Stephen twice uses the phrase “And forty years being fulfilled to him” (verses 23,30) to drive home the point that God directs and orders human events. And He would intervene in history – “and I came down to pluck them out”.
- b) The incident was a personal encounter with a living God who spoke audible words to a real human being. The voice of the Lord comes to Moses, and God reveals that He had direct personal interest in the Israelites “I have seen their affliction and heard their groans”. Thus He is not remote.
- c) It is not ceremonial. The holy ground is simply wherever God is manifest! If God is in a burning bush in the desert then that is holy ground! Moses did

- not perform any ceremony to placate God or bring about His presence. It was a personal conversation, not a parade with banners!
- d) The whole burning bush incident was the manifestation of supernatural power! The bush made Moses marvel at the sight – that is was burned but was not consumed.

Since Moses was their “hero” they could not readily argue with this analysis, which was that God was not a remote philosophical principal, or a system - rather He observed and intervened in history via personal encounters with individuals. God also intervened through the direct saving use of signs and wonders. Yet the Jews often then rejected these chosen individuals.

Thus true faith was not about places (such as the Temple) or rituals or systems. Rather true faith was like a burning bush - awesome, personal and miraculous. Jesus of Nazareth was obviously a person God had chosen to work such miracles and to hear from God. Therefore the Sanhedrin were guilty for not listening to Him, for in fact crucifying Him, just as they had rejected Moses from being their leader and redeemer.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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