

22. Stephen Reviewed the Rejection of Moses by Israel

In our last topic, we saw that Stephen was speaking to the Jewish religious leaders and gave them a review of the fear of the king of Egypt when the people of Israel were in the land of Egypt. He showed how the fear of the king caused him to try and destroy the people of Israel by killing all of the male children. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the tremendous impact that fear has on the life of any person. In our topic today, we will see that Moses tried to set Israel free by his own efforts. Then, we will see how God called Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

In Acts 7:20-22, we read, ““At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.”” Moses was born at the very time that the king of Egypt had commanded his people to kill all of the male children of Israel. We see that Moses was described as one who was well pleasing to the Lord.

When his parents could no longer hide Moses, Exodus 2:3-4 says, ““But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid *it* in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.”” The one who found Moses in this ark of bulrushes was the daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt that had ordered the death of all of the male children of Israel.

God caused the daughter to have compassion on the baby and she raised him as her own son. As a result, Moses received the best education that Egypt had to offer in that day. We read that he was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was also mighty in words and deeds. He received this training for forty years. As a result, he understood man's ways but he had no understanding of God's ways.

As a result of his understanding of man's ways, Acts 7:23-25 says, ““Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.”” When Moses was forty years old he decided to see what was happening to the people of Israel. He saw an Israelite mistreated by an Egyptian. As a result, Moses used man's way to deal with this mistreatment. Exodus 2:12 says, ““So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”” Here, we see that Moses became a murderer in his efforts to defend the people of Israel. Moses thought that the people of Israel would understand that God was going to use Moses to deliver the people of Israel from the king of Egypt. However, the people of Israel did not understand. We want to help our children understand that man's ways will never solve the problems of the world.

This lack of understanding was shown the very next day. Acts 7:26-28 says, ““And the next day he appeared to *two* of them as they were fighting, and *tried to* reconcile them, saying, “Men, you

are brethren; why do you wrong one another?” But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?”” Here, we see that Moses found two men who were both from Israel fighting with each other. He wanted to help them make peace with one another. The word translated “reconcile them” is almost always translated “peace” and speaks about peace between individuals or nations.

Moses tried to bring peace between the two men of Israel by asking them why they were doing wrong to one another. The one who had started the fight immediately reacted to the words of Moses. He said, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?” Moses could not bring peace between others because he had not acted with peace the previous day. In fact, he had killed a man. Since Moses had used man’s way to try to solve the problem, he was unable to bring peace between the two men of Israel. In fact, the people of Israel as a whole rejected the leadership of Moses and did not recognize him as a ruler or a judge.

Acts 7:29-33 says, “Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons. And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, *saying*, “I am the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses trembled and dared not look. “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground...’”” Moses had tried to solve problems his way and it did not work. As a result, he was forced to flee to the land of Midian, which was out in the desert. There he gave birth to two sons.

For the first forty years of his life, Moses lived in the palace of the ruler of Egypt and learned to solve problems in man’s way. He found out that man’s way does not solve problems. Then, for forty years, Moses was taught out in the desert how to trust God instead of himself. After forty years in the desert, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses near Mount Sinai. The “Angel of the Lord” is the common name for Christ when He appears in the Old Testament. Moses had to learn to depend on Christ instead of himself before he could effectively lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

We see that Christ appeared to Moses as a flame of fire in a bush. Although the bush was on fire, the bush was not burned. Moses was amazed when he saw that the bush did not burn even though it was on fire. To try and understand what was happening, Moses went close to the bush. Then, the Lord spoke to Moses and said, “I am the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Here, we see that the voice speaking from the fire said that He was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. When Christ told Moses to go and speak to Pharaoh, Moses asked who he should say sent him. Exodus 3:14 says, “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”’” As we see, “I AM” is a name that is frequently used of Christ in the book of John.

As Moses heard the voice, he was filled with fear and was afraid to look. Then, Christ said to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.” First, Moses had to learn to be obedient to Christ. It is only when we serve the Lord in the strength of Christ and serve Him in God’s way instead of man’s way that we will be effective in our ministry for the Lord. Second, Moses had to learn that the place where he met Christ was holy ground. It was just a small piece of the desert just like the rest of the desert. However, it was the place where he met Christ and became obedient to Him. The same is true in our lives. When we meet Christ and become obedient to Him, we have been on holy ground. As we are obedient to Him, we will do what God calls us to do in God’s way instead of man’s way. Moses failed in his first effort to try and free Israel because he depended on his own way. This time, God would accomplish His purpose through Moses because Moses was learning to do God’s work in God’s way.

Acts 7:34-36 goes on to say, ““I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.”” This Moses whom they rejected, saying, “Who made you a ruler and a judge?” is the one God sent *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.”” God had both seen and heard what His people were experiencing in Egypt. He was now going to deliver them and He had chosen to deliver them through Moses.

The people of Israel had chosen to reject the leadership of Moses. Now, after forty years in the desert learning that he must depend on Christ, the Lord sent Moses back to Egypt to deliver the people of Israel. We will see that the people continued to rebel against the Lord throughout the time that they were in the desert. However, this time the Lord could use Moses to carry out His purpose. Moses did bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. This only happened after God judged the land of Egypt and the king of Egypt. The servants of Pharaoh said in Exodus 10:7, “Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, ‘How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?’” Pharaoh would not listen even though his land had been destroyed.

Then, God had to judge Pharaoh. This happened at the Red Sea. Exodus 14:27 says, “And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.” Israel rejected the leadership of Moses. The Lord did judge Egypt. Next, Stephen will show that God also had to judge Israel because of their personal rebellion. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God must always judge rebellion against Him. He will judge our rebellion just as He judged the rebellion of Egypt and Israel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the consequences of rebellion.