

“SEEING THE UNSEEN”

Acts 7:1-16

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

Stephen had been accused of speaking against Moses—the Law—and against God—the temple. Supposedly he had stated that Jesus would destroy the temple and change the customs laid out by Moses in the OT Law (Pentateuch). These were serious charges and if found guilty he could be severely punished.

The Jewish leaders put great stock in the **external Law** and in the **external Temple**, and of course in the **land of Israel**.

Such has always been the case—*live by sight and not by faith!* Worship what I can see and what I can understand:

- Give us golden calves and not an invisible God.
- Give us an ornate building with many beautiful artistic objects and symbols.
- Give us an **elaborate ritual**.
- Give us “signs and wonders”—even if counterfeit; so the contemporary Charismatic Movement and with the New Age Movement. Such a craving **will eventually lead to the deception of the Beast and False Prophet**.
- Give us a “**Prosperity Gospel**”. You should be rich and successful; God guarantees it!
- Give us “faith” that works to bring us what we want—“**Name it and claim it**”

Genuine faith does not depend upon outward signs or objects.

Let us examine *The Divine Promise given to the patriarchs, and also the Divine Presence guaranteed to them. As we do so we will briefly examine the life and ministries of Abraham and Joseph.*

- I. THE DIVINE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM
 - A. The Source of the Promise—“The God of _____”
 - B. The Place of the Promise—_____ (Not in the Holy Land!)
 - C. The Substance of the Promise—The Gift of the _____ (3b, 5) to both Abraham and to his _____.
 - D. The Sign of the Promise—Circumcision (v. 8) [Note that circumcision is so much the essence of the “covenant” that it is called “the covenant” in v. 8.]
 - E. The Submission to the Promise (4)

1. He left the “land of the Chaldeans” and settled in Harran
 2. After his father’s death he left Harran and went to the Promised Land—where the Jews “are now living.”
- F. Hindrances to the Promise
1. No _____ (5a—“not even a foot of ground”)
 2. No _____ (5a)
 3. An extended absence from the land: _____ years (6-7)
 - Aliens in a foreign land
 - Enslaved there
 - Mistreated
 - The captor nation will be judged by the Lord
 4. A _____ to the land (7b)—they will “serve Me in this place.”

See Hebrews 11:9-10: Abraham “lived as an alien in the land of promise”—like he was in a foreign country; the same was true of Isaac and Jacob.

*Abraham looked for the secure heavenly city—the one built by God; **his permanent hope was not resting on the earthly promises.***

Abraham died without receiving the promises—but saw them from a distance. He was “a stranger and an exile on the earth.” (Heb. 11:13)

We must not focus on this life and what it offers.

Yes, Abraham had the Divine _____, and Joseph later had the Divine _____—even though they both were **out of the Promised Land and had no holy place.**

- II. THE DIVINE PRESENCE WITH JOSEPH (9-16)—“God was _____ him.”
- A. Problems Faced by Joseph
1. Jealousy of his family (9a)
 2. Enslavement in a foreign land (9a)
 3. Famine over the whole area—Canaan and Egypt (11)
 4. “Affliction” accompanied the famine (11)
- B. The triumph of Joseph over the Problems (10)
1. The Lord “rescued him from *all* his afflictions”—see Genesis for these afflictions.
 2. The Lord granted him “_____”
 3. The Lord granted him “_____ with Pharaoh, king of Egypt”—the most powerful ruler on Earth.

4. The Lord made him “governor over Egypt and all his household”—even those who had been jealous of him and had rejected him.

Is it difficult to see here a veiled allusion to Jesus’ triumph over those who had been jealous of Him and who had rejected Him, and how He also triumphed over them and was rescued from all His afflictions? He had favor with the most powerful Ruler of the universe.

C. The Reunion of Joseph with his Family (11-15)

1. Joseph’s brothers’ search for food led them to Egypt at the direction of their father (11-12)
2. The discovery of Joseph on their second visit—Joseph “made himself known to his brothers” (13)
3. The relation of Joseph to his family was made known to Pharaoh (13b)
4. At Pharaoh’s direction Joseph invited Jacob and all his family to Egypt (14-15).
5. All the family of Jacob, including Joseph and his brothers **died in Egypt—NOT IN THE _____ LAND.**
6. Eventually their bones were taken to Shechem and put in the tomb purchased by Abraham and Jacob (16).

Yes, they died in Egypt and never again lived in the Promised Land—nor did they have a temple. Yet, the Lord was with them!

CONCLUSION

*Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were “strangers and pilgrims” in a foreign land; likewise we live away from home. **We have a promise of our heritage but we don’t possess it!***

- Rom 8:24—Hope that is seen is not hope.
- Heb. 11:1—Faith is the “substance” and “evidence” of things “hoped for” and “not seen”.
- II Cor. 5:7—We walk by faith, not by sight
- II Cor. 4:18—We are looking at the things not seen
- I Pet. 1:8—“Whom, having not seen, we love.”
- John 20:29—Blessed are those who are not seeing and yet believe.
- Hebrews 11:7—Noah was warned of things not yet seen.
- Hebrews 11:27—Moses endured by “seeing Him who is unseen.”
- I Cor. 13:12—“Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then **face to face.**”

Live for the permanent and the unseen—not for the temporary and visible!