

Acts 7:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.

Stephen recounts the Exodus as authentication of Moses' divine commission through miraculous confirmation.

The phrase brought them out emphasizes Moses' role as deliverer, yet the power came from God. The wonders and signs served as divine credentials—visible proof of God's presence and power. Reformed theology distinguishes between signs that authenticate God's messengers and the underlying spiritual reality they represent.

Three locations mark Israel's journey: Egypt (plagues and Passover), Red Sea (parting waters), and wilderness (manna, water from rock). Each miracle demonstrated God's covenant faithfulness and power to save. The forty years in wilderness becomes a test of faith—physical deliverance must lead to spiritual transformation.

Stephen's audience knew these miracles well, yet he's building toward a shocking conclusion: possessing the signs and wonders didn't prevent rebellion. External miracles don't guarantee internal transformation—a warning against presuming on covenant privileges without heart faith.

Historical Context

The Exodus narrative (Exodus 7-40) formed the core of Jewish identity. Every Passover celebration rehearsed these events. Stephen speaks to Jews who pride themselves on Mosaic heritage while resisting the greater Prophet Moses foretold.

The forty years becomes a significant typological period—testing and refinement. This speech occurs roughly 1,500 years after the Exodus, yet Stephen shows the pattern repeating: signs were given, yet hearts remained hard. First-century Judaism emphasized circumcision, temple, and Torah observance, often overlooking the prophetic warnings against external religion without internal transformation.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do miracles function to authenticate God's messengers without guaranteeing faith?
2. What does the forty-year wilderness period teach about God's patience and testing of His people?
3. In what ways can we possess knowledge of God's works while resisting His authority?
4. How should Reformed Christians view signs and wonders in relation to Word-centered ministry?
5. What dangers exist in emphasizing external religious practices over heart transformation?

Interlinear Text

οὗτος ἐξήγαγεν αὐτοὺς ποιήσας τέρατα καὶ
He **brought** **them** **after that he had shewed** **wonders** **and**
G3778 G1806 G846 G4160 G5059 G2532

σημεῖα ἐν γῇ Αἰγύπτου καὶ ἐν Ἐρυθρᾷ Θαλάσσει
signs **in** **the land** **of Egypt** **and** **in** **the Red** **sea**
G4592 G1722 G1093 G125 G2532 G1722 G2063 G2281

καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἔτη τεσσαράκοντα
and **in** **the wilderness** **years** **forty**
G2532 G1722 G3588 G2048 G2094 G5062

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 14:21 (Parallel theme): And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

Exodus 12:41 (References Egypt): And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

Exodus 33:1 (References Egypt): And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:

Exodus 16:35 (Parallel theme): And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.