

Acts 7:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. The golden calf incident epitomizes human idolatry—replacing the invisible God with tangible, controllable objects.

Make us gods reveals humanity's impulse toward idolatry when God seems absent or distant. Plural gods suggests they wanted multiple deities they could manipulate. To go before us shows desire for visible leadership—faith requires trusting an unseen God, which feels risky to fallen humanity.

The dismissal of Moses—we wot not what is become of him—shows how quickly devotion fades. Moses had been gone forty days (Exodus 24:18), and their impatience exploded into idolatry. This reveals human fickleness and the necessity of persevering faith.

Aaron's compliance (he made the calf) shows how spiritual leaders can fail under pressure. Reformed theology emphasizes human depravity affecting even covenant leaders. The tragedy: they attributed the Exodus to Moses rather than God, then replaced Moses with an idol. This double error—crediting deliverance to human instruments, then worshiping created things—marks all idolatry.

Historical Context

Exodus 32 records the golden calf incident occurring while Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai. The irony is profound—God was giving the second commandment ('no graven images') while below the people violated it.

Egypt's bull-worship (Apis bull) likely influenced their choice of a calf idol. Though freed physically from Egypt, Egyptian religious concepts still controlled their thinking. Stephen uses this to indict his audience: you've been freed from the old covenant's external forms, yet you resist the Spirit's internal work. The speech dates to 34-35 CE, addressing Jews who emphasized temple and ritual while rejecting Messiah.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What modern 'golden calves' do Christians create when God seems distant or silent?
2. How does impatience in spiritual life lead to idolatry and substituting human leadership for divine guidance?
3. Why is trusting an invisible God more difficult than following visible, tangible religion?
4. In what ways do we attribute God's work to human instruments rather than recognizing divine agency?
5. How should spiritual leaders respond when facing pressure to compromise truth for popular approval?

Interlinear Text

εἰπόντες	τῷ	Ἀαρών	Ποίησον	ἡμῖν	θεοὺς	ὃς	
Saying	G3588	unto Aaron	Make	us	gods	to	
G2036		G2	G4160	G2254	G2316	G3739	
προπορεύονται	ἡμῶν·	ὁ	γὰρ	Μωσῆς	οὗτος	ὃς	
go before	us	G3588	for	Moses	as for this	to	
G4313	G2257		G1063	G3475	G3778	G3739	
ἐξήγαγεν	ἡμᾶς	ἐκ	γῆς	Αἰγύπτου	οὐκ	οἶδαμεν	τί
brought	us	out of	the land	of Egypt	not	we wot	what
G1806	G2248	G1537	G1093	G125	G3756	G1492	G5101
γέγονεν	αὐτῷ						
is become	of him						
G1096	G846						

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 32:1 (References God): And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Exodus 32:23 (References God): For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.