

What's a Church Doing in the Wilderness?

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

This verse has caused some people to mistakenly think that the “Church” as we have here at Danielstown BEGAN in 1446BC with the Children of Israel wandering in the Wilderness. That theory is WRONG. The reason is that the Church was not revealed until Jesus said HE WOULD build His Church in Matthew 16:18 and NO Peter aint the Rock! Thus the birth of the Church is in Acts 2!

So why is the word church there in Acts 7:38? Because the word church is EKKLESIA and at its basic meaning it means Assembly – more specifically a Called Out Assembly. Well, the Jews in the Wilderness were an assembly AND they were a CALLED OUT ASSEMBLY for they were called out of Egypt by the Lord. But, that does not mean they were a Church in the New Testament sense of the word. But at the basic meaning they were and that's the word Deacon Stephen used here in his sermon. But what I want to do this morning is shake off the interpretation of this verse and APPLY it. Let's look at the phrase: “The Church in the wilderness” and when we look at it, I cannot help but wonder What's a Church Doing in the Wilderness?

1. **How Does The Bible Describe The Wilderness?** NOTE: Define Wilderness – means a Desolate, Deserted, Lonely Place lacking abundant supply.
 - a. **It's a Place Of No Direction (Wandering)**
 - i. Psalms 107:4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.
 - b. **It's a Place That Has Wild Creatures**
 - i. Deuteronomy 8:15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, **wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions**, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;
 - c. **It's a Place That Hardly Has Food or Water**
 - i. Deuteronomy 8:15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, **and drought, where there was no water**; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;
 - ii. Exodus 16:3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.
 - d. **It's a Place Full of Great and Terrible Things**
 - i. Deuteronomy 1:19 And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadeshbarnea.
 - e. **It's a Place of Sin**
 - i. Numbers 33:11 And they removed from the Red sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin.
 - f. **It's a Place of Complaining (Murmuring)**
 - i. Exodus 16:2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:
 - g. **It's a Place where Few Preach Truth!**
 - i. John 1:23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.
 - ii. Luke 7:24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

2. Things That Will Get A Church In The Wilderness

a. Lack of Faith

- i. The Children of Israel we know were in the Wilderness because of a LACK OF FAITH!
 - Numbers 14:22-23 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23 Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:
 - Numbers 14:29 Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,
 - Numbers 14:33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.
- ii. What Deuteronomy 1:2-3 shows is AMAZING: (There are **eleven days' journey** from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadeshbarnea.) 3 And it came to pass in the **fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month**, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them;” They've been wandering almost 41 years!!

b. Lack of Obedience

- i. Joshua 5:6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, **because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD:** unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

c. Lack of Following

- i. Psalms 107:4 They **wandered** in the wilderness in a solitary way; **they found no city to dwell in.** (Could've been there in a week and a half!! But no 40 years!)
- ii. RECALL JESUS' WORDS: Luke 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.
 - They had the Tabernacle the EXTERNAL CROSS – but no internal Cross!

d. Lack of Conviction

- i. Exodus 16:3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD **in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full;** for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.
- ii. They remembered “the good things of the land of Egypt” - Egypt is symbolic of sin and the world, the flesh, the wiles of the devil. - They failed to remember the whip, the taskmaster, the toil of slavery.
- iii. We once were slaves to sin, Jesus has set us free, but when we yearn to return to the slavery of sin and remember appeasing the lusts of the flesh and how we got sinful pleasure for it – we have there a lack of conviction. The Bible praises Moses in Hebrews 11:25-26 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

3. Things God Does For A Church In The Wilderness

a. God Still Shows THE Way Out

- i. Nehemiah 9:19 Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein

they should go.

b. God Still Provided For Them

i. Food

- Deuteronomy 8:3 And he humbled thee, **and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.**

ii. Water

- Deuteronomy 8:15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, **where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;**

iii. Raiment

- Deuteronomy 8:4 Thy **raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.**
- Matthew 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

iv. Healing

- Numbers 21:5-9 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

v. Forgiveness

- John 3:13-16 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

c. God Humbled Them With Chastizement

- Deuteronomy 8:2-3 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.
- Deuteronomy 8:5-6 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. 6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

4. Things That Will Get A Church Out of the Wilderness

a. We Must Judge Ourselves

- i. Numbers 25:7-9 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.
- ii. 1 Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?
- iii. 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

b. We Must Cleanse the Camp

- i. Deuteronomy 23:12-14 Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: 13 And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: 14 For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

c. We Must Destroy Any Idols

- i. Exodus 32:26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

d. We Must Learn From Our Mistakes and Errors

- i. Numbers 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.
- ii. Galatians 6:7-8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

e. We Must Make the Word of God a Priority

- i. Deuteronomy 6:1-2 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: 2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.
- ii. Deuteronomy 6:3-9 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. 4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

f. We Must Not Compromise With Our Enemies

- i. Exodus 17:8-13 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. 10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.
 - 1 Timothy 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.
- ii. Deuteronomy 25:17-18 Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; 18 How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.
 - Amalek represents the flesh, the lusts of the flesh.
 - FIGHT WITH PRAYER, THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, OBEY THE LORD.

THEN When you get to the promised Land and God tells you to win the fight He will fight for you and all you gotta do is walk around your enemies till GOD MAKES A WAY and then YOU PUT THEM TO THE SWORD – You won't doubt!

See with them it took one night to Get the Jews out of Egypt but 40 years to get Egypt out of the Jews.....It took just a moment for God to save you and me but how long is it taking the Lord to drive the world the flesh and the devil from us!? Too long!

James 4:4-8 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

So this morning if you feel that you are in the wilderness or we as a Church are in the wilderness or you know of a church or a believer in the Wilderness then PRAY! REPENT! PRAY FOR REVIVAL!

We as God's Children, We as God's Church CANNOT AFFORD TO BE IN THE WILDERNESS!