

## Bibles???

### The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 7

We have been looking at the work of the Holy Spirit among the early church.

We have seen the empowering of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles – that empowerment manifested itself through the boldness by which that the apostles spoke, both in preaching the gospel and defending themselves against the religious rulers.

They were also empowered with the ability to heal – we have seen examples of that as well.

Last week, in chapter 6, we saw that the empowerment of the Holy Spirit was not limited to the 12 apostles.

One of the faithful individuals who was chosen to serve tables – we began to see how the Holy Spirit empowered him to do great things for God.

Of course I am talking about Stephen and we will see that God was not done using Stephen – He still has work for Stephen to do and Stephen will against demonstrate his faithfulness to God's calling.

Let's pray...

[Act 7:1-36 NKJV] 1 Then the high priest said, "**Are these things so?**"

So in our study last week, we saw that the Stephen begins to do great things for God and you might remember that there was a particular synagogue that takes it upon themselves to try to debate Stephen and the gospel that he was preaching – and Luke tells us that they were unsuccessful – that Stephen pretty much wiped the floor with them.

So because they couldn't compete with Stephen and the message of the gospel, they proceed to accuse Stephen of speaking blasphemous words against the temple of the Lord, against the law and the traditions and customs of the Jews.

So Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin – they are staring down Stephen and the scriptures tell that the Sanhedrin saw his face as the face of an angel – he had a glow as a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

So the High Priests – wants Stephen to respond to the charges that have been brought up against him.

But we will see that instead of defending himself – Stephen takes the opportunity to give them a history lesson showing how

- they have a habit of rejecting the wrong people. Here they were rejecting the testimony that he was preaching and months before that they had rejected Jesus Christ – their Messiah.
- They had a habit of rejecting God's grace

- They had a habit of limiting worship to a place rather than the Creator.

He starts by going back to the roots of Israel, the call of Abraham by God.

**2 And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,**

Why does Stephen begin here – remember, one of the things that Stephen is being accused of is that he was speaking blasphemous words against the temple of God.

This is one of the charges that the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees has brought against Jesus as well – the accused Him of saying that He was going to destroy the temple.

Here is the problem - the religious rulers of this time were treating the temple as an idol.

Instead of worshipping the God of the temple, they were worshipping the temple of God.

So Stephen reminds them that God is not confined to the temple. He is omnipresent.

God appeared to Abraham – not when he finally arrived in Canaan but in Mesopotamia.

Was it because Abraham was faithful to God?

No, because the scriptures tell us that Abraham served other gods when God called him. (Joshua 24:2)

**3 "and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' 4 "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.**

God commanded Abraham to leave his family and go to a land that He was going to show him.

He didn't show Abraham a brochure – He simply told Abraham – Go!

So, Abraham had to go by faith – he had to put his trust in God's word.

What did he do? – he stopped midway in Haran. God didn't tell him to go to Haran – but God waited for him.

So we see God's grace in Abraham's calling.

**5 "And [God] gave him no inheritance in it, not even [enough] to set his foot on. But even when [Abraham] had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.**

God called Abraham to this land – but Abraham never physically owned any of it.

He didn't have anything physical as proof – all he could do was trust in God's promise.

The Sanhedrin – they had physical proof – the temple and that is what they placed their truth in.

6 "But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress [them] four hundred years. 7 'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.' 8 "Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so [Abraham] begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac [begot] Jacob, and Jacob [begot] the twelve patriarchs.

God tells Abraham that his descendants are going to live 400 years in Egypt.

What happens to the Hebrews in Egypt – they grow, they multiply greatly in numbers.

So there was God's blessing upon them even though they were in a foreign land – God was taking care of them.

9 "And the patriarchs, **becoming envious**, sold Joseph into Egypt. **But God was with him**

Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery – they rejected him.

Why did they sell him? Because they were jealous of him – they were envious.

Turn with me to Matt 27 -

**[Mat 27:17-18 NKJV] 17 Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18 For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.**

Stephen is giving the Sanhedrin a glimpse of what they did when they rejected Jesus Christ –

They were like Joseph's brother who rejected Joseph.

Eventhough Joseph was going to be the one that was going to save them.

**10 "and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.**

While in Egypt, Joseph received favor from God.

Here we see once again Stephen making the argument that the spiritual presence of God was upon Joseph in a strange land.

Remember, the Sanhedrin and the other religious rulers were fixated on the temple.

Joseph was nowhere near the temple because the temple didn't exist during this time – yet God was still with him,

**11 "Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 "But when Jacob heard that there was**

**grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 "And the second [time] Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh.**

When Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to go get grain in time of famine, when they stand before Joseph the first time, what happened? They didn't recognize Joseph.

It wasn't until the second time that they come before Joseph – that after being questioned by Joseph, they admitted that they had sinned greatly against their brother Joseph – and that is when Joseph then revealed himself to them.

In the same way, the Jews rejected Jesus Christ after His first Coming, but after a time of tribulation and drought (The Tribulation Period), they will recognize Jesus as their Messiah at His Second Coming.

**14 "Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to [him], seventy-five people. 15 "So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers. 16 "And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, [the father] of Shechem.**

This tomb was the only physical possession that Abraham owned – everything else he received was done by faith.

**17 "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt 18 "till another king arose who did not know Joseph. 19 "This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.**

God had made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would dwell in Egypt for 400 years – that time has come to pass and there is a new pharaoh in charge who was worried that the Children of Israel were multiplying like rabbits – he didn't want the to take over – so he orders that male babies to be thrown into the Nile.

**20 "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. 21 "But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. 22 "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.**

So now Stephen shifts from Abraham and Jacob's sons to Moses.

Moses was the great hero of the Jewish people.

Moses was the man that God gave the law to.

Moses was the person that God gave the plans for the Tabernacle to.

And I had you make a note that his birth was well pleasing to God – I want you to think about that for a second.

How was his birth well pleasing to God – if there was no temple or law to follow??

Remember, the Sanhedrin and the religious rulers was all about following the law –

In their way of thinking, the only way you are going to be well pleasing in the eyes of the Lord is if you obey His commandments and offer sacrifices at the temple.

They rejected God's grace.

I also had you make a note where it stated that Moses was mighty in words and deeds.

However, when Moses meets God on Mt Sinai (Burning Bush) when God tells Moses that He is going to use him to deliver His people – what did Moses say? I don't know how to talk.

Was he lying? No and we will see why.

**23 "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. 24 "And seeing one of [them] suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. 25 "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 "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?' 27 "But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 'Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 "Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.**

Moses is forty years old – he is well spoken, well educated – he sees himself as having the qualifications of a deliverer.

He kills an Egyptian who is mistreating one of his people,

And when he attempts to come between two Hebrew slaves that were arguing against each other – they reject him as their deliverer.

Just like Joseph's brothers rejected him

And just like the Sanhedrin had rejected Jesus Christ.

So Moses flees into the wilderness.

**30 "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. 31 "When Moses saw [it], he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, 32 "[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. 33 'Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet,**

for the place where you stand is holy ground. 34 "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." ' 35 "**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. 36 "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.

So Moses spends 40 years in the desert – and then he has the encounter with God at the burning bush.

Now, getting back to whether Moses was lying about not being able to speak.

When Moses was growing up – he was learned in the ways of the Egyptians – he was well spoken.

But when he fled Egypt, God had to break him in order to use him.

God needed Moses to rely on God's power and not his own ability.

So for forty years – Moses raised sheep. He only talked to sheep – that is how God broke him.

So he was not lying when he said that he couldn't speak –

Notice in verse 35 that the first time Moses came to deliver them by his might, they rejected him.

It is not until the second time, after Moses comes back – when he is 80 years old that they see him as being used by God to deliver them from Egypt.

I like what DL Moody once said about the life of Moses,

He said, Moses spent forty years thinking he was somebody; then he spent forty years on the backside of the desert realizing he was nobody; finally, he spent the last forty years of his life learning what God can do with a nobody!

And in the same way that Moses demonstrated signs and wonders – first while they were in Egypt (plagues) and then in the wilderness (Crossing the Red Sea, manna and water from the rock)

Jesus also did signs and wonders – and the religious rulers rejected Him

Stephen also did signs and wonders and they were in the process of rejecting him.

**[Act 7:37-43 NKJV] 37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.' 38 "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and [with] our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, 39 "whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, 40 "saying to**

Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us; [as for] this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' 41 "And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42 "**Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven,** as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices [during] forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 43 You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'

Stephen tells the Sanhedrin that Moses told the people that God was going to send a greater prophet – Jesus Christ – and they better listen to Him.

Remember, Stephen was being accused of blaspheme toward Moses

But in their rejection of Jesus Christ, the Sanhedrin were guilty of not being obedient to Moses' command.

Stephen also reminds the Sanhedrin that not only did their fathers reject Moses in Egypt – they also rejected him in the wilderness.

The Sanhedrin considered themselves followers of Moses, yet their own fathers, the ones that knew Moses, weren't real good about following Moses, nor obeying the Law.

How did they reject Moses in the wilderness? when they made the golden calf and began to worship pagan gods and idols.

And after rejecting God, He gave them up to their own sinful desires by allowing them to be taken into captivity.

Now, why is Stephen bringing this up? Because the Sanhedrin rejected Jesus Christ because they would rather worship the temple (an idol)

**We are going to go ahead and stop right here.**

You might be asking about what application can be taken from our study tonight –

Church, sometimes we make the same mistake that the Sanhedrin was making during this time – we may not worship the building like the Sanhedrin did – at least not here.

But sometimes we can make the mistake of confining God to one place. How?

When the only place we meet God is at church.

God is absent from the rest of our lives but on Sunday mornings, I am going to meet God.

When we do this, we are being just like the Sanhedrin.

**Let's pray...**

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'