

# Acts 7:1-60

## Stephen Preaches, Part 1

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# Signs and wonders and arguments and contentions

- 6:5 – Stephen chosen as a deacon
  - *A man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit*
- 6:8 – Stephen full of grace and power performs signs and wonders
  - As promised by the Jesus before his ascension
- 6:9 – Some men took exception to him and started arguing
- 6:10 – They couldn't handle the wisdom and the Spirit
- 6:11-14 – They stirred up false witnesses against Stephen
  - Dragged him before the Sanhedrin
- 6:15 – Stephen is completely faithful
  - *All who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.*
- 7:1 – Questioned by the council
  - Given a chance to be a witness

# The Charges

*6:11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."*

- Some specific charges<sup>1</sup>
  - Blasphemous words against Moses
  - Blasphemous words against God
  - *Incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law (6:13)*
  - *We have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us (6:14)*
- Stephen will be able to answer these by invoking the history of the Hebrew nation

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<sup>1</sup>None of these charges are unique for Stephen

# What is he up to?

*51 You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.*

- Summary of the sermon
  - Reviews the OT foundation of God's promise and provision
    - Grounds his teachings in the revealed word of God
    - Continually emphasizes the sovereignty of God
  - Recounts examples of when the Israelites failed to walk in God's promises and provisions
  - Turns the focus on them and their hardheartedness
    - Accuses them of the same lack of faith as their predecessors
- Verse 51 is the crux of the sermon
  - Where did he get such boldness?

## Hello, Abram. It's me, the God of Glory.

*2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,*

- *Hear* – to understand, comprehend
- *Brethren and fathers* – speaking to them with respect and fraternity
- *The God of glory* – infinite perfection, divine majesty and holiness
  - *"The God Whose Shekinah glory was repeatedly manifested uniquely to Israel."*<sup>2</sup>
  - Stephen begins with the most secure of all foundations
- *Appeared to our father Abraham* – this was entirely an act of Grace
  - Did the Jewish leaders see this as God's unmerited favor?

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<sup>2</sup>Merryman

# I'll let you know when we get there

*3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'*

- Abraham would need to leave everything to follow God
  - He had riches and family in Mesopotamia
  - He had the pagan gods he most likely worshiped
- There is no earthly reason why Abraham should follow God
  - This would be an act of complete faith on his part
- Abraham believed, and followed God
  - This faith was a response to the grace of God

## This land is your land\*.

*5 But He gave him no inheritance in it [the land of Canaan], not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM.*

- God brought him to the land, and then had him wait
  - This was after his father had died
  - He had no more earthly support
- God promised the land to his descendants
  - Abraham had no son, and he was old
  - There was no earthly way this promise could come to fruition
  - He was in a position where he had to rely entirely on God and God's words
- Notice the continual emphasis on God's sovereignty in these events

## \*Terms and Conditions may apply

*6 But God spoke to this effect, that his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.*

- Abraham and his descendants had the promise of God
  - It was up to them to continually place their faith in that promise
- But first, there would be hardships
  - They would have to with endure in their faith in the promise
- God gave Abraham a sign of the covenant, circumcision
  - A reminder that they were God's chosen people
- God then gave Abraham a son, Isaac
  - Isaac was in essence a seal of the promise
  - He was evidence that God could do what he said he would do



# Unintended consequences

*9 The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him,*

- *Jacob [became the father] of the twelve patriarchs (vs.8)*
  - Already we see God increasing the descendants of Abraham
- Joseph sent to Egypt
  - To fulfill the prophesy of the Lord
- *God was with [Joseph] – reminder of God's provision in his promises (vs. 10)*
  - *Rescued him from all his afflictions*
  - *Granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh*
  - *[Pharaoh] made him governor over Egypt and all his household*

## Not completely famished

*11 Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it, and our fathers could find no food.*

- Famine covered everywhere
- *There was grain in Egypt* (vs. 12)
  - Joseph had planned ahead, because the Lord had given him a vision
  - What would have happened if Joseph had not had faith in God and God's words?
- *And Jacob went down to Egypt and there he and our fathers died.* (vs. 15)
- *The people increased and multiplied in Egypt*
  - Just as God foretold – *[Abraham's] DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND*

## Who's the new guy?

*18 until THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT  
WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT JOSEPH.*

- What had God said?
  - *THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS* (vs. 6)
- And what did this new king do? (vs. 19)
  - *Took shrewd advantage of our race*
  - *Mistreated our fathers*
  - *Expose[d] their infants [so that] they would not survive*

## Along came Moses

*20 It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his fathers home.*

- *He was lovely in the sight of God*
  - Why did God choose Moses?
  - *Lovely* – elegant in external form
    - Exodus 2:2 – he was beautiful
- *Nurtured three months in his fathers home*
  - He was protected from the death instituted by the king
- *Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son (vs.21)*
  - *educated in all the learning of the Egyptians (vs.22)*
  - *A man of power in words and deeds*

## Introduce yourself

*23 But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.*

- *He supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him (vs.25)*
  - *He saw one of them being treated unjustly (vs.24)*
  - *He defended him...by striking down the Egyptian*
- *But they did not understand*
  - *He appeared to [his brethren] as they were fighting together (vs.26)*
  - *He tried to reconcile them in peace*
  - *WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US? (vs.27)*
    - *YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU? (vs.28)*

## Fine then. I'll just leave

*29 At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he became the father of two sons.*

- Important point – **they rejected their deliverer** (see vs.35-37)
  - He will continue to remind them of how their predecessor's had rejected God's plan for the nation of Israel
  - He will draw a comparison to this even, and the Jewish leaders' rejection of Christ (see vs.52)
- The Jewish leaders were surely reminded of God's sovereignty and mercy throughout all these events
  - Where is their faith in God's promises and provisions now?