

# Acts 7:1-60

## Stephen Preaches, Part 2

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04 May 2014

## Picking up in the middle

- Council's question to Stephen – Vs. 1
- Story of Abraham
  - Call and response – vs.2-4
  - Promise and prophesy – vs.5-8
- Story of Joseph
  - Slavery and governorship – vs.9-10
  - Famine and food – vs.11-13
- Israel in Egypt
  - Migration and multiplication – vs.14-17
  - Ascension and oppression – vs.18-19
- Story of Moses (the first part)
  - Birth and salvation – vs.20-21
  - Growth and education – vs.22
  - Justice and judgment – vs.23-28
  - Fleeing and fathering – vs.29

# 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

## The one eloquent bush

*30 After forty years had passed, AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH.*

- *An angel* – lit. angel, messenger
  - Exodus 3:2 – *The angel of the LORD*
  - Clearly refers to God himself
    - *As he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord (vs.31)*
- *I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS (vs.32)*
  - *Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look.*
- God will fulfill his promise to his people
  - *“AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I MYSELF WILL JUDGE,” said God, “AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.” (vs.7)*

## You're the one

*34 I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM; COME NOW, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT.*

- Where was God while Israel was in Egypt?
  - *I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE*
  - *[I HAVE] HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS*
  - How soon is God to forget his promises?
  - How soon is God's people to forget his promises?
- What was God's plan?
  - *I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM*
  - *I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT*

## Wait...he's the one?

*27 But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, "WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?"*

- *This Moses whom they disowned (vs.35)*
  - *The one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer*
  - *This man led them out, performing wonders and signs*
  - *This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, "GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN."*
  - *This is the one who...received living oracles to pass on to you*
- *Would any of these descriptions apply to anyone else familiar to the leaders?*
  - *Acts 4:11 – He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you*

# I don't have to listen to you

*39 Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,*

- The people's rebellion
  - *Made a calf* (vs.41)
  - *Brought a sacrifice to the idol*
  - *[Rejoiced] in the works of their hands*
  - They had rejected God's deliverer (vs.40), and therefore they rejected God (vs.42-43)
- God's response
  - *God turned away* (vs.42)
  - *Delivered them up to serve the host of heaven*
    - Serve can also be "worship"
    - *Host of heaven* can also be "the heavenly bodies"
    - Quotes from Amos 5:25-27

## Mobile home

*44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen.*

- *The tabernacle of testimony*
  - Of what was the tabernacle a testimony/witness?
- *He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it*
  - Acknowledges that the tabernacle came from the Lord
- *Our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers*
  - Acknowledges the role God played in establishing them in the land



# Housebuilders

*46 David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. 47 But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.*

- *David found favor in God's sight*
  - Story told in 2 Samuel 7:1-16
    - "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?" (2 Samuel 7:7)
    - "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" (2 Samuel 7:18)
- *It was Solomon who built a house for Him*
  - See 1 Kings 6:1,2; 8:20

# This town ain't big enough...

*48 However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says:*

- *However* – greek word is *alla*; also translated “nevertheless”
  - Can indicate a sharp contrast (see Romans 7:7)
  - What is the contrast being drawn here?
- Quotes Isaiah 66:1-2
  - See also 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 102:25; 139:7-9
  - *HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET;*
  - *WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?*
  - *WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE?*
  - *WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?*

## Three fingers pointing

*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.*

- *You are doing just as your fathers did*
  - *Stiff-necked* – stubborn, headstrong, obstinate
    - See Deuteronomy 9:6,13
  - *Uncircumcised in heart and ears* – being callous or perverse, so that they do not listen or obey God's Word<sup>2</sup>
    - See Jeremiah 6:10
  - *Always resisting the Holy Spirit* – resisting means “to fall or rush against or upon in a hostile manner, assault, resist by force and violence, fall or strive against”<sup>3</sup>
    - See Numbers 27:14

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<sup>2</sup>Zodhiates

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

## Some specific charges

*52 Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; 53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.*

- Stephen lays out the charges against them
  - Persecuted the prophets
  - Betrayed and murdered the Righteous One
  - Failed to keep the Law
- Similar to the charges expounded by Peter
  - Acts 2:22 – *You nailed [this man] to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death*
  - Acts 3:15 – *[You] put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead*

# This is how you do it

## General thoughts on Stephen's Sermon

- He is speaking the truth with boldness (as empowered by the Holy Spirit)
  - As Christ promised in Luke 21:12-15
- He is defending the basis of his faith
  - As we are exhorted to do 1 Peter 3:15
- He appears to have a deep knowledge of Scripture
- He is able to rightly apply Scripture to his present situation

## Wrong answer!

*54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.*

- Affect of Stephen's sermon
  - "They" are most likely the mob along with the Sanhedrin<sup>4</sup>
  - *They were cut to the quick*
    - Is this the conviction of the Holy Spirit?
    - John 16:8 – *And [the Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment*
  - *They began gnashing their teeth at him*
- Response to Stephen's sermon
  - *But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse (vs.57)*
  - *When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him (vs.58)*
- 8:1a – *Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death*

<sup>4</sup>The Sanhedrin had not permission to execute without Rome's permission >

## Peace like a river

*55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;*

- *Being full of the Holy Spirit*

- *And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel (vs.6:15)*

- *He gazed intently into heaven*

- *Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*
- This was further blasphemy
- Why was Jesus standing?
  - As a prophet and mediator between God and man<sup>5</sup>
  - As a witness
  - To welcome Stephen as the first martyr

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<sup>5</sup>All these come from Constable

## Lay your sleeping head, my love

*59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”*

- Stephen's final two proclamations
  - *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!*
  - *Lord, do not hold this sin against them!*
- Jesus' proclamations on the cross
  - Luke 23:24 – *Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.*
  - Luke 23:46 – *Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.*
- Merryman: **“This was grace in action, maximal maturity in Christ manifesting itself.”**
- *Having said this, he fell asleep*
  - Amidst the violence, he has a peaceful exit