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The Church—Acts 7

Stephen's Defense and Stoning

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

STEPHEN'S DEFENSE—"Of all the peoples of the ancient world, only the Hebrews had a sense of divine destiny; only they lived in contemplation of the fulfillment of a plan that was to find fruition in Christ. It is one of the monumental tragedies of history that the very Hebrew generation that witnessed the arrival of the Messiah, in large measure rejected Him. Stephen's speech, the longest recorded in Acts, focuses upon the spiritual blindness of many first-century Jews" [Wayne Jackson, *Acts of the Apostles—From Jerusalem to Rome*, p. 74]. ||| "Stephen was laying the foundation on which to build; to show them that they were resisting the Holy Spirit by rejecting the word (see verse 51)" [Harold Littrell, *A Commentary on the Book of Acts*, p. 94]. ||| "Actually, Stephen's address was not so much a defense of himself as it was an epic survey of Jewish history as related to their rejection of the promised Messiah; and, while it is true a complete refutation of the charges against himself is apparent in this master oration, it is the glorious figure of the risen Lord which dominates every word of it" [Coffman].

7:5... DOES THIS CONTRADICT EXODUS 12:40-41, WHICH USES THE FIGURE OF 430 YEARS?—"...there were two ways of counting the 'sojourning,' these being (1) from the call of Abraham to the Exodus which was 430 years, and (2) from the birth of Isaac to the Exodus which was 400 years. The bicentennial of the United States may be counted either from the Declaration of Independence, or from the ratification of the constitution. It is ridiculous to make anything out of such so-called discrepancies as these" [Coffman].

7:14... DOES THIS CONTRADICT GENESIS 46:27—"as George DeHoff observed: 'Jacob's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren amounted to sixty-six (*Gen.* 46:8-26). Adding Jacob himself and Joseph with his two sons, we have seventy. If to the sixty-six we add the nine wives of Jacob's sons (Judah's and Simeon's wives were dead; and Joseph could hardly be said to call himself, his own wife or his two sons into Egypt, and Jacob is specifically separated by Stephen) we have seventy-five persons as in Acts.' Jewish genealogies did not regard women, or even count them; and such an attitude was noted during Jesus' public ministry, and for some time within the church itself, when, for example, the number partaking of the loaves and fishes was given as 'five thousand men, besides the women and children,' and when the number of disciples was stated as 'five thousand men' (*Acts* 4:4). It was appropriate that in this inspired speech of Stephen the women should have been reckoned among the number going down into Egypt with Jacob. Thus there is logic in Stephen's following a different system of numbering; and another pseudocon bites the dust" [Coffman].

7:51... STIFFNECKED AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART—"Stiffnecked is likely an idiom borrowed from the rural setting of the Old Testament (cf., *Ex* 32:9; 33:3, 5; *Jer* 7:26); it described the stubborn animal that 'stiffened up,' refusing to submit to the yoke of its master. Since circumcision was a sign of the covenant people in the Old Testament, to be figuratively 'uncircumcised' was, in effect, to act like a pagan (cf., *Lev* 26:41; *Jer* 4:4; *Ezek.* 44:7). These descriptives were strong terms of reproach" [Jackson, p. 81]. |||

YE DO ALWAYS RESIST—“Two important truths are here stressed: (1) The Holy Spirit, as a member of the Godhead, is a Person, hence, can be resisted (cf., Eph 4:30; 1 Th 5:19; Heb 10:29); (2) To reject the teaching of inspired men is to reject the Spirit Himself; the instruction of the apostles is, therefore, Spirit-inspired” [Ibid].

7:58... A YOUNG MAN’S FEET, WHOSE NAME WAS SAUL—“At this point Saul is described as a ‘young man.’ The Greek word *neanias* (young) denotes a man somewhere between about twenty-four and forty years of age” [Jackson, p. 83].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: **Period of the Church.**

III. Summary.

Stephen was a great man of God and a fearless and bold proclaimer of it. He provides a great summary of God’s dealing with man in the sermon he preaches in Acts 7. I have an idea that Stephen had great love for his Jewish brethren. His interest was in getting them to behave in a different way than many of their forefathers had done. In verse 51 he charges them to be different and not to resist the truth. The preaching of Stephen CUT TO THE HEART of his hearers, and they responded very opposite to the way that he wanted. They decided to behave in a way similar to their fathers. They stoned Stephen as he was calling upon God. Even then, Stephen was asking God to forgive these ignorant men.

IV. Outline.

1. Stephen begins his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-2).
2. The call of Abraham (3-7).
3. God’s covenant with Abraham (8).
4. Joseph in Egypt (9-13).
5. Jacob and his family go to Egypt (14-19).
6. Stephen tells of Moses (20-30).
7. Moses chosen as a deliverer (31-36).
8. Moses himself spoke of another prophet (37).
9. Moses was rejected by the fathers (38-39).
10. Idolatry of Israel (40-43).
11. The Tabernacle and Temple (44-50).
12. Stephen sharply rebukes the Jews for following the example of their unbelieving fathers (51-53).
13. The Jews violently react to Stephen’s rebuke (54).
14. Stephen’s vision, stoning, and the first appearance of Paul (55-60).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ Stephen does not mention what actually motivated Joseph’s brothers to sell him into slavery.
02. _____ Jacob was buried in Egypt.
03. _____ Israel REFUSED Moses as deliverer.
04. _____ Israel was never idolatrous.
05. _____ Stephen accused the Jews of persecuting the prophets.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ Following God's instructions, out of whose land did Abraham depart: (a) Palestinians; (b) Moabites; (c) Philistines; (d) none of these.
07. _____ Who was described by Stephen as one WHO KNEW NOT JOSEPH: (a) his brothers; (b) Abraham; (c) King of Egypt.
08. _____ Which of the following was NOT mentioned by Stephen as a place where Moses showed signs and wonders: (a) Egypt; (b) in the Dead Sea; (c) in the Red Sea; (d) in the wilderness.
09. _____ An interesting name for the Law of Moses found in this chapter is: (a) lively oracles; (b) the first covenant; (c) the letter.
10. _____ When Stephen told the Jews of the vision he saw of the Lord, did it have a calming effect on them: (a) YES; (b) NO.

Matching

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| A. Jesus | E. Moses |
| B. Mesopotamia | F. Egypt |
| C. God | G. Babylon |
| D. Haran | H. Egypt & Canaan |
11. _____ Said—I HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANING.
12. _____ I will carry you away beyond _____.
13. _____ The JUST ONE.
14. _____ Where the Israelites GREW AND MULTIPLIED.
15. _____ Place of great dearth and affliction.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to Acts 6 Questions... [01—True, Acts 6:5-6; 02—False, Acts 6:7; 03—False, Acts 6:8-10; 04—True, Acts 6:1; 05—False, Acts 6:11; 06—c, Acts 6:2-3; 07—b, Acts 6:4; 08—a, Acts 6:5; 09—c, Acts 6:6; 10—c, Acts 6:13; 11—face, angel, Acts 6:15; 12—the, council, Acts 6:12; 13—Stephen, Timon, Parmenas, Acts 6:5; 14—honest, the, Holy, Ghost, wisdom, Acts 6:3; 15—resist, wisdom, spirit.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. Remember WHO is speaking in chapter 7. Luke, earlier, tells of Stephen arguing with those of the synagogue of the LIBERTINES and that they WERE NOT ABLE TO RESIST THE WISDOM AND THE SPIRIT BY WHICH HE SPAKE (Acts 6:10).
 - 1) Neither were these Jews on the Council able to resist Stephen's powerful defense!
 - 2) When truth is on our side we must be as bold as Stephen was in using this great power (cf., Jer 5:14; 23:29; Rom 1:16; Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12).
2. **...the God of glory...** (Acts 7:2). Stephen was a faithful preacher and he preached about God. We ought to be students of THEOLOGY—i.e., "the study of God." Our God is: (1) A God of Truth, Deut 32:4; (2) The God of all Grace, 1 Pet 5:10; (3) The God of Peace, Phil 4:9; (4) The God of Love, 2 Cor 13:11; (5) The God of All Comfort, 2 Cor 1:3; (6) The God of Patience, Rom 15:5; (7) The God of Hope, Rom 15:13; (8) The God of Glory, Acts 7:2; (9) A God of Judgment, Isa 30:18.
2. **...and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God...** (Acts 7:55). Could the fact that Jesus is seen standing indicate His honoring the sacrifice and strong defense of the truth given by Stephen?

3. ...and stopped their ears... (Acts 7:57). When truth hurts, the easy response is to quit listening.
4. ...laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul ... and Saul was consenting unto his death... (Acts 7:58; 8:1). Guilt for sinful actions is not totally dependent upon DIRECT participation.
5. ...lay not this sin to their charge... (Acts 7:60). A true spirit of forgiveness and Christ-likeness.

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

M N B V C X Z R I G H T H A N D K L J H
 G F D S L A P O I U Y T R E E S W Q O A
 Z X S W E O D C V F R T G B N T H Y F U
 J M K I O L O P O I U Y T R E E W Q G A
 J E S U S A Z K X S W E D C V A F R O T
 T G B N H Y U J E M K I O P K D J H D G
 B S F R E D C X S D W Q A Z X F S W E D
 C T V V F R T G B N U H Y T G A B V F R
 W A X G C D E R F V B P N H Y S U J M K
 B N T T N R F V C D E W S X Z T A Q W S
 G D X R C A V O P E N E D V F L R T G B
 N I B A G T S R F V C D E W H Y S X Z A
 I N Q E W S X H C D E R F T H V F R T G
 D G B H N H Y U E R F V E C D E E W S X
 N X S E C D E R F D V E B G T Y A H N M
 A M J H R F V C D E T W S X Z A Q V T G
 T B N T H Y U J M N H Y T G B V F R E E
 S D C O V F R T S A W Y H N M J U I K N
 B C U T C D E W S X G L O R Y O F G O D
 X S W E D C V F R T G B N H Y U J D R L

[The highlighted words can be found above. They may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. DRL]

Acts 7:54-56... ⁵⁴When they heard these things, they were **cut to the heart**, and they **gnashed** on him with *their* **teeth**. ⁵⁵But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, **looked up steadfastly** into **heaven**, and **saw** the **glory of God**, and **Jesus standing** on the **right hand of God**. ⁵⁶And said, Behold, I see the heavens **opened**, and the Son of man **standing** on the right hand of God.