

"The Trial of Stephen"

Part 5

Acts 6:8-7:60

Introduction: The last time we were in our study of Acts we were looking at the trial of Stephen. He had been chosen as a deacon in Acts 6 and he was a man full of the Holy Spirit. He went to the synagogue of the Libertines and there he preached Jesus Christ. His audience was a group of Jews who were deep into Judaism, and they despised his message. There were those who tried to dispute with Stephen, but Stephen's wisdom was beyond them. They therefore bribed men to come and falsely testify against him.

Notice Acts 6:11-15

These people believed God had to be worshipped in a certain geographical location which was the temple and they prided themselves in keeping the Law. Apparently, Stephen explained to them that God was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. He must have told them that Jesus was the final sacrifice, and it was through faith in His finished work that saved men from their sins not keeping the Law. All of this was foreign to these Jews. They were still bringing sacrifices to the temple and living under the Law. Now Stephen has told them sacrifices are no longer needed and if they would accept Jesus Christ, they would be the temple of the Lord.

For all of this they dragged Stephen before the Sanhedrin and what we find in Acts 7 is the message he preached before the high court. His message and his method are great.

➤ **Stephen's Sermon**
Part 2

In this sermon Stephen reaches back to the Old Testament and he lifts up 3 men. They are Abraham, Joseph, and Moses.

➤ **Abraham Acts 7:1-7**

Stephen point to Abraham because Abraham had a relationship with God, and he worshipped God without a temple, and he was justified without the Law.

Notice the words of John Phillips:

"The revelation of God to Abram was quite independent of Moses or the temple. God, restricted to neither a special person nor a special place, can reveal Himself when and where He wills, as He did to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees."

➤ **Joseph - Acts 7:8-16**

Stephen pointed to Joseph because his family rejected him when he told them of his dream. But they later understood that God had raised him up to be their deliverer. This was a picture of Jesus Christ. He was rejected by the very people whom Stephen was speaking to because they did not believe that He had been sent by God to be their King and their Savior. But there will be a day when after the Tribulation in which God will allow the persecution to become so severe that the Jews will then turn to Jesus Christ and accept Him as their Messiah.

This then brings us to where we are tonight.

Moses - Acts 7:17-43

Notice Acts 7:17-20

Moses was born into one of the most terrible times for the nation of Israel. The leadership had changed and the Pharaoh that was now on the throne did not know Joseph. This means he did not understand how Joseph had been used by God to save the Egyptians as well as the sons of Jacob. If this Pharaoh had heard of Joseph, he did not care about the history which included him.

Application:

I just need to pause for a moment and say that in the life of this Pharaoh we see the danger that comes when history is forgotten. The forgotten history would prove to bring great heartache and pain to all of Egypt. Today in our society there is a movement to destroy the evidence of the history of our nation. Let us know that this too will lead to much pain and heartache as time moves on.

Getting back to Moses, he was born in a very difficult time. His people were in slavery and bondage. They were despised by the government and that very attitude toward Israel filtered down to the people of Egypt. Life was grueling in those days. But God had made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants and therefore He could not just allow them to perish. That is why Moses was born. God would use him to lead the nation out of Egypt and to the edge of the Promised Land.

Notice Acts 7:21-22

Because God used the tears of Moses to melt the heart of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was nursed by his mother and then after he was weaned, he was raised by Pharaoh's daughter and trained in the ways of the Egyptians. Moses spent the best part of 40 years growing up in the palace. He was a very intelligent man and from what Stephen tells us he was also

a very good speaker. It is believed that Moses was in line to be the next Pharaoh. He had all the pleasures of Egypt at his fingertips. He had great wealth and great privilege.

Notice Acts 7:23-28

Stephen helps us to understand that Moses saw himself as the man who would deliver the nation from the Egyptians. He was exactly right but the time was not right and in the situation that Stephen mentions here we see Moses moving forward in the power of the flesh.

Application:

There is a lesson here for us that is very important. When serving the Lord we must be sure we are not operating in the power of the flesh. When we serve in the power of the flesh there is nothing good that will come from the service. We must be walking in the Spirit and serving in the power of the Spirit if our service is going to be used by God.

From the life of Moses we also must learn that it is so important to wait upon God's timing. If we get ahead of God, there can be lasting consequences and the path can be very difficult. Many people have run ahead of God and experienced only heartache and confusion all because they did not wait upon Him.

Isaiah 40:30-32

³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

³¹ But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Let us also consider that Moses made the decision to walk away from all that he had in Egypt to serve the Lord.

Hebrews 11:23-27

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

²⁵ 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.

²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

These verses give us great insight into the life of Moses. Where did this kind of commitment come from? He certainly did not learn about God and the coming Messiah while he lived in the palace.

Exodus 2:7-10

⁷ Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

⁸ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

⁹ And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the women took the child, and nursed it.

¹⁰ And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

Moses was nursed by his mother, and we do not know how long she had him but in the time that she did have him in her house she poured into him all she could about her God and His Covenant promises. This is where Moses learned about the Lord.

Application: There are 2 points of application in this:

- 1. The opportunity given to parents when their children are young is an opportunity to have a major influence over them.**

Nothing is as important as teaching your children about the Lord. The problem with many families today is that they are so busy with everything else that the last thing on their mind is teaching their children about the Lord. They are taught about many things in the world but hardly ever taught the Word of God. Let us be reminded that those years when their minds are like fertile soil do not last very long. If parents do not take the time to teach them about the Lord, Satan will be more than happy to have someone teach them about the ways of the world.

- 2. What we see in Moses is total commitment.**

Moses walked away from Egypt! He had it all at fingertips, but he understood that suffering for the Lord was much better than living in padded luxury in Egypt. This is exactly what is needed in the church today. There is a need for people who are completely committed to serving Jesus Christ no matter what the cost is. It is these kinds of people who have an excellent perspective on what has true spiritual value and what has temporal value.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Getting back to Moses: humanly speaking he gave up everything and got nothing, but spiritually speaking he gave up nothing and got everything. Moses knew that it was better to suffer in the will of God in the desert than to live a life of self-pleasure out of the will of God in the padded palace. Let us understand that to live in the will of God can be a very difficult path to walk but it is the most rewarding place to be. We are faced with many choices in life and the flesh will always gravitate toward living for what we see here. It will seek a life of comfort and self-pleasure. But let us understand that all of what is attainable here in this world is only temporary.

2 Peter 3:10-12

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Notice Acts 7:27-28 again.

Here is one of the main points that Stephen is making. Moses was rejected by his own people. He was called to be the deliverer and he was rejected the first time just as Joseph was and just as Jesus was. Moses will actually be rejected again at the age of 80. Stephen is pointing to a pattern that had developed with the nation. Israel had rejected several people whom God had sent to deliver them.

Notice Acts 7:29

Moses had many degrees in Egypt while living in the palace but there was one degree that God knew he needed. This degree would be received in the desert. As J. Vernon McGee says, it was there that he received is B.D. Degree which was "The Backside of the Desert Degree".

Moses was not ready to lead Israel until he spent another 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness. These 40 years would humble Moses and help him to see his own inadequacies.

Notice Acts 7:30-33

Here in these verses Stephen points to Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush. This is very important in his sermon because this encounter did not happen at Jerusalem, nor did it happen in a temple. It happened in the wilderness. Stephen was reminding his audience that God's presence is not limited to Jerusalem and holy ground is wherever God is.

Conclusion/Application:

Do you know where holy ground is today? It is anywhere that God has placed you. It is the place where God desires for you to be today. If you think that is not so, then just try going to a place where God has not sent you and it will not be long until you will long for the "burning bush in the desert of Midian" again. This is why so many believers just go from one thing to another. They have forsaken the "holy ground" where God wants them to be, and they are trying to find satisfaction outside of the will of God. Let me just tell you that Satan can make many places look like paradise and you can go there, but if it is not where God wants you then you will NEVER be satisfied. Holy ground can be in a beautiful home, or it can be in a tent out in the elements. It all depends on where God wants you to be.

Next week we will continue to look at what Stephen says about Moses and the point which he is making.