

"The Trial of Stephen"

Part 6

Acts 6:8-7:60

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we were looking at Stephen's sermon in chapter 7 and what he said concerning Moses. Stephen had pointed to Joseph and Moses because both were rejected by their brethren. They were both sent by God but were rejected just as Jesus was rejected. This is why Stephen points to them because he is trying to show the Jews who have him on trial that there is a pattern that has developed with them and that is that they have a habit of rejecting the people whom God sends to deliver them.

Now in our study we are gathering some practical lessons from the life of Moses and when we stopped last week Moses was standing on holy ground.

Moses - Acts 7:17-43

Part 2

Notice Acts 7:33

Here is where we stopped last week. Moses was not in Jerusalem, and he was not in a temple. But God still spoke with him at this burning bush. It is interesting that while Moses was in the dessert he was standing on holy ground. How could this be considered holy ground? Because it was where God was at, and it was where God had placed him at the present time.

Application:

For you and me holy ground is where God places us in this world. We know that His presence is always with us. So as we walk through this old world it is very important that we walk in the will of God because that is holy ground for us. We will never be happy when walk away from holy ground. Holy ground may be a place where we are separated other people and it may be a place where we are in the midst of many people. It is determined by where God desires for us to be. What we must be careful of is that we can follow the desires of the flesh and walk away from holy ground which I am convinced is where many believers abide today. They follow emotions and feelings and never get serious about living in the will of God. There is a promise in Proverbs, but it is conditional.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

⁶ *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

The promise is found in verse 6 and it could read, "He shall direct thee to holy ground." But in order to have God direct us to holy ground there are 3 conditions:

1. Trust in Him with all our heart.

This means when we seek His direction, and He makes it known we must walk by faith no matter what the path looks like.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

2. Do not follow our feelings or emotions or our understanding.

Our feelings and our emotions change all the time therefore we must not allow them to be our compass. Our understanding is flawed and therefore we must set all of this aside.

James 1:5-8

⁵ *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

⁶ *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

⁷ *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

⁸ *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

3. In all our ways acknowledge Him.

This has the idea of allowing God to be the Lord over all areas of our lives.

Ephesians 3:16-17

¹⁶ *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

These are the conditions to having God direct our steps to walk on holy ground.

Notice Acts 7:34

God had heard the groaning of the people of Israel. He had allowed the suffering to increase to the point that they would desire to leave. Let us notice what is said concerning the land where Israel dwelled in Egypt.

Genesis 47:5-6

⁵ *And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee:*

⁶ *The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.*

They were given the best land and it was in Goshen. This was an area that was very fertile, and the climate was very comfortable. They had settled into this land, and all was well. They were growing in numbers and things were going very well for them. But this was not where God wanted them. He had given a prophecy to Abram that they would be in Egypt but after 400 years they would come out. So, God allowed a new Pharaoh to come to power who knew not Joseph and he would bring great affliction upon the people of Israel. They would need to come to hate Egypt before they would have a desire to leave and to accept Moses as their deliverer.

This is a picture of what will happen to Israel in the tribulation. Many of them will enter into a covenant with the Anti-Christ and they will be under his protection. But God desires that they find their security and comfort in their Messiah so in the middle of the tribulation the Anti-Christ will break the covenant and the persecution will become so severe they will turn to God, and they will then accept Jesus Christ as their King and Deliverer. This very picture is seen with Israel in Egypt. They had rejected him, but they will eventually accept him.

Notice Acts 7:35-36

The very person they had rejected was the man whom God sent to lead them to Canaan. They had rejected him and when he returned 40 years later God allowed Moses to do many wonders and signs in Egypt and in the wilderness. These wonders and signs were to affirm that Moses was sent by God.

The miracles of Jesus we performed to show that He was who He claimed to be.

Matthew 9:2-7

² *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

³ *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

⁴ *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

⁵ *For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?*

⁶ *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

⁷ *And he arose, and departed to his house.*

Notice Acts 7:37

Moses had foretold of Jesus Christ. Here he is referred to as a prophet like unto Moses.

Notice Acts 7:38-41

The word "church" here refers to congregation. This does not mean the church existed in the Old Testament for we have looked at how it began on the Day of Pentecost. Moses received the Law from God and yet Israel still rejected him. When he was in the mountain 40 days Israel grew tired of waiting and they convinced Aaron to make the golden calf and they worshipped this idol.

When they rejected Moses, they were also rejecting God and they filled the void with idolatry. Man was created to worship God and when he rejects God, he will certainly fill the void with something that he will worship.

Now as we go to the next verses, we are going to see the danger of rejecting God.

Notice Acts 7:42a

When Israel rejected God, He gave them up to worship the host of heaven. This means that when God gave them up, they turned to idolatry and as we shall see they continued to sink deeper and deeper.

Application:

This is what has happened to many people in our society today. Our nation and the people have rejected God and now they are experiencing the power of their depravity as God has removed the moral restraints from our nation.

Romans 1:18-24

¹⁸ *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

¹⁹ *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

²⁰ *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

²¹ *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

²² *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

²³ *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

²⁴ *Wherefore **God also gave them up** to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

²⁶ *For this cause **God gave them up** unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

²⁸ *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over** to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

Notice Acts 7:42-43

Here Stephen is quoting from Amos. In so doing he points to Israel's worship of Molech. This was a false god that was worshipped by sacrificing their children. Notice a horrific description of this practice:

"The rabbis tell us that the idol, having the head of a calf with a crown upon it, was made of brass and placed on a brazen throne. The throne and image were hollow, and a raging fire was kindled within it. The flames penetrated into the body and limbs of the idol, and

when the arms were red-hot, the victims were thrown into them and were almost immediately burned to death while their cries were drowned by the beat of drums."

We see in Ezekiel what Israel was guilty of.

Ezekiel 16:20-23

²⁰ Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter,

²¹ That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

²² And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.

²³ And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the LORD GOD;)

Ezekiel 23:37-39

³⁷ That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them.

³⁸ Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths.

³⁹ For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

They also worshipped the star god Remphan.

Conclusion:

People do not understand the danger when they reject God and turn away from Him. We are certainly seeing the consequences of this in our day. Israel's suppression of God's Truth was manifest by the sacrifice of their own children. Is this not what we are seeing today? The Jews were also carried away to Babylon. Someday there will be a judgment on our nation for the abominations that are being practiced. We as believers must walk in close fellowship so that if we are here when the judgment comes, we will have spiritual stability.

