

Acts 7 - Stephen's Trial

Sunday PM 08/01/21

Introduction:

Longest sermon in the New Testament, by anyone except by Jesus. Stephen was accused of blasphemy, speaking against the temple and the law, and the Mosaic customs. Earlier we had read where false witnesses were used to make these charges, **Acts 6.13-15**. One final point from **Acts 6.15** ***“And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.”*** We don't know exactly what that means. Did his face glow like the face of Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai? ***“Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.” (Exodus 34:29)*** We don't know, what we do know, there was a change in his appearance. Perhaps it showed confidence and conviction in the face of a hostile crowd. To answer the charges, Stephen gets historical.

I) History of Israel

A) Father Abraham, **Acts 7.2-8**

1. Stephen lays a solid foundation which every Jew would know, Abraham.
2. Called by God to a land God would show him (land promise) the Patriarchs, and the covenant of circumcision.
3. Basic Jewish History lesson 101, covering about 430 years of time.

B) Joseph, **Acts 7.9-16**

1. Covers from **Genesis 33ff**.
2. Joseph had dreams where his brothers and father bowed down to him.

3. They rejected him due to envy, hatred, jealousy, etc. sold him into slavery.
4. But God was with Joseph, used Joseph to deliver Jacob from the famine and bring them to Egypt.

C) Moses, Acts 7.17-40

1. Moses being rejected when he killed the slave master, **v. 17-29**
2. God selecting Moses to deliver Israel from bondage, **v. 30-37**, esp. **25, 27, 35,36**.
3. The fathers rejection Moses in the wilderness, **v. 38-40**
 - a. 1st rejection may have been understood as Moses had done nothing to prove he was sent to deliver Israel.
 - b. 2nd rejection was after the plagues, crossing of the Red Sea, etc.
4. Moses spoke of a prophet like him, **v. 37**

D) Idolatry of Israel, Acts 7.41-43

And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" Exodus 32:4

1. The golden calf was just the tip of the iceberg.
2. This was a persistent problem.

E) Idolatry of the temple, Acts 7.44-50

1. Children of Israel first had the tent of meeting to approach God.
2. Only during the time of Solomon was the temple erected.

3. They mistakenly thought of the temple as being where God dwelt, making it an idol.
4. The temple by itself made them godly, easy to place your faith in a thing instead of God.

II) Assessing the Charges

- A) **Speaking of the destruction of the temple was not the same as speaking against God.**
- B) **Who are you to accuse me of blasphemy against the law, when you do not keep the law.**
 1. Their observance was more lip service than actual obedience.
 2. Pledging allegiance to the law and observance are two different things.

III) Stephen's Charges, Acts 7.51-53

- A) **They were resisting the Holy Spirit, as they had always done.**
 1. Constant theme in their history was one of disobedience and calls for repentance.
 2. Rejecting God's spokesmen meant rejecting God's word.
- B) **They had persecuted and killed the prophets.**
 1. Examples of Joseph and Moses.
 2. They had rejected the Messiah.
- C) **They proved Stephen's point, Acts 7.54-59**

IV) Lessons For Us, Acts 7.60

- A) **The facts are the facts.**

1. Anger and killing the spokesman does not change the message.

B) You never know the long-term impact of a lesson.

1. Saul of Tarsus heard this lesson.

C) Like Jesus, Stephen prayed for those who rejected him.

1. Loving your enemies is hard but necessary.

Conclusion:

Imagine the impact this had on the church at Jerusalem. How we respond to the truth, persecution, says a lot about our heart and conviction.