

Acts Chapter 7 Second Continued

Verses 44-50

To counter the false charge that he blasphemed the temple (6:13-14), Stephen recounted its history to show his respect for it.

Acts 7:44 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen."

“Tabernacle of witness”:

The predecessor of the temple (Exodus 25:8-9, 40).

We see in this an explanation that Moses did not build the tabernacle to suit himself, but actually got exact instructions from God while he was on the mount just how to build it.

God really gave Moses a look (vision), of the tabernacle in heaven, which this was to be patterned by.

Acts 7:45-46 "Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;" "Who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob."

We see that God was with the Hebrews.

When the ark of the Covenant was with them, the enemy fled before it.

God was fighting their battles for them.

This moveable ark was brought into the Promised Land and King David desired to build a permanent temple for the ark and a Place to worship.

David was a warrior and God would not let him build it.

His son Solomon (a man of peace), built the permanent structure of the place to worship and meet God.

Acts 7:47-48 "But Solomon built him a house." "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,"

“Most High”:

A common Old Testament title for God (Gen. 14:18-20, 22; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; 2 Sam. 22:14; Psalms 7:17; 9:2; 18:13; 21:7; 73:11; 87:5; 91:1; 107:11; Isa. 14:14; Lam. 3:35, 38; Dan. 4:17, 24-25, 32, 34; 7:25).

Verses 49-50

Quoted from Isa. 66:1-2.

Stephen's point is that God is greater than the temple, and thus the Jewish leaders were guilty of blaspheming by confining God to it.

Acts 7:49 "Heaven [is] my throne, and earth [is] my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what [is] the place of my rest?"

This is speaking of the omnipresence of God.

He can be everywhere all at the same time.

In fact, the entire earth could not hold Him.

No mere building can hold all of God.

We learn in the Revelation teaching that the Spirit of God is in all churches that bear His name.

Acts 7:50 "Hath not my hand made all these things?"

We see again here, that God created everything.

In Genesis, we know that God spoke the whole universe into existence.

We learn in John chapter 1, that the Word (Creator God), was the very same one that came to earth and dwelt among us.

Notice in verse 50 above, "my hand":

Jesus (the Word; Creator God), is the Right hand of God.

He not only sits at the right hand of the Father; He is in fact the Right Hand.

Verses 51-5

The climax of Stephen's sermon indicted the Jewish leaders for rejecting God in the same way that their ancestors had rejected Him in the Old Testament.

Acts 7:51 "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers [did], so [do] ye."

"stiffnecked":

Obstinate, like their fathers (Exodus 32:9; 33:5).

"Uncircumcised in heart and ears":

Thus as unclean before God as the uncircumcised Gentiles (see notes on Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Romans 2:28-29).

"Resist the Holy Ghost":

By rejecting the Spirit's messengers and their message.

Jesus' sermon (in Matt. 23:13-39).

You see, Stephen was speaking to men who were circumcised in the flesh.

These were men who had been circumcised in the flesh on the eighth day in keeping with the Abrahamic covenant.

The problem was that they knew God in formality and had never received Him into their heart.

They had ears, but could not hear, and they had eyes, but they could not see.

Stephen tells them that they were like their fathers.

They were very technical about the law, but they had closed themselves off and they did not know the Lawgiver.

They had a religion of the flesh and not the spirit.

We see the extreme boldness of Stephen in the next verse.

Acts 7:52 "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:"

"The Just One" (see note on 3:14).

To these religious rulers, this was about the worst accusation that Stephen could make.

They prided themselves in keeping the law.

We know that many of the prophets had been killed for the truth in the Bible.

Isaiah, we are told by historians, was sawed in half.

Daniel faced the lions in the den.

Elijah fought the prophets of Baal.

These great prophets got very little help from the rulers in the temple.

Acts 7:53 "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept [it]."

“Law by the disposition of angels”:

See Deut. 33:2; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2.

Scripture does not delineate their precise role in the giving of the law, but clearly states the fact of their presence.

Many times, the prophets even spoke out against the religious rulers and were persecuted by the rulers of the temple.

Stephen tells them, you never did truly understand the law and You have certainly not kept it.

Acts 7:54 "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with [their] teeth."

“Gnashed on him with their teeth”:

In anger and frustration (Psalms 35:16; 37:12; Matt. 8:11-12; 13:41-42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).

Down deep in their heart, they knew that what Stephen had said was true.

Acts 7:55 "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,"

“Full of the Holy Ghost”:

See note on 2:4.

“The glory of God”:

Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-3; Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:26-28); Paul (2 Cor. 12:2-4); and John (Rev. 1:10), also received visions of God's glory in heaven.

"On the right hand of God":

Jesus is frequently so depicted (2:34; Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Luke 22:69; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:11-12; 12:2).

We see here, that Stephen not only felt the Presence of the Holy Ghost, but was empowered from on high and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Stephen was so filled that all scales were removed from his eyes, and he looked into heaven, and saw the throne of God, and the glory of God on that throne.

There is much controversy about Stephen seeing Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Jesus ordinarily is seated at the right hand of God, because His work is finished, but I believe He was standing to greet Stephen and welcome him to heaven.

Stephen had no fear of what they could do to him here on the earth.

He knew his home was in heaven.

Acts 7:56 "And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

"Son of man":

See note on Dan. 7:13-14.

This proclamation of Stephen would have been impossible to hold back.

To see inside heaven and all the glory there would be almost beyond comprehension.

The thrill would be so great, that any kind of death would be welcomed to be able to go there.

Acts 7:57 "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,"

To them, this was blasphemy, and they ran toward him to capture and kill him.

I really believe, however, that they stopped their ears, because they were not ready to hear that they had killed the Lord.

You see, if Stephen is telling them the truth, they know they are doomed to hell.

They have to know that it is the truth, because Stephen's countenance was so bright as we had read earlier.

Acts 7:58 "And cast [him] out of the city, and stoned [him]: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

“Laid down their clothes ... Saul”:

This is Paul’s first appearance in Scripture.

That he was near enough to the action to be holding the clothes of Stephen’s killers reflect his deep involvement in the sordid affair (see note on 8:1).

This Saul is the Pharisee who was ordering the persecution of the Christians.

This is also the Saul who Jews would rename Paul.

You see Saul was one of these religious leaders who ordered the stoning to death of Stephen.

Notice they took him out of the city wall before they killed him.

It was not lawful (their laws), to kill a man within the city wall.

Acts 7:59 "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon [God], and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

“Stoned”:

This was the punishment prescribed in the law for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16).

However, this was not a formal execution but an act of mob violence.

This is further proof that a Christian's spirit leaves his body and goes to heaven when he dies.

Stephen's spirit went to heaven immediately.

Acts 7:60 "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

“Lay not this sin to their charge”:

As had Jesus before him (Luke 23:34), Stephen prayed for God to forgive his killers.

“He fell asleep”:

A common New Testament euphemism for the death of believers (John 11:11-14; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:14; 5:10).

Stephen's prayer demonstrates that he was speaking the truth in love, not in malice.

We see here, a humble servant of God.

Stephen had become Christ like, because he asked forgiveness for these men who did this horrible thing to him.

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do".

And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Stephen said, "Lay not this sin to their charge."

There was no question that Stephen was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Immediately Stephen died to this world.

As we said, this Saul will soon be called Paul and would also become a servant of God, a follower of Jesus Christ.

Saul thought he was doing God a favor when, in fact, he was killing one of God's anointed.

Acts Chapter 7 Second Continued Questions

1. What directions had Moses been given to build the tabernacle?
2. Who led the Israelites into the land of the Gentiles?
3. Who was the king who wanted to build a permanent house of worship?
4. Why did God not allow him to build the temple?
5. Who built the temple?
6. What name is God called by in verse 48?
7. Where is His throne?
8. What is His footstool?
9. What does omnipresence mean?

10. What did we learn in Revelation about the Spirit of God?
11. In verse 50, who made all things?
12. Who is the Right Hand of God?
13. What two terrible names did Stephen call these religious men?
14. What had they resisted?
15. What was wrong with their worship?
16. What name is Jesus called in verse 52?
17. Even though they had been given the law, they had _____.
18. In verse 54, they were cut to the heart and did what to Stephen?
19. What two things did Stephen see in verse 55?
20. What was Jesus doing? Why?
21. Why did they stop their ears?
22. Where did they take Stephen? Why?
23. How did they kill Him?
24. Where did they put Stephen's clothes?
25. What was Stephen doing and saying as he died?
26. What statement did he make that was similar to Jesus' statement?