

ACTS 7:51-60

Introduction:

Stephen, accused of blasphemy against the Law and the Temple, stands before the religious leaders of Israel. Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, takes the opportunity to truly show what was happening in Israel again.

Stephen takes the heroes of Israel (Abraham-Joseph-Moses) to show that at first they weren't believed upon. But, they were the second time. Likewise, Christ wasn't accepted His first time when presented to Israel (crucified).

*Stephen is challenging them to receive Christ now by faith, as He is being presented the second time as their living Messiah.

A. Stephen Indicts Israel -

Acts 7:51-53 - Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. 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: Acts 7:53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

1. Evidently it became clear to Stephen that his message would not be accepted by Israel's leaders. Stephen knew they wouldn't listen to him much longer, so the tone of his message suddenly changed. Stephen charges them of being like their corrupt, spiritual idolaters, unbelieving fathers. They were doing exactly again as their fathers had done - murder! They had murdered the prophets of old and, now again, they were doing away with anyone who taught differently from them.
2. Stephen charges them for murdering Christ, sinning against the Holy Spirit, and despising Moses and the Law that they pretended to uphold.

Luke 11:47-51 - Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Luke 11:48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Luke 11:49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute: Luke 11:50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; Luke 11:51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

3. The greatest sin they had committed, and were committing, was the sin against the Holy Spirit - which would doom them.

B. The Rulers' Rage -

1. Stephen's words were more than they could handle. So they, in an uncontrolled rage, rush upon

Acts 7:54-55 - When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. 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,

Stephen and begin to bite or chew on him! **Truth belittles pride!

- * Religion can be vicious at times and even go berserk. Religion even tries to stop the truth at all
- * cost! (R.C.C. and Reformers' hatred of the Jews.)

2. An amazing dying grace and peace was given to Stephen. Seemingly oblivious to the rulers' anger, he is able to look into heaven itself!
3. In verse 55, Stephen mentions Christ "standing" on the Father's right hand.
 - a. Remember, up to this time nothing in Stephen's message had been said of Jesus sitting on the Father's right hand because of His finished redemptive work.

at *That is a mystery later revealed to Paul. (The accomplishments of the D.B.R. were hidden this time so that the Kingdom could be offered.)

- b. Mark 16:19 - So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Psalm 110:1 - The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

*Here the finished work of redemption is not in view. Rather the Lord Jesus Christ is invited to the Father's right hand because His enemies on earth will not have Him.

**Jesus is Israel's royal exile [until I make thine enemies thy footstool] (His second coming in Rev. 19).

4. Seeing Christ "standing" had a great significance to Israel. For Israel, when Christ rises from the throne, it meant it would be time for Him to judge the enemies of God and those unbelieving Jews.

Psalm 7:6 - Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.

Psalm 9:19 - Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

*So here in Acts 7, Christ stands. He is about to pour out His wrath to avenge His persecuted disciples - Little Flock. So close was this event - but thank God, He postponed His judgment (Christ sat back down) and He prepared to bring in our present Dispensation of Grace!

C. Stephen Being Stoned -

1. As Stephen relays his heavenly experience, the religious leaders, in rage and covering their ears, take hold of Stephen. They cast him out of the city and then stone him to death! The Romans let the Jews,

Acts 7:56-60 - And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Acts 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 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. Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 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.

most of the time, handle their own religious matters.

2. In a striking similarity, Stephen gives another type/example of Christ. Here Stephen is rejected by his own brethren. He then asks God to receive his spirit, and then finally he asks God to forgive them. *Sound familiar?

3. Jesus had said in Luke 19:11, 14 - [And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. Luke 19:14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.]

*Stephen **is** that message that Israel sent back to God to say: [We will not have this man (Jesus) to reign over us.].

4. Note: This final rejection of Jesus Christ was the unpardonable sin.

Matthew 12:31-32 - Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. Matt. 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

a. Jesus' unpardonable sin had the coming of the Holy Spirit in view. Simply put, the coming of the **emp**owering of the Holy Spirit to plead with Israel was the Godhead-Trinity's testimony that **three** Persons of the Godhead (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) had done their above-and-beyond **part** to convince/convict Israel to repentance and belief in Jesus Christ as Messiah. There should have been a **national** repentance.

- b. Remember in the O.T. and Four Gospels, the **Father** (God) was rejected. He sent His **Son** (God) in the Four Gospels and He, too, was rejected (crucified). Then the Son sent the Holy **Spirit** to Israel (Acts 1-7) to give her a new final chance.

* Thus it was with Israel, when Jesus **warned** the religious leaders of Israel that their sin against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven. He was telling them (Matt. 12:31-32) that the Holy Spirit would soon descend to give them their third and final (**last**) opportunity to repent.

- c. Israel had already sinned and blasphemed against the Father and the Son. Now with the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost and with the many overwhelming proofs (signs-wonders-believers) by Him of the Lord's Kingdom - if they rejected the Holy Spirit through the 12 and Stephen, it would be utterly inexcusable and unpardonable for **that** generation to ever be saved.

(1) Note: There is **no** fear of committing this sin today. Today's "Dispensation of Grace" is not dealing with Israel (to whom the unpardonable sin is associated)! It **cannot** happen today because we are not Israel!

(2) It is said that when a sinner dies in unbelief today, he will go to hell because unbelief is unpardonable. That is **true**, but not because they have committed the sin of Matthew 12:31-32! Nor was it because **one** of their sins was unpardonable!

Ephesians 1:7 - In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Colossians 2:13 - And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

5. Israel's brutal murders (Acts 7:52) show us the unpardonable sin.

- a. John the Baptist was the **last** of the O.T. prophets sent to Israel to call them to repentance. John ("a man sent by God") represented the Father and he was **be**headed by Herod.
- b. Next was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who took up the cry [Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand]. Jesus was crucified on the **cross**.
- c. Finally, beginning at Pentecost, Israel was given a **third** and final opportunity to repent. The Holy Spirit was given, operated through the 12, and lastly Stephen (full of the Holy Spirit). The Kingdom offer lasted from Pentecost to the stoning of Stephen.

* Israel had **rejected** the **entire** Godhead - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (O.T. - Four Gospels - Acts 1-7)!

Note: To the beheading of John the Baptist - Israel **permitted** it. As to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ - Israel **demanded** it. And to the stoning of Stephen - the leaders **committed** it!

6. In verse 58, the religious leaders-rulers laid their **outer** clothes (to make it easier to throw stones) down [at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul].

*Here we find, among the murderers of Stephen, a young man who will become Israel's leading **per**secutor against Christ's followers, thus Christ Himself.

Acts 8:1 - And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 22:20 - And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

Acts 9:3-5 - And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Acts 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

7. This was a most **significant moment** in Israel's history. This was the moment of her being set aside **temporarily**. The transition would now begin to take place from Israel to the Body of Christ (Acts 8-28).

Romans 11:11-12, 25 - I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles*, for to provoke them to jealousy. Rom. 11:12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? Rom. 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Note: Isn't it amazing how **God** concludes one dispensation (Israel's) and has a man in place (Saul) to create the next new dispensation of grace?!

Acts 20:24 - But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

I Timothy 1:11-12, 15-16 - According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. 1Tim. 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 1Tim. 1:15 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1Tim. 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

