

Stephen Sets the Record Straight, Part 2

God was faithful then, and He's faithful now.

Stephen Gives the Sanhedrin a History Lesson.

Question: Is studying and knowing history important?

King Solomon reminds us in [Ecclesiastes 1:9 \[NIV\]](#), *"What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun."*

So, studying history is important, because it provides necessary context for understanding the present and making informed decisions about the future.

Each country has its own history trail that brought them to where they are today.

By examining historical patterns, people can identify recurring causes and effects, which aids in anticipating future trends and hopefully avoiding past mistakes.

As we look at Stephen's recap of the history of Israel in his defense before the Sanhedrin, using it to demonstrate how God's plan has always been fulfilled through key figures and events, ultimately pointing to Jesus Christ, the Providence of God is an amazing thing for us to study. His supreme purpose will be fulfilled.

God's timetable is far different than what we might understand or prefer.

God promised Abraham that his descendants would one day inherit the land of Canaan, and this was before Abraham had children.

Before we go on to Acts 7, let's do a short recap of how Stephen was wrongly accused and was now in front of the Sanhedrin.

Acts 6 records a pivotal moment in the early Christian church's development. As the number of disciples grew rapidly in Jerusalem, a complaint arose concerning the daily distribution of food.

Stephen was one of the seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom and was presented to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them, signifying the transfer of authority and divine approval.

Stephen, one of the seven, stood out for his faith, the Holy Spirit, and for his ability to perform wonders and signs among the people.

He soon came into conflict with members of the Synagogue, who disputed with him, but could not withstand his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke.

Unable to refute him, they secretly persuaded men to accuse Stephen of blasphemy against Moses and God, claiming he said Jesus would destroy the temple and change the customs of Moses.

This led to his arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin, where he was falsely accused, and ultimately everyone saw his face shine like an angel's as he stood before them.

Now, let's look at Acts 7:17-29 and see what lies ahead for Stephen.

Please stand, as we read today's scripture...

“17 As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. 18 Then ‘a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.’ 19 He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die. 20 At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. 21 When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. 22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. 23 When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. 24 He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian.

25 Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. 26 The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?’ 27 But the man who was mistreating

the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? ²⁸Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons. Acts 7:17-29 [NIV]

Prayer

Thank you – everyone, please be seated.

Stephen's Old Testament history lesson before the Sanhedrin has already covered the Providence of God in highlighting the faith of Abraham and the wisdom of Joseph. Now, he moves on to the account of Moses, where he spends much more time – probably because of the false charges that were against Stephen and accused him of failure to respect the ministry of Moses and the law.

Back in Acts 6, Stephen's profile was a Spirit-filled servant of Jesus Christ.

Stephen stood out for his faith, the Holy Spirit, and his ability to perform signs and wonders.

The concept of being filled with the Holy Spirit is often perceived as mystical, but in everyday life, it means allowing the Holy Spirit to have control over your life, surrendering your will to God's will, and letting Him lead and guide you in all areas of life.

It is not merely a one-time emotional experience or a dramatic event, though it can include those elements. Instead, it is an ongoing, daily process of yielding to the Spirit's guidance, resulting in a transformation and empowerment for living a life that pleases God and fulfills His purpose.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit leads to a life marked by the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These characteristics are not the result of one's effort alone but are evidence of the Spirit's work in shaping the heart and renewing our minds.

Importantly, every believer already has the Holy Spirit indwelling them at the moment of salvation, and this presence is permanent. However, being “filled” refers to a continual surrender to God's Word, prayer, and obedience.

The Spirit fills you, as you seek His guidance in all the areas of life, allowing Him to have access to the restricted areas of your life.

Stephen was all in for God! The Sanhedrin could not compete with the Holy Spirit and the wisdom that was given to Stephen... So, they had to find men of low character to bring false witnesses against Stephen.

Who were the Sanhedrin?

The Sanhedrin was the supreme council and tribunal of the Jews during their Babylonian captivity. It was composed of 71 members, including the High Priest, a vice chief justice, and 69 general members, who were typically drawn from the chief priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees. The Great Sanhedrin, the highest court, met daily in the Chamber within the Jerusalem Temple.

They functioned as the final authority on Jewish law and religious matters - the High Priest, the chief priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees.

All together, these men had tons of Biblical knowledge, and they could not find the truth about the Lord Jesus. Every aspect of the Messiah is in the Old Testament. His conception, His birth, all the way to His death and resurrection, and the Ascension to heaven.

And more than likely, they knew the truth. But for some reason, they hated the naked Truth.

A Lie in Truth's Clothing

The Lie tells Truth: “The water is very nice; let’s take a bath together!” The Truth, once again suspicious, tests the water and discovers that it indeed is very nice. They undress and start bathing. Suddenly, the Lie jumps out of the water, puts on the clothes of the Truth and runs away.

Furious, the Truth comes out of the water to get her clothes back. But the World, upon seeing the naked Truth, looked away, with anger and contempt.

Ashamed and rejected, the Truth returns to the well and disappears forever, hiding her shame. Since then, the Lie has run around the world, dressed as the Truth. And, society is very happy, because the World has no desire to know the naked Truth.

What can we learn from this story? It reflects the painful reality the Bible has warned us about for generations. Scriptures says in [Romans 1:25 \[NIV\]](#) “*They exchanged the truth about God for a lie...*”

Not because the truth was absent but because it was uncomfortable. Truth exposes hearts and reveals motives and confronts sin, and many would rather turn away than be changed. Even back then, the Sanhedrin did not want to know the “Naked Truth,” like a lot of people today.

Jesus Himself said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life,*” [John 14:6 \[NIV\]](#)

When Truth stood before the world in human form, He was rejected, mocked, and crucified, not because He lied, but because He spoke plainly, and Truthfully.

Light always makes darkness uneasy. A lie dressed as truth is easier to accept; it sounds gentle, and it looks familiar, and it demands nothing.

But, real Truth calls for repentance, humility, and obedience. That is why Jesus warned that following Him would not always bring peace but division. [Matthew 10:34](#)

The lesson is simple: a world that rejects the naked truth will gladly embrace a well-dressed lie. But, comfort gained from lies is temporary, while freedom found in truth is eternal.

Today, the question is not whether Truth exists, but whether we are willing to face it.

Will we look away in anger, or will we allow God's Truth to strip away our pride and clothe us in righteousness?

When Stephen spoke Truth to the Sanhedrin, I bet they didn't hear a word that he said. Hatred blocks the heart, ears and mind.

Stephen argues that the religious leaders of his time were repeating the same sins of their ancestors by persecuting and killing the prophets, in their ultimate rejection and murder of Jesus - the Just One foretold by the prophets.

His retelling of Israel's history serves to show that the Mosaic Law and the Temple were temporary institutions that pointed forward to Christ, and that the true fulfillment of God's covenant was found in Jesus, not in the physical structures or rituals.

Stephen continues, noting the initial rejection of Moses by the Israelites despite his efforts to deliver them, that was a foreshadow of how they would reject Christ Jesus - the only One who could save them.

That is why history is so important – so, we will not make the same mistakes again.

As I was studying for this sermon, I asked the Lord what else do You want Your people to know?

Tell My people that: “I am Faithful.”

I was faithful then, and I am faithful now.

You may not understand My timeline, but I Am faithful.

God's faithfulness is a central theme throughout Scripture, affirmed in numerous verses across both the Old and New Testaments.

The Lord is described as a faithful God who keeps His covenant and loving kindness to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments.

This faithfulness is evident in His steadfast love and mercy, which never cease and are renewed every morning. As the prophet Jeremiah declares, in [Lamentations 3:22-23 \[ESV\]](#)
“²²The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

God's character is further defined in Exodus 34:6^b [ESV], where He proclaims Himself as “*...merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*”

This divine attribute is foundational to His relationship with humanity, ensuring that His promises are reliable and trustworthy.

The apostle Paul affirms this when he writes, “*This saying is trustworthy...*” in Titus 3:8, emphasizing the reliability and truthfulness of the teachings concerning salvation by grace.

The author of Hebrews encourages believers to hold fast to their hope, for “he who promised is faithful.”

The faithfulness of God is linked to the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is described as, “*...the same yesterday and today and forever.*” Hebrews 13:8 [ESV]

Here's a biggie: His unchanging nature provides assurance for believers. The apostle John emphasizes that when we confess our sins, He's just to forgive us our sins. We find that in, “*...he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” 1 John 1:9 [ESV]

This promise of forgiveness and cleansing is grounded in God's faithfulness, which remains even when we are faithless, for “he cannot deny himself.”

The faithfulness of God also gives us a way out to escape from temptation. As stated in 1 Corinthians 10:13 [NIV]: “*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*”

The verse states that no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to humanity, emphasizing that the struggles individuals face are a shared experiences among all people. This reassurance is meant to comfort believers, reminding them that their trials are not unique or beyond what others have endured. God is faithful and will not allow anyone to be tempted beyond what they can bear, ensuring that with every trial, He provides a way of escape, so that one can endure it.

This promise underscores the belief that divine support is available to help individuals to resist temptation and remain steadfast. Praise God for that!

“¹¹*This is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹²if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; ¹³if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*” 2 Timothy 2:11–13 [BSB]

The phrase "for He cannot deny Himself" emphasizes that God's faithfulness is rooted in His unchanging nature and character. It signifies that God cannot act contrary to His own essence, which is inherently truthful, faithful, and consistent.

This statement moves from comfort to challenge and back to comfort: V. 11 is a reminder of life, even in the face of death; V. 12 calls for perseverance.

V. 13 is a reminder of God's preserving power and faithfulness. In this context, to deny Him must entail a more serious offense than being faithless.

Denying Christ envisions a final apostasy, in contrast with a temporary lapse in trusting Christ ("if we are faithless"). Those who deny Jesus will be judged forever; but all believers sin, and God is faithful and will pardon, restore, and keep those who are truly His.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."
Hebrews 13:8 [BSB]

Jesus, the Messiah, is eternally trustworthy in His position as high priest and as Son of God—yesterday, Jesus was active in creation; today, Jesus is forever reigning in heaven, offering salvation for those who trust in Him.

Jesus remains trustworthy, Jesus who is always the same.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9 [ESV]

Christians must confess (their) sins, initially to receive salvation and then to maintain fellowship with God; when we stumble, the Holy Spirit leads us to repentance, and He is faithful and just to forgive. God is “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression.”

These scriptures collectively reveal that God was faithful then and is faithful now.

This is not only a divine attribute but also a source of comfort, hope, and assurance, for all who trust in Him.

It may sound like we went from a history lesson to looking at God's faithfulness, but God's faithfulness is History... His-Story!

God has always been faithful and will continue to be faithful as it pertains to mankind, until the end of History, when His time table comes to an end... Then, the final judgment after Jesus' return.

The new heaven and new earth are described in Revelation 21:1, where John sees "*a new heaven and a new earth*," because the former heaven and earth have passed away.

This new creation is not merely a spiritual realm but a restored physical earth where God dwells with humanity, fulfilling His original intention for creation. The new earth will be free from sin, suffering, death, and all the effects of the curse, representing Eden restored.

It will be a place of eternal fellowship with God, where the redeemed will live in harmony, rule with Christ, and enjoy the presence of God forever.

“²²Because of the loving devotion of the LORD we are not consumed, for His mercies never fail. ²³They are new every morning...” Lamentations 3:22–23^b [BSB]

This type of mercy goes the second mile, replacing judgment with restoration. And, it **never comes to an end**. God is willing to begin anew with those who repent.

God was faithful then, and He is faithful now...

Like Paul Harvey would say, “And, that’s the rest of the story.” But, in this case, it is not the rest of the story. Stephen’s story is to be continued!

Let’s Pray:

Father,

On this journey through Your Word, we are learning the importance of History. We are learning just how important faith is, and we are increasingly aware of the importance of our total Trust in You.

But most importantly, we are learning and understanding just “How faithful You are.” You were faithful then, and You are faithful now.

We thank You that Your Grace is renewed every morning; that gives us a great sigh of relief and a reassurance that Your Grace will be there for us each and every day.

Father,

We want to be a bold body of believers, like Stephen, who stood out for his faith. Let our faith grow, as we grow in Your Word, like a tree planted by the water.

As Christians, we are called to be faithful witnesses, and share God's will and plan for salvation to the unbelievers.

Let us reach out to those who do not know the freedom and the Joy of knowing that our salvation is anchored and secure by the blood of Christ Jesus.

And, God will give them the same access to salvation, when they understand they are in sin and have a repentant heart and turn to Him.

They can have the same freedom and the Joy of knowing that their salvation is anchored and secure by the blood of Jesus.

**Father, Bless Your people.
We pray this in Jesus' name.**