

Sunday, January 25th

Sierra Vista Community Church, Las Cruces, NM

Faith In Action

Stephen Sets The Record Straight Part 3, Acts 7:30-53

Introduction

Since the start of January, we have been reading about Stephen: his arrest and his defense. Today we will look at the last part of his statement to the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, and all the men in the church in Jerusalem.

To recap, our Elder Julian taught us about Stephen who was “full of grace and power, and was performing great wonders and miraculous signs among the people” at the end of Chapter 6.

Our Elder Jim showed us that “Stephen was not so much defending himself as much as he was trying to portray Christ in a way the judges, elders and rulers would understand.”

Our Elder Gary explained that our God has shown Himself faithful then and now.

Pray

SIT and Read – Acts 7:30-50 [CSB]

After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he was approaching to look at it, the voice of the Lord came: I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look.

“The Lord said to him: Take off the sandals from your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. And now, come, I will send you to Egypt.

“This Moses, whom they rejected when they said, Who appointed you a ruler and a judge?—this one God sent as a ruler and a deliverer through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. This man led them out and performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

“This is the Moses who said to the Israelites: God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. He is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors. He received living oracles to give to us. Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him. Instead, they pushed him aside, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. They told Aaron: Make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don’t know what’s happened to him. They even made a calf in those days, offered sacrifice to the idol, and were celebrating

what their hands had made. God turned away and gave them up to worship the stars of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

House of Israel, did you bring me offerings and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness?

You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship.

So I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.

“Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses commanded him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. Our ancestors in turn received it and with Joshua brought it in when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before them, until the days of David. He found favor in God’s sight and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. It was Solomon, rather, who built him a house, but the Most High does not dwell in sanctuaries made with hands, as the prophet says:

Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool.

What sort of house will you build for me?

says the Lord,

or what will be my resting place?

Did not my hand make all these things?

I. Acts 7:30-43 [CSB] – God’s chosen people have continually rebelled

A. God knows what His people go through

B. Acts 7:34 [CSB]

I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. And now, come, I will send you to Egypt.

C. Side quest: Exodus 3:5-10

D. God chose Moses to lead His people

E. God’s people knew Moses and had already rejected him

F. Exodus 2:11-14 [CSB]

Years later, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his own people and observed their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his people. Looking all around and seeing no one, he struck the Egyptian dead and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you attacking your neighbor?”

“Who made you a commander and judge over us?” the man replied. “Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”

Then Moses became afraid and thought, “What I did is certainly known.”

G. Despite Moses' failings, God still used him as a leader and prophet

H. Acts 7:36 [CSB]

This man led them out and performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

I. God's people, the nation of Israel, still chose to reject him

J. Acts 7:39 [CSB]

Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him. Instead, they pushed him aside, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt.

K. God allowed their rebellion

L. Acts 7:42-43 [CSB]

God turned away and gave them up to worship the stars of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

House of Israel, did you bring me offerings and sacrifices
for forty years in the wilderness?

You took up the tent of Moloch
and the star of your god Rephan,
the images that you made to worship.

So I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.

M. Side quest: Amos 5

N. Advice: Think twice before you rebel against God; He may let you do it!

II. Acts 7:44-50 [CSB] – God has never been confined to a building or institution

A. Stephen mentions the first "portable" church building: the tabernacle of the testimony

B. It took about a year to build initially, and six-months to set up and tear down

C. It held the Ark of the Covenant, which housed the Ten Commandments

D. That portable building went wherever God sent Israel

E. King David wanted to build a permanent place for God

F. King Solomon accomplished it

G. Acts 7:47-50 [CSB]

It was Solomon, rather, who built him a house, but the Most High does not dwell in sanctuaries made with hands, as the prophet says:

Heaven is my throne,
and the earth my footstool.

What sort of house will you build for me?

says the Lord,

or what will be my resting place?

Did not my hand make all these things?

H. Stephen is quoting Isaiah 66, another side quest

I. Where is Stephen going with all of this?

J. Acts 6:11-14 [CSB]

Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God.” They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; so they came, seized him, and took him to the Sanhedrin. They also presented false witnesses who said, “This man never stops speaking against this holy place and the law. For we heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.”

K. Stephen was addressing the false statements made against him

III. Acts 7:51-53 [CSB] – God’s people still rebel and cling to buildings/institutions

“You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit. As your ancestors did, you do also. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You received the law under the direction of angels and yet have not kept it.”

A. Stephen is pointing out the obvious: God’s people haven’t changed

B. God sent His only son, Jesus, and they rejected Him because He challenged their institution

C. Stephen was talking to several of the same leaders that plotted against Jesus

The Crux

Are we more like Stephen or like the leaders of the Sanhedrin? Have we learned to rebel against God?

Stephen chose to believe in the Messiah, His Savior, the Son of God, Jesus the Christ! We should choose to believe in the Messiah, Our Savior, the Son of God, Jesus the Christ!

If you have not accepted Christ as your Savior, it is not too late. Accept Him today, right now.

Invitation