

*Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.*

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

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First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #235

## **THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

### **Chapter 7**

#### **Stephen Preaches to the Sanhedrin**

1. Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"
2. And he said, "Brethren and fathers listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,
3. And said to him, '*Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.*'
4. "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.
5. "And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.
6. "But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years.
7. '*And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge, said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.'*'
8. "Then He gave them the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.
9. "And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him
10. "and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.
11. "Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance.
12. "But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13. "And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh.
14. "Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.
15. "So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers.
16. "And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem.
17. "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,
18. "till another king arose who did not know Joseph.
19. "This man dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.
20. "At this time Moses was born and was well pleasing to God, and he was brought up in his father's house for three months.
21. "But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.
22. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds.
23. "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.
24. "And seeing one of them suffer wrong he defended and avenged him who was oppressed and struck down the Egyptian.
25. "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.
26. "And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?'
27. "But he who did his neighbor wrong, pushing him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?'
28. 'Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?'
29. "Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.
30. "And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai.
31. "When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him,

32. "saying, *'I am the God of your fathers-the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'* And Moses trembled and dared not look.
33. "Then the LORD said to him, *'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.'*
34. *'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'*
35. "This Moses whom they rejected, saying, *'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'* is the one God sent to be a ruler and deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush.
36. "He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.
37. "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, *'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'*
38. "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and with our fathers, 'the one who received the living oracles to give to us.
39. "whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.
40. "saying to Aaron, *'Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'*
41. "And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.
42. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven as it is written in the book of the Prophets: *'Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?'*
43. *'You also took up the tabernacle of Molech, and the star of your god Remphan, images which you made to worship, and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'*
44. "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen,
45. "which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the fact of our fathers until the days of David,

the conditions for entering and maintaining the promised land (Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 28)

7. **The Davidic Covenant** was made with David after the death of Saul and David's taking the throne at Jerusalem. It involves David's Seed, House, Throne, and Kingdom both naturally and spiritually. It pointed ultimately to the everlasting Throne and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15, 16, & 28; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7; 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 17).
8. **The New Covenant** is what we are not under. This is what Kevin Conner says of this covenant: *"The New Covenant was made by the Lord Jesus Christ immediately prior to His death at Jerusalem. It was made with the twelve apostles, who represented the House of Israel and the House of Judah, after the flesh, but were the foundation of the New Covenant Church, being the twelve apostles of the Lamb. It became the fulfillment of all previous covenants, fulfilling and abolishing in itself their temporal elements and making possible their everlasting elements. The New Covenant makes possible and brings the believer into the Everlasting Covenant, thus completing the cycle of covenantal revelation."* A few of the scriptures dealing with the promises of this covenant are Acts 10:43, Luke 7:36-50; Romans 3:24-26; John 3:1-5; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:23-24; Romans 8:15 & 23; Romans 3:23).
9. **The Everlasting Covenant** was made by the Godhead in Eternity before man was created and before sin entered the world. Man was not a party to it, but he is the object of it. It has to do with the creation and redemption of man. It promises everlasting life, immortality, an everlasting Kingdom, everlasting joy and love and mercy and so much more (John 3:16; Titus 1:2-3; 1st John 2:25; Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:9-11)

Paul tells us that what happened in the Old Testament happened for our example (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:11). Thus, all of these men mentioned by Stephen are types-

**Abraham:** God the Father

**Isaac:** God the Son

**Jacob:** God the Holy Spirit

**The Twelve Sons of Jacob:** The Israel of God, all their names having prophetic truths

**Joseph:** Christ, the Jehovah Jireh

**Moses:** Christ as the Prophet-Deliverer

**Aaron:** Christ as the High Priest of God

**Tabernacle of Witness:** Christ as the True Tabernacle of God

**Joshua:** Christ as the leader into the Promised Land and the Place of Rest

**David:** Christ as the Shepherd and as the Prophet, Priest and King

**Solomon:** Christ as the builder of the Temple

In summary Stephen is saying that as the Jewish people rejected the first time Joseph, Moses, David and Aaron but the second time exalted and accepted them, so shall they accept *the Just One*, whom they murdered the first time He came and whom will return the second time.

**Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and the first mention of Saul of Tarsus (Paul)**

54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

55. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

56. And said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord.

58. And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

60. Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

What these religious zealots did was illegal. The Sanhedrin had not right to put anyone to death. Only the Romans could do that, and first they must have a trial. Saul was a Pharisee of Pharisees, and certainly must have agreed that Stephen was being blasphemous. Perhaps he did not cast a stone because, as much as he hated Stephen, he did not want to break the law that he knew so well. The method of stoning was generally to first cast someone off the mountainside. If this did not kill the person, then they rolled large boulders over the side of the mountain onto the person until they were "grave yard dead." Whether Paul actually threw stones or not, he was an eye witness to these things, and this must have burned on his conscious, though he was not a believer. He was there to see Stephen's face aglow and to hear his words affirming Jesus standing at the right hand of God and Stephen's words asking God to forgive those who killed him.