

Acts 7:1-60 Who is on Trial?

THE SCENE TOOK PLACE in a

Washington , DC , Metro Station, on a cold January morning in 2007, this man with a violin played six Bach pieces for **about 45 minutes**. During that time, approximately 2,000 people went through the station, most of them on their way to work.

Some passed by and stopped for a few seconds
Others for a couple of minutes

A few children stopped and tried to listen but were quickly pulled along by their mothers.

The musician **played continuously** for 45min Only 6 people stopped and listened for a short while. About 20 gave money but continued to walk at their normal pace. The man collected a total of \$32.

When he finished playing No one noticed and no one applauded. There was no recognition at all.

No one knew this, but the violinist was **Joshua Bell**, one of the greatest musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces of music ever written, with a violin **worth \$3.5 million dollars**.

Two days before, Joshua Bell sold-out a theater in Boston where the seats averaged \$100 each to sit and listen to him play the same music.

When Jesus came the first time – many in Israel including Most of the religious leaders completely missed it.

Here in Acts 7 – A young man named Stephen brings them face to face with their Costly mistake!

In our study last week we took a look at Stephen – a man who had a Full Life.

A) Full of faith, full of the HS and Full of Power.

B) Stephen started as a deacon waiting on tables making sure the Hellenist widows received fair portion

C) Then we found him in the Synagogue of the Freedman – very popular Ch.6 V.9 pp from all over the region – went there.

D) Stephen was in that synagogue preaching Christ as the messiah.

Once again religious leaders in Israel are taking offense.

A) Stephen is dragged off to stand before the Sanhedrin the Jewish supreme court

B) The 71 most powerful men in Israel – led by the High Priest – Caiaphas – presided over Christ trial

C) False witnesses are brought in to say that Stephen is speaking against Moses & the temple.

D) Ch. 6 V.15 Declares that as these accusations are being made- Stephens face begins to glow like the face of an angel- They are all in AWE

**That is when Caiaphas breaks the silence Ch.7 v.1
Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"**

A) What Stephen does here in response is absolutely fascinating –

B) He is going to give these rulers in Israel a history lesson.

1) And the Key point that he is going to lay forth to that religious council is this:

That the religious leaders of Israel have a long history of NOT recognizing the DELIVERERS that God sent until they came the 2nd time.

C) He is going to use Moses and Joseph as his primary witnesses but he is also going to call

1) Abraham / Solomon/Amos to the Stand.

D) So Stephen is going to make a defense for his position not so much that he might be spared these false accusations

1) But rather to further prove that Jesus is the Messiah

In the course of his defense TWO amazing things ARE going to happen – #1 tables are turned.

A) Stephen goes from being the one on trial to putting these religious leaders on trial.

B) #2 He is going to vividly illustrate the Pursuing heart of God toward rebellious sinners.

C) As we work our way thru this passage – we are going to learn 5 important principles – one from each witness – that directly applies to our walk w/ God today

**No better place to start than where the nation began with Abraham.
RDv.2-4a**

Now in this call to Abe there are three phrases that are significant.

A) God said: V.3 Get out of your country, 2.) From your relatives, 3) Come to something new!

B) And what Stephen is wanting them to see by using Abe as an example here is that from the very beginning they have been **a called out people.**

C) Now the Lord was calling them to come out of Judaism and into something new.

1) A relationship with God thru his son JC

The Point that Stephen is making here with Abe is they shouldn't be surprised at all-that God would

send a prophet into your midst to call you out of something and into something better!

A) That is what God does – SAINT ? – Light shines thru!

B) **Saints are called out ones – separated from the world – separated unto God.**

1) Not just from put to.

C) **Wed. RIGHT PATH – Lost don't need a solution we need the direction- get on the right path.**

1) Justin – need to get on the right path – Separate from my friends –

The point Stephen is making – this is how the nation began – Abe was called out – called unto!

A) What did Abe do ? He obeyed that call. He stepped out in faith believing God.

B) Described as faith in both the old and the NT

C) This is Stephens 2nd point in using Abe as a witness

1) Abe entered into a **faith based** relationship with God

D) It has always been about a **FAITH BASED** relationship. – Saved grace thru faith

RD V.4b-7

Abe walked by faith believing God – entering into the land of Promise.

A) So why would you be surprised that God would call you out of something and into something new

B) Call you to walk with Him in a faith based relationship – that is what He has done from the beginning.

8 Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision;

It wasn't until after Abe stepped out in faith – believing God – that God gave him the cov of circumcision. **and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.**

So this is what STEVE is saying to this religious council and they are getting it – because they will be very upset at the end of this sermon.

A) What he is saying to them is this: You boast in Abe but you know nothing about Abe!

B) Because you boast in all the things that Abe never boasted in!

1) Abe had no temple – he had **NO LAW** – he had no **CIRCUMSISIION** – at the beginning.

C) He had **NONE** of these things that you accuse me of speaking against.

But what Abe did have that you don't have is a personal relationship

with God.

A) God referred to Abe as HIS FRIEND !

B) You think that because you have a physical tie to Abe as his descendant – you know what he was about

C) In reality you **don't know ANYTHING that he was about.**

1) And you will not know what Abe was about until you are ready to live a life of faith and not of works

2) Until you are ready to live in a faith based relationship with God. Not a works based

D) Right now you have a relationship with the law of Moses – with the temple of God {Everything But God**}**

All I am asking you to do you religious leaders is what God asked Abe to do in the beginning – is to **COME OUT & LIVE BY FAITH!**

A) That is what the testimony of Abraham teaches us today.

B) God has called us into a relationship with him that is based on faith!

1) Abraham believed God – Justified!

C) Just like Abraham God calls us out of this world and unto Himself.

1) Called out from and Called To – FRIEND!

He finishes – thank you very much Abe – you may step down – **Now I call Joseph to the witness stand.**

9 "And the patriarchs, {Leaders – just like these men in the Sanhedrin were leaders} becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him

B) Recall the story – Joseph's older brothers were envious of Joseph –

Dad's favorite – sold him

C) Now it had been apparent to many including Pilate that these religious leaders were envious of Jesus

1) He moved with Power – and Popularity

D) Well Like Jesus/ Joseph's brothers delivered him out of envy – But God was with Him – that is all that mattered.

Evidence that God was with Him V10 God 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.

**After some time as a slave and in prison – God blessed Joseph – interpreted the dream – gave counsel – to prepare for the 7 yrs of famine
PHARAOH – MADE HIM #2**

E) For a time things looked bleak for Joseph – but God had a Plan.

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.

A) Here is the point – Pattern started with Joseph – where our leaders didn't recognize God's deliverer until they came the 2nd time.

B) Issue with the Jews today – they don't recognize the first coming of Jesus.

1) Still looking for MESSIAH

C) I will never forget – being in Israel up on Mt Meggido.- Over looking

Valley of Meggido

1) Talking about the battle of Armeggedon antichrist nations – Jesus – battle

D) Yoshi our guide – that was awesome – fired up- I loved that – **Amazing! – Can't wait!**

1) Problem – he is thinking that will be the first coming of the messiah.

E) The Bible tells us when Jesus comes the 2nd time the eyes of the Jews will be opened

1) They will realize they missed it the first time.

Rd v.14-17

So the through Joseph the people of Israel were delivered and allowed to grow in Egypt

A) Came in as Shepherds – but Egyptians despised Shepherds – but they loved Joseph

B) Pharaoh gave them the land of Goshen – to dwell in by themselves – they grew – more babies

1) Over time 75 pp grew to 3 million

C) God brought them to Egypt so they could grow from being a family to a nation.

1) Hard to grow as Nomads – rough life

Here is what Joseph's testimony teaches us is that God will allow us to encounter times of difficulty in order to grow us.

A) God sees the big picture: He sees what is up ahead – the famine that is

coming.

B)He would use Egypt to grow the family into a nation.

1)And He would use Joseph's time in Egypt to set him up as a Deliverer.

C)Even when things do not make sense we just need to trust Him –

1)Believing He is making all things to work together for good to those who love Him Purpose.

D)So they were growing in Egypt –

**18 till another king arose who did not know Joseph. Saw them as a threat
{ made them slaves -**

**19 This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.
{reduce population**

F)So the pp of Israel are at a place where they need a deliverer – God is going to send one.

Thank You Joseph – next calls MOSES! RdV.20-21

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, {Basket insulated with pitch in the Nile river}

Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.

A)She named him Moses – interesting the most talked about figure in the OT – don't even know his real name!

Acts 7:22

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

Historians

Learned in all their schools highly educated – Military general – Mighty in words & deeds

23 "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

Moses leaves the palace and is going to go and visit the people 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.

They didn't understand that God had raised him up – it would be 40yrs later when he came to them the 2nd time that they began to understand.

RD V.26-36

V.35 Key Phrase – This Moses whom our fathers rejected. – PATTERN

A)The Leaders of Israel have a long history of failing to recognize God's deliverers until they come the 2nd time.

37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel,

B)You think I am speaking against Moses you need to remember what Moses said! –

'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'

C)He was speaking of the Messiah – Moses was speaking of Jesus

1)In other words even Moses said there was one coming after him that they should listen to! Rd V.38-42

You say that I am speaking against Moses – but in reality your fathers rejected Moses!

A)Even after – He was with God glowing / gave the 10 commandments

B)The testimony of Moses teaches us:

C)God sometimes has to break us down before He can build us up!

1)He will seek to free us from pride and self dependency in order to make us God dependent.

Next He is going to call the Prophet Amos the the witness stand. The Farmer

B)V.42 He quotes Amos - Acts 7:42-43

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 Moloch,

And the star of your god Remphan,

Images which you made to worship;

And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'

Here is how bad the rejection got – Our fathers turned to idols – even Molech – sacrificed their kids

A)For that reason – God sent them to Babylon – for 70 yrs of captivity.

B)THE CAPITAL OF IDOLATRY!

1)Want idols? Idols out your nose

C)God will do that – Parent – smoke a whole pack

1)Never smoke again.

D)By in large the Pp of Israel never went back to idols. FOREVER CURED!

The Prophet Amos teaches us that when we rebel God will give us what we want – until it makes us sick. – Turn back to Him.

Stephen is basically saying – there has never been a time in our history really taken Moses seriously

A) Don't accuse me of speaking against Moses

B) Amos can step down – call Solomon to the stand

RDV.44-46 Transition –

Pt Started with the Tabernacle – God's presence

God would pick Solomon to build the temple!

RD 47-50

A) God spoke thru Solomon and Isaiah – telling us that He doesn't dwell in temple made with hands.

B) God never intended that we should develop a relationship with the temple. – which is exactly what they had done.

C) They had it all wrong! Once again missed the point entirely. The testimony of Solomon teaches us that in our relationship with God – he does not want us to get distracted or sidetracked by any physical things.

Now I wonder if they were at all impressed that Stephen – a Grecian Jew would have such a grasp on their history?

A) If they were at all – that changes drastically in v.51

Here is where Stephen – gets bold

B) Now Many Bible commentators agree that at this point in his sermon – Stephen – sensed their rejection

1) Which leads him to say:

51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53 who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

You are just like your Fathers they rejected and killed the Prophets and you have rejected and killed Jesus the Messiah.

This is when they lose it! RD V.54-60

As we close – see what Stephen teaches us in His dying moments.

#1 When People are coming against you – Look up!

Set your mind on the things above not here on earth

Seeing from a Heavenly perspective

#2 He saw Jesus standing:

A) Jesus normally sitting – He sat down in terms of redemption – FINISHED.

B) But He gets up when His Children are in trouble.

C) Standing Ovation – Standing to welcome Stephen well done

#3 Stephen reflected Jesus in His death.

A) Receive my spirit

B)Father forgive them.

#4 His life was not a waste –

A)One convert – Saul

B)Big Catch!