The Light of the King Exposes Darkness

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The Acts of the Apostles / Acts 7:1–53

Introduction

Good morning Awakening Church. Today we have a particular lengthy text, therefore I will have a particularly short introduction.

A King was given a report by one of his wise and trusted councilman.

[1]"There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. [2] The rich man had very many flocks and herds, [3] but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. [4] Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.

The King was outraged and said "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourth fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Primary Text Breakdown

Main Point: The King exposes the long standing rebellion of Israel with the long suffering of His promises.

1. Stephen reveals the truths concerning the Abrahamic promises and the Land.
2. Stephen reveals the truth concerning Moses and the Law.
3. Stephen reveals the truth concerning Temple and current condition of Israel's leaders.
4. Stephen condemns the leaders with the same sins as their fathers.

› Going to a portion of the previous section while standing. (The actual Chapter will be read throughout the sermon)

Red Acts 6:11-15.

Call: The grass withers and the flowers fade

Response: But the Word of the Lord endures forever

~~Pray~~

Stephen reveals the truths concerning the Abrahamic promises and the Land

Acts 7:1–8 ESV

[1] And the high priest said, "Are these things so?" [2] And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, [3] and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' [4] Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. [5] Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. [6] And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. [7] 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' [8] And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

He build a connection of the two parties. (vs. 1-2)

1.1 Stephen begins his judicial discourse by connecting himself with the audience. He reminds them that he is a Jew, and are part of the same covenantal promises given by the God of Glory. Stephen here is aligning his case with the judges. He is building a report with the listeners. From the text he we he calls them "Brothers and fathers." He then addresses them with "our father Abraham," he is reminding them that they share a common heritage. They are brothers and should not be enemies.

He reminds them of their origin. (vs 2-4)

1.2 When he speaks on Abraham's origin, we are reminded that God's revelation is not limited to a location or a place (Land or Temple). Abraham was called before he was ever promised a land to obtain as an inheritance. Abraham was called to leave his traditions and follow God's command and the same is called for us. He had to leave what was familiar to him. If we consider this, Abraham was asked to leave a place he would have felt secure in, not a sojourner. Notice here that Stephen points out not the actions of Abraham, the big deal isn't Abraham, but what God had done. God revealed (vs 2), God spoke (vs 3), God sent (vs 4), God promised (vs 5), God spoke (vs 6), God gave (vs. 8). Yet the Jews always made a big deal about Abraham. Yes Abraham was counted as faithful, because Abraham had faith he obeyed God. He followed through with his pilgrimage. He trusted in the promises of the LORD.

1.2.1 Christians today are called to be faithful and trust in God's promises during our pilgrimage in this day and age. Our inheritance is not the land of Canaan. Our inheritance is heaven with the one who made it possible, Christ Jesus.

He points out their focus on the Land. (vs 4-5)

1.3 Abraham, although, he was not given this land it was given as a promise to him to his offspring. Stephen connects this in verse 4 rather directly with "this land in which you are not living." He is reminding them that God was the giver of this -land- that they so cherished and set their hope on. Israel misunderstood God's interest to be limited to the land. Stephen is building up his argument on that God's intent was never to rest only on this land. We may say simply, that it was God's starting place for his people. The Jews believed that their salvation in God was threaded to the fact that they were simply Abraham's offspring and inheritors of this promised land. Their entire traditional structure is built upon this.

He speaks of their enslavement. (vs 6-8)

1.4 Next Stephen speaks on how these promises were to take place. He moving to connect the enslavement of Egypt with the call of Moses. Genesis 15: 13-14 promised affliction over a course of about 400 years and he promised redemption by God hand and God's hand alone, not by the power

and strength of man. The end of verse 7 remind us of the intention of God's deliverance, God's intention for us all, "after that they shall come out and worship me." (We are not delivered from evil so that we continue to go our own way) God confirms this promise with an external sign of his covenant with Abraham with circumcision. This was an external expression of God's promises. This dramatic ritual for Abraham had subsequently included his male offspring so that they could claim the "inclusion with the Abrahamic relationship."

He gives a rhetorical indictment of Israel in the history of Joseph. (vs. 9-16)

Acts 7:9–16 ESV
9 "And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was
with him 10 and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and
wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and
over all his household. 11 Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt
and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. 12 But
when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on
their first visit. 13 And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his
brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. 14 And Joseph sent
and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in
all. 15 And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, 16 and
they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had
bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

1.5 We have a covenant established and promises given to Abraham and his family. However, Stephen begins to pull out the reality of Israel's relationship with God. Our first clue is given with the explicit jealousy of Joseph. Joseph was rejected by his jealous brothers. God had rescued him as we see that God was with him, even in Egypt. Notice how God's presence is not bound by location or limited in any way. In Joseph we begin to see a trend, where the deliverers of Israel were, at some point, rejected by their own. Despite Josephs rejection and near death by his own brothers, God vindicated him by giving him the power to rescue and preserve his own people in Egypt. The Text mentions that God gave Joseph wisdom and favor before Pharaoh. We might make a sense of a parallel here with Stephen who was also full of Grace (Favor-χαρις) and Wisdom (we see what happens when God places his hand on his people), which was presented in chapter 6. God made Joseph a ruler over Egypt and over his household.

1.6 When Stephen mentions the jealousy of Joseph's brothers, he is pointing out he destructive nature of it. Stephen is addressing the same exact nature of this council and identifying it with the nature of Joseph's brothers. Acts 5:17 "17 But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy" We might do well to pay attention to the typological link here between Joseph and Christ. Joseph was rejected by how own but empowered by God to save those who rejected him. Christ was raised from suffering and death to bring eternal salvation to include those who rejected him (we see this in Acts 4:10-12.)

1.7 Stephen is showing God's presence and power outside of the promised land. Yet, the promises still stood. Jacob was buried, with his fathers, in the small parcel of the promised land as a testimony that they still had some faith in God promises.

The overall claim here is that God's commitment were given before there was an established nation and place. God's commitment were never to be eternally isolated to a nation or location, but includes all tribes, tongues, and nations.

Stephen reveals the truth concerning Moses and the Law.

He explains the promise of God concerning the number of offspring. (vs. 17-22)

We enter the center piece of Stephen's defense. He was falsely accused speaking against the holy place and the law, that he would destroy the temple and change the customs of Moses. Keep this in mind as we move into this section.

Acts 7:17–22 ESV
17 "But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham,
the people increased and multiplied in Egypt 18 until there arose over Egypt
another king who did not know Joseph. 19 He dealt shrewdly with our race and
forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive.
20 At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was
brought up for three months in his father's house, 21 and when he was exposed,
Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. 22 And
Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his
words and deeds.

He explains the promise of God concerning the number of offspring. (vs. 17-22)

2.1 God gave the promise to Abraham, and we see how God took the 12 sons of Jacob and turned them into a mighty nation that even threatened the mighty nation of Egypt. Because of the size and strength of Israel, Pharoah had to deal with them shrewdly to keep them tamed. It was during this time we are told that Moses was given life. God positioned Moses to be his prophet by placing him in the house of Pharaoh so that he is given great instruction and wisdom. Here we have another typological link in verse 22. Luke pens in Luke 24:19 "19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Moses is obviously linked to be a type of Christ.

Acts 7:23–29 ESV
[23] "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. [24] And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. [25] He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand. [26] And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' [27] But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? [28] Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' [29] At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

He reminds them of God sending Moses. (vs. 23-29)

2.2 In terms of it coming into his heart, we can be assured that God had put in Moses's heart to be a deliverer of his people. We know it was God who sent him. We are given a sense of God's purpose prior to his self-revelation of the burning bush. God saw and knew Israels affliction and had positioned Moses to be a deliverer, yet, Israel rejects their deliverer. "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" Israel failed to see Moses as deliverer. Israel failed to see Jesus as the Christ and the ultimate deliverer. Do we fail to see or hear?

Acts 7:30–34 ESV
30 “Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness
of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he was amazed
at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 32 ‘I
am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.’ And
Moses trembled and did not dare to look. 33 Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off
the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.
34 I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard
their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send
you to Egypt.’

Stephen reminds them that God revealed himself and his will to Moses from the Bush. (vs. 30-34)

> 2.3 After Israel Rejected Moses, he left for Midian. There God revealed himself more fully by way of the Christ himself in the bush. We are given this fuller revelation of God in order to establish the authority of Moses. Moses is not a self proclaimed leader. God appointed Moses. It was God who revealed himself to Moses to lead his people. It is worth here to note that the ground was not holy because the bush or location. The ground was holy because that is where God choose to make his presence known. The same could be said about the temple. It was not the temple that made it a holy place. It was God who chose to make his presence known that caused it to become holy. We are shown here in parallel to the Exodus account, that God saw and heard, and have come to save his people.

Until this point, Stephen has been building up his case with the historical truths of Israel’s history. Stephen until has been making flat, non-pointed statements. Starting in verse 35, we see Stephen starting to turn his argument to a point. Stephen begins to expose the condition of Israel in the light of these narratives.

Acts 7:35–38 ESV
35 “This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a
judge?’—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel
who appeared to him in the bush. 36 This man led them out, performing wonders
and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. 37 This
is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like
me from your brothers.’ 38 This is the one who was in the congregation in the

wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.

He reminds Israel that they Rejected God's chosen prophet. (vs. 35-38)

2.4 Stephen points out the error of the Jews immediately by pointing out that the rejected Moses was sent by the God of Abraham, of Issac, of Jacob. Not only did God reveal himself to the rejected Moses , but this Rejected deliverer was authenticated by God in the many signs and wonders that was performed during his time in Egypt. Most awe strikingly, he was authenticated by the splitting of the Red Sea, the end point of the Egyptian rule over Israel. Moses was undeniably commissioned by God.

2.5 Stephen uses Deuteronomy 18:15-21, to remind the council that Moses promised that God will send another prophet like himself. Peter actually uses this in Acts 3:22-23. The point of this passage is to show that there would be an ultimate Prophet, the Christ. In their law they were to called to examine and obey the prophets, if their prophecies would come true. The point that Stephen is making here, is that Christ the Ultimate Prophet that was supposed to come and reveal God's will and lead His people into salvation did come. Unlike Peter who was addressing heirs of the kingdom, Stephen is addressing the ones who killed the prophets and ultimately killed The Prophet they had been waiting for.

2.6 Israel rejected the ruler and deliverer of their own people, appointed by God, the one that gave them the Law that they so tightly gripped yet so mistreated for their own gain. Stephen who was accused of speaking against the holy Place, the Law, the Temple and of Moses, is pointing out the hypocrisy of Israel who historically disobeyed and rejected themselves. Unlike this Israel, True Israel consists of those who proclaim Jesus is Messiah, who recieved salvation by Christ's hand alone. Israel's identity is not bound by their identity in Moses or the Law, but in Christ alone.

Stephen turns the heat on high in these next verses.

Acts 7:39–43 ESV
39 Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts
they turned to Egypt, 40 saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before
us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know

what has become of him.’ [41] And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. [42] But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: “ ‘Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? [43] You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’

Stephen reminds them that God rejected Israel as covenant breakers. (vs 39-43)

2.7 Likely looking at reddening face of the court room, Stephen, who is the accused, presses further by proclaiming that their fathers refused to obey Moses, and the law and turned to the Idolatry of Egypt. So much so that they demanded Aaron to make for them an image that they might worship and set before them. Stephen here links disobedience to Moses to the sin of Idolatry. He links the rejection of God’s prophet as the rejection of God himself. The actual heart of Israel can be summed up in Numbers 14:3–4 “3 Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” 4 And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”” They were discontent with their deliverance and were unwilling to be God’s chosen and holy people. They instead desired the comforts and captivating idolatry of Egypt.

What Comforts are you holding onto Today? What is captivating your thoughts? Is it God or is Idols?

Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians with this stark command and warning.

1 Corinthians 10:7–8 ESV
[7] Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” [8] We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

2.8 Stephen gives them the result of such rebellion. “God turned away and gave them over.” God gave Israel up to the desires of their hearts. He allowed them to remain captive to their fleshly choice and the consequences that

followed them. (he may not kill 23k today, but he will let sinners remain captive, their captivity will be their undoing) Stephen Quotes Amos 5:25-27. As we read, the prophet begins with a question, to which the answer is "not exclusively." Israel is accused of the worship of other gods instead of Him that delivered them and gave them a land to be His people. Remember the purpose of God delivering Israel was so that they could worship Him, Exodus 7:7. Amos gives extreme examples of the gods they followed. Molek the Canaanite sun God was known for infant sacrifices. Rephan, the Egyptian god, god of the planet Saturn, which was worshiped on the 7th day, Sabbath. (Where we get Saturday from). Stephen ends this section with a more recent historical crisis, the Babylonian exile, which was a result of disobedience and idolatry.

Stephen reveals the truth concerning Temple and current condition of Israel's leaders.

Acts 7:44–50 ESV
44 "Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to
Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. 45 Our
fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that
God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, 46 who found
favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.
47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him. 48 Yet the Most High does not
dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, 49 " 'Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the
Lord, or what is the place of my rest? 50 Did not my hand make all these things?'

3.1 Stephen ties in the third tower of piety from the Jews, the Temple, to their illegal worship of pagan gods. He reminds them that they were given proper worship instructions. God had given them the means and the instructions for creating the Tent of Witness, which was their proper place of worship.

3.2 God fulfilled his promise of the land, by ushering in Israel, who was led by Joshua, with the tabernacle so that they could worship God. The central theme of the tabernacle was a God designed place where God was the center of worship. Stephen fast forwards hundreds of year to David. He links the tabernacle to David. David found favor in the eyes of the LORD and sought to make a dwelling place for God. Solomon his son, would be the one who

actually oversee the construction of it. Although the temple was built by technical human hands, The Lord made his presence known by appear in it. Solomon however, knew that the temple could not contain the presence of God. Stephen Echo's this in Solomon's prayer. 1 Kings 8:27 "27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!" Solomon's posture towards this building was one of humility knowing the power of God.

3.3 I want to be careful here to explain that Stephen is not suggesting that the building of that temple was an idolatrous craft of human hands such as the golden calf. The problem itself is not even the temple. The problem is the man-made institution that seeks to declare some claim on God. In other words, it was the Israel leaders that proclaimed piety and righteousness with God, despite having an uncircumcised heart because they possessed the temple.

3.4 Stephen then quotes Isaiah 66:1-2 . He is exposing the difference betwen things made by human hands and with creation that was made by God's hand. Humans cannot contain God who is ruler and sovereign over all. The Jewish temple is not the final resting place of God's presence. This separation of God, not being bound by a temple, is also an expression that God available to all and not bound to any specific place or geographical location. (we do not have to travel to Israel to worship) We have hope because we are told that God resides in all who believe, as we are dwelling places for God's Spirit, not created by human hands, but chosen and created by the hands of Christ.

Stephen condemns the leaders with the same sins as their fathers

The oven is on high, the room is hot. What Stephen does next is he tosses a grenade into the oven.

Acts 7:51–53 ESV
51 "You stiff-necked people, 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 announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53

you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.

4.1 This entire time Stephen is builds his Testimony, from identifying with them through Abraham, to revealing the nature of Abraham's origin. He links Israel to Joseph in Egypt where Moses is raised. He reveals the historical narrative that they were God's people, chosen and were to obey the prophets and oracles of God. Yet, their own history shows that they persistently failed. Instead of obedience they practiced Idolatry. They persistently rejected their rulers and deliverers. Stephen showed them the bow. He showed them the arrow. He showed them how to draw it back. Now he's aiming it at them.

4.2 Stephen's fingers are pointed at the covenant breakers. "You stiff necked people" a reference to Exodus 33:3-5. The council have been identified with the same stiffed neck people from Egypt. They were guilty of the same sins, same rejections, and same idolatry. They were uncircumcised of heart and ear. Their circumcision in Abraham had not inner disposition on their lives, they needed to be circumcised of the heart, which is a feat that only God can do.

4.3 Stephen sticks his boney finger into the faces of this council and declares just line Nathan the Prophet, "You Are The Man!" We see that before Stephen was speaking inclusive of himself now excludes himself from the audience. He accuses them of resisting the Holy Spirit. Whenever a prophet was sent to confront the Israel, the Spirit was with them, the Spirit was in the midst of them. Yet they, refused the authority of this prophet, they rejected them and killed them. This is not suggesting that they successfully fended off the Spirit from their heart, that is an impossibility. They went as far as tho slaughter the ones who announced the coming of the Righteous One. **The same Righteous One that these Jews were responsible for crucifying**, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. They killed their Messiah, the Christ, the one that knew no sin that came to deliver his people from sin.

4.4 Their hearts were hardened and their ears were closed. Stephen placed the total accountability of killing the Messiah on these men. They people should have known. He writes that They had the law that was delivered to them. They had them all, Yet they did not keep it. Stephen was not guilty of speaking

against the holy place and the law, he was not guilty of moving to destroy the temple, nor speaking against Moses. History shows that Israel was the one guilty of rebelling against Moses and the law. They thought they could use God like trinkets holding on the promised land, the Law and the Temple. Yet God cannot be contained. And God cannot be thwarted by human schemes.

Call to Christ

The light of the King is exposing the darkness of wicked men. Christ was the rejected stone. He not only was rejected by his own, but became the corner stone to the Church that we sit in today.

Being in a specific place (Church) or specific Land (America) or even from a specific nation does not save you.

If your salvation rests on these things, then you are wrong and are in deep trouble. Salvation rests in Christ Alone.

Joseph forgave his brothers for their sins and instead provided and preserved them. Christ forgives sinners of their sins and delivers them from the wrath of God that is to come.

Moses, by the power of God delivered his people from Egypt. Christ delivers sinners from themselves and the world. He saves and restores.

David planned and Solomon built the temple that was destroyed. Christ is the corner stone and foundation for the house of God that will never be destroyed.

Our hearts and ears must be circumcised. You must believe and Trust in the saving work of Christ.

My question today is this… Do you? Are you the man that the boney fingers is pointing at?

Trust in Christ today for salvation and be Born again! Conform your lives to the instructions that has been given to us.

Do not put your security in a building or a nation or land. It must be anchored in Christ.

“my life got better when i started going to church” -reject —— Church can

make us feel better, but doesn't save. Our lives get better when we submit to Christ.

Its only in Christ that we can be saved and strengthened. Put your traditions to the test of God’s Word