



# **STARTING IN JERUSALEM**

## **LESSON 5**

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Fall 2020

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# VERSE FOR THE JOURNEY

- **Acts 1:7-9** He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
  - **AUTHORITY: *EXOUSIA*: the right to act**
    1. given by someone to someone
    2. works within certain specified rules
    3. has established parameters (domain)
  - **POWER: *DUNAMIS*: the ability to act**

AUTHORITY AND POWER WORK TOGETHER

# THE SOLUTION

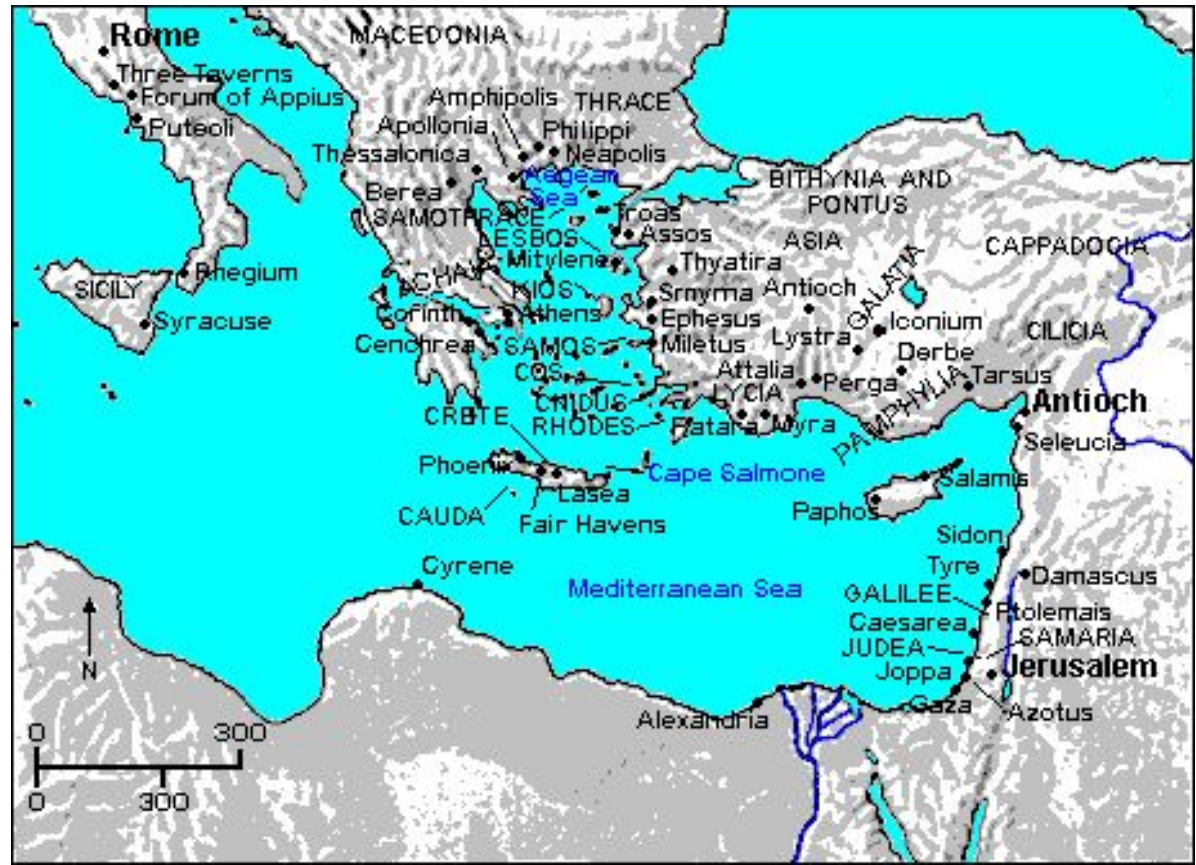
Acts 6:3-5 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose **Stephen**, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. These seven were commissioned by the apostles

**Acts 6:7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.**

# THE BOLDNESS OF STEPHEN

Acts 6:8-9 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

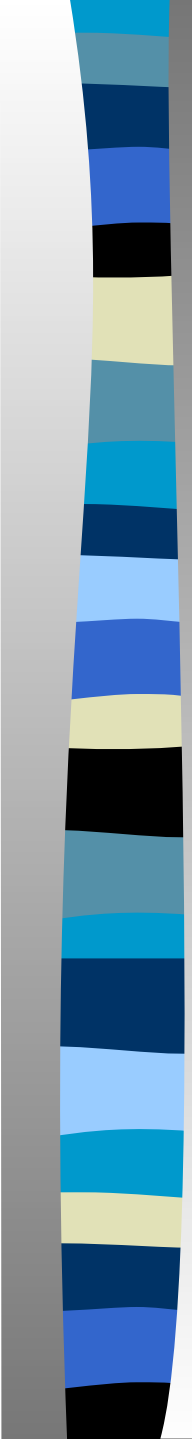
Stephen was able to win the dispute



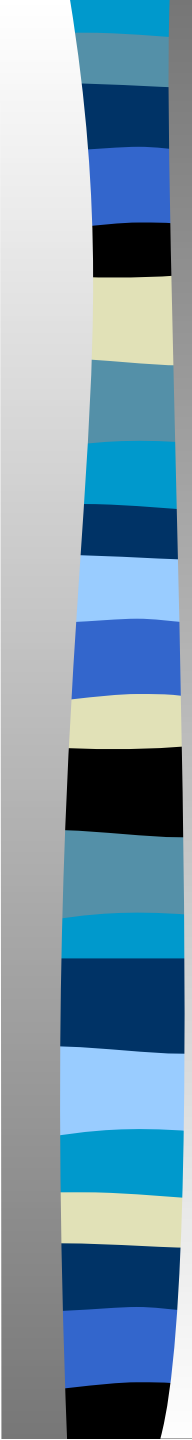
# IF YOU CAN'T WIN, LIE!

- Acts 6:11-14 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."
- **HAD THEY REALLY MISUNDERSTOOD WHAT HE SAID?**
- Acts 6:10 But they were unable to cope...
- **Cope: *anthistemi*: stand against**

# WAS IT PRIDE?

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- Who were the Freedmen?
  - Historical writings discuss men who were initially imprisoned by Pompey when he came to Israel in 63 BC
  - Many of these men were educated Jewish leaders and teachers
  - Later when it became apparent that they weren't a threat, they were released with citizenship that passed down to children
  - **Paul:** present at stoning of Stephen
    - Acts 22:28 And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."
    - Philippians 3:5 ...circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

# STEPHEN'S DEFENSE

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- God called Abraham out of Chaldea and made a covenant with him
  - God knew there would be 400 years of captivity in Egypt
  - Joseph was sold into slavery (in order to prepare for the coming famine) and his family eventually came to Egypt looking for food
  - After the death of the Pharaoh who knew Joseph, the people were enslaved
  - Moses was educated by the Egyptians
  - Moses fled Egypt but eventually returned after being called by God to lead Israel into the land promised to Abraham



# DEFENSE PART 2

God miraculously worked through Moses

The people rebelled by making the golden calf

The tabernacle was portable and temporary

God was present even without the temple

The blessings of God are not limited to the temple or the area of the temple or even to Israel

Israel has always evidenced opposition to God and His plans

Acts 7:51-53 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it."





# SUMMARIZE

- 1. God reveals Himself progressively to His people**
- 2. God doesn't limit His blessings to just Israel or to those who worship at the temple**
- 3. Israel has a pattern of opposition to God**
- 4. Now Israel's leaders are opposing God again**

■ Acts 7:54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.



# NO RETREAT, NO SURRENDER

- Acts 7:55-58 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
- Apparently Saul wasn't actually throwing rocks



# THE DEATH OF STEPHEN

- Acts 7:59-60 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.
- The church has experienced the first martyr
- This was an illegal killing under Roman law
- God can use even such wrong things to work out His plan
- Stephen gave a clear testimony of God's faithfulness and sovereignty



# RESULTS OF STEPHEN'S DEATH

- The gospel spread to various places, including Antioch, where a church was founded
  - Philip evangelized
  - Paul headed to Damascus and was converted
  - Peter evangelized
  - Persecution forced the believers from being only in Jerusalem—thereby fulfilling the great commission
1. God is in control; He is never caught by surprise
  2. This world is temporal; God is eternal
  3. God is just; eventually the wicked will be punished and the righteous will be rewarded
  4. God has a purpose for your life and will use you as he used Joseph, Moses, and Stephen