

Welcome to: - Bible House of Grace.



God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Acts 7.

(2013).

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Acts 7.

Topics.

- Stephen tells of the Birth and the History of Israel.
- Stephen rebukes the High Priests and those with Him.
- Stephen's cloths were laid at Saul's (Paul's) feet.
- Stephen has fallen Asleep.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter Stephen was doing great signs and wonders and multitudes including some Jewish priest were converting to the Lord. The religious authorities who belonged to the synagogues of the Freedmen appointed false witnesses to condemn Stephen before the Jewish council of scribes and elders. The chapter ended with the words, "Stephen face was like the face of an angel."

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

Stephen tells of the Birth and the History of Israel.

Acts 7:1-50 ----- ¹And the high priest said, "Are these things so?" ²And 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, ³and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' ⁴Then 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. (The Promised Land) ⁵Yet 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. ⁶And 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.' ⁸And 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. ⁹"And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favour and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. ¹¹Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. ¹²But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. ¹³And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. ¹⁵And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, ¹⁶and 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. ¹⁷"But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt ¹⁸until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph. ¹⁹He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive. ²⁰At 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, ²¹and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. ²²And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds. ²³"When he (Moses) was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. ²⁴And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not

understand. ²⁶And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarrelling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' ²⁷But the man who was wronging his neighbour thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?' ²⁸Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons. ³⁰Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him (Moses) in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹When 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. ³³Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴I 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.' 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. ³⁶This man (Moses) led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.' ³⁸This 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. ³⁹Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, ⁴⁰saying 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.' ⁴¹And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. ⁴²But 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? ⁴³You 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.' 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. ⁴⁵Our 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, ⁴⁶who found favour in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who built a house for him. ⁴⁸Yet 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? ⁵⁰Did not my hand make all these things?"

Stephens' speech gives a beautiful overview of Old Testament history which if covered in detail would result in an almost endless amount of pages therefore the following notes are primarily focused on the underlying reasons Stephens is giving such a speech.

Introduction.

The words, and the high priest said, "Are these things so?" (v1) link us back to the previous chapter in which Stephen is being accused, by false witnesses that he is speaking blasphemes against the Law of Moses.

Abraham.

Stephen being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom and knowing that at the end of this speech he is going to rebuke the high priest and the hypocritical religious council he is standing before, begins his reply to the high priest by firstly talking about Abraham since all Jews held Abraham in the highest esteem and looked to him as the Father of Israel.

Stephen is not telling the council anything they don't already know, but in testifying to Israel's history and birth in such detail he is showing the high priest and those with him that he is not a novice in Israel's birth and not only does he understand

the Scriptures that speak of their founding fathers, but respects them as they do. The Jews wickedness was not in their lack of knowledge, but in their pride and selfish ambition and their lack of compassion, mercy and grace which manifested in their evil crime of murdering Christ (v2-8).

Moses.

Stephen then covers the story of Joseph (v9-16) a redeemer of Israel which leads into the life of Moses who laws those standing at the Jewish council followed. Stephen in great wisdom is telling the story of Moses with the intent of using it at the end of his speech against the Jewish council because of the evil likeness they have to their fathers to Moses and to Christ.

He points out that Moses was sent to Israel by God to be a ruler and a redeemer of Israel and that he performed amazing signs and wonders in their very presence.

Added to this Stephen reminds the council that the Angel of the LORD gave Moses the oracles of God at Mount Sinai to give to Israel and highlights the following prophetic words Moses spoke to the Israelites saying: -

- God would raise up for them a prophet like him from amongst their brothers (v37).

Stephen now begins to conclude his argument by making the following statement that even after all this evidence Old Testament Israel rather than obeying Moses thrust him aside in their hearts saying: -

- Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?

Then rejoiced in the religious works they were able to do with their own hands i.e. make idols (v41) but by extension the words, "their own hands" carries the idea of rejoicing in their own self-effort and self-righteous religious acts in keeping ceremonial rites, feast and holy days etc. (v30-43).

The Temple.

Stephen being fully aware that the high priest and the Jewish council believed that following God was all about legalistically and dogmatically holding fast to the rules and traditions of the temple points out that the LORD their God does not dwell in buildings no matter how majestic, opulent and holy they may appear (v44-50).

Stephen rebukes the High Priests and those with Him.

Acts 7:51-53 ----- ⁵¹"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵²Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

Stephen has been telling the high priest and Jewish council of Abraham the father of their nation and of Moses, who all Jews highly respect and whose laws they legalistically (they had added many more to them) followed and now tells them that they have exactly the same pride and hypocritical heart as their fathers who rebelled against Moses and the prophets did because rather than have, "The righteous one Moses said was to come," ruling over them they condemned and murdered him to protect their own prideful empire of legalistic religious hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

Stephen's cloths were laid at Saul's (Paul's) feet

Acts 7:54-60 ----- ⁵⁴Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But he full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸Then they cast him out of the city and

stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The high priest and council were so furious at what Stephen had said they immediately dragged him out in extreme anger and stoned him in contrast Stephen looked up and saw Jesus standing at God's right hand and while being stoned not only prayed that Jesus would receive his spirit, but that Christ would not hold this sin against them.

NOTICE: the Bible always talks of Jesus sitting at God's right hand, but in these verses Jesus no-doubt is so over-whelmed with Stephen's stunning faith and manifestation of the fruits of Spirit and his love for Christ stands up.

Stephen has fallen Asleep.

Though Stephen was brutally and murderously killed his death is spoken of as being asleep, this is because death for anyone who is in Christ is only temporary, since a day is coming at the last trump when all who have died in faith will be raised from the dead to eternal glory and everlasting life.

A young man named Saul.

The following chapter shows that the Jews aggressively set about persecuting those who confessed the name of Christ especially the young man named Saul whose feet Stephens garments were laid at.

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