

## STEPHEN'S SERMON – RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT – PART 4 - ACTS 7:44-8:3

### OBSERVATION

### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

Monday 7:30pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by doughnut/vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221; email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: <http://www.missioncalvary.com/> Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by numbers pastor/teachers.

#### 7. THE PRESENCE OF GOD – Acts 7:44-50

Act 7:44 "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,

Act 7:45 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 face of our fathers until the days of David,

Act 7:46 who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob.

Act 7:47 But Solomon built Him a house.

Act 7:48 "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:

Act 7:49 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS MY FOOTSTOOL. WHAT HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME? SAYS THE LORD, OR WHAT IS THE PLACE OF MY REST?

Act 7:50 HAS MY HAND NOT MADE ALL THESE THINGS?'

#### 7. THE PRESENCE OF GOD – Acts 7:44-50

v. 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," - Stephen is charged with blaspheming the temple – answers here – cf. - Acts 6:13

v. 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 face of our fathers until the days of David, - As to the CONQUEST of the land - They did not always have the temple which they now adored. The issue was not the building but the presence of God!

vs. 45-46 "David, who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob - As to the CONSTRUCTION of the temple – Acts 7:46-47 - Even David did not have a temple

vs. 48-49 "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: [49] 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS MY FOOTSTOOL. WHAT HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME? SAYS THE LORD, OR WHAT IS THE PLACE OF MY REST? - As to the CAPACITY of any building – Acts 7:48-50 – cf.-- 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1-2

#### “RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT – Pt. 4” Acts 7:44-8:3

(Previous Studies)

1. THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM – Acts 7:1-8

2. THE PLOT AGAINST JOSEPH – Acts 7:9-16

3. THE PERILS OF EGYPT – Acts 7:17-22

4. THE POSITION OF MOSES – Acts 7:23-29

5. THE PLAN OF GOD TO DELIVER ISRAEL FROM EGYPT – Acts 7:30-34

6. THE PROBLEMS IN THE WILDERNESS – Acts 7:35-43

(This Week's Study!)

7. THE PRESENCE OF GOD – Acts 7:44-50

8. THE MAIN POINT OF STEPHEN'S MESSAGE – Acts 7:51-53

9. THE PROOF OF THEIR RESISTANCE – ACTS 7:54-60

10. THE PERSECUTION THAT RESULTED – ACTS 8:1-3

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#### **8. THE MAIN POINT OF STEPHEN'S MESSAGE – Acts 7:51-53**

**Act 7:51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."**

**Act 7:52 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,**

**Act 7:53 who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."**

#### **8. THE MAIN POINT OF STEPHEN'S MESSAGE – Acts 7:51-53**

**v. 51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. - In terms of their present ATTITUDE**

**"resisting" –**

**"stiff-necked" – root word – "hard," "dry" "callous" - cf - 2 Chronicles 30: 7-9; Proverbs 28:14, 29:1**

**"uncircumcised" –**

**v. 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, - In terms of past ACTIONS – cf. – Matt. 23:29-37**

**v. 53 "Who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." - In terms of their ACCOUNTABILITY to God's law**

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#### **9. THE PROOF OF THEIR RESISTANCE – Acts 7:54-60**

**Act 7:54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.**

**Act 7:55 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,**

**Act 7:56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"**

**Act 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;**

**Act 7:58 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.**

**Act 7:59 And they stoned Stephen as**

**he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."**

**Act 7:60 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.**

#### **9. THE PROOF OF THEIR RESISTANCE – Acts 7:54-60**

**v. 54 "When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. - Their immediate REACTION – Note the emotional buildup! The hostility!"**

**v. 56 "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" - why was Jesus standing? Possibly because Stephen had been confessing Christ before men and now he sees Christ confessing His servant before God.**

**v. 57 "Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; - Their REFUSAL to listen to Stephen – Acts 7:55-58**

**v. 58 "the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet" – the previous witnesses – cf. - Acts 6:13**

**v. 58 "a young man named Saul." - "young man" – used up to 40 -45 years; "old man" – used after 60 years (Paul, the aged) – Philemon 9 Chrysostom says Saul was 35 years old**

**v. 59 "he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." - The RESPONSE of Stephen – Acts 7:59 – cf - prayer of Christ – Luke 23:46; what was the difference in the prayers of Stephen's and our Lord's?**

**v. 60 " he had said this, he fell asleep. – cf. Luke 23:34 "asleep" - our word "cemetery" from Greek – a place for sleeping - (Christian term)**

#### **The effects of persecution and martyrdom on the church!**

An instructive modern parallel is what happened in 1949 in China when the National Government was defeated by the Communists. Six hundred and thirty-seven China inland Mission missionaries were obliged to leave. It seemed a total disaster. Yet within four years 286 of the had been redeployed in South-East Asia and Japan, while the national Christians in China, even under severe persecution **began to multiply and now total thirty or forty times the number they were when the missionaries left.**

**10. THE PERSECUTION THAT RESULTED**  
**– ACTS 8:1-3**

*Act 8:1 Now Saul was consenting to his death.  
At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

*Act 8:2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.*

*Act 8:3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.*

**10. THE PERSECUTION THAT RESULTED – Acts 8:1-3**

*Chap. 8 v. 1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. - The SUPPORT of Saul*

*v. 2 devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him - “devout men” – not believers yet!*

*v. 3 “As for Saul, he made havoc (lomainomai-brutal and sadistic cruelty ) of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” - The SCATTERING of the church – cf. Acts 22:4-5, 9: 26:9-11*

**The early church was shocked and stunned by the martyrdom of Stephen and by the violent opposition which followed. But, with the benefit of hindsight, we can see how God’s providence used Stephen’s testimony, in word and deed, through life and death, to promote the church’s mission. -- What will be done for Christ through your life? Your death?**

**Can you see how God used the faithfulness and willingness of Stephen to accomplish God’s providence?**

**How faithful and willing are you? Am I?**

**Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

**Questions:**

- 1. What two blasphemous charges will Stephen answer in vs. 44-53?**
- 2. How important was the conquest of the land to the Jews of that day? (They only had the tabernacle)**
- 3. Did Solomon confirm the Jews position that the most important dwelling place of God was their temple? 1 Kings 8/27 How would you describe where God dwells?**
- 4. How did Stephen show the Jews that God does not dwell in temples made with hands? Why is this important?**
- 5. How important is verse 51 to the terms of Stephen’s main point of his message? What is the main point? Can you think of an Old Testament verse that Stephen may be referring to?**
- 6. How were they limiting God with respect to their beliefs to the presence of God in their temple?**
- 7. What words did Stephen use to describe the attitude of the Jews? Do you have a callous heart?**
- 8. Do you see how Stephen witnessed under great resistance - showing love but speaking the truth!**
- 9. How close was the place Stephen was stoned to death to that where Christ was crucified? Where in Jerusalem in St. Stephen’s church?**
- 10. Can you see the similarity of Stephen’s forgiveness to those stoning him to that of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was crucified? What would you have done?**
- 11. How old do you think Saul was at the time of Stephen’s stoning?**
- 12. Does Paul’s own testimony in Acts 22 & 26 verify Stephen’s account of Paul’s being in favor of the stoning of Stephen?**
- 13. What was the difference between the forgiveness prayers of Stephen and our Lord’s? What does this difference prove?**
- 14. Do you think the stoning of Stephen was a help or a hindrance to the growth of the early church? Why? What about the intense persecution of the church?**
- 15. Should we be praying for the release of prisoners; for or against martyrdom, of Christians?**