

## Acts, Sermon # 17

Acts 7 - Stephen

Ministry – 6, Message, Martyrdom

I've entitled tonight's message: "Stephen's Sermon."

Let us pray.

Stephens Sermon, 52 verses to be exact, is one of the lengthiest, longest sermons in the Word of God.

This sermon is the final speech of God to the leaders of Israel.

Vs. 1b - vs. 11, 13 – 4 things; God, Moses, Temple, Law – blasphemy / slander

Harken, vs. 2-53

Vs. 2-50 – narration or rehashing of Israel's past, from Abraham to Stephen's present day

The sermon covers four great episodes in Israel history.

1. Vs. 2 – Abraham – vs. 2-8 – God's dealing with Abraham
2. Vs. 9 – Joseph – vs. 9-19 – God's dealing with Joseph
3. Vs. 20 – Moses – vs. 20-44 – the major section of the sermon, God deals with Moses.
4. Vs. 45 – starts when Israel entered the promise land – Joshua/David.  
Vs. 45-47 – is the time of the possession of the land.  
Three characters, Joshua, David, and Solomon

Vs. 51 – we have change – when a preacher gets to this point and begins the application to the hearer. Brings it home to roost, steps on the toes

Application – vs. 51-53

I'm going to skim over but I want to give you the overview.

- I. Several themes – There is progress and change in God's program
  - #1 Abraham, vs. 2 – called him. Isaac, Jacob – 12 sons, 12 tribes
  - #2 Joseph, vs. 9 – Egypt – radical change, all of Israel is in Egypt
  - #3 Moses – the exodus
  - #4 The building of the tabernacle, vs. 44, travel / portable
  - #5 The temple, vs. 47
  - #6 And now, the church, from Judaism to Christianity

II. The blessings of God are not limited to the land of Israel.

- #1 Vs. 2-8 – notice how many times geographical places are mentioned

This is telling us basically about the places of Abraham's journeys.

God worked in:

Mesopotamia – vs. 2

Haran – vs. 4

This land, Israel – vs. 4

Strange land, Egypt – vs. 6

Promise land, this place – vs. 7

God in the early days moved from place to place and He was powerful in all of those places, the whole earth God is God of the whole world, vs. 49! God was not limited to Israel

Vs. 9 – Egypt – Where was God?

Vs. 10 – Egypt

Vs. 11 – Egypt

## Vs. 12 – Egypt

The essence of the sermon is, wherever God's leaders and God's people were, God was there too.

Vs. 20 – the life of Moses, broken up into 3 periods of time and it is based on geography

Vs. 20-28 – Where was Moses first? Vs. 20-22 – in Egypt.

Vs. 29-34 – Where was Moses? Midian, the back side of the desert.

Vs. 35-44 – God sends Moses back to lead the people. Where is Moses?  
Wilderness. Where was God? God was with Moses wherever Moses was.

Vs. 45-50 – God was with them when they brought the tabernacle into the Promised Land

God was not localized, not confined. That is one of the points of Stephen's message.

God is with us. The Jews were a privileged people. They had the covenants, the law, the tabernacle, the temple, the ritual services. Based on that privilege, the idea was that God was confined to their tiny nation.

With that thinking, came great pride, indifference, presumptuous. Stephen is saying the temple is done and God is finished with that for now.

God began to move out.

The strongest churches in the world at the end of the first century were in Turkey, Rev. 2-3.

North Africa, Germany, Scandinavia, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and the Americas. Who is after us? China.

God is not bound to a particular nation. We cannot take this for granted. It is our privilege right now but not our right and we need to understand that.

God is not confined and God's Spirit moves and it moves according to where He finds men whose hearts are right with Him.

Abraham – family of idol worshippers

David – the least in his family

Joseph – the Spirit of God goes where He wills, to where men respond with the right kind of hearts and it is not dependent upon our buildings, positions, denominations, titles, locations, traditions.

God is God and God can do what God wants to do.

Now the application

Vs. 51 – Now, that is not a good way to influence people and make friends.

Look back to:

Vs. 9 – envy tried to destroy Joseph

Vs. 25 – did not understand

Vs. 35 – they refused

Vs. 39-40 – would not obey

III. Historically, God's people have rejected God's message. Israel in the past always evidenced a pattern of opposition to God's plan and His men. "You are just like your Fathers."

Vs. 51 – resist the Holy Spirit

Those that are in the best position to understand and see the working of God have been the very ones that reject the message and the messenger.

Jesus was indisputable before them. Jesus wrought miracles, wonders and signs and yet they refused Him, rejected Him and eventually killed Him.

Vs. 52

Vs. 53-54

They rejected Christ. Now, they will reject Stephen.

This rejection by Israel was not something that happened in a day, a decade, but the whole history.

The rejection of the early church

The rejection of Jesus Christ

The rejection of the holy prophets

The historical precedent is there in every episode of Israel.

Bring that down to us, to our country, (overview of our Christianity), to our church.

Stay in step with Him.

God's final message to the Sanhedrin, vs. 54

God moved out, Acts 8:1.

Historically, those most privileged have been most rejecting of the influence of God.

Don't let that happen to us as a country, church or Christians.

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Are our hearts in tune with God? The altar is open.

Is our heart cold or hot?

Let us be humble and be a people that God can work in and through.

We have tremendous privilege, benefits and blessings.

We have every possibility of enjoying the benefits of God and His Word

Let us not be proud or resistant to His will and His Word.