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By Dan Maines

Acts 7

Acts 7:1

Now the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

† Stephen was placed on trial before the Sanhedrin, accused of blasphemy against Moses, the Law, and the temple. His defense would be the longest recorded speech in Acts, rehearsing Israel's history to show their continual rejection of God's messengers.

Acts 7:2-3

And Stephen said, "Hear me, brothers and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives, and come to the land which I will show you.'"

† Stephen begins with Abraham, the father of faith, showing God's covenant began before the temple or Law existed.

† Philo (On Abraham 70) speaks of Abraham as the model of obedience by leaving Mesopotamia.

Acts 7:4-5

"Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him."

† Abraham never received the land physically, yet the promise was fulfilled through his seed, Christ (Galatians 3:16).

† Josephus (Antiquities 1.7.1) confirms Abraham's migration to Canaan by God's command.

Acts 7:6-7

"But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land, and that they would enslave and mistreat them for four hundred years. 'And whatever nation to which they are enslaved I Myself will judge,' said God, 'and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place.'"

† Stephen reminds them of Israel's sojourn and deliverance, showing God's pattern of salvation through judgment.

Acts 7:8

"And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so

Abraham fathered Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac fathered Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs."

† The covenant sign pointed forward to Christ, not to nationalistic pride.

† The Mishnah (Shabbat 19.6) emphasizes circumcision as a defining mark, but Stephen points beyond it.

Acts 7:9-10

"The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph, and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and his entire household."

† Joseph's rejection by his brothers prefigures Christ's rejection by Israel. God exalted Joseph just as He exalted Jesus.

† Philo (On Joseph 39) praises Joseph's wisdom, paralleling Stephen's description.

Acts 7:11-16

"Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers there the first time. And during the second visit, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was revealed to Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent word and invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five people in all. And Jacob went down to Egypt, and he and our fathers died there; and they were brought back from there to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem."

† Israel's story was marked by exile and return. Stephen highlights God's providence even in hardship.

Acts 7:17-19

"But as the time of the promise which God had assured to Abraham was approaching, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, until another king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. It was he who took shrewd advantage of our nation and mistreated our fathers, in order that they would expose their infants, and they would not survive."

† This Pharaoh's cruelty anticipates Herod's massacre of infants in Matthew 2. Israel's leaders repeatedly opposed God's deliverers.

Acts 7:20-22

"It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was beautiful in the sight of God, and he was nurtured for three months in his father's home. And after he had been put outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was proficient in speaking and action."

† Moses, like Christ, was preserved from death in infancy. Both were prepared for their mission by God's providence.

† Josephus (Antiquities 2.9.7) affirms Moses' reputation for wisdom and eloquence even among the Egyptians.

Acts 7:23-29

"But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel. And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took revenge for the oppressed man by striking and killing the Egyptian. And he thought that his brothers understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand. And on the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brothers, why are you injuring one another?' But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?'"

You do not intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?' At this remark, Moses fled and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he fathered two sons."

† Moses was rejected as ruler and deliverer, foreshadowing Christ's rejection by Israel.

Acts 7:30-34

"Now after forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight; but as he approached to look more closely, the voice of the Lord came: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Moses shook with fear and did not dare to look closely. But the Lord said to him, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. I have certainly seen the oppression of My people in Egypt, and have heard their groans, and I have come down to rescue them; and now come, I will send you to Egypt.'"

† God's presence was not confined to the temple. He appeared to Moses in the wilderness. Stephen emphasizes God's freedom to reveal Himself anywhere.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 4.33-35) describe God's presence in unexpected places, confirming Stephen's point.

Acts 7:35-37

"This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush. This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your countrymen.'"

† Stephen directly applies Moses' prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:15) to Jesus. Just as Israel rejected Moses, so they rejected Christ.

Acts 7:38-41

"This is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at length on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him; on the contrary they rejected him and turned back to Egypt in their hearts, saying to Aaron, 'Make us a god who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what happened to him.' At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands."

† Israel's idolatry at Sinai revealed their continual rebellion. Stephen compares their past rejection of Moses to their present rejection of Christ.

Acts 7:42-43

"But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the heavenly lights; as it is written in the book of the prophets: 'You did not offer Me victims and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness, did you, house of Israel? You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship. I also will deport you beyond Babylon.'"

† Stephen quotes Amos 5:25-27, reminding them of Israel's idolatry that led to exile. Their history was marked by rebellion.

Acts 7:44-47

"Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. And our fathers, after receiving it in succession, brought it in with Joshua when

they disposed of the nations that God drove out from our fathers, until the time of David. David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for Him."

† The tabernacle and temple were never ultimate. They were temporary symbols pointing to Christ.

Acts 7:48-50

"However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is the footstool of My feet; what kind of house will you build for Me?' says the Lord, 'Or what place is there for My rest? Was it not My hand that made all these things?'"

† Quoting Isaiah 66:1-2, Stephen shows God cannot be confined to a building. This directly challenges the Sanhedrin's temple obsession.

Acts 7:51-53

"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, you do also. 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."

† Stephen indicts them for resisting the Spirit and killing the prophets, culminating in the betrayal of Christ.

† The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10.1) declares all Israel has a share in the age to come except those who deny the Law. Stephen reverses this, declaring that those who rejected Christ forfeited covenant blessings.

Acts 7:54-56

Now when they heard this, they were infuriated, and they began

gnashing their teeth at him. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked 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 and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

† Stephen's vision confirms Daniel 7:13-14, where the Son of Man receives kingdom authority. Jesus was enthroned, not awaiting a future reign.

Acts 7:57-60

But they shouted with loud voices, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one mind. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then he fell on his knees and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

† Stephen became the first Christian martyr. His prayer echoed Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:34, 46).

† Early writers (Tertullian, Apology 50) saw Stephen's martyrdom as the seed of the church, inspiring boldness in others.

How it applies to us today

† God's presence is not confined to buildings but revealed through His people in Christ.

† The history of Israel's rejection warns us not to resist the Spirit.

† Stephen's bold witness and forgiving spirit remain a model for the church under persecution.

† Christ reigns now at God's right hand, confirming fulfillment of Daniel 7.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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