



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Study 10: **AFFIRMING FAITH IN THE GOD OF GLORY** Acts 7:1-16

Stephen had been accused of speaking blasphemous words against Moses, against God, against this holy place (the temple) and against the law (Acts 6:11,13). False witnesses were set up who said, **"we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us"** (Acts 6:14). This is why Stephen was brought before the council by his accusers. **"Then said the high priest, Are these things so?"** The message in this chapter was given in response to that question. In his response, Stephen identified with the nation, using the words, **"our father Abraham"** (verse 2), **"our fathers"** (verses 15,19,38,39,44,45), **"our kindred"** (verse 19). He also recognized God as **"the God of glory"** (verse 2), **"the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"** (verse 32). He affirmed his respect for Moses. He said, **"Moses was exceeding fair"** (verse 20), **"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds"** (verse 22). **"This Moses did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer"** (verse 35). Concerning **"this holy place"** (the temple), he reminded them that God said, **"and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in THIS PLACE"** (verse 7). **"But Solomon built Him an house"** (verse 47). **"Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in TEMPLES made with hands; as saith the prophet"** (verse 48). And how about the law? He recognized the exalted place of **"the law received by the disposition of angels"** (verse 53) but convicted them of disobedience and rebellion, **"AND HAVE NOT KEPT IT"** (verse 53). The nation, Israel, not Stephen, was guilty of disobeying the law, of unholy worship in the temple, holy place, of rejecting Moses and the Messiah of whom he spake, of dishonouring the God of glory. Israel was guilty and unrepentant.

DIVINE REVELATION TO ABRAHAM, THE PREEMINENT JEW

Acts 7:1-3; Psalm 29:3-11; Genesis 12:1-4; Joshua 24:2,3; Nehemiah 9:7,8; Isaiah 51:1,2; Genesis 13:10-18; 15:4-7; Hebrews 11:8-10; Genesis 17:1-8; 22:16-19; Romans 4:12-16.

"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham". Stephen's devotion to God was unsurpassed by any of his accusers. To him, He is the God of glory, the glorious God, who is full of majesty, splendour and magnificence. He used the title, **"the God of glory"** which appears in only one other place in the Old Testament to show his indisputable reverence for God, **"the most High"** (Acts 7:48). The charge of blasphemy against him was baseless; he regarded the most High God as worthy of honour, adoration, majesty, exaltation, praise, worship, obedience and submission. The Jews also referred to Abraham as their father and took much pride in being the children of **"our father Abraham"**. So Stephen affirmed that he was not a stranger to **"our father Abraham"** (Acts 7:2), neither was he a foreigner in Israel (Acts 7:19). And he was not ignorant of the history of God's chosen people. He caught everyone's attention as he began his defence from God's call to Abraham. His intention was not just to narrate history. He was leading them to contrast their disobedience with Abraham's obedience, their unbelief with Abraham's faith, their self-centredness with Abraham's sacrifice, their superficiality with Abraham's spirituality, their rigid temple worship with Abraham's moveable altar of worship, their religion of hatred, violence and murder with Abraham's religion of love towards Lot and others, their attachment to the law with Abraham's attachment to the Lord (John 8:37-44,56-58; Matthew 3:9,10).

DECISIVE RESPONSE OF ABRAHAM AND THE PROMISED JUSTIFICATION

Acts 7:4-8; Genesis 15:5-7, 13-16; 17:9-14; Exodus 6:7,8; Nehemiah 9:7-11; 2 Chronicles 20:7; Romans 4:1-5, 9-12,16,22-25; Acts 13:38-41; Romans 2:28,29; Colossians 2:9-11; Deuteronomy 30:6; Hebrews 11:9,10,13-16.

"He came out of the land of the Chaldeans, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell." God called Abraham and he responded immediately. Though the Jews claimed to be Abraham's seed, they did not respond to God as he did. The Word of God reveals Abraham as believing (Genesis 15:6), obedient (Genesis 22:18; 26:5), walking with God (Genesis 24:40; 17:1), faithful (Nehemiah 9:7,8), friend with God (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8), circumcised in heart and ears (Romans 2:28,29; Acts 7:51), affirming the saving power of Scripture (Luke 16:29-31), rejoicing to see the day of Christ (John 8:56), being justified and righteous (Romans 4:1-3; Galatians 3:6-9) believing in the resurrection of the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19); they did not. Recalling the history of Abraham, **"our father"** should have drawn his hearers to a thoughtful consideration of their standing with God. Hearing Stephen and reading the records concerning Abraham, **"the father of us all"** (Romans 4:16) should lead us to a re-examination of our faith in God and our faithfulness to God. God promised that He would give Abraham an inheritance of land for

possession, "**when as yet he had no child**". He believed God for the earthly possession, yet his "**affection was set on things above, not on things on the earth**" (Colossians 3:1,2). "**By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country,... for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God**" (Hebrews 11:9,10). "**And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city**" (Hebrews 11:15,16). The land in which Abraham dwelt was his temporary residence. Even his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not theirs, a land of bondage for 400 years, before moving into the Promised Land. Abraham and ...believers among his descendants "**having seen** (the promises) **afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth**" (Hebrews 11:13).

DREADFUL REJECTION OF HIS ANOINTED, THE PROPHETIC JOSEPH

Acts 7:9-16; Genesis 37:4-11,28; Matthew 27:17,18; Genesis 39:2,5,21-23; Psalm 105:19-22; Genesis 42:1-24; 45:1-18; Zechariah 9:9; 12:10; Romans 11:25-27; Matthew 23:37-39; Acts 4:12.

We must not miss Stephen's train of thoughts. His story-telling approach was for a purpose. He was recounting the history of the nation of Israel, highlighting the lives and ministries of their patriarchs and prophets to show them that they had done to Jesus, the Anointed One, the Appointed Deliverer, the Approved Redeemer, the Only Saviour, what their fathers had done to the deliverers sent by God in the past. "**Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers**" (Acts 7:51,52). The nation of Israel, represented by the council and the accusers, "**men, brethren, and fathers**" (verse 2) must have felt the sharp arrows of conviction as they heard Stephen review the steps from Joseph's humiliation to his exaltation. "**And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt**" (Acts 7:9). "**For he (Pilate) knew that for envy they had delivered Him (Jesus)**" (Matthew 27:17,18).

"**And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren**" (Acts 7:13). The first time the Lord Jesus came, Israel did not know or accept Him. "**He came unto His own, and His own received Him not**" (John 1:11). When they see Him the second time, He shall be known by them. History is repeated again and again. It was thus with Moses and Israel. He was only received "**the second time**". "**This Moses whom they refused, the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer**" (Acts 7:35). In effect, Israel said of Christ, when He came the first time, "**We will not have this Man to reign over us**" (Luke 19:14). As it happened to Moses, the second time when Christ, the Messiah returns, Israel will receive Him. During the long period of time, before Christ's Second Coming, Israel in their state of rejection will suffer. Indeed, the suffering of rejecters will culminate in the great tribulation, "**such as was not since the beginning of the world**" (Matthew 24:21). At this Second Coming, Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26).

If you are blessed by these bible study outlines, we'd like to hear from you.
You can email the pastor@dclm-liverpool.org.uk with your comments