

~ACTS~

Lesson 22- Stephen's Defense (part 2)

We are continuing our study in the book of Acts, and we are working our way through chapter 7 and Stephen's defense against the Sanhedrin Council. As we learned in chapter 6, Stephen was a man of good witnessing character; a man full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom, full of faith, and filled with the dunamis power of God. And he was performing great signs and wonders and to preaching the Name of Jesus boldly. And it was because of this bold preaching that he was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin Council.

Last week we started looking at chapter 7, and in verse 1 Caiaphas the high priest asks Stephen a question. He says, "[Are these things so?](#)" Caiaphas is referring to the four counts of blasphemy from chapter 6. Stephen was accused of blaspheming God, Moses, the Law, and the Temple, but what is interesting is we don't see Stephen defending himself necessarily, but rather he puts these same accusations back on the Sanhedrin Council. Stephen through the power of the Holy Spirit turns the tables and begins indicting them that they are the ones who are really blaspheming God because they rejected Jesus Christ. And to make this point, Stephen gives the Sanhedrin Council a history lesson on Jewish history showing them that throughout all of Jewish history, the fathers have a consistent pattern of resisting the Holy Spirit and rejecting God's chosen men, [Acts 7:51-52](#).

Stephen begins his first example with faithful Abraham, and he describes how God called him out of Ur of the Chaldeans. And Stephen makes it very clear that while he was in Ur of the Chaldeans, before he went to Haran, God told him to get out of his country, out from his family and out of his father's house to a land that I will show you. So finally, after a small detour in Haran, Abraham travels down to the land of promise and God begins working in him to become the father of the Jewish nation, which then led to Isaac and Jacob and the twelve patriarchs of Israel. But in these examples, Stephen is making the point that the Jewish fathers continued to reject God's chosen deliverers. And Joseph's brother's becoming jealous of Joseph, rejected him, and sold him into Egypt. But that didn't stop the plans of God, because God raised him up to be the second in command in Egypt. Remember Stephen pointed out that the first time they came to Egypt they didn't recognize Joseph, but then the second time Joseph was made known to them, and they were preserved by the providential hand of God and kept safe and grew and multiplied in the land of Egypt.

Throughout this entire chapter, Stephen is reminding the Sanhedrin Council that the Jewish fathers have a habit of resisting the Spirit and rejecting God's chosen deliverers. They rejected Joseph, they rejected Moses, and they rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ when they crucified Him. But as I pointed out last week, even among this rejection, God was still faithful to His promises to Abraham which led to THE PROMISE of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. These rejections didn't surprise God, in fact God weaved these rejections into His sovereign plan of redemption and even the rejection of the Christ, gave redemption to the whole world. God's plan of redemption will not be stopped. All the promises of God focus on one objective, that is Jesus Christ and His plan of redemption for everlasting life to anyone who would believe on His Son. And that's what we are going to see today as we study the life of Moses. We can see that God was preserving His people and fulfilling His promises to Abraham, even despite the constant rejections from His people, but He kept His promise for the sole purpose of ushering in His Son Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Today we will be looking at verses 18-36, specifically at the life of Moses. Let's back up to verse 17 and read into verse 18.

[17\) But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt](#)

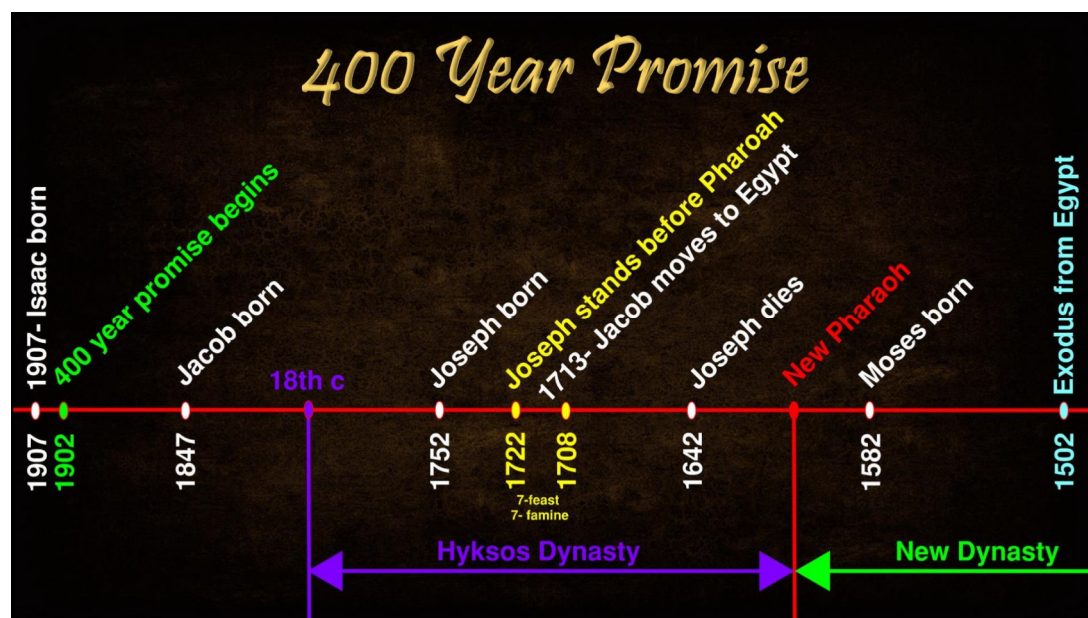
God raised up Joseph as the deliverer so that Jacob and his family could be preserved in Egypt. Israel went into Egypt as a family of 75 but came out as a nation. Stephen is reminding the Sanhedrin of God's promise to Abraham, **Acts 7:6-7**, Gen 15:13-14. The time of that promise is drawing to a close and now in the last 100 years of this promise, the children of Israel are brought into bondage in Egypt. The 400-year promise began just after the birth of Isaac around 1902BC. Jacob was born in 1847BC and Joseph was born in 1752BC, and he stood before Pharaoh in 1722BC when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream. Then after that came the 14 years of feast and famine, which brings us to 1708BC. The people of Israel sojourned in the land of Canaan for just under 200 years and then they came to Egypt because of the famine probably around 1713BC (1902-1713). But even in Egypt the people of Israel still had peace while Joseph was remembered by the Pharaoh. But Stephen says that another king arose...

18) till another king arose who did not know Joseph.

When Stephen says **another** king arose who did not know Joseph. This word "another" in Greek is heteros, ἕτερος, "another of a different kind" who had no regard for the people of Israel. In fact, he looked at them as a threat because of their growing population, **Ex 1:8-10**. This new king had just conquered Egypt and taken control and he is worried that Israel is growing too powerful, and they might try to join their enemies and overthrow them. Joseph died at the age of 110 in 1642BC, (71 years after Israel moved to Egypt) Gen 50:26, and Moses was born 60 years later in 1582BC. And so sometime in between those two dates, at the turn of the 16th century BC, a new Pharaoh takes control who did not know Joseph. And it is at this time when the children of Israel were put into bondage in Egypt. So out of the 400 years of sojourning, they were in bondage the last 100 years (1600+--1502).

The Bible is telling us that there seems to be a major change in the leadership of Egypt around this time, and it just so happens that according to Egyptian history, sometime after the turn of the 16th century BC, there happens to be a dynasty change in the land of Egypt*. History tells us that the Hyksos dynasty began around the 18th century BC, and they were favorable to the Jewish people, because its recorded that during the dynasty of the Hyksos there was an influx of immigrants from the Palestinian region that began living in Egypt. This just happens to be the same timeframe that the children of Israel came to Egypt at the end of the end of the 18th century BC and they grew and multiplied. Now 100 years later there was a dynasty

change because this new Pharaoh conquered the Hyksos rulers and another king of a different kind began to rule Egypt and out of fear of being overthrown, this king put the children of Israel into bondage.



*https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ahmoese_I

<https://christianpublishinghouse.co/2021/03/09/who-were-the-egyptian-pharaohs-during-the-time-of-moses/>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hyksos-Egyptian-dynasty>

19) This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.

This new king of the new dynasty in Egypt begins to deal treacherously with the Jewish people. All through this discourse, Stephen is quoting from the LXX, and this word he uses in verse 19 translated **treacherously** is the same word in Exodus 1:10, *κατασοφίζομαι*, to deal shrewdly or deceitfully. The first thing the new Pharaoh did was he **oppressed our forefathers** by dealing shrewdly or deceitfully with them, forcing all the Hebrew people into slavery, **Exodus 1:11-14**. The first phase of oppression was forcing them into slavery, then Stephen says this new Pharaoh made them **expose their babies, so that they might not live**, **Exodus 1:15-22**. Notice that even through all this persecution, the favor of God is with them, and they are still growing into a nation just as He promised, Ex 1:12, 20.

20) At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months.

Stephen makes the comment that Moses was pleasing to God because this was God's chosen deliverer and God was faithful to keep His promises. And I believe his parents knew Moses would be special too because Paul says his parents hid Moses by faith, **Hebrews 11:23**.

21) But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.

God's providential hand kept Moses safe even in the midst of terrible persecution, **Exodus 2:3-10**. Moses could have been raised with his Hebrew family for up to 3 years, and then gave him to Pharaoh's daughter to be raised as her son.

22) And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

This is new information that we don't necessarily see in the Exodus account. Stephen, by the Holy Spirit, tells us Moses was being raised as a prince of Egypt which just shows the mighty hand of God working in this because this new Pharaoh hated the Hebrew people, but yet his daughter is raising one in his palace. And little does he know; she is raising the next deliverer for the Hebrew people. Over the next 40 years, Moses grows up in the ways of Egypt and in Pharaoh's palace. But God has something else in mind for Moses, and after 40 years God calls Moses to be the deliverer of His people.

23) Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

This is God moving Moses in a new direction away from the ways of Egypt and calling him to be the deliverer of Israel. Stephen says **it came into his heart to visit his brethren**. Literally the Greek says, it ascended upon his heart to *ἐπισκέπτομαι*, to visit his brethren for the purpose of comfort and relief. As a shepherd would look after his sheep, Numbers 27:16LXX. God is planting this in his heart. Moses knows he is a Hebrew by birth and God gives him a compassion for the people of Israel to be their deliverer and rescue them from bondage. Paul gives us some more information about the transformation in his heart, **Hebrews 11:24-26**. The Greek literally says, by faith, Moses having become great refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Stephen said, "he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." Acts 7:22. He was great in the land of Egypt, the son of the pharaoh's daughter, mighty in words and deeds. And it was here at the pinnacle of his life that God stepped in and changed his heart. He was being groomed to be a prince of Egypt, but God is transforming him to be shepherd for His people. Moses now has a desire for God's people. God has placed this upon Moses' heart that he would be their deliverer, and Moses chooses, that is a shocking word... Moses earnestly chooses to embrace sufferings by walking directly into tribulations rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Why? Because he looked to the reward, and he knew that suffering the reproach of Christ, as being a type of the Christ and a deliverer, was of a greater value than all the treasures in Egypt. This is stirring in Moses' heart and he knows he is called to be the deliverer so he acts on it...

24-25) ²⁴ And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. ²⁵ For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.

Stephen makes it clear that Moses knew he would be the one to deliver them from this oppression, so he takes matters into his own hands and kills an Egyptian to prove to his brethren that he is on their side. This was Moses' way of showing the children of Israel that he was their deliverer, that he would bring them justice. The Greek literally says, "And seeing a certain one being treated unjustly, he (Moses) defended and committed justice to the one being oppressed." And he did this by killing the Egyptian, but clearly this was not the right way to handle things. But it reminds me of the story of Abraham and how Ishmael was born. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars and his child would come from his own body, Genesis 15:4-5, so in chapter 16 Abraham takes matters into his own hands and Ishmael is conceived through Sarah's maidservant Hagar, Genesis 16:1-16. So this is a very similar scenario. God placed this idea of being the deliverer on his heart, but then he took matters in his own hands and Moses goes out and presents himself as the deliverer to the children of Israel, but the Jewish fathers rejected him.

26-29) ²⁶ And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, (notice Moses is still trying to be their deliverer) saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?' ²⁷ But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?' ²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹ Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

The next day, after trying to show them justice, Moses appears to them as their deliverer, but out of a haughty spirit, they ask the question, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" The answer is that God did, and Stephen is going to point that out in verse 35, but things didn't go as Moses thought. He thought they were going to accept him as the deliverer, but now the word is getting out that Moses has rebelled against the Pharaoh and so he has to run and hide in Midian, **Exodus 2:14-15**.

Over the course of 40 years, Moses has a whole new life; he gets married, he has two children and he starts working for his father-in-law as a shepherd. The Bible doesn't say much about this timeframe, but I can't help but think that Moses may have thought he made a mistake. It was placed upon his heart to be the deliverer of Egypt, and he was so sure of it, he rejected his royal path as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and he rejected all the wealth of Egypt and chose to suffer with his people. But the thing he didn't expect was that his own people would also reject him and he would become an outcast and have to hide in the wilderness of Midian.

This seems discouraging, but I believe this was a necessary part of Moses' life when God began shaping his heart to be the deliverer of His people. There was no way Moses could be God's deliverer and still have the prideful arrogant heart of an Egyptian prince. God wasn't looking for a mighty warrior to lead His people. He needed someone with a humble and obedient heart who could shepherd His people and speak His Words. So Moses spent 40 years in the land of Midian tending the flock of Jethro, and it was during this time that God was working on his heart to form him into the shepherd of His people. Moses went from being the mighty prince of Egypt to the humble shepherd of God. In fact, Numbers 12:3 tells us that *Moses was very humble, more than all the men who were on the face of the earth*. And I believe this was the heart that God needed for His deliverer. 40 years pass by and finally, in God's perfect timing, He appears to Moses when he is 80 years old...

30-33) ³⁰ And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. ³¹ When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, ³² saying, 'I am the God of your fathers—the God of

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and dared not look. ³³ 'Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

The text says an angel appeared to Moses, and an angel evidently was involved, but clearly this is God Himself appearing to Moses because He tells Moses to take off His sandals, for the place He is standing is Holy ground. A holy angel would never demand this, because they never allow themselves to be worshipped. I believe this was a pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ before He became a Man. We see another instance of something similar with Joshua before the battle of Jericho, Josh 5:13-15. God continues speaking to Moses from the burning bush and says...

34) I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.

This is God keeping His promise to Abraham and His people and to Moses, because this was a confirmation to Moses that he didn't give up his life for nothing. God had providentially worked out the timing and now he is sending Moses back to Egypt and this time Moses is going back with faith and boldness know that God is with him, **Hebrews 11:27**. Stephen says all this to make the point to the Sanhedrin Council that the children of Israel, their Jewish fathers have a habit of continually rejecting Moses and God's chosen deliverer.

35) This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' this is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush.

This Moses, whom your fathers rejected, this is the one God sent to deliver Israel out from bondage and fulfill the promise to Abraham. Notice Stephen makes the point again, this is the deliverer whom they rejected the first time, but they got it right the second time when he came back. They recognized him as their deliverer, and he set them free through signs and wonders by the mighty hand of God.

36) He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

The wonders and signs in Egypt were God's wrath and judgement on the land of Egypt for their cruelty, and within this entire Exodus plan, God foreshadows the work of His Son through the Passover and the Exodus. The Passover is a type of the redeeming and satisfying sacrifice of His Son and the Exodus out from Egypt into the promise land is foreshadowing our deliverance out from the bondage of darkness and being translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son. But remember they had to enter the promise land by faith, and Paul tells us, "*they could not enter in because of their unbelief.*" Heb 3:19, so they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. There are so many parallels to our Salvation in this story because it is only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved.

From here to verse 53, Stephen continues to speak the Truth boldly showing from Scripture that just as their Jewish fathers have continually rejected the chosen ones of God, they too are guilty of rejecting God and His plan of redemption. Remember what he says in verse 51, "*...you always resist the Holy Spirit just as your fathers did, so do you.*"

Stephen was put on trial for blaspheming God and Moses, the Law and the Temple, but Stephen has turned the tables and convicted them of this blasphemy against God because they are the ones who have rejected the One God sent as Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.