

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 7 verses 17-60 by Chuck Smith 2.19.23

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February memory verse Luke 24:45 (NKJV)

And **He** opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the **Scriptures**.

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But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph ([Act 7:13-18](#)).

He passes over from Joseph, who was rejected by their fathers, his brothers sold as a slave. That's the first example he's going to give of a mistake that their fathers made of a God-ordained leader. The second example that he is going to bring to them is that of Moses. And so he jumps right into Moses.

This Pharaoh dealt subtly with our family, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end that they might not live ([Act 7:19](#)).

That is, the Pharaoh, you remember, ordered that all of the boy babies be slain and the girl babies be kept alive. And so he is making reference to that order of the Pharaoh.

In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding beautiful, and he nourished up in his father's house for three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son ([Act 7:20-21](#)).

Actually, they were ordered to cast their children into the Nile River. Moses' mother hid him for three months, and then when she cast him into the Nile River, she had made a little ark out of the bulrushes. And so she kept the order of the Pharaoh, she put him in the river, but in this little floating basket. And the Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nourished him for her own son.

And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was a full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers the children of Israel. And when he saw one of them suffering wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and he killed the Egyptian: for he supposed [interesting he supposed] that his brothers would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they did not understand ([Act 7:22-25](#)).

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Now when Moses came down to his brothers, he just felt, "Surely they will know that God put me in this position in order that I might deliver them." But they did not understand this.

And so the next day when he showed himself again to them as they were fighting among themselves, he said, You fellows are brothers; why are you wronging each other? But he that was doing wrong to his neighbor thrust him away, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Will you kill me, as you did the Egyptian yesterday? Then Moses fled at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. And when Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and he drew near to behold it, and the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and dared not to behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off your shoes from your feet: for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and I am come down to deliver them ([Act 7:26-34](#)).

That, to me, is very comforting as God says to Moses, "I have seen, I have heard, and I've come to help." What is true of God's people at that time is true of God's people always. God sees, God hears, and God has come to help. God sees your affliction, God sees your trials, God hears your cry, God hears your call, and He responds. God has come to help.

And now, I will send you to Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush ([Act 7:34-35](#)).

In their fathers, they have two classic examples of their fathers putting out God's anointed. Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave. They rebelled against Joseph's dream. You remember, he had a dream where the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him. He had a dream where his brothers and he were tying up their sheaves and his brothers' sheaves all bowed down to his. In these dreams, it was declared that God had ordained Joseph as a ruler over his brothers, but they rebelled against that and they tried to get rid of him selling him as a slave to Egypt. And yet, God did exalt him and make him a ruler there in Egypt, and they came under his rulership later.

Now the same is true with Moses. They cast him out. Moses thought that they would know that God had ordained that he would be a ruler and leader among them, but they did not know. And they cast Moses out. But forty years later, God brought him back as a ruler and a deliverer for the people.

And so he uses these two examples of the mistakes that their fathers made of recognizing God's ordained plan and God's ordained ruler. There's a pattern that exists in this nation.

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He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and the Red sea, and in the wilderness for forty years ([Act 7:36](#)).

So Moses' life, divided up into three forty-year periods. Forty years in the schools of Egypt, becoming something. Forty years in the wilderness, finding out he was nothing. Forty years leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, finding out that God could take nothing and make something out of it. And so, the forty-year divisions of Moses' life.

This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; and him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake unto him in Mount Sinai ([Act 7:37-38](#)),

The church in the wilderness. The word church, ekklesia in Greek, literally means "the called out ones". Israel was never called the church in the land, but they had been called out of Egypt, and thus, in the wilderness were known as "the called out ones". The church today are those that God has called out of the world to be a special people, a peculiar nation unto Him.

there on Mount Sinai, with our fathers: he received the living oracles which he gave unto us ([Act 7:38](#)):

That is, the oracle, is a spokesman of God's Word, and there God gave to Moses the law, His Word.

To whom our fathers ([Act 7:39](#))

You talk about your fathers, God gave them these living oracles but they would not obey them.

but they thrust him out from among them, and their hearts turned back again to Egypt ([Act 7:39](#)),

You talk about your fathers, "Oh, our fathers this and our fathers that." Your fathers rejected the law of God. They again cast Moses out and in their hearts they returned back to Egypt.

Saying to Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him ([Act 7:40](#)).

He had been forty days up in the mountain, the people became impatient, and they came to Aaron and said, "We're going to go back to Egypt. Make us gods that will lead us back to Egypt. We don't know what's happened to Moses."

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And so they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have you offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which you made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus ([Act 7:41-45](#))

Now Jesus... there is a reference to Joshua in the Old Testament. I've told you over and over again that the name Jesus is the Greek for the Hebrew name Joshua. And because he is talking to them and it is translated here into the Greek, the name is given in Greek. But this is a reference to the historic man Joshua, who took over Moses' place and led the children of Israel into the land. "Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua"...that is, the tabernacles of witness that were made in the wilderness. They brought it into the land.

whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him a house. Howbeit ([Act 7:45-48](#))

Now, he was accused, you remember, of saying things against the temple. Solomon built Him a temple, however, he said,

the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet ([Act 7:48](#)),

And, of course, you can go back to the Old Testament and you can find that they say that the Lord doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. And so, Solomon is saying, "I have no illusions that this is going to be Your exclusive dwelling place. The heavens of heavens cannot hold You, how much less this house that I have built. But Lord, we want this house as a place where we can just come and meet You."

For the Lord said,

Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what house will you build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my abode? Hath not my hand made all these things? ([Act 7:49-50](#))

I think of that whenever I think of giving to God. Because anytime I ever give to God anything, I'm only giving back to Him that which is His anyhow. Didn't He make everything? He lets me be a steward of His goods, and in my giving to God, I'm only really giving that which is His anyhow.

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Then he now gets to the application of the points that he has been subtly making. He presses now the application very directly.

You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so are you guilty [you're doing the same thing]. Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted? ([Act 7:51-52](#))

And if you go back into their history, you'll find that their fathers persecuted every true prophet of God. Isaiah was persecuted and was sawn in two, ultimately. Jeremiah, thrown into the dungeon for speaking in the name of the Lord. Elijah and Elisha had real problems because they spoke out against the evil kings. "Your fathers? Tell me now which of the prophets did they not persecute?"

and they have slain those, which showed them before of the coming of the Just One ([Act 7:52](#));

In other words, these prophets who were telling them of the coming of the Messiah, these true prophets of God, they had killed these prophets who had prophesied of the coming of the Just One, the Messiah.

of whom ye now have been now the betrayers and murderers ([Act 7:52](#)):

"I mean, you're worse than your fathers. They killed all of the prophets that came to them who were telling them of the coming of the Messiah. But *you* killed the Messiah!!" What a charge. "Because you were the betrayers and the murderers."

You have rejected the law by the disposition of angels, you have not kept it ([Act 7:53](#)).

He was accused of speaking against the law of Moses. He said, "Look, *you* haven't kept it; *you've* rejected it."

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God ([Act 7:54-56](#)).

"Your fathers rejected Joseph; God made him a ruler. Your fathers rejected Moses; God made him the ruler. You have rejected Jesus Christ; God has made Him the ruler. I see heavens opened and I see the Son of Man standing there on the right hand of God."

Jesus, in the book of Revelation, promises to those overcomers in the church of Thyatira, that they will be granted to sit on their thrones in His kingdom. Stephen sees Jesus, not sitting on the throne next to the Father, but he sees Him standing. And I believe that it is significant. I believe that Jesus has stood to receive into heaven His first martyr in the early church. The first one of millions who would give their lives for the

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testimony of Jesus Christ. And I believe that as Stephen was ready to be martyred, the Lord stood to receive him into that heavenly kingdom. "The Son of Man is standing there at the right hand of God."

And they cried out with a loud voice, they stopped their ears, [they did not want to hear the truth], and they ran upon him with one accord, and they threw him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, [and as they were stoning him] he called upon God, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep ([Act 7:57-60](#)).

We find in the martyrdom of Stephen much of what we saw in the crucifixion of Jesus, in that number one, he was praying for those who were committing the crime.

You remember Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Stephen is saying, "Father, don't lay this sin to their charge." Praying for the persecutors. As Jesus said, "Pray for those who despitefully use you." And thus, Stephen, following the example of Jesus.

Secondly, we find that Stephen here is commending his spirit to God, even as Jesus, when on the cross, commended His Spirit unto God. And so, following the example of the Lord in His crucifixion, Stephen is now martyred and the first blood of the church has been shed. And as the result, they did not silence the witness of the church; they only spread the witness all over the place. For then began a great persecution against the church.