

Acts 6:1—7

Hellenistic Jews vs. Hebraic (Hebrew) Jews

- The church was able to solve their internal problem of fairly serving widows from the Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews.
- Those involved in the administration of serving tables freed up others so they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.
 - Even though these servers were often working in the background, they were critically important for the proper functioning of the Hebrew church.
 - Even the least job at Bethesda is important. **1 Corinthians 12:18—26**
- The result of the Hebrew church working together as one is that the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.
 - By not focusing on internal problems, a church can focus on ministry.

Acts 6:8—10 The Rise of Stephen

- Stephen was a Hellenistic Jew who was given great power to persuade and was the first non-Apostle mentioned to do miracles and signs.
- He got the attention of a group of Rabbis from the Synagogue of the Freedmen (or the Libertines).
 - It is assumed by many that they were once held captive by Rome and later freed from their bondage.
 - They were from Cyrene (west of Egypt), Alexandria (in Egypt), Cilicia (central Turkey) and Asia (western Turkey).
- Since he was filled with the Holy Spirit, they were unable to argue against him.

Acts 6:11—15 The Trial of Stephen

- The Freedmen were able to stir up the people, elders and scribes saying that Stephen spoke blasphemy against Moses (the Law) and God (the Temple).
 - They used the same argument and techniques as at Jesus' trial, bringing in false witnesses and saying that Jesus was going to tear down the temple thereby changing the Law.
- This is the third time God has given the leadership of the nation of Israel a chance to hear testimony about Jesus Christ.
- Stephen's face was glowing, Just like Moses face did when he came down from the Mt Sinai with the Law. **Exodus 34:29—33, 2 Corinthians 3:13**

Acts 7:1—53 Stephen's Indictment

- Many Bibles label this portion of Scripture as "Stephen's Speech". NASB says this is "Stephen's Defense". I think it should be labeled "Stephen's Indictment".
- Stephen, under the full control of the Holy Spirit, lays out his case against them and when done, declares them guilty.

Acts 7:1—8 The Promise of a Great Nation

- Stephen begins logically at the beginning when God gave Abraham the promise of a great nation.
- Abraham was obedient to God,
- Abraham was told his descendants would be held captive for 400 years then would be delivered and would return to the place that Abraham was now living.

Acts 7:9—16 Joseph and the Patriarchs

- Stephen continues with the story of Israel
- Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers.
- He grew up in the king's household and lived as the king.
- At first meeting with his family they did not recognize him.
- At the second meeting he revealed himself to them and they lived out their lives with Joseph in the palace.

Acts 7:17—38 Moses and the Exodus

- Moses was born in preparation of leading the Israelites out of Egypt
- He grew up with the king's household but he loved his own people.
- He left his kingly realm and went to his own people but was rejected the first time.
- He then left for 40 years and at the right time God called him into service to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

Acts 7:39—43 Israel Disobedient

- Israel continually turned away from God and pursued other god's.
- They have a long history of ignoring God's pleas to come back to Him.

Acts 7:44—50 God's Dwelling Place

- The word Tabernacle in Hebrew means, "dwelling place".
- The Tabernacle is a shadow of heaven.
- This is where God has decided to "live" and is where man needed to go to meet Him.
- Solomon was allowed to build a Temple, which replaced the Tabernacle.
- Stephen pointed out that God cannot be confined to a Tabernacle or Temple. His domain is the universe.
- This was said in response to their accusation to Stephen speaking blasphemy against the Temple.
- They, however, have spoken blasphemous words against God whereas the Temple is only a picture.

Acts 7:51—53 Israel's leaders condemned

- Stephen now directly points his finger at his accusers and says they are the ones guilty. They have done just as their fathers have done, persecuting and killing the prophets God sent.
- They are the ones disobedient to the Law.

The Significance of Stephen's story of Israel

- The above show clearly how Israel has and would reject her Savior.
- Moses is a type of Christ, rejected the first time he came to them, then later as their savior leading them to the Promised Land.
- Joseph is a type of Christ, not recognized the first time but fully revealed the second time. They were allowed to live in the palace.
- Stephen knew exactly what the significance of these past events meant and how they related to the current situation.
- As we will find out, his accusers also knew exactly what Stephen was saying.

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