



Chapter 7 Continued Part 2

Once again before we get started here on the 2nd part of the continuation of chapter 7 of the book of Acts.. I want to reiterate the fact that if you're just now joining us in this study of the book of Acts you've missed a ton of information. And I think that anyone who's been with us from the start of this study would more than agree with me when I say that it's imperative that you start with us from the beginning of this study in order to better understand some of the things we'll be talking about here this evening.

So once again I encourage you even.. implore you.. to start at the beginning of this study on the book of Acts before trying to move forward here in the middle of Acts chapter 7.

If you take your time.. and start with us from the beginning.. and I think you'll be glad that you took the time to do so. With that being said.. for those of you who have been with us, I'd like to start by taking a look at Acts chapter 7: verses 37 through 43, so lets start with verse 37:

Act 7:37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelite's, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.'

Act 7:38 This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.

Act 7:39 Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt,

Act 7:40 saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

Act 7:41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

Act 7:42 But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: "'Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

Act 7:43 You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.'

So what Stephen was trying to point out to the Temple Authorities here is that what they were doing was exactly what their forefathers had done back in Moses time. And so he actually quotes from the book of Amos. Lets take a look at Acts 42 and 43 again:

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Act 7:43 You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.'

Now lets turn to Amos Chapter 5 verses 25 through 27:

Amo 5:25 "Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?"

Amo 5:26 You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyyun your star-god—your images that you made for yourselves,

Amo 5:27 and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

The Israelite's were turning back to Egypt when they made for themselves a golden calf to be their mediator instead of Moses. And this angered God, because he knew that they were once again falling back into the false Pagan worship of the land that he had just taken them out of.

They were worshiping him just like the Egyptians had worshiped their Gods, and our Father in Heaven wasn't going to have any of that nonsense. You see they were not really worshiping the golden calf itself.. they were simply trying to create a new Moses (a new mediator) or a conduit between themselves and God because this was the Egyptian way of doing things.

I want us to notice what Aron says after he creates this “golden calf”:

Exo 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD. (Yahovah)"

So the people were not all together abandoning Yahovah the God of Abraham Issac, and Jacob.. they simply wanted a mediator like Moses. They wanted something that they could look at and touch, and something that would represent the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, and as we've already seen... they didn't want God himself to come back down and talk to them. Remember.. the people wanted Moses to to be the mediator between them and God because when God did come down to speak to them he scared them half to death and they begged Moses not to let God come back down to talk to them.

The problem was that God clearly forbids this kind of worship. This idea of having an inanimate object to pray to is Pagan, and God detests such things. Our God was very, very clear.. he does not want to be worshiped like the Pagans worshiped their gods.

Deu 12:28 Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you

and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Deu 12:29 "When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land,

Deu 12:30 take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.'

Deu 12:31 You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

Deu 12:32 "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

So clearly the Israelite's were breaking the commandment of God the father when they themselves were worshiping him like the Pagan Egyptians were worshiping their gods. And our God does not want to be worshiped like the Pagans worship their gods, just as he says in Deuteronomy 12:31 through 32.

And this is what the Pharisees and the Temple authorities were doing. They didn't make a golden calf per say.. but they did make their own man made, man created, man fabricated laws and commandments and mixed them with Gods commandments, there by worshiping another god other than the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob.

You see they had done the same thing that their forefathers had done. They had created a false religion, and they were worshiping a god that they had created in their own minds. And this is what Stephen was trying to point out to them.

Now I want us to step back from this picture for a moment, and I want us to inspect ourselves and our own man made, man created, denominational doctrines, and all of our over 5000 different denominational charters of men out there and what we as Christians have done today.

And my question would be.. are we any different from the Temple Authorities that our Messiah called a "Brood of Vipers" and "Two Fold Children of Hell"? Have we not built our own proverbial golden calf?

How do we explain Christmas for instance? December 25th is the birthday of every major sun god that ever existed. Tammuz, Osiris, Horus, Semeramus, Zeus, Moloch, Baal... all of them have the same birthday.. December 25th. And do we not know that God our Father has commanded us not to worship him like the Pagans worshiped their Gods?

Have you ever heard of anyone celebrating a birthday in the Bible? There are only two birthdays mentioned anywhere in the Word of God, and both of them were Pagan kings and

both of them committed murder on their birthdays. You see birthday's were not celebrated by the Hebrew people. Their lives were celebrated at the time of death. Think about it.. who has done anything by being born?

We know full well that our Messiah was not born on December 25th. Any Christian who's ever done more than 15 minutes of study on the matter knows better than that. Not one of Gods Priests, Prophets, Apostles, or his Son ever had their birthdays recorded in the Bible not one of them from Adam and Eve in the beginning of the book to John at the Island of Patmos in the back of the book. None of them has their birthday's recorded in the scripture anywhere.

Are we not worshiping our God like the Pagans worshiped their gods? Are we not doing exactly what he commanded us not to do in Deuteronomy chapter 12 verses 31 and 32? You know full well that we are. At least those of us who are still stuck in that deception, and most of us who are not still doing it are still guilty of doing it ourselves before he pulled us out of it.

What about "Good Friday"? There's no "Good Friday" anywhere in the scripture just like there's no 1st day of the week Sunday Sabbath in the scripture anywhere. These are all Pagan appointments, festivals, and rituals set up by the Roman Catholic Church. These days don't belong to the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob.. they belong to gods of the Pagans.

So the question then becomes.. when today's modern day Christian hears the truth concerning these things.. how will we react? What if Stephen were standing before us here today and what if he were telling today's modern day Christian the same thing he's telling the Temple Authorities? How would we react?

Would we react by turning away from these wicked man made, man created, man fabricated Pagan rituals, festivals, and myths and turn back towards God? Or would we mock Stephen the way that the Temple Authorities did and turn back to our Pagan ways, and continue to worship our make believe gods? Would we continue to make void the Word of God in order to hold onto our own traditions the way the Pharisees and the Saducees did? What do you think would happen today?

I would suggest to you that Stephen would be mocked and laughed at, and run out of today's modern day denominational churches, and labeled as a heretic, and anathema.

Nothing changes... under the sun.

I see a lot of people who are hearing the truth for the first time and are coming back into the arms of Yahshua, and our Father, but I also see twice as many who are rejecting the truth because they've been lost for so long.. because they have accepted the lies for so long... because they've attached themselves to their own man made, man created, man fabricated traditions and rituals and myths for so long that they just can't let go of them.

They would rather make void the Word of God in order to hold onto their own Traditions just like the Pharisees did. And what did our Messiah tell us would happen if our righteousness did not far exceed that of the Pharisees?

Mat 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

You see so many of us will read this 7th chapter of the book of Acts and we'll hear what Stephen is telling these Pharisees and Saducees.. but we'll wrongly exclude ourselves from the picture. We see these Pharisees and Saducees as the evil ones, we see them as the “brood of vipers”, and the “white washed tombs”, and the “two fold children of hell” that our Messiah calls them in the 23rd chapter of Matthew but we exclude ourselves from the picture.

We have a hard time admitting that nothing has changed under the sun, and that today's modern day Christianity has become those very Temple Authorities. We ourselves have become the “brood of vipers”, the “white washed tombs”, the “two fold children of hell” that our Messiah warned about so many generations ago.

And even those of us who have come out of these kinds of deceptions have a hard time admitting that we too were once caught up in these wicked and demonically inspired things.

We should thank him every day for his Mercy and his Grace, and the blood that covers our heads, and for his Ruach Hakodesh that allows us to have the eyes to see and the ears to hear. Because so many can't see, and so many can't hear. And even many of those who can... simply won't because even though they see their error, they refuse to lay down their family traditions and to pick up their crosses and to follow him.

They've chosen to make themselves friends with the World.

Jas 4:4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

The Temple:

In verse 44, we can clearly see Stephen turning their attention to the Temple, and he reminds them that God himself never commanded a Temple with human hands to be built. It was David's idea to build God a Temple, but because David was a man of war and had blood on his hands he only allowed the Temple to be built by his son Solomon, but God himself never asked for a Temple to be built.

In verse 48 through 50 Stephen reminds the Temple Authorities about the issue of man made things being used to worship God:

Act 7:48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

Act 7:49 "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?"

Act 7:50 Did not my hand make all these things?'

This once again did not make the Temple Authorities a fan of Stephen as he once again is warning them against just one more thing that they're guilty of.. and that was putting the Temple above God himself because they were worried that Stephen had said that his Messiah was going to destroy the Temple.

Once again all Stephen was doing was quoting from their own Torah in Isaiah 66 verse 1:

Isa 66:1 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?"

And I have to agree with Pastor Tom Bradford who says this and I quote:

"God well knows the way humans are wired. If you erect a Temple or a Shrine, it will often become more important than the one in whose honor it was built. We love to build grand religious edifices because they make US proud!"

We seriously think we are doing something for God when we construct monumental showplaces and call them holy sanctuaries. How often I've heard Pastors and Elders at church building meetings speak about the need to spend big and make things especially beautiful because we want to give to God our best.

But the "best" that God wants from his worshipers is the best of the fruits of the spiritual gifts He has given to us to use to benefit others and God's Kingdom; not the best most lavish buildings that money can buy".

Another thing to remember is that the only place that God ever consistently showed up at was over the Ark of the Covenant. And the Ark of the Covenant had been missing ever since the take over of Babylon, when they sacked the Temple and it had gone missing.

When Nehemiah and Ezra built the new Temple, there was no Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holy's. And it never was seen again even in Yahshua's time there was no Ark in the Temple. So how then can we think that we have to go to a Temple or some building in order to pray for Gods guidance, protection, or healing?

This once again is nothing but a man made, man created, man fabricated bunch of nonsense. And so once again Stephen simply wanted to remind them that it was not Gods idea to build a Temple in the first place it was built on a human idea that King David had put into play.

And I point these things out to remind us of these grand cathedrals and these multi million dollar church amphitheaters that we continue to build.. “Mega Churches” they call them. My friends it's clear that the only “Temple” that God cares about or ever said that he would live in.. is you.

1Co 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

1Co 6:20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The people of God can gather in any building, or even a park, or even in a pole barn, or on the Internet.. it makes no difference to God where his people gather, only that they do.. gather in his name and rejoice in one another, and teach and preach his Gospel message and his Word and that they worship him. It's our hearts he's after my friends.. not our buildings.

One last thing that I want to touch on here in Acts chapter 7 are the Levitical laws concerning stoning because this is important to understand. There are 18 cases that capitol punishment is called for in the Torah. Some of these are: immoral sexual behaviors, blasphemy, incest, profaning the Shabbat, murder and idolatry.

The reason that they rushed Stephen outside the city was because according to the law no one could be executed or buried inside the community because death causes ritual impurity. So there is no doubt that what had happened to Stephen was what the Temple Authorities saw as just and correct according to Torah law.

Many biblical scholars and commentators have said that the stoning of Stephen was illegal and I would have to agree with them on this one. The very fact that Stephen was an Apostle made this stoning an abomination to God with out a doubt, but according to the Temple Authorities.. who had already made themselves the seed of Satan in the first place.. according to our Messiah when he called them “to fold children of hell” in Matthew 23: verse 15.. this was all well and good, and well with in the laws of their new man made hybrid religious system.

The last thing that I'd like to draw our attention to before we close out chapter 7 is found in verse 60 of Acts chapter 7 where it says that Stephen then fell asleep. Death is often referred to as sleep through out the scripture.

1Co 15:51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 1Co 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

1Co 15:53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

1Co 15:54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

1Co 15:55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

1Co 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

1Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Also notice that the word "LORD" here is not Yahovah. If we check the word "Lord" with an interlinear we can know that the Greek word here is "kurios" which according to Strong's means: "Supreme in authority", "God, Lord, Master, or sir" so the word "Lord" here is not the tetragramaton or the name of God. And that's just a little fyi.. for your information there.

So in other words the word "Lord" here is actually being used more appropriately than it is used in the "Old Testament".

With that being said I think we'll close here and start chapter 8 of the book of Acts next week.