

CP - 5/15/22

Acts 7:35–54 - Stephen's Defense, Part 2

Sermon Outline

Recap:

*Stephen brought before the Council on false charges

*Charges:

1. Blasphemy against Moses and God (6:11)
2. Speaks against the Temple and the Law (6:13)

*7:1–37: addresses charges about Moses and God

*7:38–53: addresses charges about the Law and Temple

Stephen's Overall Theme in his defense:

*God's history with Israel - REVELATION

- to the Patriarchs
- through Moses
- through the Law
- through the Tabernacle
- through the Prophets
- ultimately, through Jesus Christ

*Israel's history with God - REJECTION

1. Stephen's Positive View of the Law and Tabernacle

*The Law (7:38)

- given from God (God is the active source of actual revelation)
- living and powerful (nature is active, energetic - Heb. 4:12)
- for the people (given to help people know God and honor Him)

*The Tabernacle

- given by God (7:44)
- given for God's presence (Ex. 25:8)
- given for true worship (7:45–46)

2. Stephen's Confrontation of Religious Hypocrisy

*Like their fathers, they broke the very law they claimed to uphold. (7:38–42)

*Like their fathers, they consigned all of God to an idol. (48-50)

- In the wilderness, to a golden calf (7:42)
- To the stars (7:42)
- To pagan gods (7:43)
- In the present, to the temple and religious system

*They were worshipping a system instead of God their Savior.

*Like their fathers, they rejected God's messenger, Christ.

- Jesus perfectly kept the Law of God before them.
- Jesus was God in the flesh, tabernacling with them.

(*They replaced their unique spiritual identity for a national identity.

*We are defined and led by the external, rather than God's work in our hearts.

*We ignore the internal and focus on the external to group ourselves and others.)

* 3 Examples of Hypocrisy: Abortion, Religious Pluralism, LGBTQ+/Ignoring heterosexual sin

3. Stephen's Call to Repentance (7:51-53)

*Turn from your pride and stubbornness ("stiff-necked")

*Turn from your refusal to listen ("uncircumcised")

*Turn from your sin against God ("betrayed and murdered...did not keep it")

PLEASE DON'T BE LIKE THEM! They did the exact same thing.

Application:

*We must obey the Word of God we claim to believe.

*We must seek to purge our lives of hypocrisy.

*We must recognize we as believers as the temple of God.

*We must never be afraid to call others to repentance.

Discussion Questions/Thoughts

1. What does God's history with Israel and Israel's history to God reveal about both God's and Israel's character? How are we like Israel? Do we take God's faithfulness for granted?
2. What was Stephen's view of the Law and the Tabernacle? How did he defend himself from the charges brought against him? Why does he refer to the tabernacle rather than the present temple?
3. What is hypocrisy, and why is it so revolting at all levels? In what ways were the Israelites hypocritical in the stories Stephen told? How was the Council in the present acting just as their fathers did in these stories?
4. How were the Jews viewing their religious system and temple? How had it replaced God?
5. What was the ultimate sin of the Council and Israel in regards to Jesus? How were their actions toward Jesus far worse than actions against the Law and the Temple? How is Jesus the perfect Law Keeper and the true Tabernacle?
6. In what specific ways do we trade our spiritual identity for a national identity? How does this endanger our witness in the world and among the world?
7. How did Stephen describe the Council to their faces? In these descriptions, how was Stephen calling them to repent? What do we learn from Stephen's defense?