

AM Acts 7:1-43 Against Moses?

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- [0 : 00] And if you have one of the church Bibles like this, that should be on page 1102.!
- Acts chapter 7, page 1102. This is God's Word.
- And the high priest said, Are these things so? And Stephen said, Brothers and fathers, hear me.
- The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, Go out from your land and from your kindred, and go into the land that I will show you.
- And he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. After his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.
- [1 : 05] Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him.
- Though he had no child. And God spoke to this effect, that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them for 400 years.
- But I will judge the nation that they serve, said God. And after that, they shall come out and worship me in this place. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision.
- And so Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day. And Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt.
- But God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favour and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.
- [2 : 17] Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit.
- And on the second visit, Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob, his father, and all his kindred, 75 persons in all.
- And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers. And they were carried back to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver, from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.
- But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt. Until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph.
- He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants so that they would not be kept alive. At this time, Moses was born.

[3 : 23] And he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house. And when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.

And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. And he was mighty in his words and deeds. When he was 40 years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel.

And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand.

But they did not understand. And on the following day, he appeared to them as they were quarrelling and tried to reconcile them, saying, Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?

But the man who was wronging his neighbour thrust him aside, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday? At this retort, Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

[4 : 40] Now when 40 years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight.

And as he drew near to Luke, there came the voice of the Lord, I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. And Moses trembled and did not dare to look.

Then the Lord said to him, Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. And I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and have come down to deliver them.

And now, come, I will send you to Egypt. This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge? This man God sent as both ruler and redeemer, by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush.

This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, for 40 years. This is the Moses, who said to the Israelites, God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.

[6 : 00] 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.

Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside. And in their hearts, they turned to Egypt, 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. And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

But God turned away, and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as 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?

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.

[7 : 11] We'll leave the reading there for this morning, and we'll come back to the rest of this chapter, this evening. For those of us who trust in Christ, cannot help but read these words, and reflect on the immense cost, that our Saviour was willing to bear, on our behalf.

Well, let's turn back to Acts chapter 7. I know that as a congregation, you've been spending a bit of time in Acts, in the last while.

But it's good for us to do that. But Acts 7 is quite a difficult passage. But one of the problems with it, is it's a very long chapter. And that's why we're going to take it in two chunks, this morning, and this evening.

And I just want to say a couple of things, by way of context, before we come to the passage itself. Just to explain what is happening, in Acts chapter 7.

The verses immediately before it, just at the end of verse 6. We read there about what's actually happening, this man Stephen, has been appointed to a leadership role, in the church.

[8 : 40] He's a deacon. And he has been accused, as it says, in these verses, he's been accused of speaking against Moses, and against this holy place, which is a reference to the temple, in Jerusalem.

And, that might not seem very bad, to us, but, in those days, to speak against Moses, and against the temple, was, in effect, to speak against, all of the doctrine, all of the teachings, of the true religion, of the people of God, and all of the practice, and all of the way, in which they worshipped.

And so, he's really been accused, of, what's called blasphemy. He's been accused of, of speaking against, all that was good, and right, and true.

And so it's a very, and in those days in particular, it was a very serious crime. Now, in our culture, and in our day, nothing is sacred, and people say all kinds of, horrific, blasphemous things, against, the Lord Jesus Christ, with complete, impunity.

But, in this day, and in this culture, it was regarded as, very serious. And there's a, practical question for us, that immediately, as we approach that, the high priest, asks this question, he says, are these things so?

[10 : 23] Is this true? And, those of you, who've read the whole chapter, will know that, although, what happens is, is that, Stephen is, is martyred, he is, he's condemned to death, despite, the defence, that we'll be, looking at today.

But, it wasn't wrong, of the high priest, to ask this question, was he really guilty, of such a, a horrible crime? And, perhaps, just at the outset, we should reflect on that, that, although we live in a culture, where nothing is sacred, we need to be careful, about the way, in which we speak, about the doctrine, and the practice, of the worship, of the living God, because, although no one will, condemn us to death, it is nevertheless, in a sense, still a matter, of life and death, whether or not, we, accept, or reject, all that is taught, in the Bible, and all that that means, for the way, in which we practice, our lives, the way in which, we seek, to glorify God, and worship him.

The other thing, I want to say, just very briefly, is, that at the end, of chapter 6, we're told, that Stephen's face, is like the face, of an angel, and so, as he makes, this defense, his face, is described, as being like, the face, of an angel, and, we might come back, to that, but we're going, to look, at this, under, under three headings, we'll see, how there's, a pattern, of rejection, throughout, the Old Testament, and we'll see, that, that then, develops, as, a pattern, which, points towards, what would really, happen to Christ, who's the fulfillment, of everything, in the Old Testament, and then, briefly at the end, we'll look at, how that, works out for us, that this pattern, of rejection, that those, who are sent, with the message, from God, are, almost always, rejected, and that Christ, himself, is rejected, and that means, that we can, also expect, to experience, some degree, of rejection, and hostility, in our lives, in the same way, as Stephen does, it's a strange, chapter though, isn't it, chapter seven,

I don't know, how you felt, when we were reading it, but, whenever I've read it, before, I often wondered, does he risk, annoying, the people, that he's speaking to, to understand, he's, he's, he's, he's been called, in front of, the high priest, and the, the ruling council, the Sanhedrin, as it was called, and this is composed, of Pharisees, and Sadducees, and all kinds of, people, who were, very, very well educated, and who knew, everything, they would likely, have known, the entire Old Testament, off by heart, and yet, Stephen, in his speech, as he comes to, preach, as it were, it's a sermon really, he's preaching, but it's also, a legal defense, he's accused of blasphemy, and he's making this defense, and he decides, to do that, by rehearsing, the history, of God's people, and you think, isn't that, going to be, you know, we would say, patronizing, isn't he telling them, things that, they already know, but if you look, at his language, in verse 2, brothers and fathers, hear me, he's very respectful, he's very polite, he's not trying, to annoy them, he's not trying, to make them seem, silly, or anything, like that, no, he has a very, serious point, to make, and he takes, his time, to go through, this history, carefully, and the reason, for that, is because,

Stephen's face, has been unveiled, as it says, in the New Testament, elsewhere, you might want, to look up, 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, verses 12, to 18, later, to read, of how Paul, describes what happens, when somebody, comes to understand, the scriptures, properly, they suddenly, see that, they're all about, Jesus, they're all, pointing, to this great, savior, who will come, and redeem, a people, for, for himself, and he sees, this so clearly, that his face, is, is, somehow, changed, he's, his face, is some sort of, shining, angelic, quality, about it, it's, as if, a light, has been switched on, for Stephen, it's like, a, find, suddenly, finding, a key, that unlocks, something, that's been, a mystery, and he goes, on, to try, to, share that, to try, to defend himself, by explaining that, to these men, to say, the history, of the, the Jewish race, is not an accident, of some, births, and deaths, and, and historical, events, there's real, there's a real, meaning, a real purpose, behind everything, that happened, and everything, that's recorded, for us, in the Old Testament, and he picks out, two people, he picks out,

[16 : 18] Joseph, and Moses, amongst others, but, in verse 9, of chapter 7, read that, the patriarchs, were jealous, of Joseph, and, in a sense, Stephen, doesn't go into the details, but, those of us, who have access, to the Bible, we can read about that, in Genesis, and we know, that it wasn't, merely jealousy, they hated him, they were leaving him, for dead, and they would have, left him for dead, but instead, they decided, to sell him, as a slave, at the last minute, they rejected, Joseph, and yet, in God's plan, Joseph, was the one, who was, appointed, and sent, to save them, they would have, perished, they would have died, they would have, nothing to eat, unless Joseph, had been, appointed, as a redeemer, as a saviour, for the patriarchs, and these are the men, who are the, the family heads, of, of, of the Israelites, who he's speaking to, at this time, and then he comes to Moses, and he spends a lot more time, on Moses, and that's what we're really, looking at this morning, because, everything has been foretold,

Abraham already knew, that his, descendants, would be slaves, for 400 years, and now we come, and here is Moses, and he's born, into that, that situation, all of God's words, do come true, don't they, and so, that's true even, of this promise, to Abraham, about his, descendants, being enslaved, but there's also, an interesting little, side note here, is that, here we have a case, of the New Testament, giving us, fresh information, that we didn't have, before, in the Old Testament, we can read, about what happened, when Moses, struck down, this Egyptian, but there's nothing, in what we read, in Exodus, that tells us, what he was thinking, about, at the time, but because, God's word, is all true, we now know, that at the point, when Moses, was striking down, this Egyptian man, he was thinking, that God's people, would realize, that he'd been, sent to them, as a savior, as a rescuer, he's here to bring, justice, and freedom, for them, but they don't, realize that, they reject him,

Moses, was willing, to give up, power, and luxury, and his education, and all of these, great things, he had everything, that anyone, would want, as an Egyptian, prince, and yet, he was willing, to give that up, in order to, rescue, his own people, and in that way, Moses, is just like Jesus, because Jesus, gave up, far more, wealth, if you like, far more, security, and comfort, and all of these things, in order to come to earth, and live as a human being, and to rescue us, there's also a reminder, as we read through, this account, of just how, horrible, and violent, a place, Egypt was, for these, Israelites, and so we see, in verse 27, these words, who made you, ruler, and judge, over us, they reject, this, and they're asking, this question, which we know, the answer to, don't we, who made you, ruler, and judge, over us, well, the Lord, has appointed him, ruler, and judge, if only they, they knew, and come again, to verse 35, and you'll see, the same words again, who made you, a ruler, and a judge,

Moses has been, rejected here, in a, in a, a fairly, a fairly, brutal way, but as we see, the rejection, is an ongoing thing, throughout their time, in the wilderness, the Israelites, are constantly, grumbling, against Moses, and if you've got time, you could read, the events, that lead up to, Exodus chapter, 34, later, and you'll be reminded, there, that, in the context, of this, ongoing, grumbling, and complaining, against Moses, these are, people who are, rejecting someone, whose face, is shining, Moses face, was shining, because he'd been in, such, near presence, of the Lord, and he had to, veil his face, and despite that, these people, rejected him, and it's an intriguing, little detail, isn't it, that Stephen's face, as he reminds them, that they've been, rejecting, their leaders, in the past, has this angelic, quality to it, and yet, it makes no, difference, it seems, and so, these are, the men that Stephen, is defending himself, before, they claim, to revere, and obey, everything that Moses, has taught them, but, they miss, they miss, the whole, significance of it, and, and Stephen, has laid this out, for them, the way he's described, the history, of the Jewish people, it's obvious, the direction, in which he's moving, he's, he's showing them, that,

Moses came, and you rejected, Moses, and they can see, this coming, a mile off, they know, that what he's saying, is, and, the Lord Jesus, Christ has come, as the fulfillment, of the one, who was promised, to you, by Moses, and you've rejected, him, also, and so that's, that's our next, main heading, this, pattern of rejection, that we see, in the Old Testament, all of it, is pointing, towards this, much more, serious rejection, that they've rejected, Christ, in Luke chapter 24, we read, that Jesus, on the road, to Emmaus, states explicitly, that all of the scriptures, beginning with Moses, and the prophets, are speaking, about him, and, you could almost, open your Bible, at random, and find, an example, of a prophet, like,

[23 : 27] Elijah, or Jeremiah, or, Isaiah, or any of these people, who are sent, with God's word, and yet, they're rejected, by those, to whom, they were sent, and, Stephen, is saying, Moses, has promised, he's, the great prophecy, that Moses, has made, is that there, will be someone, like me, who will be sent, to you, and they've, to listen, to him, and one of the ways, in which Moses, is like, Jesus, is the way, in which he's, rejected, and so, what's implied, in Stephen's defense, is crystal clear, in other parts, of scripture, Christ himself, makes it absolutely, clear, in his own words, in Matthew chapter 23, we can read, of Jesus, pronouncing, a woe, on some, very likely, some of the same men, before whom,

Stephen, is having to make, his defense, some of these, senior leaders, of the Jewish people, and he says to them, that you decorate, the tombs, of the prophets, and so, you witness, against yourselves, that you're the sons, of those, who murdered, these prophets, prophets, and so, it turned out to be, they very much, did, reject Jesus, and that's, something for us, to, to really, pause, and consider, these people, claimed, to have, a great understanding, they claimed, to be, moral, and upright, and righteous, and anxious, to do, what was correct, but they missed, the whole, the main point, of the whole, of the Bible, completely, passed them by, and why was that, well, in one sense, a simple answer, is to say, well it's to fulfill prophecy, you think of,

Isaiah 53, he was despised, and rejected, by men, can we, can we get any, deeper, of a reason, than that though, when we come, to John's gospel, you know that, the start of John's gospel, says, that Jesus, came to his own, but his own, received him not, this pattern, of rejection, keeps going, Jesus is sent, to his own people, and his own, receive him not, and if, John, had stopped there, there would be no hope, for anyone, would there, but praise God, John, goes on to say, but to such, as did receive him, he gave the right, to become, children, of God, not just, justified sinners, but adopted, as God's own, children, part of his family, and that, the way in which, that happens, we call this, the doctrine of, adoption, adoption, and, adoption, happens, because, of another doctrine, which we call, union, with Christ, we have this, mysterious, but very real, connection, with our Savior, when a person comes, to put their faith, in Jesus Christ,

Christ, there's a sense, in which, their identity, is so closely, united, to Jesus, that, what happens, to them, and what happens, to that group of people, is described, as being, what happens, to Christ's, own body, the body, of Christ, is a metaphor, in the Bible, that we read about, and people, who become Christians, become part of, Christ's, body, in a, in a, it says, it's a mystical thing, but it's a very real thing, and for that reason, the rejection, that Jesus experienced, is, is an ongoing, experience, that the church, goes through, we didn't have time, to read it all, but I would encourage you, unless you're,

I hope you'll, all be out tonight, but if, if you can't make it out tonight, please read the rest, of Acts chapter 7, and you'll see there, that, this rejection, that came, for, that, that, that, Stephen is talking about, Moses is rejected, Joseph's been rejected, and he's, he's implying, and states, states it explicitly, you've, you've rejected, the one, who was sent to you, the holy, the holy one, let me get the, the words exactly right, he says, you have killed, those who announced, beforehand, the coming of the righteous one, whom you've now, betrayed, and murdered, you, who received the law, as delivered by angels, and did not keep it, that's the extent, of that rejection, but as you read on, in Acts chapter 7, you'll see that, the rejection means, that Stephen himself, suffers, the ultimate rejection, he is executed, by this council, because they reject him, and as I've been, explaining, the doctrine of, the union with Christ, means that we too, will experience, something, of that, rejection, we live in a country, where there's relative peace, and there's, good liberties, we have freedoms, to do all kinds of things, and sometimes we worry, don't we, that the tide is, is turning, and, the occasional, person who does, street preaching, will get some trouble, from the police, but, by and large, we are free, in this country, to proclaim, the good news of Jesus, without, too much, bother, and one question, we have to ask ourselves, is, why is that?

[30 : 38] Because, when Stephen, proclaimed the true gospel, really, really well, he was, martyred for it, our message, is a deeply, offensive one, it says, that there's only, one way, to be saved, there's only, one savior, there's only, one name, given, under heaven, by which, anyone, can be saved, and, it's bound, to provoke, a response, if we communicate it, well, and that is why, Jesus says, in his sermon, on the mountain, blessed are those, who are persecuted, because of righteousness, for theirs, is the kingdom of heaven, blessed are you, when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say, all kinds of evil, against you, because of me, rejoice, and be glad, because great, is your reward, in heaven, for in the same way, they persecuted, the prophets, who were before you, in first John, we read these words, do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world, hates you, and we've spoken already, about Paul's reference, to the offense, the offense of the cross, as he calls it, in Galatians, the one thing, we must do, is of course, remember those, who do suffer, greatly, in other parts, of the world, people are, laying down their lives, to proclaim this message, and in first Corinthians 12, we read this, these words, just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts, form one body, so it is, with Christ, now you, are the body of Christ, and each one of you, is a part of it, and put that beside, what we read, in Hebrews 13, continue to remember, those in prison, as if you, were together, with them, in prison, and those who are, mistreated, as if you, yourselves, were suffering, that's my message, this morning, are we willing, to experience, rejection, for the name, of Christ, we're coming up, to Christmas, aren't we, and at Christmas time, it's a, it's a very, acceptable,

Christian festival, and part of the reason, for that, is because, there's no real, I believe, there's no real, offense, in a, in a, a tiny baby, a baby, is a kind of a harmless, thing really, isn't it, but, Christ, who came, and was born, into this world, didn't stay, as a baby, did he, he, he grew, and became a man, and suffered, insults, and persecution, and rejection, and crucifixion, and then he rose again, and it's impossible, to be neutral, about these things, and so, that's where we are, this morning, we have a message, that it's impossible, to be, neutral, about, and in closing,

I must urge, everyone here, if you haven't already, to throw your lot, in with Christ, and be willing, to be despised, and rejected, along with him, because it's the only way, to be certain, of, life, everlasting, amen, and may God, bless these thoughts, to us, up, up, up, up, You