

Acts 7:44-60

- **HISTORY REPEATS...**

- o 1st - Abraham...
 - STEPHEN stood before the Sanhedrin - with two FALSE accusations against him...
 - That Jesus would CHANGE the customs of Moses - **Matthew 5:17**
 - And that he taught Jesus would DESTROY the Temple - **John 2:21**
 - For his defense - Stephen gave them a HISTORY lesson [FOUR parts]
 - Showing them they had ALWAYS been a REBELLIOUS people...
 - FIRST - Abraham [first Jew] had only PARTIALLY obeyed the command of God - **Genesis 12:1**
 - As a result Israel did NOT inherit the LAND until the SECOND time!
- o 2nd - Joseph...
 - SECOND - Joseph [one of the twelve] was REJECTED by his brothers - sold to gentiles...
 - They ASSUMED he was DEAD – but instead he began to RULE [second in Egypt]
 - ONLY to have his brothers come and KNEEL before him [famine]
 - And they received him as their SAVIOR the SECOND time - **Zechariah 12:10**
- o 3rd - Moses...
 - THIRD - Moses was raised for FORTY years as the PRINCE of Egypt...
 - But when he tried to help his people they REJECTED him - who made you a RULER and JUDGE...
 - After FORTY years in Midian - God met him in the burning bush - and sent him back...
 - The SECOND time Israel received him as their deliverer [from bondage]
 - But they ultimately REJECTED the WORD of God at Mount Sinai [golden calf]
 - In answering the FIRST accusation against Steven – changing the Laws of Moses...
 - Steven points out the Jews had NEVER even tried to keep the Law!

- **4TH - THE TEMPLE... vs. 44-50**

- o 1st - The Tabernacle... vs. 44-46
 - The Witness... vs. 44
 - Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness as He appointed!
 - Steven moves on to answer the SECOND accusation against him - the TEMPLE...
 - Long before the TEMPLE was built - they had the TABERNACLE [σκηνή]
 - It was called the Tabernacle of the TESTIMONY - **Exodus 38:21**
 - TESTIMONY [עֵדוּת] - from the Hebrew word [עָד] meaning WITNESS!
 - It was a TENT where the ARK of the covenant [10 commandments] was - **Exodus 26:33**
 - Located in the center of the CAMP of Israel during their WILDERNESS years...
 - It was the PROOF [witness] that God was with Israel!
 - The Pattern... vs. 44
 - Instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen!
 - Moses was COMMANDED [imperative] to build it according to the PATTERN - **Exodus 25:40**
 - PATTERN [תְּבִנִית] we would say the BLUEPRINT...
 - God was very specific about EXACTLY what the TABERNACLE should look like...
 - Because it was a SHADOW of the Heavenly dwelling place of God...
 - SHADOW – meant to point us to the thing that is making the SHADOW!
 - **Hebrews 8:5** - “[The Tabernacle] was a COPY and SHADOW of the heavenly things. Moses was divinely instructed... [to] make all things according to the PATTERN shown [him].” [NLT]
 - FIRST door led into the courtyard – where the priests offered sacrifices for SIN...
 - SECOND door led into the TABERNACLE – where the menorah [light] was...
 - THIRD door led into the HOLIEST – where the Ark and Mercy seat were!

- The TABERNACLE points us [shadow] to our relationship with God...
- When we receive Jesus [FIRST door] – the price for our sin is paid...
- When we live for Jesus [SECOND door] – He lights the way for us to live our life...
- When we finally go home [THIRD door] – we come into the presence of God!
- God with us... vs. 45-46
 - Which our fathers - having received it in turn - also brought with Joshua into the land.
 - Possessed by the Gentiles - whom God drove out before the face of our fathers!
 - Therefore - because Israel had received the TABERNACLE...
 - The PROOF [witness] that God was with them...
 - They brought it with them when JOSHUA took them into the Land...
 - JOSHUA [Ἰησοῦς] - the name in the GREEK text is Jesus...
 - Both come from the Hebrew word [יְשׁוּעָה] - the LORD [יְהוָה] saves [יִשְׁע]
 - Because God was with them [Tabernacle] and Jesus was leading them...
 - Even the GIANTS in the land could not stand against them - **Numbers 13:33**
 - And they were able to drive out the GENTILES [ἔθνος]!
 - Moses [Law] could ONLY take Israel so far - he could NOT take them in...
 - Because the LAW cannot SAVE us - it can only show our need to be SAVED - **Galatians 3:24**
 - It has to be Jesus [God saves] that leads us into the Promised LAND!
 - But when God is with us [Tabernacle] - and Jesus is LEADING us...
 - We can have the confidence that NOTHING can defeat us...
 - Because we know that God is greater than ANY enemy - ANY challenge we might face!
 - **Romans 8:31** - "If God is for us who can be against us?"
- 2nd - House for God... vs. 46-50
 - Grace of God... vs. 46
 - Until David who found favor before God - and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob!
 - The TABERNACLE was set up at a place called SHILOH - **Joshua 18:1**
 - SHILOH [שִׁילֹה] - a place of REST - because God was dwelling with Israel...
 - And for FOUR hundred years that is where the TABERNACLE stayed...
 - Until King David found GRACE [χάρις] from God...
 - When God agreed to allow him to build Him a PERMANENT home - the TEMPLE...
 - GRACE because although David had the right heart - it was the wrong message...
 - God NEVER asked - and did NOT want Israel to build Him a TEMPLE - **II Samuel 7:7**
 - None of us live in TENTS - because they are NOT permanent...
 - A TENT is something we might spend a few nights in while camping...
 - God wanted Israel to see a TENT - to remind them this was NOT home!
 - Far too often we get too attached this life and forget...
 - We are not home yet – our home is a place we have yet to see – heaven...
 - We need to remember to keep a light touch on things here – we are just living in tents!
 - **II Corinthians 5:1** - "We know that if our earthly house - this tent is destroyed - we have a building from God - a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."
 - Expensive... vs. 47
 - But Solomon built Him a house.
 - BUT [δὲ] David was NOT allowed to build the TEMPLE - the task fell to his son SOLOMON...
 - The reason is because David was a man of WAR - **I Chronicles 28:3**
 - When Solomon built the TEMPLE it took him SEVEN years - **I Kings 6:38**
 - And because of the incredible GIFTS David had given to him...
 - What Solomon created was one of the WONDERS of the world!
 - David gave - 100 thousand talents of GOLD - a Million talents of SILVER - **I Chronicles 22:14**

- TALENT - is equal to around 33 kilos [there are 1000 grams in a kilo]
- 100 thousand TALENTS gold = 3.3 BILLION grams of GOLD...
- At over SIX thousand pesos per gram = 20 TRILLION pesos in GOLD...
- Not to mention an additional TWO trillion pesos in SILVER!
- Throne of Heaven... vs. 48-50
 - However - the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands.
 - As the prophet says: Heaven is My throne - and earth is My footstool.
 - What house will you build for Me? says the LORD - or what is the place of My rest?
 - Has My hand not made all these things?
 - BUT [ἀλλά] the MOST high [אֱלֹהֵינוּ] - does NOT live in TEMPLES made by men...
 - As the Prophet Isaiah also said - **Isaiah 66:1-2**
 - Since the THRONE of God is in [the third] HEAVEN - and the earth where He puts His feet...
 - What kind of HOUSE on earth could anyone possible build for Him...
 - Also - it was His HAND that made EVERYTHING [πάντα]!
- Misplaced Faith...
 - In answering the SECOND accusation - destroying the TEMPLE...
 - Stephen pointed out the TEMPLE was just STONE - it was NOT where God lived...
 - Israel thought because the TEMPLE stood in Jerusalem - God was with them...
 - But their FAITH was in the Temple - it was in the WRONG place!
 - When Hophni and Phineas took the ARK into the battle against the Philistines - **I Samuel 4:4**
 - Israel was defeated - because they TRUSTED the ARK rather than God of the ARK!
 - We all have FAITH - but too often we put our FAITH in the wrong place...
 - It does NOT matter if a CHURCH is a nipa hut - or an elaborate building...
 - Because God is NOT in the BUILDING - God is in us - **I Corinthians 6:19**
 - Therefore - we do NOT put our faith in a CHURCH - we trust in the God of the church...
 - It does NOT matter if we have a little Bible - or a HUGE study Bible...
 - Because God is NOT in the BOOK - God speaks through the BOOK - **II Timothy 3:16**
 - Therefore - we do NOT put our faith in the BIBLE - we trust in the God of the Bible...
 - The point is POWERFUL - make sure to put our FAITH in the RIGHT place!
- 5TH - DEATH OF STEPHEN... vs. 51-70
 - o 1st - Conclusion... vs. 51-54
 - Stiff necked... vs. 51
 - You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.
 - Having made his FOUR points - Stephen comes to the CONCLUSION...
 - FIRST - these LEADERS [Sanhedrin] were stiff-necked [only here NT] - unwilling to REPENT...
 - OUTWARDLY they were circumcised - and claimed to be ISRAEL [governed by God]
 - But INWARDLY they were NOT - their EARS and HEARTS were FAR from God!
 - **Romans 2:29** - "He is a Jew who is one inwardly... circumcision is that of the heart."
 - Resistant...
 - You always resist the Holy Spirit!
 - SECOND - they ALWAYS [ἀεὶ] were OPPOSED [ἀντιπύπτω] to the Holy Spirit...
 - They SPIRIT was speaking to them - but they NEVER listened...
 - These were men who were HARDENED - and CALLOUSED against His conviction!
 - **I Timothy 4:2** - "Having their own conscience seared with a hot iron."
 - SEARED [καυστηριάζω] - only here NT - we would say cauterized...
 - They NO longer feel the conviction of sin - they become hardened to God!
 - When we first commit a SIN - we bleed with CONVICTION from the Holy Spirit...
 - But if we continue to SIN - we can create a CALLOUS on our hearts [feel nothing]

- SIN is devastating - if we refuse to repent - it will harden our hearts - **Hebrews 3:13**
- SEARED with a hot iron - we end up rejecting God - because we prefer our SIN!
- Like your fathers... vs. 51-53
 - As your fathers did so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?
 - And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One.
 - Of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.
 - Who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it!
 - THIRD - they were just like their FATHERS...
 - Their FATHERS who had PERSECUTED the prophets sent from God...
 - Men who came to a REBELLIOUS nation to call them to REPENT [but they would NOT listen]
 - And the prophets who spoke [προκαταγγέλλω] about Jesus [just one] - they KILLED...
 - Like their FATHERS - they PERSECUTED those who called them to REPENT [Stephen]
 - And like their FATHERS - they had betrayed and MURDERED [passive] Christ...
 - BECAUSE they had been given the WORD [νόμος] of God - but IGNORED it!
 - People do NOT change - they are still the same TODAY...
 - God has given us His WORD - He sends people to WARN us...
 - But the world does NOT want to hear it - they REJECT the truth...
 - Not because they CANNOT believe it - but because they do NOT want it!
- o 2nd - Cut to the heart... vs. 54, 57-58
 - Rage... vs. 54
 - When they heard these things they were cut to the heart.
 - And they gnashed at him with their teeth!
 - When the SANHEDRIN was CUT to the heart [διαπρίω] – their hearts were torn in two...
 - Used only here and in BOLD response of the Apostles - **Acts 5:33**
 - The continuously [imperfect] GNASHED their TEETH to show their RAGE at STEPHEN!
 - Closed ears... vs. 57
 - Then they cried out with a loud voice - stopped their ears - and ran at him with one accord.
 - They cast him out of the city and stoned him!
 - They then began to SCREAM [φωνῇ μεγάλῃ] to drown out the voice of Stephen...
 - Even COVERING their ears - so that they could NOT hear his WORDS...
 - They RAN towards him - in ONE accord [ὁμοθυμαδόν]
 - The same word used to describe the UNITY of the church through the Holy Spirit - **Acts 2:46**
 - Is here used to describe the UNITY of unbelievers through their SIN...
 - And they threw him out of the city - and [imperfect] STONED him to death - to silence him!
 - People do NOT like it when we point out their SIN – they tend to get UPSET...
 - Because when we give them the TRUTH – it CONVICTS them...
 - So they react [sometimes violently] to try and silence that CONVICTION...
 - We cannot make people REPENT – but we can warn them...
 - We might think it is kinder NOT to confront their SIN...
 - But the truth is leaving someone in their SIN – is condemning them to HELL!
 - Man called Saul... vs. 58
 - The witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul!
 - Those who were WITNESSES - the ones throwing the stones - **Deuteronomy 17:7**
 - Took off their coats to be able to throw harder...
 - And gave the coats to a young man named SAUL to watch over!
 - This is the FIRST mention of SAUL [Paul] in the Bible...
 - But it would seem the death of STEPHEN left a mark [he did not forget it] - **Acts 22:20**
 - Years later he would look back at the IMPACT his life had on him...

- Rather than being JUDGED by God - he was given GRACE!
 - **I Timothy 1:13-14** - "I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man. [But] the grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly." [NIV]
 - If God can save a man like SAUL - who stood approvingly at the death of Stephen...
 - Then there is NO question the GRACE of God can reach ANYONE...
 - Which should give us HOPE - even if someone is HARD hearted today...
 - Even if they get UPSET at us - want to SILENCE us - God can still SAVE them!
 - **I Timothy 1:16** - "God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners." [NLT]
- o 3rd - Standing up... vs. 55-56, 59-60
- Jesus stands... vs. 55
 - [Stephen] being full of the Holy Spirit gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God.
 - And Jesus standing at the right hand of God and said:
 - Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!
 - Being FULL [present] of the Holy Spirit - Stephen chose to look up [ἀτενίζω]
 - And he SAW the GLORY of God - and Jesus STANDING at the right hand of the Father...
 - Jesus does NOT stand [perfect] at the right hand - He SITS - **Colossian 3:1** - **Hebrews 8:1**
 - ONLY here do we see Jesus STANDING in Heaven [οὐρανός]!
 - If we have a child who does exceptionally well at an event...
 - Maybe they score the winning point - or have a perfect recital...
 - Our natural reaction is NOT to sit - we jump to our feet to show we are PROUD...
 - Jesus stood because He was PROUD of His son - He was cheering him as he came home!
 - I CANNOT imagine a more incredible homecoming - than Jesus STANDING...
 - To hear Him say the words - well done good and faithful servant - **Matthew 25:21**
 - Not because of anything we have done for the Lord - but because of what He did for us...
 - Then every hardship - and sorrow in this life will have been worth it - we are home!
 - Forgiven... vs. 59-60
 - They stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying: Lord Jesus receive my spirit.
 - Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice:
 - Lord do not charge them with this sin. And when he had said this - he fell asleep!
 - As the men STONED [imperfect] Stephen - he called [present] out to God...
 - Pleading [imperfect] with his Lord [κύριος] to receive his spirit [τὸ πνεῦμά μου]
 - He KNEW he was about to DIE - yet he did NOT pray for God to save HIS life...
 - Instead - as the rocks forced him to his KNEES - he SHOUTED [φωνῇ μεγάλῃ]
 - Lord [κύριος] - please [subjunctive] do NOT charge this SIN to them...
 - And when he had said that - he fell ASLEEP [euphemism for death] - **I Thessalonians 4:13**
 - The prophet Zechariah was STONED to death by the wicked king Joash...
 - As he died - he told them the LORD will look on it and JUDGE [κρίνω] - **II Chronicles 24:22**
 - If we are HONEST we probably relate more to Zechariah than Stephen...
 - But Stephen understood - that death is TEMPORARY [sleep] - Hell is ETERNAL...
 - And that allowed him to have GRACE and FORGIVENESS!
 - No matter what anyone has done to us - how they have hurt us...
 - Our hearts should NOT be to see them JUDGED - we want them FORGIVEN...
 - Because [like Stephen] we know what matters MOST is that they get to HEAVEN!