



The Rejected Ones Become Rulers and Deliverers

Acts 7:1-7:36

(Lesson #11)

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OUTLINE of Acts Chapter 7:1-36

- 1) The High Priest calls for Stephen to respond to the charges made in the council (7:1).
- 2) Stephen recalls how Yahweh called Abraham in Mesopotamia and Abraham did not initially fully obey (7:2-4).
- 3) Stephen recalls how Yahweh promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan, even though Abraham owned no land and had no descendants (7:4-6a).
- 4) Stephen recalls how Yahweh told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved and afflicted for 400 years, but would then be delivered (7:6b-7).
- 5) Stephen recalls how Yahweh gave Abraham circumcision as the sign of the covenant (7:8a).
- 6) Then Stephen, in passing mentions Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs (7:8b).
- 7) Next Stephen recalls all that happened with Joseph (7:9).
- 8) Next Stephen recalls how the man (Joseph) Israel's sons rejected became the ruler and deliverer of the nation (7:10-13).
- 9) Stephen recalls how Joseph sent for Israel to come and live in Egypt and ultimately die in Egypt under Joseph's care (7:14-16).
- 10) Next Stephen recalls the rising up of Moses, even in perilous times (7:17-22).
- 11) Stephen then recalls how Moses sensed God would use him to deliver the people out of Egyptian bondage (7:23-26).
- 12) But Israel rejected Moses and so Moses fled to Midian (7:27-29).
- 13) Stephen recounts the burning bush episode and God's call to send Moses to deliver Israel from hard bondage (7:30-34).
- 14) Then Stephen reminds the Sanhedrin that God delivered Israel with the man (Moses) they initially rejected (7:35-36).

"1 ¶ And the high priest said, "Are these things so?" 2 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, 3 and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' 4 Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. 5 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. 6 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 four hundred years. 7 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' 8 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.

Vs 1 - The charges having been leveled against Stephen, the High Priest then asks the question, are these things so?

Again, in modern vernacular he is saying to Stephen, what is your defense to these charges. The charges could be summed up as they were summed up in verse 11 of chapter 6: *"Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.""* (Ac 6:11 ESV)

Of course, these charges were not true, some of the Hellenist present had hired men to lie about Stephen, to attack him personally.

Stephen will never respond to these charges, but I believe you will see that Stephen has a very high regard for Moses and more importantly for Yahweh.

Vs 2-3 - So Stephen, although **enduring false accusations** and being **slandered** opens with **showing respect and deference** to the council.

First to his fellow countrymen, where he addresses them as brothers and more specifically to the Sanhedrin who he addresses as fathers.

Stephen is not going to tell the Sanhedrin anything they do not know. But, knowingly or unknowingly they have **forgotten** some of the **important lessons** from the past.

More importantly, they have failed to connect the past with the present. Stephen is going to remind them of the things they have forgotten, and he is going to connect the past to the present in compelling and undeniable ways.

Then Stephen begins to trace the story of Israel. He starts with the beginning of the nation:

- 1) He says, the **God of glory** (Yahweh) appeared to Abraham... This term **God of glory** is only used here in the New Testament by Stephen (the Deacon). Its genesis is Ps 29:3.

MacArthur writes: *“The title appears only here and in Psalm 29:3. It is the most rich, complete description of the almighty, holy sovereign God, since His glory is the composite of all His attributes.”*

The **God of glory** first appeared to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia (before he even moved to Haran):

- a. It was not in Israel, it was in Mesopotamia that Abraham was called!
 - b. I wonder if the Sanhedrin got the point, the God of glory was and is not limited by geographical boundaries.
 - c. The call happened before there was a **temple** or even a **Promised Land**, the God of glory **appeared** to Abraham in Mesopotamia!
- 2) When the God of glory appeared to Abraham, he said to him: ***Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.***

God said to Abraham, leave your kindred behind, go to the land that I will show you (Canaan). What did Abraham do? Let's read on.

Vs 4-5 - Abraham **did not** leave his **kindred behind**, instead he brought his father and his cousin to Haran. Abraham **did not go to Canaan** at least not initially, instead he **left Mesopotamia and went to the land of the Chaldeans, to Haran.**

Abraham, the **Father of the faithful** was not **initially obedient!**

Following the death of his father, God removed Abraham from Haran into the land which you are now living, into the land of **Canaan**, into the **Promised Land**.

APPLICATION: Abraham became a **giant of the faith**, but he **did not start out that way**. It is the same for you and I. Generally speaking, faith is a muscle that is strengthened as we use it, as we operate in faith.

Abraham initially **did not obey God** on the first call, but then later he did obey. This is Stephen's point, this **pattern with Israel**, (initial obedience and later obedience) is woven through this entire sermon.

Yet, Yahweh gave Abraham **no inheritance in the Promised Land**, and he had no descendants.

The only things that Abraham owned was a burial plot (Gen 23) purchased from **Ephron the Hittite**.

What he had was a promise from God. But Abraham did not have so much as a piece of dirt the size of his foot, and he had no descendants.

Although he did have **the promise from God that the land would one day be his and his descendants.**

BUT, he had **no descendants**. All he had was **audacious promises** from Yahweh!

Vs 6-7 - Yahweh even told Abraham, that his offspring (which at the time his wife was barren and he had no offspring) would be sojourners in a land that belonged to others, and in that land they would be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years!

Stephen says 400 years, but Exodus and Galatians say 430 years (Ex 12:40).

Two opinions here:

- 1) Stephen is simply rounding (possible).
- 2) For 30 years the Pharaoh "knew" Joseph, after that Pharaohs arose that did not know Joseph and things got progressively worse for the nation (maybe).

As promised, God would judge the nation that enslaved them, the nation they were serving and God said: **'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.'**

Ultimately, they would come **back to Canaan**, back to the **Promised Land**.

Vs 8 - He Yahweh, gave him (Abraham) the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:9-12).

Abraham became the father to Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day, Isaac received the promise and became the father to Jacob, and Jacob received the promise and became the father to the 12 patriarchs. In fact, we just finished Genesis two months ago, this is all fresh on our minds.

9 "And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him 10 and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. 11 Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. 13 And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. 14 And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. 15 And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, 16 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.

Vs 9-10 - Here Stephen moves into the **story of Joseph**, he says the patriarchs **being jealous of Joseph sold him into Egypt**.

This is **particularly applicable** for we read in Acts 5:17.

Stephen tells the Sanhedrin, that the patriarchs (less Benjamin), were **moved with jealousy and sold Joseph into Egypt!** They may have **sold him into slavery**, but **God was with him**.

I hope you see Stephen's point, Israel has a history of this behavior. They did it with Joseph and now they are doing it with Christ!

Wait, he wasn't in Israel, he was in Egypt (and God was with him). Not in Israel, not in a temple, but all the while God was with him! God is not restricted to buildings or geographical locations,

One more point, we talked about this on a couple of occasions. This is the **sovereignty of God** and the **responsibility of man**. Man was doing what he wanted, but God, was working in the background all things in the direction that He (the sovereign Lord) wanted them to go.

Vs 10 – Not only was **God with Joseph**, God:

- 1) **Rescued him out of all his afflictions.**
- 2) Gave him **favor** and **wisdom** before Pharaoh.
- 3) God made Joseph **ruler** over Egypt and over all his household. Remember (Gen 41:39-40).

This point should strike a chord with the Sanhedrin, for Peter has been saying this about Jesus (Acts 2:36 and 5:31).

What **happened with Joseph** is **exactly what they did and are doing with Jesus!**

The rejected one later became the Savior of the rejectors! This should sound familiar!

APPLICATION: There is a larger point of application. God can work in and through the thorniest of scenarios in our lives. If we will trust Him and leave it to Him!

Vs 11-12 - After Joseph's rejection by his brothers, a famine came over the land, that spread throughout all Egypt and Canaan. That is factually true, we remember the details from Genesis.

There was great affliction in the land and Israel "our fathers" could not find food.

Then Jacob got word that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers, the brothers (minus Joseph and Benjamin). Jacob sent the ten to visit Egypt to secure grain!

Vs 13-14 - Then Stephen says on the second visit, (after they had come back to fetch Simeon and to get more food) Joseph made himself know to his brothers, we remember the story, we remember the banquet that Joseph prepared for his brothers.

Now Stephen skips the whole matter of hiding the "**silver drinking mug**" of Joseph, and he simply says what happened in the end. Pharaoh himself learned that Joseph's brothers were visiting him (Gen 45:16).

Then Joseph summoned Jacob and all his kindred to come to Egypt, in all we are told it was 75 persons.

This figure of **75** is a quote from the **Septuagint of Genesis 46:27** and likely includes the grandsons of Joseph.

Vs 15-16 - So, Jacob went down to Egypt where he was cared for and protected by Joseph. But not only did Jacob die, so too did the other patriarchs.

Ultimately, Jacob died in Egypt and you remember Joseph and his sons took him to Abraham's burial plot, the cave of Machpelah and buried him there. Remember he made them promise to do that.

The antecedent pronoun in vs 16, "**they**" must be referring to the patriarchs.

But the larger problem is Stephen says Abraham bought it for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. But that is not what we read in (Gen 33:18-19).

Is Stephen confused? Scholars are not certain on the explanation, two have been proposed that I am aware of.

- 1) Abraham built an altar in Shechem and some speculate that he must have also purchased the plot of ground that he built it on that would later be the place where the patriarchs were buried.

- 2) Stephen is telescoping the account of Abraham's purchase of the Machpelah site and Jacob's purchase of the Shechem site into one picture.

We cannot be sure, and we are too far removed to likely ever figure this one out with perfect certainty.

Notice what Luke says that Stephen said, "they" were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamar in Shechem.

17 ¶ "But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt 18 until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph. 19 He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive. 20 At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house, 21 and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. 22 And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

Vs 17-19 - As the time that God had promised Abraham drew near (Gen 15:13) the Israelites increased and multiplied in Egypt.

But then, there **arose over Egypt**, another king **who did not know Joseph**. He had no knowledge of all the good that Joseph had done for Egypt. A king likely totally disconnected from Joseph and the exploits of Joseph (Ex 1:8).

This king, (Pharaoh) dealt shrewdly with the Hebrews, he dealt shrewdly with the Israelites and forced their fathers to expose their infants, so that they would die (Ex 1:13-14 and 1:15-16).

The midwives disobeyed Pharaoh, telling him the Hebrew women were to vigorous and gave birth before the midwives arrived. The Pharaoh commanded in (Ex 1:22).

Vs 20 - It was at this **perilous time** that Moses was born. But it was not just a perilous time, it was the **time appointed of Yahweh**.

Stephen, who had been accused of speaking blasphemous words against Moses, stated that the baby Moses was beautiful in God's sight and that he was brought up (hidden and cared for in hiding) for **three months** in his father and mother's home.

By the way Moses' parents show up in the Hall of Faith (Heb 11:23).

Vs 21 - But ultimately the day came, when his parents could not longer hide him and they had to expose Moses too (Ex 2:3).

When this happened Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the Nile. She saw the basket, and she sent her servant girl to retrieve it (Ex 2:6).

She adopted Moses and brought him up as her own son. Now the boy was actually raised by the his mother, but we will save all of the extra details for our Exodus study.

This is a very shorthand expression for what happened, but the Sanhedrin would know. They were fully aware of the story of Moses!

Vs 22 - So once the child was weaned, he was raised in the house of Pharaoh. Moses, because he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and his deeds.

Instructed in science, mathematics, astronomy, history, and medicine. Moses was instructed at the finest **Egyptian University**. He became a man mighty in words and in deeds.

His natural leadership abilities, coupled with his God given spiritual abilities, coupled with the most comprehensive education the ancient world had to offer, created a man God had specially prepared for the task at hand.

23 *"When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. 25 He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?'* 27 *But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'* 29 *At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.*

Vs 23 - Moses was raised as an Egyptian, but he likely always knew he was actually a Hebrew.

At forty, it came into Moses' heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel.

We do not know why it came into his heart, but we should assume that **God placed it in his heart**, because God plans to do a work through Moses, thus Yahweh places it in Moses' heart to visit his fellow countrymen.

We should assume that God is calling Moses a man He has especially prepared for the work!

Vs 24-25 – Moses saw one of the Hebrews being wronged by an Egyptian, Stephen says and Luke records that Moses **“defended”** the **“oppressed”** man. He defended him by striking down the Egyptian (Ex 2:11-12).

Stephen then says that Moses did this because he **“supposed”** his brothers (fellow Hebrews) would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand.

But they did not understand, they did not accept, they did not acknowledge what God was doing or that God was doing it through Moses.

Moses offered deliverance to Israel and he was rejected! Does that sound familiar?

By the way, Moses shows up in the Hall of Faith (Heb 11:24-29).

Vs 26 - Then the next day Moses appeared once again among the Hebrews.

Upon his arrival it appears that two of them were quarreling. In the midst of their quarreling Moses tried to reconcile them by saying: *'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?'*

Vs 27-28 - BUT, the man who was doing the wrong to his neighbor, thrust Moses aside.

It seems that he physically pushed him aside and then said to him: *'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'*

FIRST QUESTION: Who made you a **ruler** and **judge** over us? Who do you think you are, who has assigned you as the king and judge over what we do. **Who are you anyway?**

SECOND QUESTION: Do you intend to kill me the way you killed the Egyptian yesterday?

Once again, **Stephen's point is obvious**, God raised up a **leader and a deliverer** and Israel initially **rejected** him!

What happened to Moses is what has happened to Jesus and Israel has a history of this!

Vs 29 - At this response, Moses fled Egypt. He fled to Midian. Where he lived for forty years.

While in Midian, he became a father to two sons: **Gershom and Eliezer**.

30 ¶ "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 32 '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. 33 Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

Vs 30 - Moses was forty when he stepped in to defend a Hebrew from oppression by an Egyptian. He ends up fleeing Egypt. Now 40 years later (Moses is now 80) an angel appears to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush (Ex 3:1-3).

This text is saying that Mount Sinai is in Median, in Saudi Arabi and not what we call the Sinai peninsula. Do you see that? This is inline with what Paul says in (Gal 4:22-24).

This "angel" appears to Moses from the burning bush.

Vs 31-32 - When Moses saw the sight, the bush that burned but was not consumed, he was amazed! He decided to draw near and get a closer look at the bush that burned, but would not burn up.

Upon drawing near he heard the voice of the Lord (Ex 3:4-6). This was so disturbing that Moses trembled, he feared to even look at the sight of the burning bush.

Stephen said, he did not dare look at it for he was afraid to look at God!

Vs 33-34 - Then the Lord spoke again and said to Moses three things, let's walk through them:

- 1) **Take off your sandals** for the place where you are standing is holy ground.
 - a. Moses was standing in the presence of absolute holiness, absolute perfection, absolute beauty!
 - b. Side note, when we encounter God in this kind of way, we are encountering **the Holy God**.
- 2) I have **surely seen the affliction** of my people in Egypt.
 - a. What they are enduring at the hands of the Egyptians has not gone unnoticed to me.
- 3) I have also **heard their groaning**; I have heard their cries for deliverance.
- 4) I, **Yahweh have come down to deliver them**. Let this sink in before we read the fifth thing.
 - a. Here Yahweh tells Moses. I (Yahweh) have come down to deliver them.
- 5) Now come, **I am sending you**, by way of implication **to deliver them**.

APPLICATION: When **God has a work** He wants to do, rarely does He do it Himself. He sends one of His children to do it. To leverage off pastor's point last Sunday. He has lots of tools, He grabs one that is clean and close and uses that man or woman to accomplish what He intends to do.

That is what Yahweh is doing with Moses. That is what God does with us.

If we want to be used of God. Like Moses and like Stephen, we need to be **clean and close**.

God is not looking for our **abilities**, but rather our **availability** (clean and close). He will give us all we need to pull of the mission that He is sending us on!

35 "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. 36 This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. 37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.'

Vs 35 - This Moses, who the nation of Israel rejected by saying: *'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'*

THIS IS STEPHEN'S POINT ONCE AGAIN! It turns out that Israel was guilty of rejecting the very one whom God had sent to be both **ruler and redeemer**.

This is the second time Stephen is making this point.

Israel has rejected the ones who God sent. The ones who God sent to be both ruler and redeemer.

The parable Jesus told in Matt 21:33-46 makes this very same point!

Vs 36 - The man **they rejected**, Moses, is the **very man who led them out**. This man performed wonders and signs in Egypt and the Red Sea. I hope you see Stephen's obvious **connection between Moses and Jesus**.

Let's summarize:

- 1) Stephen shows a high regard for the law of God (not a blasphemer).
 - 2) Stephen shows a high regard for Moses (not blaspheming him either).
 - 3) Abraham was not in Israel, nor did he have access to the temple, but **God appeared to him**.
 - 4) Joseph was not in Israel, nor did he have access to the temple, but **God was with him**.
 - 5) Israel's sons rejected Joseph, the man that God sent as both **ruler and deliverer**.
 - a. **You know what God did?** He made Joseph **ruler and deliverer** anyway (by way of implication think of Jesus).
 - 6) Israel rejected Moses, the man God sent as both leader and deliverer.
 - a. **You know what God did?** He made Moses **leader and delivered** anyway (by way of implication think of Jesus).
 - 7) **This is a message of grace!** The nation initially rejected Joseph, but received him the second time. They rejected Moses, but received him the second time. To that Sanhedrin, they had and were rejecting Jesus, but there was still time to receive him. For God has made him both **Lord and Savior**.
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