

Acts 6.7-15

First after Jesus

Challenges to Growth of Church > OUT: Persecution, IN: Hypocrisy

Ch 6 Ancient Challenge 1500 yrs < : Israelites > Redeemed from Egypt

“Life was better back there!...Building Pyramids!...Eating Cucumbers!”

Wandering Israelites & Widows Jerusalem > In Common: GRUMBLING

God: GRACE for Grumblers > Raises Up Leaders: Spirit-filled Servants

All Jerusalem knew of CRISIS of Food DISTRIBUTION to Widows

Apostles Empowered 7 HELLENISTIC (Greek Language, Culture) Jews

5 Never Mentioned Again > Learn more about 2: Stephen & Philip

Never know How GOD will Use Person CONSECRATED to His Work

Equipped by G's Spirit / Framed by G's Enemies / Touched by G's Glory

1. Equipped by God's Spirit

Thru out Bible > Power SPIRIT OF GOD INITIATES CHANGE

When the APOSTLES told church to Select Servants, Requirement

6.3 choose seven men...who are known to be full of the Spirit

6.5 They chose Stephen, a man full of...the Holy Spirit

a. Spirit

Problems in Church > People Self-filled / Solution > People Spirit-filled

7 Leaders: Chosen by Members / Consecrated by Master

Ch 2 – Event: Pentecost – Once for All Salvation Event: Baptism of Spirit

King Jesus – Died, Rose, Ascended > Shared GIFT of Given by Father

Rewarded w SPIRIT of God > Kindly Shares His Spirit those He SAVES

Graduated from College > Shocked by Parents > Bought Car! VW Rabbit

Not only helped PAY for Tuition > Generous when I Finished Course

Once had CAR Need keep it TOPPED UP with Gas!

Baptism of Spirit: Once for All Historical Event, Church Receive Benefits When BELIEVE in
Jesus > Join Baptized Community by Faith

Continue NEED Filling w Spirit // Pull up to Pump, TOP UP, We LEAK!

No COMMAND in Bible to be BAPTIZED w Spirit > to be FILLED

“¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Ephesians 5.18-20

“full” = under the control of / Control of spirits OR by GOD’S Spirit

I’m SURE Nobody here Knows what its like to be DRUNK

Seen in the Movies > Morning After “Did I really say/do THAT???”

“It was NOT Me! It was the Alcohol” > NOT Remove Responsibility

Command > Reject “You do YOU” > Be like Jesus, filled w/ Spirit

b. Faith

v. 5 They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit...

Simple Gift > FAITH > Not what YOU DO but what HE DID > Take It!

Faith BROUGHT Stephen IN, and Faith KEPT him in > FULL of It

Believe BEYOND what is Visible > Hebrews 11.1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

“Seeing the Invisible”: Confidence Not in Treasures or Pleasures of World

c. Wisdom v. 3 choose 7 men from among you who are known to be **full of the Spirit and wisdom**. We will turn this responsibility over to them

Stephen: Probably Hellenistic Jew > Greek speaking synagogue Converted > received X >

Baptized > Discipled > Lord’s Supper

Deacon: Need Wisdom > Knowledge of Christ, cultures, Christians

Love God and Neighbor > Bless Enemies > Hospitality to Strangers

v. 8 Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.

v. 9 began to argue with Stephen.

2. Framed by God's Enemies

a. Argument : 1st Jesus > NOW Stephen - Considered FALSE Teacher

6.9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen.

“Freedmen” – Roman prisoners, who Purchased Freedom

Freedman > founded by freed Jewish slaves, 1st language LATIN

Saved from PAGAN Culture > Came to Holy City / Purity / Tradition

Saw Jesus as THREAT to Historic Truths of JEWISH Faith

6.7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

>> Priests converting > Caused Fear & Uncertainty to Jews

Eager to KEEP Pure TRADITIONS > Worked hard for FREEDOM

Religion BOUND Former Slaves together – Source of HOPE

Challenge to their Religion BE A GREAT THREAT TO THEM

STEPHEN > FOE TO THEIR STABILITY - SAME TRUE TODAY

b. Allegation Could NOT WIN by FAIR Debate > Use FALSEHOOD

Seen in Most POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS - FALSEHOOD & SLANDER

Schools: Used to Teach HOW to Think > Today teach WHAT to Think

6.11-14 They secretly instigated men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses & God.” And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and they set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”

Worst Violation > Against Moses and God > Temple, Torah, Traditions

SERIOUS ALLEGATION - NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT TO JEWS

TEMPLE and the TORAH / WORSHIP and the WORD

GOD'S MEETING PLACE and GOD'S MESSAGE

Building - Rules – Power Structure // 3 Most Impt. Things Church!

Stephen’s Accusers ALLEGE he wants to CHANGE ALL 3!!

Typical of the DEVIL'S ATTACK - mixes Half Truth in his Lies

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'
Matthew 26.59-61

Straw Man > Misrepresenting the Enemy

John 2: "Temple" – Jesus HIMSELF would be DESTROYED

Not saying DEMOLISH Temple > He – THE Temple - would be KILLED

c. Answer v. 10 they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Stephen UNIQUE Wisdom from God: Defend & Declare Gospel of Jesus

1 of FIRST Apologists of Christian Faith >> NOT mean "Say Sorry!"

Greek "apologia" = a 'defense' or 'answer'

Xtian apologetics defends Biblical Truth of Christianity against Attacks

Your commands make me wiser than my enemies Psalm 119.98

Jesus: I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict Luke 21.15 54

Proving Promise of Jesus > Don't worry about What to SAY!

What DO when Cannot Win Argument > Shout and Fight and Lie

Effective Apologia: 7.54-58 "When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

As he stood tall before the Council, he brought the theology of X down hard on the three great pillars of popular Judaism: the land, the law, and the temple – three false bases for confidence before God. Kent Hughes

d. Application > Inciting Crowds: Stephen Attacking WORSHIP of Israel

2 Charges: Against Moses by Law / Against God by Temple

No Heart in Religion > Forms become PRIMARY, Ritual, Traditions

Once you have NO Heart for God then EXTERNALS become Essential

Don't Sit in Pastor's Office > Biggest Mistake of Tenure @ Hilo Church
 Worked Hard > Teaching Scripture, Calling People to Christ, Prayer!
 Hired Paint Co. > Historic Building: Yellow, Red > Paint Expert Idea
 Yellow & Green better Complimentary Colors "pay you big bucks!"
 Haole Malihini Horrible Mistake, Gossip all over Town GREEN!? X KZ
 Main Thing Worship Jesus under Red / Green / NO Roof at All!

1 Jesus, where'er your people meet, there they behold your mercy seat;
 where'er they seek you, you are found, and ev'ry place is hallowed ground.
 2 For you, within no walls confined, are dwelling in the humble mind;
 such ever bring you where they come, and going, take you to their home.
 5 Lord, we R few, but you are near; nor short your arm, nor deaf your ear;
 O rend the heav'ns, come quickly down, & make a 1000 hearts your own.

3. Touched by God's Glory

Moses: Focus Critics Complaint – Stephen MORE LIKE Moses than They

When Moses came down from Mt Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. Exodus 34.29-30

6.15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

EVEN BEFORE he OPENED his MOUTH– TRUTH of GOD on FACE

Was it not God's deliberate purpose to give the same radiant face to Stephen when he was accused of opposing the law as he had given to Moses when he received the law? In this way God was showing that both Moses' ministry of the law and Stephen's interpretation of it had his approval.
 John Stott

Face SHINING like Moses > Glory of God present TEMPORARY!

Glory SOON Departs! Like Moses FADING Glory

NOW is your Chance > Listen to God's Word NOW or be LOST

God wants to get their ATTENTION // Pentecost EVENTS

This Message determine DESTINY of Israel Forever > Way of LIFE

Space Shuttle Needs BOOSTER Rocket for Launch > VITAL for Lift-off Only way ESCAPE

Grip of Earth's Gravity!

Once it Does Job – Spends ALL Fuel – Dead Weight would Bring DOWN

Role of Israel is Jettisoned like Booster Rocket > Served WELL

Moment has PASSED > Jesus in Another Orbit > Risen to GLORY

Only ESSENTIAL Now is to be IN CHRIST

All POINTED to Real Thing > PERSON of Jesus Christ IS Real Thing

Stephen Preached About JESUS > SAW Jesus > DIED LIKE JESUS

FORGIVENESS for his MURDERERS on his LIPS

7.59-60 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

// Jesus on Cross Prayed 2 Father: Now Prayer to Lord Jesus = GOD

“fell asleep” Peaceful Description of Brutal Death > Full of Christ

CRIED Out – NOT for himself or his Pain > for Attackers to be SAVED

Religious CHAOS and KILLING Shows ABSENCE of God’s SPIRIT

7.51 "You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

You wonder what kind of world we live in when good and godly men like Stephen can be murdered by religious bigots! But we have similar problems in our ‘enlightened’ age today...hostages, bombings kill innocents, assassinations...The heart of man has not changed, nor can it be changed apart from the grace of God. Warren Wiersbe

6.8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

Signs & Wonders NOT Silver Bullet > bring Arrest, Pain, Prison, Death!

Not create Church Growth > Death, Destruction, Drove Out Church

EVEN at END of STRONG WORDS 7.55 Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit

TODAY many Teach Spirit-filled = Success, Health, Prosperity, Happy

3 MEN in NT > FULL of H.S. – 2 Murdered, 1 Gave Property Away

Jesus, Stephen, Barnabas > Full of Spirit >> Selfless, Sacrificial givers

6.5 Stephen, a man full of faith >> A MAN FULL OF JESUS

Acts 6.7-15 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. 8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. 11 Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." 12 And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, 13 and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us." 15 And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Lord we thank you for your mercy and grace. In mercy you do not give us what we deserve. In grace you freely give us what we do not deserve – all because of the gift of Jesus. You give grace to grumblers. You protect and purify your people to advance the Gospel and build your Church. Spirit of God fill seven leaders in Kalahikiola – with wisdom, faith, grace, and power. Lord, for your glory, fill seventy leaders! Raise up a banner for your Name!

Ask the Lord to make you one of the Seven!

Heavenly Father, we stand in awe of your plan and power. From a handful of believers on the opposite side of the earth – the Word of God has not stopped growing. Your Church is expanding in every nation on earth. Protect us from adversity without, purify us from hypocrisy and grumbling within. Give us your grace Lord Jesus – host us at your table as we feed upon your forgiveness by faith. Seal us in your Salvation that we might forever remain in your grip. Amen.