

Acts 7.1-60

Change Can Get You Killed!

Never want to HEAR 'C' Word spoken by DR. > FEAR CANCER

Big "C" Word SOME FEAR ALMOST AS MUCH - **CHANGE!!**

Creatures OF HABIT- Like things to Stay SAME - COMFORTABLE

World of Change - Everything round US Changes, We're CHANGING

ALL OF LIFE IS CHANGING – We Struggle to keep up with it

By the Time your Complexion Clears Up, HAIR Falls Out > TEETH

FURNITURE DISEASE – Chest is falling into my Drawers

Changing People in Changing World creates CHANGING CHURCH

Place Change Most Threatening > Church - REFUGE / SANCTUARY

1. Critics of Change

a. Argument 6.9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen...rose up and disputed with Stephen.

CHANGE in their Religion would be a GREAT THREAT to THEM

Former Slaves BOUGHT their Freedom > Eager for Stability and

STEPHEN > Foe to their STABILITY - SAME TRUE TODAY

Apostles Empowered HELLENISTIC (Greek Language, Culture) Jews

7 Servants Chosen ALL GREEK Speaking, HELLENISTIC JEWS

Stephen & Philip Preachers / Evangelists – Other 5 NEVER Mentioned

b. Allegation Could Not WIN by FAIR Debate > Use Falsehood

6.11-14 “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God”... against this holy place and the law... Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered”

NO Worse Violation > Agnst Moses & 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

Stephen's Accusers ALLEGE HE WANTS TO CHANGE ALL 3!!

TYPICAL OF THE DEVIL'S ATTACK - mixes Half Truth in his Lies

2. Creator of Changes

MOST UNUSUAL Sermon recorded in Book of ACTS

1. Longest 2. No Jesus 3. No Resurrection 4. No Invite to Believe 5. No Self Defense

Focus on 4 Epochs of Israel's History / 4 Great OT Heroes

1. Abraham and the Patriarchs 2. Joseph and the Egyptian Exile
3. Moses & Exodus Wanderings 4. David & Solomon – & the Temple

IF U think these are FOUR ROCK BANDS > Need to READ MORE O.T.

CHANGE comes FROM GOD > He always does NEW THINGS

a. God Works Everywhere Jews thot God Only in THEIR TEMPLE

7.2 God of glory appeared to our father Abraham in Mesopotamia

7.9 Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him

EGYPT, EGYPT, EGYPT – Mentioned SIX TIMES by Stephen

EGYPT mentioned more than 600 X's in Bible – MOSTLY BAD

7.17 as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt

God would FULFILL promise to Abraham – even in Egypt

GOD'S LAWGIVER WAS A PRINCE OF EGYPT

7.22 Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians

7.33 The Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

PLACE WHERE YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND

Where? Downtown Jerusalem? Wilderness of Sinai!!??

HOLY Ground – Outside HOLY LAND – Wherever GOD IS – IS HOLY

FIRST MENTION OF A RELIGIOUS BUILDING

7.44 Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness

Solomon KNEW REAL TRUTH > STEPHEN'S CRITICS DID NOT

7.48 the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands

HEAVEN IS GOD'S THRONE / EARTH IS HIS FOOTSTOOL
 GOD COULD NOT BE CAPTURED INSIDE THEIR BOX
 STEPHEN SEES LONG AWAITED MESSIAH OF ISRAEL

“oh good, he is coming for us right – the House of Israel, people of faith”
 BIGGEST SHOCK 7.56 “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

YOU GUYS MISSED HIM – Messiah WAS HERE YOU Murdered HIM
 MAY SEEM LIKE A CONFUSING SERMON TO YOU – NOT to Them
 WOUND OF ITS IMPACT WAS UNBEARABLE – Stephen must die
 THEME OF SERMON – God of Israel, on the Move / NOT BOUND
 No Building can CONFINE HIM or CONTROL HIS ACTIVITY

b. God Works thru Anyone - SACRED HEROES are MORTAL MEN

Abraham – Idol worshipper – WHY left Mesopotamia

Joseph– Young Man thrown away into Egyptian prison

David – YOUNGEST, SMALLEST son of Jesse – Shepherd Boy

Moses – Old Man tending sheep in the desert wilderness

Longest SECTION on MOSES – HONORED Law Giver of Israel

Focus Critics COMPLAINT – Stephen MORE LIKE Moses than They

6.15 all...council saw that his face was like the face of an angel

Before Stephen OPENED his MOUTH– TRUTH of GOD on FACE

1) Disobeyed Moses Revelation 7.22 Moses...instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds

7.37,38 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.’ 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.

STEPHEN HONORS MOSES – SHOWS HIM NO DISRESPECT

Understands Moses Points TO JESUS > Great, Final Prophet of God

2) Denied Moses Redemption 7.25 Moses/He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.

7.35 “This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer

7.39 Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt

Pay LIP Service to Moses & LAW – They are Worst OFFENDERS

Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts 2 Corinthians 3.15,16

7.51 “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.

7.52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered >
Only Ref to JESUS

7.53,54 You who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."...heard...furious...gnashed teeth at him

Stephen’s Deadly Sin his God NOT Confined: Temples, Texts, Traditions

Should NOT seek UNNECESSARY CHANGE FOR CHANGE SAKE

BUT WHEN UNAVOIDABLE CHANGE COMES- Should NOT FEAR

GOD HAS SEEN END FROM THE BEGINNING

GOD IS IMMUTABLE – UNCHANGEABLE – ETERNAL

I the LORD do not change. Malachi 3.6

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today & forever Hebrews 13.8

3. Christ the Change-Agent

a. Replaced Temple – MEETING PLACE – God & Man

TEMPLE ITSELF – pointed to SOMEONE Greater

7.49 “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord

Enemies MISUNDERSTOOD this STATEMENT of Jesus: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."...the temple he had spoken of was his body.” John 2.19-21

HIS BODY - TRUE TEMPLE OF GOD - WAS CRUCIFIED

Now as RISEN Lord invites WORSHIPERS from EVERYWHERE

MEETING WITH GOD NOW ONLY THROUGH JESUS

Jesus: I tell you that one greater than the Temple is here Matthew 12.6

Meeting with GOD No Longer BOUND by Buildings & Services:

Jesus: where 2 or 3 come together in my name, there am I with them. Matt 18.20

STEPHEN entered HOLY TEMPLE thru HORRIBLE TRAGEDY

7.55-56 full of the Holy Spirit (Stephen) gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Stephen has been confessing Christ before men, and now he sees Christ confessing his servant before God.
F.F. Bruce

Jesus NOT Impassively Sitting Down Somewhere FAR AWAY

Standing - REACHING OUT – With Us in all OUR STRUGGLES

FATHER HAD STORE IN SHOPPING MALL – PET SHOP

POODLES HAIRCUT AND MADE BEAUTIFUL

Friends & I used to sit with DOG WHISTLES – Watching and Blowing

DOG WHISTLE – Sound BEYOND RANGE of Human Ear

Piercingly Clear to more Sensitive Ears of a Dog / Impossible to Groom

Sound in Another Realm / Sights of Another Realm / Jesus in Glory

b. Fulfilled Law - Jesus is New Moses – Law of Kingdom of God

Regarding LAW of Moses – Jesus: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" Mt 5.17

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Romans 10.4

TEMPLE & LAW >> GOD GIVEN GIFTS

BOTH FIND THEIR GOD-INTENDED FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Philip: "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth"
John 1.45

JESUS WAS CHANGING BOTH THE TEMPLE AND THE LAW

CONSTRUCTIVE NOT DESTRUCTIVE / POSITIVE NOT NEGATIVE

BOTH MAGNIFY THEIR IMPORTANCE WHEN POINT TO CHRIST

No harm can be done to the temple and the law, when Christ is openly established as the end and truth of both of them
John Calvin

4. Christians and Change

a. Power SPIRIT OF GOD INITIATES CHANGE

WHEN THE APOSTLES TOLD THEM TO SELECT SERVANTS

6.3 pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit

6.5 they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit

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

Religious CHAOS and KILLING Shows ABSENCE of God's SPIRIT

7.51 "You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

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

PREACHED About JESUS > SAW Jesus > DIED LIKE JESUS

COULD NOT STOP THE MESSAGE / KILL MESSENGER

7.57-58 they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him

Ground TEETH – Threw STONES – BUT NEVER OPENED BIBLES

FORGIVENESS for his MURDERERS on his LIPS

7.59-60 As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Jesus on Cross Prayed to Father > Now Prayer to Lord Jesus = God

"FELL ASLEEP" Peaceful Description of Brutal Death > Full of Christ

Cried Out – NOT for Self or his PAIN – for Attackers to be SAVED

Grace of God EMPOWERED TO BRING GOD HONORING CHANGE

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

Grace and power: sweetness and strength...merged in one personality

G. Campbell Morgan

b. Promises

How to COPE w/ Change? > Full of GOD - Person of His WORD

2 Unchanging Truths RUN THROUGH STEPHEN'S MESSAGE

1) God will Bless His Word

Stephen DECLARED a PROMISE-KEEPING GOD

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matt 24.35

Change is painful to us all...we should not seek change merely for the sake of change. Yet true Christian radicalism is open to change. It knows that God has bound Himself to His church (promising that He will never leave it) and to His word (promising it will never pass away). But God's church means people not buildings, and God's word means Scripture not traditions. So as long as the essentials are preserved, the buildings and traditions if necessary can go. We must not let them imprison the living God or impede His mission in the world. John Stott

2) God is With His People

Mesopotamia – Egypt – Dessert – Wilderness – OMNIPRESENT God

Jesus: I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28.20

Church Shocked by Martyrdom // Cross of Jesus // God Working thru

8.4 Those who had been scattered *preached the word wherever they went.*

Death of STEPHEN > HINGE in Book of ACTS > Jerusalem to Nations

2024 > Suffering, Terrorism, Famine, Senseless Slaughters

God of Stephen > Living > Purpose > Not Always KNOWN to US

7.58 witnesses laid down garments at the feet of a young man named Saul

Embrace God > Endure CHANGES > Filled with Spirit, Wisdom, Word
