Acts 6:15 – 7:53 “Stephen Takes the Sanhedrin to School”

Sermon Goal:

**SLIDE 1**

Review of Acts 6:8-15 – “A Strategy for the World”

Acts 6:8-15

**“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. 10And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. 11Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” 12And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon *him,* seized him, and brought *him* to the council. 13They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; 14for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” 15And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.”**

Last week we began with reminding ourselves of Jesus’ agenda for his church.

**SLIDE 2**

**Jesus’ Agenda – Acts 1:8**

**“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

**- What can we learn from this? What is Jesus concerned with, and what does He want His people to be doing?**

**SLIDE 3**

How did the Holy Spirit begin to accomplish Jesus’ goal?

1. (Acts 6:1-6) Use a church dispute to bring about the spread of the gospel

2. (Acts 6:7) Use a humble, unlikely man to expand the gospel

3. (Acts 6:8) Use signs and wonders to capture the people’s attention

4. (Acts 6:9-10) Uses Saul’s synagogue to spread the Word of Christ

**SLIDE 4**

The Result of the Holy Spirit’s Strategy

1. Some from the Synagogue of the Freedmen are saved and take their message back home.

Examples:

2. Acts 11:20

**“But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.”**

3. Acts 13:1-3

**“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.”**

**This is evidence that the plan is succeeding...**

**SLIDE 5**

**Satan’s Strategy to crush the Gospel**

**1. (Acts 6:11-14) Confuse the Issue (Lie)**

**“Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” 12And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon *him,* seized him, and brought *him* to the council. 13They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; 14for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.”**

**2. (Acts 7:57-60) Cancel the Threat**

**“Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him.* And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60Then 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.”**

**SLIDE 6**

Application

1. God has always and always will use circumstances and people to accomplish His will

2. You can trust God’s sovereignty no matter how things appear

3. Yield to God and He will use you.

4. This all means that you can trust the Lord and rest in Him.

**Acts 6:15 – 7:53 “Stephen Takes the Sanhedrin to School”**

**SLIDE 7**

Outline of Today’s Passage Acts 6:15 – 7:60

1. The Empowerment Acts 6:15

2. The Pivot Acts 7:1

3. The Remediation Acts 7:2-50

4. The Confrontation Acts 7:51-53

5. The Martyr Acts 7:54-60

Let’s work through this outline

1. The Empowerment

let’s look back at Acts 6:15.

**15 “And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel”**

Why is Stephen’s face shining? He is filled with the Holy Spirit, so you know what’s coming. His words will be a message that points right at the reality of Jesus Christ. He has received power from on high.

This follows the accusations made against Stephen in the previous 6 verses.

They look at Stephen, and see something that must have been startling.

 2. The Pivot: Acts 7:1

in verse 1 of Chapter 7, Caiphas says to Stephen,

“Are these accusations true?” – Explain Caiphas’ question/background

And...Here we go.

3. The Remediation: Acts 7:2-50

These religious guys need a reminder of the truth, so...

Read 7:2-50 (Stephen takes the Sanhedrin to School)

**“And he said, “Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ 4Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. 5And *God* gave him no inheritance in it, not even *enough* to set his foot on. But even when *Abraham* had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. 6But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress *them* four hundred years. 7‘And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.’ 8Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so *Abraham* begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac *begot* Jacob, and Jacob *begot* the twelve patriarchs. 9“And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him 10and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. 12But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13And the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to the Pharaoh. 14Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to *him,* seventy-five people. 15So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers. 16And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, *the father* of Shechem.**

**17“But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt 18till another king arose who did not know Joseph. 19This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live. 20At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father’s house for three months. 21But when he was set out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. 22And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. 23“Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. 24And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. 25For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. 26And the next day he appeared to *two of* them as they were fighting, and *tried to* reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ 27But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’ 29Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.**

**30“And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. 31When Moses saw *it,* he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, 32*saying,* ‘I *am* the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and dared not look. 33‘Then the Lord said to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 34I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.” ’**

**35“This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.**

**37“This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’**

**38“This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, 39whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, 40saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; *as for* this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ 41And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets:**

***‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?
43You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’***

**44“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, 45which 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 until the days of David, 46who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. 47But Solomon built Him a house.**

**48“However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: *49‘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? 50Has My hand not made all these things?’***

I know that was long. It was a brief but thorough history of Stephen’s people, the Jews, His brethren, before whom he now testified. How do you think Stephen held their attention while telling them things they already knew?

It was because the message was supernatural, straight from God.

They have been primed – set up, brought up to speed...and then,

4. The Confrontation Acts 7:51-53

I can see Stephen taking a deep breath, and then, he drops the weight of their sin directly on their heads.

**“*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did,* so *do* you. 52Which 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, 53who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it.*”**

**Notes:**

5. The Martyr Acts 7:54-60

**54When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. 55But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” 57Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him.* And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60Then 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.**

**Notes:**

**SLIDE 8**

**Application**

**1. Wait Patiently on the Lord – He will fill you**

**Luke 12:11-12 –**

**“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. 12For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”**

**2. Know the Word – Study it**

**2Timothy 2:15**

**“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

**3. Boldly Speak the Truth – No matter the consequences**

**Ephesians 4:14-15**

**“...we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"**

**4. Trust in His Will for Your Life – and Death**

 **Psalm 27:1**

 **“The Lord *is* my light and my salvation;
 Whom shall I fear?
 The Lord *is* the strength of my life;
 Of whom shall I be afraid?**