

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part V: The Ministry Of The First Local And Universal Church, Acts 3:1-8:3

H. Christ's Work To Instruct Us On His Leading Thru Stephen's Words (Acts 7:2-53)

I. Introduction

- A. Stephen's Acts 7:2-53 sermon was clearly empowered by the Holy Spirit under the leading of Christ as evidenced by Stephen's supernatural facial glow in Acts 6:15 and witnessed by Acts 7:55-56.
- B. We learned in our last lesson that this sermon exposed how Israel had long misread God's leading due to spiritual callousness, cf. Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 369-370.
- C. Thus, the **instruction** that message gives on how God leads His people contrary to how His people have often perceived that leading is valuable for us to consider that we stay tuned to God's leading (as follows):

II. Christ's Work To Instruct Us On His Leading Thru Stephen's Words, Acts 7:2-53.

- A. As Stephen's sermon noted, God's people must watch that they not resist God's intent to produce Biblical progress and change in ministry formats versus getting locked into dead ritualism, Ibid.:
 1. Stephen's sermon had noted that change in how God ministered in Bible history was a typical constant:
 - a. God changed from ministering directly to the whole human race to minister through one man, Abraham, Acts 7:2-8 in light of Genesis 10:1-12:4.
 - b. God once moved Jacob's offspring from Canaan to Egypt (Acts 7:9-16) but then used Moses to lead them back out of Egypt and into Canaan again during Israel's exodus, Acts 7:17-43.
 - c. The tabernacle was made for mobility, and so God's visible presence moved from spot to spot in the wilderness all during Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan, Acts 7:44-46.
 - d. When the temple was built in Jerusalem, it was noted in Scripture that this could not truly house God, for the heavens of heavens could not contain Him, Acts 7:47-50; Isaiah 66:1-2.
 2. Thus, God's people even in the dispensation of the Church must realize that God does not want us to become locked into dead ritualism, but realize He can Biblically vary His style of guidance, ministry and assignments of life and ministry with His people.
- B. As Stephen's sermon noted, God's people must note that His blessings are not limited to a single geographical area, but that they spread far and wide to all who heed the Lord, Ibid.:
 1. One of the charges Stephen faced was the claim he was opposed to the temple's welfare, Acts 6:14, a charge revealing the belief that somehow God abode only in that one location.
 2. In reality, even the Old Testament prophets countered this claim, saying that the temple could not contain God (Isaiah 66:1-2), and Stephen noted how God had comfortably moved from place to place from the days of Moses until the building of Solomon's temple, Acts 7:44-45; Numbers 9:15-23.
 3. Accordingly, God's people today must realize that God does not view the location of the Church building, or America or some other locality as His favorite place, but that He quite comfortably blesses all kinds of people around the world in all kinds of locations and in all kinds of conditions!
- C. As Stephen's sermon noted, God's people must watch that they not oppose God's plans and men when He first introduces them unto them, Ibid.:
 1. Stephen's sermon noted that just as Joseph and Moses were rejected by Israel in their first appearances to the nation, God's own Son was initially errantly rejected by Israel, Acts 7:9-16, 17-36, 37, 51-53.
 2. Accordingly, God's people in the Church era must be careful not to oppose God's plans and men when He introduces them, that they walk by faith in His Word without becoming detoured by dead ritualism!

Lesson: God empowered and led Stephen in his sermon to critique Israel's leaders for having long resisted God's changes in working with them, in thinking God's blessing was geographically limited to their temple site and in resisting God's new plans and messengers.

Application: By application, we in the Church era must watch that we not turn so stagnant in our faith that we resist Biblical change by God, or assume a certain geographical spot or nation is more desired by God than others or that we not recognize God's Biblical plans and messengers when He sends them. Our faith should thus not be rooted in ritualism, but in relating to a LIVING, DYNAMIC God!