

## Acts # 17

4-14-24

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Stephen has just preached a careful rehearsal of the history of Israel; God had revealed Himself to Abraham, called him to a country far from his home and family, promised that his descendants would number as the stars in the sky and the sands of the sea and that He would give to his descendants a large possession of land, the where of which Abraham had no idea but his descendants would, eventually, inherit and inhabit it, all of it, forever! And also, by the way... they would, first, be held captive for 400 years.

Abraham believed all that God said to him even though, as of yet, he had no child, no son through whom his lineage would descend and multiply and he had never had any interaction with God! How did he know?

Why did Abraham believe God? How is it that he was, perhaps, predisposed to the understanding of and the belief in the existence of the One God, Almighty, Creator of all that is Who is able to know and direct the future?

Adam knew God, Who walked in the garden into which He had placed Adam and Eve; Adam knew the Voice of God Who had spoken with him at times; God spoke to Cain who rejected God's voice after he had killed his brother, Abel.

When Eve gave birth to Seth, she understood the truth that through Seth, God's promised Seed would be carried all the way to the Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who would ultimately destroy the 'seed of the serpent,' Satan, in the Antichrist. Her Seed was carried through a Godly line from Seth to Noah. Adam's descendant, Lamech, Noah's father was Lamech who was already 56 years old when Adam finally died! Lamech could have listened to Adam's teaching and history lessons for all that time and without doubt, Adam, who'd been originally created with an infinite and eternal mind, remembered everything for the past 930 years without any vestiges of dementia at all and Lamech was 113 years old when Enoch was raptured to Heaven; Enoch was the most righteous mortal human, ever, who literally walked with God; he could have also been Lamech's treasured teacher. All of Lamech's acquired knowledge could have thus been poured into his son, Noah, who became a preacher of righteousness and the one whose family God would preserve when all other humanity perished in the Flood.

Adam was unimaginably brilliant, the genius of geniuses. It would have been nothing for him and his children to have developed a perfect written and spoken language; possibly even Hebrew. All the history of the 1500 years before the Flood was surely, I believe, preserved in a library of books which would have been taken upon the Ark to be kept unto, through and beyond the Flood.

The Godly Seed was carried through Noah's son, Shem who was probably the one tasked with keeping the World's historical library when Noah finally died. Remember: these are not savages or cavemen! These are the longest living most brilliant minded humans, except Jesus Christ, to ever walk the Earth.

Noah lived 350 years after the Flood until Terah, Abraham's father, was 128! Noah died just 2 years before Abraham was born! Shem, Noah's son, was alive until Abraham was about 150! Isaac, Jacob's father, would have been grown by the time Shem finally died.

Abraham could have held, and kept safe in his possession, all the compounded knowledge and written histories from the time when God walked and spoke with Adam and Eve, Seth to Enoch, Methuselah, Noah and Shem, all the knowledge from Adam until Jacob to Joseph.

Those books of history could have been, then, taken with Jacob's family when they traveled down to Egypt where one of two things could have happened: 1) they could have been preserved in a Hebrew home through those 400 years of slavery until the Israelites left Egypt to travel through the wilderness for 40 years and they could have then been kept within the confines of the portable Tabernacle; therefore, Moses could have studied them preparatory to his writing out the Pentateuch, the first 5 Books: Genesis through Deuteronomy.

Or: 2) It could be that said books did exist, were carried down to Egypt but then... they might have been confiscated by the Egyptians and kept in the palace of Pharaoh. After 320 years of the captivity in Egypt,

Moses was born and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. He could have studied that historical record until he was 40 years old, enabling him to later write out the Pentateuch under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Whether or not all this is true, it is still true that every Word Moses wrote was Holy Spirit inspired.

*'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'* 2Tim 3:16

Something to think about, something about which to imagine...

Until now, as Stephen has had their attention; with everything he's said, to this point, they have no argument; they've been quietly nodding in agreement... 'Maybe this guy isn't so bad...'

But then Stephen winds himself up and throws a bomb into the crowd:

**Acts 7:51:** *'Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. <sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: <sup>53</sup> Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and (you have) have not kept it.'*

*Stiffnecked:* You will not bow in submission to God!

*Uncircumcised in heart and ears:* They were proud of their rite of circumcision; it set them apart from the Gentiles; it proved they were special, better... God's chosen people... it was their ticket to Paradise! What they failed to understand is that the circumcision of the flesh was merely an outward sign of what God requires of the inner heart... similarly... but not exactly... baptism of the Born Again is also but an outward sign but it represents what God has done, what He has accomplished in creating, of His Own volition, a new and righteous heart that is His/his forever! It is no longer a work of the flesh but, rather, the work of God through the work of His Holy Spirit.

*'And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,... **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked...** <sup>17</sup> For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward... Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.'* Deut 10

*Always resisting the Holy Spirit...* never following His leading... always filled with pride in who they imagined themselves to be: chosen by God because they were special above all the peoples of the Earth when, in reality, they were only special in that God had chosen them through absolutely no worth in themselves over any peoples of the Earth.

*'For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup> The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:'* Deut 7:6

*Persecuting and killing God's Prophets* whom He sent to warn them over and over again... they always resisted and rejected Him and His spokespersons; God saw them as an adulterous, whoring, unfaithful wife as illustrated through the ministry of Hosea. But, for Israel, the best news is yet to come. Here, the Holy Spirit through Stephen is contrasting Israel in the flesh with the True Church in the Spirit. For us, God's work in us has already been completed; we've already been recreated; all that remains is the transformation of our earthly, dying bodies into glorious, eternal and perfect bodies like Jesus Christ's Own Body while at the same moment, we will be freed from our old sin nature as it resides within our sinful flesh.

*'Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.'* 1 Cor 15:51

*'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he*

*shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is.'* 1 John 3:2

The same is true today; even within so-called churches; they are blind and deaf to truth; they believe the lies of the World and of their own false teachers; they parrot them just as loudly and forcefully as the rest of the World; they hate Jews and True Christians; they love the '*palestinians*;' they despise the things of the Spirit; they love the world while the world tolerates them to the extent that they believe, speak and act like the World.

The enemy (muslims and the world) of my enemy (True Christians) is my friend. How else to explain the abject idiocy of so-called '*christians*,' homosexuals, 'transgenders,' hollywood and the media siding with muslims who will quickly murder them when finally given the opportunity!

Just as God required of Israelites, a personal circumcision of the heart, just as He chose Israel to be His Own... Before the foundation of the World, God chose for Himself a certain, specific people to be gathered from every nation, tribe and tongue to whom He would reveal Himself, individually; He would call and draw each one to Himself while recreating them into the holy and righteous virgin bride for His faithful Son, all according to His Own purposes without any worthiness or deservedness in themselves whatsoever!

But these, whom Stephen is blasting, have no concept of truth or faith; apart from the Holy Spirit's work, they are, to spiritual things and ideas deaf, mute, blind and wholly uncomprehending.

**Verse 54:** '*When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.'*

Once before, in response to Peter's first sermon, those listening were '*pricked in their hearts*;' previously, their reaction, because the Holy Spirit was drawing them to Himself, was to seek forgiveness and Salvation: '*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*' Acts 2:37 Then, as opposed to *now*, they willingly received God's gifts of repentance and faith to believe. Here, they willingly disbelieve; their hearts rise up in wicked rebellion.

Both instances are the result of their will; one wills to submit while the other wills to rebel but both are responsible before God. One, because God had chosen him from the foundation of the world, God chose to free his will from the bondage to sin. The other, because God had not chosen him from the foundation of the world, God chose to not free his will from its willing bondage to sin but that does not release him from his responsibility before God because he had always willingly submitted himself unto the bondage of sin.

These hate the True God Almighty because they refuse to come to Him in humble submission to His Sovereignty. God said that all are guilty before Him: '*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*' <sup>7</sup> *And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.'* Isaiah 64:6

They hate God; they will not confess and repent of their sin. They, along with their religious leaders, Pharisees and Sadducees, put their trust in that they are Jews! Sons of Abraham! God's chosen people! Their physical circumcision! That they are not Gentiles! Their animal sacrifices, even sacrificing lame, blind, old and sick animals! They hate Stephen because they hate the Lord Jesus Christ Who is, in fact, Holy and Righteous, the Spotless Lamb of God, the one and only Way of Salvation.

Today, we see the world responding in exactly the same way; they hate Jews because they hate the God of the Bible Who loves Israel, Who has chosen Israel above every other nation on Earth, Who continues to guard and protect Israel through no worthiness on their part whatsoever; they seethe with jealousy and murderous hatred. They hate Christians because they hate the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only chosen and anointed One, the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life unto Eternal Salvation.

The October 7th vicious massacre of more than 1200 innocent Jewish civilians including women and children by muslim Hamas with Israel's subsequent righteous retaliation has served to finally rip the mask away which was barely covering the worldwide hatred of Jews and genuine Christians; this, I believe, will prove itself to be

the major turning point leading to the final fulfillment of all End Times Prophecy because it has served to reveal all that's been only barely hidden. Young people, old people, students and professors... those from every walk of life and every nation... their unveiled hatred of Jews and genuine Christians has set the world onto the same path trod by 1930's Nazi Germany.

Because they proudly proclaim their hatred for Jews and genuine Christians, they'll willingly follow the man whose hatred for the same will be unmatched in all of human history... the Antichrist; they will give themselves over to his every command, believing in and worshipping him as god while rushing to take his special Mark upon their right hands or foreheads which will then seal their fate to eternity in the Lake of Fire!

***Verse 55:*** *'But he (Stephen), being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup> And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.'*

Always, Stephen is described as being full of the Holy Ghost! We'd all like to be known to God as one who willingly serves Him and others, who effectively preaches the Gospel, who courageously confronts evil and who rests in His loving care even unto a violent death. There's only one way that can be true of each of us; we are commanded, but Spirit-enabled, to walk in the Spirit, to follow the Holy Spirit's leading... day by day, minute by minute, choice by choice:

*'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;'* Eph 5:18

*'And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'* Eph 4:30

*'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'* 1Cor 6:19

*'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup> Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.'* Gal 5:22

And when we fail, we are commanded and lovingly invited to come to His Throne for patient forgiveness and restoration to intimate fellowship: *'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'* Heb 4:15

***Verse 57:*** *'Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,'*

*'Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,'*

Imagine: being so rebelliously evil that they would actually put their hands over their ears and cry out loudly so as to not hear Truth! That is the perfect picture of today's citizen of the world!

***Verse 58:*** *'And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.'*

And here is our first introduction to Paul... not at all like the man of God he would become. Here, as a rising star among the Pharisees, he guards the coats of those who are murdering righteous Stephen. He doesn't try to stop them; he gives his wholehearted assent that this follower of Jesus is fully deserving of a violent and viscous death! And from here, he will make it his personal mission to stamp out this new Christianity... how he must have grieved over this later, after his conversion...

***Verse 59:*** *'And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. <sup>60</sup> And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.'*

Just like the Lord, Jesus Christ Who said, *'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.'*

This should be of great encouragement to us who are facing ever increasing hatred and persecution; as we trust in God's absolute Sovereignty over our lives and over all things; He will always guard us even to, and through, the moment of physical death.