

Lessons from the Old Testament in Stephen's apology (Quality: Average)

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- [0 : 00] At the Rolstow, we will speak to the last two verses in the chapter we read. The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 7, verses 59 and 60.
- And they found Stephen, calling upon God, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.
- He kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their child.
- When he had said this, it was true. It was almost a replica of the dying outpourings of the Lord Jesus.
- Except that it is said at the end that he gave up the job. He laid down his own life. And yet this is associated with the knowledge that Stephen had of the whole history of the children of Israel.
- [1 : 29] You would not say there's a great deal of spirituality in it. Until he comes toward the end, where he lays the whole charge against the people that are before them.
- In this sixth and seventh chapter, we have a very remarkable account.
- The work of God at a particular juncture in his life, the life of the church, rather, when one is changing from one scene to another.
- You read the chapter 6, you will find there the anointing and appointing of the godly and gracious men, Stephen among them, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.
- When they sat before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on it. No scene like this anywhere else in the word of God.
- [2 : 55] Here was the beginning of a new era. Here were men, obviously Gentiles, by their very names. Philip, Procora, Nicola, Tartham, Parmeas, Nicodas, the proselyte of Antio.
- No Jewish names there. Oddly men, married after the Gentiles, the descent of all, into the churches as of the pre-cursion Deacon.
- And from this page, the pathway widened out through the way they went out into the parts of Asia and the disputed pre-cursion set forth the everlasting gospel as it was now revealed in these earlier Pentecostal days by the Holy Spirit.
- And the opposition in which they met. And how they did exactly the same to them as they did to Jesus, they subpoiled witnesses to side that Stephen and the other had blessed seen the name of God and said that this man Stephen said the temple would be destroyed and all the old laws would be changed.
- we cannot really enter into this only by thinking very quietly and deeply of the massive change it must have been.
- [4 : 52] If there came about such a massive change today it would indeed turn the whole war upside down. one is on the way undoubtedly of evil and it has to yet come that this is for good and there was the instrumentality of human nature these men furnished for their several parts and Stephen among them.

And what is most important is the long pages of history well this is a long chapter this chapter that he speaks of those things which we know well enough.

call of Abraham it begins with he goes on to speak of Sir Hachiyah Jacob back out of Egypt and a fortunate time and a deliberate not of the way that Pharaoh was raised up to preserve them.

what a wonderful man Joseph was and how when this Pharaoh died another king who knew not Joseph and everything shut and he goes on to speak as we know from these earlier pages of the scriptures of the appointment of Moses and how he was so wonderfully cared for in his faithfulness and learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians with whom he would have so much to do in such a remarkable way and then he goes on to speak of Moses activities and how he eventually for 40 years went into the wilderness where he had to take the people afterwards they're all fully if we know our

Bibles familiar with these things and he is a man on the first of it I don't think that history doesn't matter will it don't disregard history because it's merely history as the children know it at school and say you don't like it it's the hand of God who might take good that's the hand and that's what the Lord's people are taught to serve they see men and figures and incidents war and peace peaceful things like roof war like things where thousands die are over and all they are brought to observe and think of and meditate on the mighty hand of God overruling all these things and to the believer history becomes a very massive thing and we must never give our young people in particular the idea that they can concentrate on the

[9 : 19] New Testament but it doesn't matter they're the old never give that impression and never hold it yourself because you will find the same God in the old and the new this is one of the turning points in the history of the world where the Lord brings about this remarkable church but it's pounded upon the historical facts already to cause and they don't disagree people there's about only one point in the whole of this apology of Stephen's that we know nothing about and that is that

Moses supposed that they would have known that he would have delivered them to do we're not told how Moses came to suppose this or on what ground evidently Moses had this poor knowledge poor information gifts him who and when and by what means are not told but by and large there's no difference and so Stephen when he stands for the historical fact of the word of God takes them one by one from their setting puts them before the people who knew them well enough should have known them more to this end therefore we need to take a lesson that it doesn't do us any harm to reread the Old

Testament and it doesn't do us any harm to see this brought into living power time of God's appointment and here's a man full of the Holy Ghost which is a very important point it's a good thing to have your mind while store the description and it is a bad thing to put it on one side and say it doesn't matter this is all Stephen had he had known in Testament now get things strike in your own mind as regard to this that if you are sometimes trying about your reading of the word of

God and you say or the enemy says who was reading the Old Testament say to him why shouldn't I look for my God in the Old Testament to carry them why shouldn't I look for him where he is to be found oh it's a wily crowd that sinks through and is fed with the Old Testament and set in on one side so the example is before here is a man about to the use of God and about to the first martyr and he stands by the word of

God now think of the number of people that know nothing about him now little company I don't suppose there's one not one who does know something of these bits if I were to ask the youngest child here who it was that lay in an ark of bulrushes he'd be able to tell for those powers or think their matters have not happened these wonderful works of God and the way he does tie on things together and causes them to work together for good Stephen was like Paul and of course hundreds of others these godly men in that day well versed in the old destiny

[14 : 49] I'm not suggesting one to the exclusion of the other I'm saying that there's an even balance between the two and here it is put to good use and the fresh information and latest events and the crowning of all these ancient historical facts come at the crucial moment in verse 51 when Stephen turns to the people and says he's stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears you do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did so do you which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted and they have now we could cite here they have now slain them which showed before of the coming of the just ones of whom we have now been the betrayers and murderers now this is what stungle as it where the word of

God at once brings them into life this is where God takes the sword out of the scabbard and uses it this is where truth provides us there is no voice to oppose this there is no one that can say well you're wrong Stephen you've got your historical facts all wrong and what happened about a few months ago Stephen is not true you're talking to us about something which has never happened now their consciences were cut they were cut to the heart as a remarkable point here with regard to preaching the gospel which I have referred to before that is that when

Peter was saying as much as this in his bold address the day of Pentecost that the people received a similar power in their own heart they were fricked in their heart it didn't for me to distinguish between the meaning of the word fricking and the word cutting but the outcome of Peter gestation in the Pentecost of men and brethren what shall we do to be sane sane you don't find it here my dear friends I point out to you the utter sovereignty of God you don't find it here

Steve laughing why you can't answer me can you why why should these men be dealt with as they were at the Pentecostal message when Peter did why should not these men instead of railing on stable as they did gnashing upon him on their teeth why should they not men and brethren what shall we do to be shy oh that awful and solid barrier of divine sovereignty which men fly fast and loose with today never have done is visible almost to the naked eye you can see it as clearly as they know it was withholding from them their eyes were blinded that they could not see and there was not one of this multitude who were thus cut to the heart and gnashed on with their teeth with their teeth who made the slightest utterance or request very solemn point this in the life of a believer who sees one taken and another left

Jacob separated from you one member of the family left two were left one taken the other this is where we see the hand of God the overruling hand of God and this is what our Bible are for to teach us these sacred truths and to hammer and under them and to show us that they are God's working it follows by any reasonable argument that if this happened on the day of

[21 : 34] Pentecost when Peter was preaching they were ripped in their hearts why should it not happen on this day when they were cut to the house but we're not dealing with sense and religion we're dealing with divine sovereignty and we're dealing with it as living people on the borders of eternity as those who one day stand before that solemn barrier and yes or no come or go and it is not we who fight the history it is God it is he who fight the decision not man so that you have here a very full account not only as the history of

Israel from the time of Abraham and all the relevant facts but come to this amazing scene where they go further than gnash upon him with their teeth they stoning the death this stoning is something we can only visualize if you may have seen pictures of it looking in the history the other day at the more dead system I saw a graphic picture of the stoning and they weren't perhaps little pebbles men took their clothes off and laid them at the feet of sword when men start taking off their outer garments there's heavy work to be done and these stones were not just stones that the children pick up and skim across the water now this is why they laid their clothes at the feet of

Paul saw death and these therefore were the cruelties of that death poor stuff left the dead one can well picture how through such a bolder peril by more than one man would stun a person and probably kill and this is the outcome of the faithful testimony of Stephen as he comes down to depending the truth of his life for we as real religion as to be ready to defend the truth with our lives is the word of

God the ancient history the present history that we have now this murdering of Christ lying down of his knife this positiveness in our belief about this sacred sacrifice of the Lord Jesus have we enough life in our souls that would stand the test of suffering as this we can't answer the question can we because we know that there is martyrdom great and what untold numbers John refers to beneath the throne of God in heaven their cry for holy revenge upon their shed blood as the martyrs of Christ and there is such sacred company without nothing he therefore stood to the end and God appeared for him

I see the head of the son of man standing on the right hand of God we now look about the heavens the night of we hear much about man movements in the upper heavens and we know that there is a reference in the scripture to the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee and have reached the heaven of heavens has it though he may have landed on the moon and know what it is to be white blessed and succeed now that

[27 : 57] Stephen saw the head go vast space above our head open and he was given sight to see it and what did he see an unknown person no I see the heaven open the son man the son of man whom we've been speaking about here he calls him in verse 52 the just one the just one of whom he have now been the betrayers and murderers but the same man man the very same man we read that he sank at the right hand of God we make a difference between standing and sitting here it is standing it matters not to us what the arguments may be one way or the other the fact is that

Jesus was standing at the right hand of God and this further aggravated them to the pitch that they went beyond their gnashing of teeth I mean I expect I've said so before and it won't matter if I say it again have you ever gnashed your teeth if you have you know you've been in a tidy passage because this is as far as man goes in his anger and he rips or gnashes his teeth but they went further than this and he said he saw the heavens open they cried with a loud voice and what did they do they stopped very used again

I say to you why did they not say what must I do to be saved tell me why did they not say Lord save us why did they not cry like the Philippian jailer did what must I do to decide tell me why did they put their fingers in their ears why did this pronouncement of the open heads and the standing saviour there fill with with utter utter utter enmity why did they not want to hear about him you've got the answer in your own heart so by enmity to

God the bitter vile enmity in our heart to a holy God heart and if it's in your heart you know what it is you will agree with what I a very positive proof of it the enmity of the carnal mind of which Paul had spoken times are yet to come and he said an actual man is enmity against good and we don't know much about enmity to each other people fall out and disagree and walk down the side of the road and I haven't spoken to them for years and I don't want to and all that story is common enough but when it comes to absolute enmity to

God you know you don't know much about what it is so do I not to your fellow preachers I believe there would come a point where it possible for reconciliation for you to forgive your greatest enemy ultimately they will come to enmity to God bitter enmity they stop their ears and here is a man full of the Holy Ghost and here is a man that charged them with thanks set before them what they have been guilty of here is a devil urging them on to the last degree they stopped their ears and ran upon them with one accord a whole mob of them no restraining hand like in some cases in

[34 : 29] Paul's experience saying that the last minute some sensible voice ungemanial to arise now to say here is a man on his way to heaven suffering for the cause of God and truth here is the vital reality of it all that not for one moment did he hesitate God open the heavens he saw his savior that was more precious to him than somehow he would not now sell his birthright for a mess of potty would he far from him but they cut their ears now

I say in reading the Old Testament you will see the hand of God in so many places where you didn't expect it the same applies here in the early stages of the new they put their finger in their ears now this isn't strange I don't say that people literally put their fingers in their ears under how many sermon have used that with your fingers in your ears in other words deliberately I can no no it can be done in school don't they ask them after a lesson what the lesson is about they couldn't tell it all the ones can quietly shut their ears the dead the psalmist said stop it earlier though the child never so wisely you remember the day when you stopped your ears and they ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city stoned him now the main point of all this is my thoughts this week come to the latter part of this which I hope to speak from the seasons

Lord Jesus receive my spirit you got an immortal soul there's a difference between you and the beast you got an immortal soul and here is one who is saying with such sacred simplicity that the man he can see in heaven the right man the just one he is saying well you can't breathe upon the surface

Lord Jesus receive my spirit and take that's far above history doesn't it and yet it is the true history of the church of the God a readiness a readiness as you sang in your second here there's no abiding city here there's got to be a dissolution between the body and spirit and Stephen was well aware of it with every evidence that he was throughly fernic and war and worthless thought by the holy spirit and this is dying dying or rather the dying uproaches you have an immortal soul so that he stands before you and which side of the mind that I saw point out to you this morning between these two great eval to you stand when they cried men and brethren what much we do to be said or the other side of the line when you gnash upon him with your feet put your fingers in your ears and say no now don't want to listen to it so the

Lord help you to think about it and bless it to it amen