

Sermon Series Title: "Church Beginnings"

Sermon Series Summary: From now until around Easter, we will be in the book of Acts, covering chapters 1-12. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we see the NT church being born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this series, we see the church being built, the kingdom going forth, and the gospel being proclaimed.

"We are in our "Church Beginnings" sermon series, and through this series, we're going to see that we need to know where we come from to know who we are now and to know who we will become in the future."

Call: Deuteronomy 32:39

Text: Acts 7:1-3, 9-10, 20-22, 35-39, 47-53

Title: "The Sermon of Stephen"

Next Week's Call: Deuteronomy 32:43

Next Week's Text: Acts 7:54-8:3

Next Week's Title: "The Sacrifice of Stephen"

Future Calls: Judges 5:2, 3, 4-5, 31, 2 Samuel 2:1-2, 3, 4, 7, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23-25, 26-27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 40-43, 47, 50-51

Future Titles: "The Confusion of Simon" (Acts 8:9-25), "The Mission of Philip" (Acts 8:4-8, 26-40), "The Conversion of Paul" (Acts 9:1-19a), "The Ministry of Paul" (Acts 9:19b-25), "Dwelling in Flesh" (Daniel 2:8-11)

Fallen Condition Focus: Our pride leads us to trust in things outside of Christ for our purpose, life, and joy.

Christ redeeming FCF: Christ is the fulfillment of Scripture and our defense.

Proposition: "Let us trust in Christ who is our Redeemer and our Refuge."

Summary: Being filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen is led to proclaim Christ through the Old Testament. He rejects the areas of pride in the Jewish leaders, and he teaches how Christ fulfills all of Scripture. He proclaims that they are following their fathers in rejecting God's sent prophets by rejecting and crucifying God's ultimate prophet in Jesus.

Reflective Questions:

1. What are the sources of our pride that we trust in instead of Christ for our source of joy, worth, purpose, and hope?
2. What do you think about what Stephen said regarding the Old Testament and Jesus?
3. How do we reject Christ in our lives?

I. Introduction

- A. Hook- Trial- charge and defense
- B. Transition- in ch. 6, Stephen is charged with speaking against the temple, the law, Moses, and God.
- C. Proposition
- D. Points

II. Israel's Pride

- A. Stephen defends himself in an indirect way, because his main point is to proclaim Christ to these Jewish leaders.
 1. He calls them out for their pride in their idols, and he presses upon them that Jesus is the fulfillment of all Scripture.
 2. He goes into Scripture in more detail than any of the apostles so far (remember, he's a Deacon)!
- B. Israel's pride of their ancestors
 1. It's a rich heritage. Look how blessed it is in Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, the prophets.
 2. They pride themselves in their ancestry.
- C. Israel's pride of their land
 1. The Promised Land is such a big part of Israel's history.
 2. It was Israel's inheritance as a nation after the Exodus.
- D. Israel's pride of their customs and temple
 1. This is part of the charges against Stephen (6:14).
 2. Circumcision (v. 8)- sign of God's covenant
 3. Sacrificial system (vv. 41-42)- God's system of atonement
 4. Temple (vv. 44-47)- God's presence
- E. Israel's pride in Moses and the Law
 1. Part of their charge against Stephen (vv. 11, 14)
 2. Moses is the chief prophet in the Old Testament, and through Moses, we have the Law. The people identify with both of them.
- F. Don't we have areas of pride in our lives? What are the idols we go to for our source of joy, life, purpose, and hope?

III. Stephen's Points

- A. Stephen addresses each area and rebukes their pride.
- B. Israel's pride of their ancestors
 - 1. But these are all by God's grace- calling of Abraham (v. 3), favor on Joseph (v. 10), protection of Moses (v. 21).
 - 2. And these Jewish leaders are more in line with the people who rejected Joseph (brothers in v. 9) and Moses (v. 35, 39- even after the Exodus). We see Stephen talk about that in v. 52.
- C. Israel's pride of their land
 - 1. But we see Abraham be called and blessed in Mesopotamia (v. 3), Jacob receive favor and wisdom before Pharaoh (v. 10), Moses receive instruction in the wisdom of the Egyptians, Moses encounter God at the burning bush near Mt. Sinai and on Mt. Sinai receiving the law- all in Egypt (vv. 30, 38).
 - 2. Side note- Hebrews 11 talks about Abraham's hope beyond the land to the promised land of heaven.
- D. Israel's pride of their customs and temple
 - 1. Abraham was blessed and called before the first circumcision took place.
 - 2. And God's temple is everywhere. It was a sign of who God is and how we have access to Him. But it isn't a means to limit God and to manipulate God to submit to the people (vv. 48-50).
- E. Israel's pride in Moses and the Law
 - 1. But Moses himself says that there will be another prophet after him (v. 37). Jesus is the fulfillment of this law (Righteous One- v. 52).

IV. God's Plea

- A. Stephen starts off with respect and honor- "Brothers and fathers" (v. 2), but he ends with calling out their pride- "stiff-necked people" (v. 51).
- B. But even with the ending of speech and life, we see that his main point isn't to defend against the charges against him.
 - 1. He wants them to see their pride and sin, to repent, and to believe in Jesus who is the Righteous One, the fulfillment of Scripture.
- C. I don't believe he ends his speech with hatred and resentment but remorse-asking them to know, repent, and trust. This is the same heart as our Savior.
 - 1. We see his last words be "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," reminding us of Christ's words in Luke 23- And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
 - 2. We see this kind of emotional plea in Luke 19, when Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, though He knows what Jerusalem will do to him.
- D. Jesus is our Redeemer by fulfilling all of Scripture.

1. Jesus is the ultimate ancestor of God, the Son of God.
 2. Jesus is the ultimate inheritance who calls us His inheritance.
 3. Jesus is the ultimate temple.
 4. Jesus is the ultimate prophet and the fulfillment of Law.
 1. He lived and died according to the Law for our redemption.
- E. Jesus is our refuge by providing everything that our idols cannot.
1. He gives us a new people and nation. He gives us the inheritance of heaven. He is the place we are fully known and fully loved by God. He is God with us and our hope of eternal life.
 2. His redemption of us in love is the source of our joy, life, purpose, and hope.