

Acts 7:17-43

1. In his defense before the Sanhedrin, Stephen continues to survey Israel's history, paying special attention to key individuals that were called out by God into this pattern of sojourning, affliction, exaltation, test of faithfulness, and promise fulfillment. Having already discussed Abraham and Joseph, he now turns to Moses.

a. What aspects of Moses' life is being highlighted in Stephen's presentation? How much does he mention the law? What does he talk about instead?

b. What does Stephen highlight about Israel's response to God's appointed "ruler and redeemer"?

c. In light of the above, how then is Stephen responding to their charge that Stephen disrespects Moses?

2. In short then, the point that Stephen is setting up is that the leaders of Israel have actually misunderstood and rejected the very thing they claim to value so much, i.e., Moses and the law.

a. In what ways do you see that Christians today are tempted to do the same thing? In other words, can you think of any examples where we fight so hard for something, but in actually miss the whole point of it?

b. What are some ways that we can do this specifically with Christmas?

3. Stephen ends this section by pointing out that God's response to the Israelites' idolatry was to turn them over to worship their false gods and reap the consequences.

a. How do texts like this, where God turns people over their sinful desires and allows them to reap the consequences, affect you? What does it make you think about or how does it make you feel?

b. Have there been any times in your own life where you experienced something similar, i.e., God allowing you to pursue what you wanted and reap the consequences?

c. How did God use that redemptively in your life? What did you learn from that experience?

4. Finally, again we see the pattern of sojourning, affliction, exaltation, testing and fulfillment. In Moses' case he was already living as an outsider, and then he actually tried to do what God had called him to (bring deliverance to Israel), but he did it his own way, in his own power and it led him into further exile and affliction. It wasn't until God met Moses, commissioned him, and empowered him that Moses was able to achieve what God wanted to for him.

a. Can you relate? Is there something that you have been called to do by God, and yet have tried to do it in your own strength and it backfired?

b. How have you seen God teaching you to fulfill your calling by relying on His power?