

20-21 Bible Study #8

11/3/20

Acts 7

Review of Last Week

- In Acts 5, we saw a couple sell a piece of property and lie about the proceeds resulting in the death of both parties
- As the young church grew, some believed that the sick could be healed if the shadow of Peter passed over them
- The Sadducees became alarmed at Peter's message and brought the disciples before the Sanhedrin
- Rabbi Gamaliel counseled the council to leave the followers of Jesus alone as they might be from God
- We also discussed the dispute between the *Hebrew* and *Hellenist* Christians that led to the establishment of the Diaconate
- We ended by meeting Stephen, who debated with some Hellenistic Jews over the teaching of Jesus

Acts 7 (Cont)

- **Acts 7:35-50** *“This Moses whom they refused saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge? God sent as both ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush...This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up...as the prophet says’”*
 - Once again, this was from **Deuteronomy 18:15**
 - They made themselves an image of the god Apes, a god of Egypt
 - They rejoiced in the idol they had made
 - Their idol was seen as a “habitation for their god” since they made houses by their hands
 - Father asked if we could hear an echo here?
 - *Stephen* was accusing the *Sanhedrin* of making an idol out of the temple

Acts 7 (Cont)

- The High Priest *Caiaphas* had said of Jesus: “*It is better that one man die than the Romans come and destroy us all*”
- This meant that *Caiaphas* knew that there was something very special about Jesus and that it was better to get rid of Him than risk the Romans deciding to destroy the temple
- Father said that the *Sadducees* saw salvation in the temple rather than in God
- Thus, Stephen accused them of idolatry

Acts 7 (Cont)

- **Acts 7:51-53** *“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit...they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the righteous one, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it”*
 - Father suggested that this is what should happen at an ecumenical service with a Christian standing up and saying something like:
 - You stiff-necked people
 - You killed all of the prophets
 - You did not keep the law as given on Mount Sinai
 - You made and worshipped a golden calf

Acts 7 (Cont)

- **Acts 7:54-60** *“Now when they heard these things they were enraged,...And when he had said this he fell asleep”*
 - We are hearing this now because **Daniel 7:21*** said the wicked kingdom will prevail over the saints
 - But, **Daniel 7:22** states that God will eventually conquer the enemies of the Church
 - Father pointed out that *Stephen* died in the same way that **Luke** described the death of Jesus
 - This was to demonstrate that *Stephen* died as a participant in the death and resurrection of Jesus

Acts 8

Acts 8

- **Acts 8:1-8** *“And **Saul** was consenting to his death... So there was much joy in that city”*
 - Father said that Saul should be seen as the foreman on the job of stoning Stephen
 - The statement that the people laid their jackets at his feet does not mean that he just happened to be walking by and they asked him to watch their coats
 - It really meant that he was the overseer of the action
 - Father asked that we look at **Acts 22:20**; it states that Saul was the one who killed Stephen
 - Even though he may not have thrown any stones, he was certainly in charge of the stoning

Acts 8 (Cont)

- The rest of **Acts 8** continues by explaining the expansion of the persecution of the Church by Saul (Paul) beyond *Jerusalem* into *Judea*
- This action also led to the spreading of the Church into *Samaria* by *Deacon Philip* (listed next in the list of deacons after *Stephen*)
- Father reminded us that Stephen was dead and Philip took the banner of the early church into Samaria where he began to preach the good news
- Many Samaritans began to be converted (remember that they were Israelites who were mixed with Gentiles in a long and complex history)
- Samaria was originally the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, composed of members of the 10 tribes of Israel at the beginning of the civil war
- When they were assimilated by the Assyrians, they were mixed with five pagan nations from within the Assyrian Empire
- This means that the progression of the Church went from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and then on to the Gentiles