

ONE message. people. mission.



Stiff-Necked People

Acts 6:8-7:60

Main Idea

God meets us in a Person offering redemption to those who have rejected Him.

Overview

- **God's Presence: God Meets Us in Person, Not in a Place**
 - The first charge levied against Stephen is that he is speaking against the temple (6:11, 13-14)
 - The Temple was central to everything in Jewish religion, so to speak against it was to speak against God himself
 - Stephen responds by showing God has always worked outside the temple
 - He appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia, Haran, Canaan, and Egypt (vv. 2-8)
 - He was with Joseph in Egypt (v. 9)
 - He saw Moses in Egypt and appeared to him in Midian (vv. 20, 30-33)
 - He was with his people in the 'tent' in the wilderness (v. 44)
 - It was not until the time of David a temple was considered, and eventually built by Solomon (v. 44-45)
 - God does not dwell in a house made by hands - The Creator of all things cannot be contained to a created thing (v. 48-50)
 - The temple was a work of hands just like the golden calf (v. 40-41) and had become just as much an idol
 - In his death Jesus destroyed the temple like the sun destroys the need for streetlights; like a marriage destroys the engagement; the shadow has become the reality.
 - In his death and resurrection, Jesus reconciles us back to God, becoming the temple, the supreme meeting place between God and sinners.
- **God's Sovereign Grace: God Brings Redemption Through Rejection**
 - The other charge levied against Stephen is that he is rejecting Moses and the law.
 - Stephen, yet again with biblical precision, shows that it's not he that is rejecting God's messenger and message, but it is they who are doing just that.
 - God's people rejected Joseph, and God used that very rejection to bring redemption to his people (vv. 9-16)
 - Though God raised up Moses to deliver his people, they rejected Moses (vv. 25-27), yet God still uses Moses to redeem his people (v. 35)
 - In spite of all the grace, mercy and patience God has shown his people through Moses they continue to reject him (v. 39)
 - Stephen wants his accusers to know that they are no different. Though they have rejected God's messenger and his message, God, in his sovereign grace brings redemption through rejection.

- In essence, Stephen is saying just as your fathers rejected Joseph you are rejecting Jesus; just as your fathers rejected Moses you are rejecting Jesus. And just like God in his sovereign grace brought redemption from rejection with Joseph and Moses, so it is with Jesus.

Questions

Discussion Starter: Why is it so tempting to trust in the 'work of our hands' to usher us into God's presence?

1. What two charges were brought against Stephen and why are these so significant?
2. What can we learn about the way Stephen 'defends' himself against the charges?
3. How does Stephen show from Scripture that God has always worked outside the temple?
4. How is the temple like the golden calf? What are the 'temples' and 'golden calves' in our lives?
5. How does God bring redemption through Joseph and Moses?
6. What does it tell us about the character of God that he uses even rejection to bring about redemption?
7. Stephen's last three sentences were all about Christ. Specifically what were they and how does that inform how we should both live and die?

Accountability Question: What are you trusting in (maybe even subconsciously) to make you 'good' before God?