

Acts 6-7 Chapter Study

I. The Church At Jerusalem Chs. 1-7

F. A New Problem & Solution Ch. 6:1-7

We covered this 2 Sundays ago so we'll be brief with it tonight . . .

6:1-6

¹Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

The verses before this describe the amazing love & charity that bound the Church together.

The poor & needy were being taken care of by those with means.

But here we read of a disparity, a seeming inequity that arose between 2 groups.

At this time, the Church was *exploding* in growth.

They weren't simply *adding* members as before, now they were *multiplying*.

And this growth brought with it, as it always does, it's own set of challenges.

One of them was between the 2 main camps of Jews that framed Jewish society there in Jerusalem, the Hebrews & the Hellenists. [See sermon]

It seems Hebrews had taken charge of the distribution & since they tended to know the Hebrews widows better, they got first take on the daily distribution.

This meant less for the Hellenist widows & soon a minor brouhaha began to rumble.

Satan is ever on the lookout for how to attack the Body of Christ and ever one of his primary strategies is division.

So he tried to whipped out the old weapon of prejudice & went to work sowing discord.

It didn't get a chance to take root though because the Apostles heard about it and immediately addressed it.

²Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

There was certainly nothing wrong with or demeaning in taking care of widows.

But it just would not have been the best use of the Apostles limited time & energy if they took on the task themselves.

Their time would be better spent in leading and feeding the flock in spiritual things.

Others ought to be found who could do an even better job than they of taking care of the poor.

So they told the church at large to select 7 men who could take on the ministry.

Then they gave them the criteria to use in making their selection. [Sermon]

Notice that the Apostles showed some real wisdom in how they dealt with this

crisis.

As leaders – needed to lead and didn't convene a convention and sit around and ask all what they should do.

They led by saying;

- 1) Here's what *we'll* do.
- 2) Here's **WHAT** you should do
- 3) Here's **HOW** you should do it.

The Church is not a democracy. It's leaders are appointed & anointed by God to lead.

But wise leadership recognizes at times it's best to provide guidance & open up the opportunity for others to take a lead in ministry.

⁵And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Everyone recognized the soundness of the Apostles direction and followed it.

They selected 7 men that tradition refers to as “deacons.”

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul gives a list of qualifications, first for *elders*, who are charged with the *spiritual oversight* of the fellowship; then *deacons*, a word which means “*servant*.”

Deacons are given the task of specific areas of *practical ministry* within the fellowship.

In 1 Tim. 3:13 Paul says this . . .

For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We see that clearly in the record of the first 2 deacons mentioned here.

Stephen's story follows right after this. He becomes the first martyr of the Church.

Philip becomes the first missionary.

Tradition says the 3rd – Prochorus became the Apostle John's personal secretary, a bishop of Nicomedia, and finally was martyred.

We know nothing of the other 4. Some have tried to link the last, Nicolas, to the cult of the Nicolaitans in Revelation, but there's no historical connection to be found.

Once these 7 were selected, the Apostles laid hands on them, officially identifying with them and marking them as delegates of their authority in taking care of the business of ministering to the poor among them.

What's interesting about this list is that all 7 are Hellenistic names.

The Church was being wisely gracious as they implemented the solution.

⁷Then the word of God spread,

It spread for 2 important reasons . . .

- 1) The Apostles weren't distracted from it by waiting on tables.
- 2) Not only was it being taught, it was being lived.

and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem,

If the Church had been exploding before, now the revival heats up even more. **and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.**

While a few of the priests were Hebrews, the family of the high priest was thoroughly Hellenist.

They knew better than anyone the tension that existed between them and their rival Hebrews.

So when the priests witnessed the potential rift overcome by an amazing demonstration of grace & love in the Church, it was all the proof they needed to convert to faith in Jesus as the Messiah & Savior.

But there was another major reason why many priests were coming to faith – something had happened not long before that only needed an explanation and the Apostles were now providing it.

On the day Jesus died, in fact, while He spent his final breaths on the cross, the veil in the temple, which was about as thick as a man's hand, was torn in 2 from top to bottom.

Word about this had gotten out and the Apostles were explaining that the reason the veil tore was because with Jesus' death, the final sacrifice for sins had been made and the barrier between God & man, symbolized by the veil, had been removed.

Now all can come into God's holy presence simply by faith in Jesus.

The priests had heard the Apostles' teaching and many realized it for the truth it was and became passionate converts to the Faith.

G. Stephen's Story Ch. 6:8-7:60

1. Arrested 6:8-15

⁸And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

What remarkable about this is that up[till this point, signs and wonders have been limited to the Apostles.

5 times miraculous signs are attributed to the Apostles [2:43, 3:12, 4:7, 33, 5:12)

But now that the Apostles have laid hands on and identified with the deacons, & those deacons faithfully discharge their work, God blesses them with a wider field of service.

Stephen's work & influence grew as God verified his calling by allowing him to work miracles.

⁹Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

During the Exile in Babylon 500 years before this, the Jews maintained their religious commitment by meeting in small groups to read & study the Books of Moses.

These meetings were called synagogues.

When they returned to the land after 70 years of exile, though they rebuilt the temple, they continued to meet in their own cities & towns n synagogues.

The exiles realized it had been a neglect of God's Word that had resulted in their being judged & removed from the land.

So they determined to never let that happen again by devoting themselves as students of the Scriptures.

The synagogue was the center of study.

Even though the temple was in Jerusalem, the people met in several synagogues throughout the city.

One of them was made up of former Jewish slaves who'd gained their freedom & moved to Jerusalem.

This Synagogue of Freedmen was especially devoted to apologetics, of studying to defend the Jewish religion against the philosophies & religions of the Roman Empire.

They decided to take on the new sect of the Nazarenes.

As I mentioned Sunday, the Jewish authorities had no luck in quelling the Nazarenes through threat, arrest & even beating.

Maybe doctrinal debate would shut it down. So they decided to take on Stephen.

But it was no contest; he embarrassed them badly with his simple but powerful proofs that Jesus was the Christ.

11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

Their wounded pride moved them to get even by twisting Stephen's words & charging him with blasphemy, a crime punishable by death.

Note it says they "secretly induced men" to make this charge. This was nothing less than a full on conspiracy where they met and *plotted* what to say & do.

12 And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

The Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court.

If debate wouldn't work in squelching the Nazarenes, then how about death?!?! Maybe the fear of martyrdom would work.

So, realizing this marked an important moment in defining Judaism's formal relationship with Jesus' followers, the entire Jewish civil & religious government was assembled for this federal trial.

13 They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

Witnesses came in under oath & gave *knowingly false testimony* about what they heard Stephen say.

They claimed he'd made blasphemous claims about how Jesus would destroy the temple and do away with the Law.

Now, the Jews believed as the House of God, the temple was eternal, and that their interpretation of the Law would stand forever.

For anyone to suggest otherwise was deemed as blasphemy, and punishable by death.

So, the charge is made, and Stephen has a chance to respond.

15 And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

There's a reason why his face looked that way. You see, this was a watershed moment for Israel as a nation.

And Stephen's angelic countenance was meant by God to move the court to think of another such watershed moment – when Moses had come down from Mt. Sinai with the Law & the invitation to enter into covenant with Him.

His face had shone with the light of heaven.

But when Moses arrived at the foot of the mountain, what did he find?

The people were rebelling against the Lord.

Stephen's face was radiating the glory of heaven because this was a similar moment.

Jesus had come and not long before stood where Stephen now stood.

These same men had condemned & crucified Him.

But God had turned Jesus' death into the means of salvation.

Now here's Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit to call these men to repentance and faith.

They'd rejected the Son of God, but it was not too late.

If they reject the Spirit of God, it would be.

What's interesting is that Stephen was charged with saying the temple would be destroyed and for that they were willing to kill him.

Ironically, it'll be their rejection of Stephen's message that will result in the destruction of the temple.

You see, it's their condemnation of Stephen, instead of their repentance, that will result in Israel's judgment at the hands of the Romans in just another 35 years.

2. His address to the Sanhedrin 7:1-53

1 Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

I wonder if in 5 minutes the high priest didn't regret asking this of Stephen.

2 And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' 4 Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran.

Stephen begins at the beginning of the Jewish people – with the first Jew, Abraham.

He'd been charged with speaking against the temple, which the Sanhedrin considered so holy it was a central, constant, & crucial part of their religion.

Stephen begins by showing real faith, the kind God is looking for, has *nothing* to do with a *place*.

Here he subtly reminds them how though God had called Abraham to Canaan, he stopped off and stayed in Haran for years. Abraham's was an imperfect faith in

God.

And from there, when his father was dead, He [God] moved him to this land in which you now dwell. ⁵And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on.

If a temple was so crucial, why hadn't God given Abraham the land & command to build one?

But even when *Abraham* had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. ⁶But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress *them* four hundred years.

Again, if the temple was so crucial to Israel's faith, why would they spend 400 years outside the land?

⁷'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.'

⁸Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision;

Which was meant to be a mark that identified Abraham & his descendants were in *covenant* with God.

But this covenant sign wasn't a significant part of the Mosaic Law.

It's barely mentioned in Leviticus, only said that it was to take place on the 8th day after birth.

Stephen's point in all this is that the Sanhedrin was all wrapped up in a distorted idea of what constituted true faith in God.

If Abraham was the father of their faith, then he ought to be understood as faith's template.

But they'd largely *ignored* the character & example of Abraham's faith.

and so *Abraham* begot *Isaac* and circumcised him on the eighth day; and *Isaac* begot *Jacob*, and *Jacob* begot the twelve patriarchs.

Now Stephen turns a corner from emphasizing the locationless character of faith to Israel's tendency to reject & resist God.

⁹'And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt.

Joseph was Jacob's favored son. Because his elder brothers were envious of him, they sold him into slavery & told their father Joseph had been eaten by a wild animal.

But God was with him ¹⁰and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

The parallels between Joseph & Jesus are astounding.

Those parallels had been pointed out by Jesus to the Apostles after His resurrection and the Apostles had now shared them with the disciples.

No doubt the Sanhedrin had heard much of the teaching of the Apostles so as Stephen rehearsed this, they connection between Joseph & Jesus would be obvious.

Joseph's brothers had envied him because he was the favored son.

Jesus was the favored Son of God the rulers were envious of.

In Matt 27:18 Matthew tells us Pilate knew the reason the Sanhedrin wanted Jesus executed was because they envied His popularity with the people.

Sold for the price of a slave, Joseph was then accused of crimes he did not commit, just as Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver – a slave's price, then falsely condemned.

Thrown into prison, Joseph ministered to the captives.

Jesus went to Abraham's bosom where He shared the message of his redemption with the captives there.

Next, Joseph was exalted to the right hand of power, Pharaoh's throne, and given the name, Zaphnath-paaneah = Savior of the world.

Jesus rose & ascended to the right hand of the Father as the eternal Savior of the World.

¹¹Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. ¹²But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

When Joseph's brothers appeared before him the first time, he remained hidden to them, just as Jesus was not recognized by His brethren in his first coming.

When he did reveal himself, they were frightened, but he consoled them by saying, "You meant it for evil, but God has turned it to good – to save many lives."

In the same way, the rulers meant Jesus' death for evil, but God turned it to good & the salvation of many.

But Joseph's brothers didn't come to him until there was a crushing trial.

In the same way, the Jews will not come to Jesus as their Messiah until the extremities of the Great Tribulation drive them there.

¹³And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh. ¹⁴Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.

It was when Joseph was seated at the right hand of power with a Gentile bride, that his brothers realized who he was.

It took his harsh discipline of them to test their hearts before he revealed himself, just as Christ now sits at the right hand of power, taking from the Gentiles a people for His bride, and will test His Jewish brothers to see if they're genuinely repentant.

It was when Joseph's brothers' repentance over their treatment of Joseph was proven that Joseph finally revealed himself, just as Jesus will reveal Himself to Israel when their repentance is real at the end of the Tribulation.

Then Joseph gathered the entire family into the land where he ruled, just as Jesus will gather all Israel into the land where He rules during the Millennium.

As Stephen told Joseph's story, the parallels to Jesus could not be lost on the Sanhedrin.

¹⁵So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers.

¹⁶And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the

father of Shechem.

Stephen's point is that all these great patriarchs, these men who founded their faith & nation, lived a great deal of their lives outside the land of Promise.

So again, if a place like the temple was so important, why had those men they revered as the foundation of their religion not been more keyed in to that fact?

Maybe because place ISN'T that important after all!

Now Stephen turns the story toward the next major character in their history – Moses.

17“But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt ¹⁸till another king arose who did not know Joseph. ¹⁹This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.

As a sidelight – there's some debate among scholars about the timing of the Exodus.

Most consider one of 2 possible dates.

1) The early date says the Exodus took place about 1500 BC

2) The late date see it occurring 200 years later, about 1300 BC.

If the Early Date is correct, and most *conservative* scholars think so, then the Pharaoh who ordered the killing of the Hebrew babies was Thutmose I.

His daughter was the well known Hatshepsut.

Hatshepsut married her half-brother Thutmose II, who only reigned for 4 years after his father died.

The throne should then have gone to Hatshepsut's step-son Thutmose III, but she managed to retain rule for 21 years.

When she finally died, Thutmose III ascended the throne and was so furious for having had his reign delayed by his step-mother that he embarked on one of the most ambitious empire-building campaigns in Egyptian history.

He brutally crushed most of the power centers in Canaan, softening up the region for the Conquest by Joshua a few years later.

Thutmose III would have been the Pharaoh who ruled when Moses was spending his 40 years tending sheep in the desert.

He returned to lead Israel out of bondage during Thutmose III's successor, Amenhotep II.

²⁰At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. ²¹But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.

This probably accounts for why Moses was a good looking child – if he'd been ugly, Hatshepsut might not have adopted him.

The Egyptians were greatly moved by physical beauty – it was a big deal to them.

²²And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was

mighty in words and deeds.

Hatshepsut was likely grooming him to take the throne.

23“Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

This wasn't just a curiosity on Moses' part; the thing came into his HEART – it was a prompting of the Spirit.

He went to see the condition of his fellow Jews out of love & concern for them.

In the same way, Jesus, Prince of Heaven, was moved to come and Identify with His people Israel.

24And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian.

Moses knew his destiny was as the deliverer of his people.

When Jesus came, He undid the evil bondage of the Fall by healing the sick and delivering people of demonic possession.

25For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.

They missed Moses as their deliverer, just as they missed Jesus.

26And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and *tried* to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ 27But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?’ 28Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’

This guy who rebuffed Moses offer of help was only expressing the sentiment of many as they considered Moses – envious of his privileged upbringing while they languished in bondage.

In a similar way, the Jewish rulers had rejected Jesus – saying, “We will NOT have this man to rule over us!”

29Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

As Joseph was driven from his brothers, so Moses fled to a foreign land where he took a Gentile bride and had children.

Again, this is a picture of Jesus, Who went away to tend to His Father's flock, take a Gentile bride and have spiritual children.

30“And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai.

The marvel of the bush is that though it was on fire, it was not consumed.

God spoke from the midst of the bush.

That bush was a picture of Israel, which was beset by the fiery trial of slavery, but wasn't consumed.

She wasn't consumed because God was in the midst of her.

And God told Moses to return and lead his people out of bondage to the place of Promise.

In the same way, Jesus will come to Israel during the fiery trial of the Tribulation and lead her out of her distress into the glory of the Millennium.

³¹When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, ³² saying, ‘I am *the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*’ And Moses trembled and dared not look. ³³‘Then the LORD said to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.

And that was on Mt. Sinai, which wasn’t the location of the temple!

³⁴I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.” ’ ³⁵“This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush.

Stephen stood accused of blaspheming Moses. He reminds them Moses was at first *rejected* by the elders of the tribes.

Moses came *twice* to Israel to deliver them from bondage.

Between those 2 comings was a long period of trial and difficulty for Israel.

The first time they missed him, not interested in the deliverance he offered.

The second time, they followed him out of trouble & into a new place of privilege and blessing.

³⁶ He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

³⁷“This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’

Moses told them to be on the lookout for another prophet on the same level and par with him; in other words, someone who would have as great an impact on their relationship with God as he’d had as the giver of the Law.

That was the very thing the Apostles were now saying Jesus was; He was that Prophet spoken of by Moses.

In fact, just as God verified Moses’ calling by marking it with dramatic wonders & signs, so God had verified Jesus’ claims and role by just as dramatic signs.

That the Apostles were duplicating them and attributing them to Jesus who they claimed was still alive only added further evidence to the truth that Jesus was the one Moses had pointed to.

SO – they could accuse Stephen of blaspheming Moses – but if Moses were there he’d condemn the entire Sanhedrin for their foolishness in rejecting He’d told them to be on the lookout for.

³⁸“This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, ³⁹whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, ⁴⁰saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; as for this

Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’⁴¹ And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

Now Stephen really starts to tighten the focus on his main theme, that the leaders of Israel have always resisted & rejected God.

When Moses was up on the Mount getting the Law from God, what were they doing?

Engaging in the most debauched orgy of evil imaginable.

⁴²Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: ‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? ⁴³You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’

Yeah, the Law was so all important to them they’d completely neglected it in a wonton & crass idolatry that resulted after hundreds of years of warning and rejection, in their being hauled off into exile.

⁴⁴“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, ⁴⁵which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, ⁴⁶who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob.

Stephen returns to the subject of the temple for a moment and shows how the very nature of the original tabernacle that the temple was a later version of, was mobile!

And being mobile – how important was a particular place/location?!?!?

Not at all – what was far more important was what took place at the tabernacle – *communion, fellowship with God.*

⁴⁷But Solomon built Him a house.

It wasn’t until about a thousands years AFTER Abraham that the temple was built.

And even then, it wasn’t built by the command of God. It was David’s idea to build it; Solomon his weird son who did so.

⁴⁸“However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: ⁴⁹‘Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest? ⁵⁰Has My hand not made all these things?’

Even at his dedication of the temple, Solomon recognized how presumptuous it was to build a house where God’s presence would be localized.

God is way to glorious and grand to be contained in a structure made with hands, no matter how spectacular it is.

So, having made clear God isn’t into places or procedures, and that Israel has demonstrated a consistent tendency over the generations for it’s leaders to

reject & resist God, Stephen wraps it up . . .

51“*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so do you. ⁵²Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, ⁵³who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*.”*

As I mentioned Sunday, Stephen knows they’ve already decided to condemn him.

There was only one way out of this for him and that was to totally *renounce* Christ –

Which of course he *wouldn’t* do,

And which the Sanhedrin didn’t really **WANT** him to.

They **WANTED** to execute him so that they could forever mark the followers of Christ, the Nazarenes, as a heretical sect.

So Stephen makes it clear that he understands their intention and that far more than they know, this is a watershed moment.

It was one thing for them to reject Christ as Joseph’s brothers had rejected him.

But what they meant for evil, God had turned to good and the saving of many lives through the cross.

This moment was different in that now, if they continued to resist, they’d be finally & forever rejecting the Holy Spirit – and there was no recovery from that.

Joseph’s brothers had repented and been saved.

The Sanhedrin proves by their actions if they’d been there before Joseph that day, they would have *killed him*.

3. Their reaction: Stephen martyred 7:54-60

54 *When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. ⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ⁵⁶ and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” ⁵⁷ Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; ⁵⁸ and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

We covered these verses Sunday so I’ll leave it to you to get the CD if you weren’t here.