

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 21ST–22ND, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

## FATHER ABRAHAM (ACTS 7:1–8)

### “ARE THESE THINGS TRUE?” (V. 1)

Stephen (who is a deacon in the church of Jerusalem) is standing before the Jewish council.

- He has had false accusations brought against him, and his life is hanging in the balance.
- Rather than defend himself against these false accusations, Stephen offers up an *apologia* (a formal, reasoned defense of the Christian faith).

Remember, Stephen is standing before the most powerful, highly educated, and sophisticated leaders of the Jewish religion.

- They're accusing him of blasphemy against Moses, the law, and the temple.
- Stephen presents an argument to show that the Christian faith aligns with Old Testament history and that his accusers are actually opposing God by rejecting God's Messiah.

God's history with His people began with God's call to Abraham to leave his country for an unknown destination.

- Many Jews in that day connected the blessing of God directly to a specific parcel of land.
- Stephen wanted to show that God's blessing occurred before the land; it wasn't because of geography but because of God's character and kindness (v. 2).

God called Abraham away from his land and family to go to a land that God would show him (v. 3).

- God's people are always invited to trust and follow Him, even when He's leading us to an unknown destination that we may be unsure about.
- Abraham obeyed God's call and moved forward in faith, even when the promises of God weren't yet fulfilled (v. 4).

God did not give Abraham an inheritance in the land at that time yet promised it to him and his descendants (v. 5).

- As God told Abraham about this inheritance, He also said there would be a time of great difficulty as Israel went into slavery in Egypt (v. 6).
- God promised that He would deliver His people (v. 7), even as He established His covenant with Abraham's family (v. 8).

### WHAT'S THE POINT?

God's covenant relationship with His people began before the land, before the temple, and before this complex religious system that the council was holding onto so tightly.

- God's presence and purposes are not confined to sacred places, institutions, or national boundaries. God calls people to trust Him and follow Him wherever He leads by faith.

Sometimes, we can get so tightly attached to certain traditions of our faith that we miss the reasons they were given in the first place.

- Other times, we get so obsessed with a tribe/denomination that we forget the greater story that God is telling through Jesus.
- When the forms of our faith become the focus, we miss the heart of God entirely.

## IN THE LAND OF EGYPT (ACTS 7:9–16)

Egypt is mentioned six times in vs. 9–16. This was no doubt a painful reminder to the Jews of the bondage and slavery of their past.

- However, the graciousness and kindness of God are also depicted throughout this part of the story, as God was working to provide for His people.
- Notice what the text says about Joseph: “God was with him” and “God rescued him” (vs. 9–10).

## JOSEPH DIDN'T HAVE AN EASY ROAD, BUT GOD WAS WITH HIM AND RESCUED HIM.

God gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh.

- Above any actions of pagan rulers and world leaders, God Almighty controls all His world.
- Against all odds, God elevated Joseph to a position of prestige, power, and authority for a divine purpose.

## JOSEPH'S SUFFERING WAS REAL, BUT IT WAS FOR A GREATER PURPOSE!

That purpose was to save Israel from extinction by providing food for them during a time of famine in the land (vs. 11–15).

- If Joseph hadn't been sold into slavery, he wouldn't have been able to provide the counsel to Pharaoh that delivered not only Israel from certain death but also Egypt.

After Jacob and his entire family died, their bodies were carried back to Shechem, to the land that God promised to Abraham (v. 16).

- What's the point? The point is that our unlimited, omnipotent God does not accept any humanly designed prohibitions on the way He carries out His work!
- He is not bound to temples, churches, families, nations, geographical districts, or time.

### WHAT'S STEPHEN SAYING?

God's ways and works are bigger than the little boxes we sometimes put Him in.

- “The Lord works in mysterious ways.” Any time we try to pigeonhole God into working according to our set of rules, we prove we don't completely understand His character.
- God has a plan and perfect will. They are good, and we can trust Him.

“The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you” (2 Chronicles 15:2).

- If you have placed your faith and trust in Christ, you have been united with God through your faith—the Lord is with you.
- You are going to go through trials in life that you may not understand, but God is with you.

## MOSES (ACTS 7:17–36)

Outside of Abraham, the most respected and sacred figure of the Jewish faith is Moses.

- God's promise of a holy land to Abraham had not yet been fulfilled when Joseph lived, even though all the patriarchs had been buried there when they died.
- For the next 400 years, generations of the children of Israel born after Joseph lived in Egypt, where they were enslaved.

Verses 18–19 say that another king who “did not know Joseph” arose and “dealt deceitfully” with the Jewish people.

- Around this time, God raised up Moses who was “beautiful in God's sight” (v. 20).
- God allowed Moses to be rescued and raised by Pharaoh's daughter. He received an Egyptian education and was raised as a prince for the first 40 years of his life (vs. 21–22).

Moses's first attempts to lead Israel failed miserably and sent him, the specially born and highly educated choice of God, into the wilderness for 40 years (vs. 23–28).

- Even though they didn't know it yet, Moses was God's deliverer for Israel.
- The people of Israel didn't recognize him as their deliverer and even shunned and rejected him spitefully (sound familiar?).

Where did Moses go between 40 and 80 years old? He went to the land of Midian, where he married, fathered two sons, and worked as a shepherd for his father-in-law, Jethro.

- Can you imagine the humiliation and loneliness Moses must have felt?
- It seems that God was emptying Moses of any reliance on his own strength—this is the work of true spiritual preparation.

Stephen then focuses on the final 40 years of Moses's life, the period of actual ministry.

- As God appears to Moses in the burning bush, the empowerment that wasn't available to him 40 years earlier was now his—he would no longer minister in his own strength.
- In v. 33, the emphasis on “the place where you are standing is holy ground” is very intentional.

Stephen is again reminding the Sanhedrin that wherever God dwells and speaks is “holy ground,” even if it is miles from the holy land or completely unrelated to special buildings.

- Moses became God's redeemer and chosen instrument to save the people of God from bondage and slavery, but Moses's ministry also pointed ahead to something greater.

### WHAT'S THE POINT?

In His perfect way and in His perfect timing, God sent to His people a deliverer—Moses.

- God sent His deliverer, and yet the people rejected him at first (vs. 27–28).
- The very man they rejected is the one God later sent back to deliver them (vs. 35–36).
- Jesus, the rejected deliverer, rose again and is now offering His deliverance.

Sometimes, God's work in our lives comes through people, voices, or moments we don't expect or even resist at first.

- Often, it's our pride, familiarity, or preconceived ideas that keep us from recognizing what God is doing right in front of us.
- Don't reject what God is doing simply because it doesn't look the way you thought it would.

### A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

- Imagine a couple that gets so obsessed with and excited about planning a wedding that they forget they're getting married to each other.
- Traditions, structures, and forms of religion aren't really the point. They're meant to celebrate the covenant, not replace the relationship.
- *How is your relationship with God? Do you have one? Or is it just a wedding with no marriage?*

### GOD IS WITH YOU WHEN YOU ARE WITH HIM.

- Sometimes, people assume that because they have some form of religion, God is automatically with them and on their side.
- Scripture doesn't actually say that God is with everybody. God isn't with people simply because they belong to the right group, keep certain rituals, or carry the right label.
- *Do I belong to God? Have I trusted Christ?*

### BUT IF HE'S WITH YOU... HE'LL RESCUE YOU.

- You are going to go through trials that you are not going to understand. Life will seem unfair, confusing, and absurd at times.
- If God is with you, there's a greater purpose and a plan that's bigger than what you can see.
- Hold on to hope. Don't give in to despair.
- Keep living. Don't just focus on surviving; focus on God's faithfulness when you don't understand.

### DON'T REJECT GOD'S DELIVERANCE.

- God has made a way for you to be saved through Jesus alone. Don't reject Him.
- If you're His, God is at work in your life to refine and grow you, and He has a program that might look different from the one you would plan.
- “Everything is necessary that He sends, and nothing can be necessary that He withholds” (John Newton). *Do you trust Him?*