

Kingdom Offer Rescinded

Acts 7:54—60

Acts chapter 7 is a turning point in Israel's spiritual history. This time in her history was approaching the culmination of everything God promised to Israel. They had already seen the first 483 years of Daniel's prophecy being fulfilled, and now all that was left was the final seven-year Tribulation before the Millennial Kingdom would be set up at the Second Coming. Stephen had just given a lengthy sermon outlining all of Israel's spiritual failures to recognize the men God had sent to them in the past. He accused them of doing the same thing now as the Holy Spirit speaks through Stephen.

Final rejection

The leader's reaction to Stephen was predictable. Israel had turned away from God numerous times in the past, and now they had just rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ, by death on a cross. Stephen had just pointed out their evil ways and they reciprocate with more evil. He had just hit at their heart, and instead of repenting, they spewed hate toward him because he exposed them for all to see what they were really like. As they began gnashing their teeth at Stephen, he turns heavenward and declares that he is able to see into the throne room and reports seeing God the Father with Jesus Christ standing at His right-hand side. Imagine the utter contempt these leaders must have felt, being reprimanded by an unlearned man who now claims he is able to see God and that the man they had recently put to death was standing by His side.

Jesus Christ standing

When Stephen looked into heaven and into the throne room of God, he saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. You may recall that when Jesus Christ ascended into heaven that He was seated at the right hand of God, indicating His work of redemption was complete (Mark 16:19; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1). We also know that in this age of Grace that He is still sitting at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:1). Jesus Christ sitting down is in contrast to the priests who were never to sit while in the temple, because their work was never complete. Scripture, however, tells us that there will come a time when Jesus arises.

Psalm 110:1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

His arising is an indicator that He has some work to do concerning Israel's prophetic program. The only thing left is the seven-year Tribulation followed by the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. When He is shown standing, He is declaring His wrath against the earth, coming as judge of mankind (Revelation 19:11). This judgement comes at the end of the Tribulation as we see the martyrs wondering how much longer must they wait before the Lord deals with these evil people (Revelation 6:10). Notice that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who will be the judge of mankind (John 5:22; Acts 10:40—42). This Judge (Jesus Christ) is shown arising in order to judge mankind (Psalm 7:6; 9:19; 82:8). Notice how Jesus coming as judge fits Him standing at the door knocking (Revelation 3:20; James 5:9; Luke 12:36—37). This picture of Jesus standing at the door of a person's heart waiting for the person to open his heart to Jesus is a total fabrication having no scriptural support.

He is also shown to have stood up in retribution. We see that not only in Psalms 110:1 (above) and also in verses such as Psalm 68:1; Isaiah 2:19, 21. The terror of the Lord against all ungodliness is evident in Revelation 6:12—16. Here God's fury is so intense that men will be

hiding from Him and even begging for death to get away from the wrath of the Lamb. This is God's unrestrained indignation against all things evil.

It is significant that Stephen sees Jesus Christ standing, as he is being stoned by Israel. When He declared he sees Jesus standing, it should be understood by Israel's leadership that God's wrath would soon be poured out on them.

Kingdom offer withdrawn

Understanding Israel's prophetic future helps to put into perspective what is going to happen because of their rejection of God's offer of the Kingdom. Rushing toward Stephen in a rage, while yelling and covering their ears, they are once again rejecting another one of God's spokesmen. They grab him and haul him outside the city gates to stone him. As he falls to his knees, he pleads with God to once again forgive them of their sin of rejection.

This last rejection of God's prophet was blaspheming of the Holy Spirit. They had already rejected the Father through John the Baptist, the Son and now the Holy Spirit through Stephen. This last rejection was blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which was a sin that would not be forgiven them (Matthew 12:31). It was now impossible to renew them again unto repentance (Hebrews 4:1—4). The opportunity was now lost, the offer was withdrawn. Israel could now no longer expect to see the promised Millennial Kingdom at this time. This event is mentioned in Hebrews 6:1—4, and is foreshadowed in the story of Israel refusing to enter the Promised Land when God told them to go.

Kadesh-barnea

It was two years after leaving Egypt that they were given the command to leave Mount Sinai and move toward the North into the Promised Land. At Kadesh-barnea, the southern most border of the land God promised to them, they were to go in and wipe out their enemies and claim the land for their own. Deuteronomy 9:23 sums up what happened:

Deuteronomy 9:23 Likewise when the Lord sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice.

Instead of doing what God commanded them to do, they became afraid of the powerful inhabitation and decided it was best not to fight against them, but instead go back to Egypt. God's anger burned against them, and He was going to destroy them, except God listened to the pleas of Moses. God decreed that this generation would all die in the wilderness (except Joshua and Caleb) and He would bring the new generation into the promised land.

Having heard this, the people decided they would take it upon themselves to go in and fight the enemy and take over the land promised to them. In spite of Moses' warnings, the people armed themselves and went out to fight. They were soundly defeated (Numbers 14).

Notice that in Acts 7 the offer of the Kingdom was withdrawn and no amount of repentance would bring it back. This is exactly what happened back in Numbers 14. Israel was offered the Promised Land, but they refused it. Once God withdrew His offer, they were unable to obtain possession of the land. They would not be able to go back until wandering for 40 years in the wilderness.

Since Israel has rejected the Kingdom. God changes His dealing with mankind by raising up Saul, Who will become Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles with the message of the Mystery.

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