

Theme: The Living God is not tied to a temple of stone; nor is His Church. He is with His people wherever they go – on earth and in heaven.

Introduction: Some things are worth dying for.

I. The Servant – Stephen shares in Christ’s Power, Wisdom, Suffering & Peace

II. The Opposition

A. Synagogue of the Freedmen

B. Their charge

1. Serious two-fold charge - nothing more sacred or precious to Jews than the temple and their law.

2. Is Stephen speaking against the temple and the Law??

- False witnesses charge – v. 14

- Stephen’s teaching was that of Jesus.

3. Jesus on the temple and the law.

a. He would *replace* the temple (John 2:19-21)

- He was the new temple replacing the old!

- “One greater than the temple is here!” (Mt.12:6)

b. He would *fulfill* the law.

- Accused of disrespect for the law (broke Sabbath regulations ate with sinners – let his disciples pick grain on the Sabbath)

- Came not to abolish the law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them. (Matthew 5:17)

III. The Message -

A. A unique message for Acts

- longest sermon/address in Acts by far

- Ends *not* with call to repentance – but with OT-style condemnation

B. A unique lesson in Israel’s history

1. God’s presence with his people is not tied to the temple.

a. Abraham? (2-8) - The *God of Glory* comes to him *in Mesopotamia!* Here God revealed himself in a foreign land! To a man who worshipped foreign gods (Joshua 24:2). NOTE: *Long before there was any temple, any meeting “place” God had a holy people who were his own. The promise was renewed many times.*

b. Joseph. (9-16) - 6 times in 7 verses we are reminded that God was with His servant *in Egypt!* God *rescued him – God was with him.*

c. Moses raised up to deliver the people. (17-43) NOTE: Divides this section into three 40 yr. periods.

- Time of promise grows near! v17
- God appears in Burning Bush!! He must *remove his sandals* because he was ***on Holy ground!!***
- Israelites rejected Moses– but God appointed him as ruler and redeemer! (35)
- **36,37?? Foretold the coming of the messiah as a prophet like him!**

d. David & Solomon (44-50)

- Temple may be symbol of His presence among the people – but... (49,50!)
- It could never be regarded as God's Home – in any literal sense. (48!!)
- 2 Chronicles 6:18; Isaiah 66:1,2

NOTE: Stephen has proven that: If God has a home on earth – it is with his people! He will be their God, and where they are, He will be.

2. Having the Law and Keeping the Law are two different matters.

- a. Jesus *fulfilled* the law. Matthew 5:17
- b. His accusers have rejected the Word of God – Not Stephen!
 - **They killed the one predicted to come – The Righteous One!**
 - rejected the Law – did not obey it!

IV. The Rejection - Swift and violent.

V. The Mission

A. For Stephen? Mission complete.

1. Lays theological groundwork for Kingdom Expansion

- *Frees the church from the temple!*
- *It has always been the case. – God never “attached” to it.*

2. Receives his heavenly reward!

B. The Church?

1. Kingdom Expansion – Phase I

- Physically Driven Out from Jerusalem!
- Message (and messengers) go to Judea and Samaria.

2. Many will receive their heavenly reward!

Conclusion:

1. We don't, you don't - have a corner on the market! God can save, deliver, redeem *anyone He pleases!*
2. The message? God has taken up residence in His people! Is it worth dying for?? Will we die to self to see it spread??