

BETTER

**It's For His
Glory!**

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996)

Acts 7:1–8 (NKJV)

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

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. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.

5 And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.

6 But 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.

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.'

8 Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

- This is the longest address in the Book of Acts and one of the most important.
- In it, Stephen reviewed the history of Israel and the contributions made by their revered leaders:
 - Abraham (*Acts 7:2–8*)
 - Joseph (*Acts 7:9–17*)
 - Moses (*Acts 7:18–44*)
 - Joshua (*Acts 7:45*)
 - and David and Solomon (*Acts 7:46–50*)

- But this address was more than a recitation of familiar facts; it was also a contradiction of their indictments against Stephen and a revelation of their own national sins.
- Stephen proved from their own Scriptures that the Jewish nation was guilty of worse sins than those they had accused him of committing.
- What were these sins?

These Are Their Sins

1. They misunderstood their own spiritual roots. *(vv. 1-8)*
2. They rejected their God-sent deliverers *(vv.9-36)*
3. They disobeyed their Law. *(vv.37-43)*
4. They despised their temple. *(vv.44-50)*
5. They stubbornly resisted their God and His truth. *(vv.51-53)*

They Misunderstood Their Own Spiritual Roots

(Vv. 1–8)

- Stephen’s address opens with “the God of glory” and closes with the glory of God (*Acts 7:55*); and all the time he spoke, his face radiated that same glory! Why? Because Israel was the only nation privileged to have the glory of God as a part of its inheritance (*Rom. 9:4*).

They Misunderstood Their Own Spiritual Roots

(Vv. 1–8)

Romans 9:4 (NKJV)

who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;

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- The glory of God had departed, first from the tabernacle (*1 Sam. 4:19–22*) and then from the temple (*Ezek. 10:4, 18*).
- God's glory had come in His Son, but the nation had rejected Him.

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John 1:14 (NKJV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

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- Abraham was the founder of the Hebrew nation, and his relationship to God was one of grace and faith.
- God had graciously appeared to him and called him out of heathen darkness into the light of salvation, and Abraham had responded by faith.

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- Abraham was saved by grace, through faith, and not because he was circumcised, kept a law, or worshiped in a temple.
- All of those things came afterward (*see Rom. 4; Gal. 3*). He believed the promises of God and it was this faith that saved him.

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Romans 4:2–5 (NKJV)

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

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Galatians 3:4–6 (NKJV)

4 Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

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- God promised the land to Abraham's descendants, and then told Abraham that his descendants would suffer in Egypt before they would enter and enjoy the land; and this took place just as God promised.
- From the very beginning, God had a wise plan for His people; and that plan would be fulfilled as long as they trusted His Word and obeyed His will.

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- The Jews greatly esteemed Abraham and prided themselves in being his “children.”
- But they confused physical descent with spiritual experience and depended on their national heritage rather than their personal faith.
- John the Baptist had warned them about this sin (*Matt. 3:7–12*) and so had Jesus (*John 8:33–59*).

Matthew 3:7–12 (NKJV)

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,
9 and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

John 8:33–37 (NKJV)

33 They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free’?”

34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

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- The Jews were blind to the simple faith of Abraham and the patriarchs, and they had cluttered it with man-made traditions that made salvation a matter of good works, not faith.
- God has no grandchildren.
- Each of us must be born into the family of God through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

John 1:11–13 (NKJV)

11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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- The Jews prided themselves in their circumcision, failing to understand that the rite was symbolic of an inner spiritual relationship with God. (*Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 6:10; Acts 7:51; Gal. 5:1–6; Phil. 3:3*).

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Colossians 2:11–12 (NKJV)

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

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- Over the years, the fulfilling of rituals had taken the place of the enjoyment of reality.
- This happens in churches even today.