

Sermon Title: **“It’s All About Redemption (Part 2)”**

Sermon Series: Acts: Kingdom Vision 20/20

Text: **Acts 7:8-16**

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## **I. Introduction**

While the Mission of Jesus is still the banner which unites and guides these Spirit-filled believers, the Vision of how would continue to grow and develop is always evolving forward to look more and more like God’s Kingdom.

**Jerusalem -> All Judea -> Samaria -> the End of the Earth (Acts 1:8)**

Two Weeks ago we saw how Stephen was full of four things:

1. Faith
2. Holy Spirit
3. God’s Grace
4. God’s Power

Last week we looked at the beginning of Stephen’s appeal to his Jewish Brethren- their shared patriarch Abraham. God had called Abraham to leave his people and follow Him, becoming a part of His plan to redeem all things. At first Abraham left, but chose to settle in a place short of where God had called him. God then calls Him again, and Abraham obeys fully.

God then foretold how his descendants would serve another Nation for 400 years, increasing in number, to be delivered to worship God at the very place the Sanhedrin sit in judgment over Stephen. A Covenant unlike any other between God and humanity, this promise was symbolized by circumcision. *While it was on the flesh of men, God was always after the heart of all people- male and female, Jew, and Gentile.*

**Going Deeper: 1)** *We are reminded from last week that Stephen was a man full of what four things? Are these available for all believers or a special few? How do we see God’s faithfulness and patience toward us in the calling of Abraham? Why is God after our hearts?*

## **II. “Jealousy” (Acts 7:8-9a,11)**

This week we find Stephen continuing to appeal to his Jewish brethren through the life of Joseph and his brothers. Again, last week we saw God’s patient faithfulness toward Abraham as he struggled to follow God’s invitation and direction. While there were other ups and downs to the narrative, *God is faithful, for He is the **God of Glory**- Sovereign and balanced in every part of Who He is and all that He does.*

As time moves onward, each generation is one step closer to the fulfillment of God's Promises to Abraham coming to fruition.

As Stephen may see the gaze of these 70 men at him, noting their disgust and disbelief, he draws them to the heart condition of the patriarchs who were closer in brotherhood than he and them today.

### **Jealousy.**

Early in the Narrative we find their Jewish ancestors had problems with God's favor upon anyone but themselves. Why *him* and not *me*?! Stephen is building the case that this is the Sanhedrin's own heart toward Jesus in hopes to help them see themselves driven by the same jealousy!

Let us turn to **Genesis 37:1-36**.

A father's *favor*, a *Dream* from God, and a colorful *coat* fed into the brother's hearts cultivating a soil of hate soon to bring forth a bitter harvest. This led to a ***momentary*** deception that led to a ***lifetime*** of living a lie.

Now, back to **Acts 7:11**.

### **Famine.**

What was the silent suffering in their hearts has now swallowed up their entire lives. There was no rain and therefore no harvest. People were starving. Payback from God? Deserved Judgment from God / Justice for Joseph?

**Going Deeper: 2)** *Do you know what it is to make a decision in the moment that seemed good, but then ended up having years of cost? Have you carried a lie in your heart, reburying it every time life threw storms at you that surfaced it? Why were Joseph's brothers jealous of him? How would this relate to the Jews / Sanhedrin angry at Stephen?*

### **III. "Favor & Anointing" (Acts 7:9b-10)**

While this was happening to Joseph's family, he eventually found himself in Egypt. Stephen highlights that God was with Him. With God's presence comes His ***Favor*** and ***Anointing***.

God:

- *Rescued* Him from all his troubles. (Note: did not spare him; matured him through them). Favor and Anointing are appointments over our lives we grow into through faithfulness in trust and obedience toward God.
- Gave Him *favor* with Pharaoh, King of Egypt. (Greek "charis" *Favor* -> *Grace*)
- Gave Him *unusual* wisdom that enabled Pharaoh to appoint him in charge of his palace and governor over all of Egypt.

Stephen is building the case upon their shared history that even though, to Joseph's brothers who were jealous of his favor, *God's plans were not hindered*. Remember: **God of Glory!**

Everything was moving forward in fulfillment to what God had promised Abraham.

The brothers would not be left to die in the misery of heart and famine.

Redemption was coming.

**Going Deeper: 3)** *How was God present in Joseph's life? How are God's favor and anointing seen in your life? Are you trusting Him to rescue you from your troubles, give you favor in the lives of those who the Spirit is working to welcome your witness into, and provide wisdom to say YES! at every invitation as you are in His Word and Prayer continually?*

#### **IV. "Redemption" (Acts 7:11-16)**

Stephen recounts their further history in that Jacob sent the brothers to Egypt to buy bread during the famine. Their hunger led them to the source of physical bread which in turn brought them before their brother Joseph.

While they did not recognize him, he did them and staged a test to see if they had changed. First trip to Egypt Joseph kept a brother; the second was Jacob's youngest son. It was at this the brothers threw themselves down to take the place of Benjamin.

**Repentance-** deepest of remorse and regret that produces a change of course for one's life through behavior. It begins in the soul, affects the mind, alters the behavior, and changes the trajectory of one's life.

A different side of *Jealousy*, one that honors God is *diligent / earnest / zealous* pursuit of what honors Him (Greek zeloo)

***"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent."***

***-Revelation 3:19***

**Weeping.** Turn to **Genesis 45:1-46:7**. Tears of *Revelation, Repentance, Forgiveness, Healing, Invitation*, and most importantly- **Reunion**.

Joseph introduced the brothers before Pharaoh and had the rest of his family brought to Egypt. While they lived there for a while, this was not their destination and the burial of the patriarchs symbolized and reminded Israel of this- their favor and anointing of God in His story of Redemption!

**Note how this story is a shadow of Christ and us -> Hebrews 2:10-18.**

**Going Deeper: 4)** *Hunger can be a powerful motive to bridge what our pride, jealousy, and anger divides. How did God use this famine to reunite Jacob's children? How does this story parallel our story with Jesus? What difficulty had God used to bring you to a better place?*

## V. “Reunion”

So, wait Pastor. Are you saying God provided a famine that touched entire nations just to bring this redemption to Joseph’s brothers?

Consider the following:

- 1) What parent would not move the world for their children who are suffering?
- 2) What parent can watch children suffer, even justly as did the brothers?
- 3) If they are truly the descendants chosen by God to bring the world His Son, how would they survive if not for mercy, grace, and forgiveness?

In answer to that question, yes, I do.

What does this story have to do with the Jewish brothers of Stephen and the Sanhedrin judging him?

They, like Joseph’s brothers are judging him (Stephen) through jealousy, and greater continuing to deny Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham- their Messiah. Stephen is appealing to this story in prayerful hope that they will connect the dots and experience the weeping of repentance, healing, and forgiveness with Jesus as the brothers did Joseph.

Stephen, a man full of *Faith*, the *Spirit*, God’s *Grace* and God’s *Power*, was led of the Spirit to speak this story from the Bible into the audience around Him. Remember what Jesus said,

***“But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”***

***-Matthew 10:19-20***

Stephen introduced God as the God of Glory. All of His attributes are perfectly balanced and in harmonious expression in all that He Sovereignly does.

- Let us trust Him as did Joseph, and grow in His Favor and Anointing
  - Let us repent quickly as did the brothers when sin is pointed out
- Let us be jealous for God to live for him in all of our lives, being filled with Faith, the Spirit, Grace and Power.

**Going Deeper: 5) *How radical is a love that would impact entire people groups to bring love to people? Right now, who are you in this portion of Stephens message- Joseph or his brothers? We love those around us best when we are jealously pursuing God in all that we are- to know Him and make Him known. Do you trust Him to be at work with family, friends, co-workers, etc who may be going in directions away from God? Stephen had hope for the audience about to stone him. Hope placed in Jesus is a powerful thing; cultivate this hope by being in His Word and Prayer this week. Follow the Spirit’s leading, and speak / live the Gospel in Jesus’ Name!***