

False Religion Rejects God's Deliverer (Moses)

Acts 7:17-41

Halifax: 8 January 2012

Introduction

Today we return to our regular sermon series in Acts.

- We have been looking at the defence of Stephen before his accusers in chapter 7.

Stephen was one of the seven men that were chosen to look after the care of widows in the early church.

- The seven were chosen because they were recognised to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
 - Stephen was especially so, for Luke specifies that he in particular was full of the things of God—full of faith, full of power, full of grace, full of the Holy Spirit.
 - This being so, Stephen drew the attention of his fellow Hellenistic Jews.
 - As he went about fulfilling his ministry, they began to dispute with him about his faith in Jesus.
 - But Stephen answered them in such a way that they soon found that they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke...
 - So they resorted to accusations and threats.
- At last, they dragged him before the Sanhedrin to answer to their trumped up charges!
 - They accused him of blasphemy against Moses and against God and of speaking against the temple and the law...
 - They considered it to be speaking against the law and the temple for Stephen to say that God would destroy the temple and change the customs that Moses had delivered to Israel.
 - But Stephen was not saying that the law and the temple were bad...
 - only that now that Jesus had come, they had fulfilled their purpose in redemptive history and must give way to greater things!
 - My daughter just got married,
 - She and George no longer want to live as they did when they were engaged...
 - Not because they think their engagement was bad, but because they have moved on to the married state to which their engagement prepared them.
 - They are done with merely calling each other and meeting each other for coffee—now they are making a home together.
 - If Stephen's accusers had only been willing to listen and receive the truth,

- they would have seen that Stephen had a greater appreciation for the law and for the temple than ever before!
- He had greater appreciation for them because now he had seen how they pointed to and led to Jesus Christ,
 - the glorious redeemer that God had sent from heaven to save His people from their sins!
 - Now Stephen could see how all those priests with all their sacrifices served to prepare the way for the coming of Messiah and His great sacrifice on the cross!

When Stephen is brought before the court to defend himself,

- he proceeds with great wisdom and skill.
- Rather than answering directly, at first,
 - he takes what he has in common with his accusers—
 - a common heritage in the patriarchs, in Moses, and in David,
 - a common revelation from God in the Holy Scriptures,
 - and he recounts to them their common history which they all cherished.
- Yet, he does so in a way that shows several important points that pertain to the things that his accusers oppose...
 - First, he shows that the Lord is not bound to work only at the temple... but in whatever way He pleases to reveal Himself.
 - A place is only holy because God makes it holy by His blessing and presence.
 - He points out that God revealed himself to Abraham in Mesopotamia and then in Heron.
 - He shows that He was with Joseph in Egypt and that He met with Moses in the wilderness.
 - Stephen shows that Israel consistently rejected the worship that God appointed for them, wanting to worship on their own terms rather than God's...
 - His point of course is that now that Jesus has come, they are once again resisting the new order that has come.
 - They are wanting to cling the temple even though God is done with the temple.
 - We will look at this more closely next week.
 - Secondly, Stephen shows throughout his defence that Israel has consistently rejected the very ones that God sent to deliver them.
 - Last week we looked at how, because of envy,
 - the very patriarchs themselves rejected Joseph, the very one who was God's appointed deliverer...
 - And this week, we are going to look at how the fathers rejected Moses.
 - Stephen's point, of course,

- is that the Israel of his day is doing the very same thing with regard to the Messiah!
 - Should it really be surprising to find that they are now rejecting their Messiah?
 - They have a long history of rejecting whoever God sends, so why should be any different now?
 - They need to repent because they are rejecting the very One who is the ultimate deliverer, even their own Messiah whom Moses promised!

- It is a thing that is most absurd—for them to reject the very One that God had promised through all the ages who has come to save them!
 - As we consider this today, we need to look at our own generation...
 - For we are guilty of the same folly.
 - Many in our generation reject the One who has been sent to save us!
 - You need to see how foolish it is to reject Him...
 - You need to see this if you are rejecting Him...
 - And you need to see this so that you might help others around you who are rejecting Him and might not be tempted to join them in their rejection or to be ashamed to openly follow Jesus!

We will look at four absurdities that have to do with the rejection of the One that God sends which can be seen in Stephen's account concerning Israel's rejection of Moses when he was sent to deliver them.

I. First, see that it is absurd not to seek salvation in the day appointed by God for salvation.

- A. Stephen begins verse 17 with the words, "When the time of the promised drew near."
1. What promise?
 - Well the promise of God's deliverance from Egypt of course!
 - Stephen has already reminded us back in verse 5-6 how God had openly promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants
 - but not until they had first spent 400 years in Egypt and been slaves there.
 - It was a promise to look forward to as part of God's working to redeem them and through them to reach the world!

 2. Those who have a promise like this from the God of heaven ought to eagerly look for its fulfillment when the appointed time draws near.

- In other words, in the time of Moses, Israel should have been looking expectantly for God to do what He had said!
 - Abraham had believed Him and had been given the sign of circumcision.
 - He lived in hope, trusting in promises that would be fulfilled long after he had departed from this present world.
 - Jacob had also believed Him.
 - He showed his faith in the future promise by insisting that he be buried in the land of promise, fully expecting to bring his descendents there at the appointed time.
 - Joseph had also believed Him and had requested that his bones be carried up to Canaan for burial when the promise of deliverance was fulfilled.
 - All of this should have served to make the people expectant in the day when the time of the promise drew near!
 - They should have been looking for the Lord to visit them and ready to receive the deliverance that He sent.

B. How much more ought that to have been the case in Stephen's day

1. All through the ages, God had set forth the promise of the Messiah.
 - Through the prophet Daniel, He had promised that after the decree to restore and build Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25)
 - there would be a period of 7 weeks of years followed by 62 weeks of years and then Messiah would come.
 - That was a period of 483 years.
 - If you calculate from 457 BC when the command to rebuild was issued,
 - that brings us to 26 AD when Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at His baptism.
 - Of course the exact date was subject to interpretation, but the general time frame was very clear.
2. As a result many of the Jews were indeed looking for the Messiah at the time of His coming.
 - When Jesus was born and presented at the temple to offer the sacrifices,
 - we are told how the elderly prophet Simeon recognised him as the promised Messiah...
 - And then how Anna the elderly prophetess also gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.
 - John the Baptist had prepared the way, and there were people who were looking for the promised coming of the Christ!
 - They were expecting the God of heaven to do what He had spoken as well they should.

3. But sadly in Stephen's day as well as in Moses' day,
 - there were many others who were not looking for God's promise—who did not recognise the time of God's visitation.
 - If they were looking, they were not looking for it in the right way because they missed it.
 - They did not see that Messiah had come.
 - We marvel at how the Magi came from the east seeking Him and how the chief priests and scribes who knew that He was to be born at that time took no interest in seeking Him.
 - Only Herod, who was threatened by His birth took notice of Him by trying to kill Him.
 - The world was found sleeping when He came instead of watching.

C. But look at us in our day!

1. We have the promise of God given concerning the gathering of the nations to salvation—
 - For example, in Isaiah 2, it says:
 - **Isa 2:2-3: Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**
 - The last days began when Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at God's right hand.
 - Thus in 2 Cor 6:2, Paul, writing to the Gentiles, declares what that the Lord says:
 - **2 Corinthians 6:2: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**
 - God is gathering the nations to Himself from the four corners of the earth, just as He promised.
2. That means that everyone among the nations ought to be looking for God's promised salvation to them!
 - They ought to be coming to learn of the Lord and what He has done.
 - And of course the truth is that many are doing this...
 - Just as many in the time of Jesus joined Anna and Simeon because they were looking at God's promise being fulfilled before their eyes.

- In fact, it is amazing how the nations are coming—thousands of people come to Christ every day!
3. But what folly for those who do not come!
- It is the appointed time of the promise!
 - If people were in their right minds, they would be very eager to at least find out about this—to examine it!
 - As soon as they hear about God saving people from sin—they would want to search it out!
 - And a lot of people have heard about it in our day!
 - It's pretty hard to miss it in our society.
 - But the truth is, we are not in our right minds.
 - We are indifferent about the most important thing in all the world!
 - We are sleeping instead of seeking in the day of promised salvation.
 - How absurd this is!
 - Now let's look at the second absurdity...

II. **Second, it is absurd not to yearn for salvation when we are in such great need of salvation.**

A. Stephen shows Israel's need of salvation...

1. He speaks of the rising oppression of Egyptian bondage in verses 18-19.
 - He says that a Pharaoh came along who did not know Joseph,
 - And who:
 - **Acts 7:19: "dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live."**
 - What an awful thing!
 - to have your babies killed before your eyes!
 - God had promised to multiply Israel greatly—
 - and He had—
 - but this Pharaoh was a war against God's promise.
 - He was busy reducing them even as God was multiplying them.
 - Israel was in desperate need of deliverance!
2. And we see that Israel needed deliverance in other ways as well.
 - They were the people of God, but here were two Hebrews that Moses found fighting with each other...
 - The rebuke is given to the them in verse 26 where we are told that Moses:

- **Acts 7:26: found *two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’***
 - How right he was!
 - They were sons of Israel, sons of the promise!
 - God had called them to walk before Him and be blameless!
 - This incident was just a microcosm of what was going on among them!
 - The people needed to be delivered from their sin...
 - Imagine it—those called out to be God’s people fighting it out like that.
3. Now you would think that those who were in such need of salvation would be eager for it!
- When there is a remedy, it is foolish to ignore it.
 - But as we will see in a moment, when Moses comes forth to deliver them he is surprised to find that they reject him...
 - They have no interest in being delivered.
- B. By this, Stephen is exposing the fact that many in his day had no interest in being delivered by Jesus despite their great need—and so it is in our day!
1. This is absurd because the need is so great!
- a. We suffer the effects of the curse.
- It is true that God has given us a lot of relieve in His mercy—we have many things that make life easier for us...
 - but there are still wasting storms and wasting diseases and economic crashes and injuries and starvation.
 - And above all there is death.
 - Don’t you see your need?
 - It is painful to see people going on without the Lord from one tragedy to another!
- b. And not only that, but look at our conduct...
- We have trouble getting along with each other—wars continue, divorces are common, siblings quarrel with each other...
 - Big management oppresses workers and workers cheat their employes and surf the internet when they are supposed to be working.
 - Women are reduced to sexual objects—and foolishly put themselves into this role rather than looking for men who truly love them.
 - Why go on like this when God has new life for you?
 - What do you gain by going on without Him?
- c. And then there is the fact that we are estranged from the living God!

- We do not know Him!
 - We do not live for Him!
 - We do not serve Him!
 - We do not worship Him!
 - We do not see His glory and His love and His power!
 - We are guilty before Him and if our sin is not pardoned, we will be brought to eternal damnation.
 - John the Baptist warned the Jews to flee from the wrath to come!
 - We need to do the same!
 - We have sinned against our Creator and we need forgiveness.
2. What folly it is to have such great need and ignore the remedy that God has provided!
- The problem, of course, is that people make themselves insensible of their need by denying it.
 - Then when the remedy comes, they have no interest in it.
 - Some will even say, “What do I need to be saved from?”
 - We need to pray that God would remove the spiritual blindness of those in our land who suppose that they do not need God’s Saviour.
 - They might be happy with some religion or some rules,
 - but they do not feel they need radical salvation through the Son of God, offered up on the cross for sin.

III. Thirdly, it is absurd to ignore the one that God has so uniquely qualified to be our Saviour.

A. Stephen shows that Moses was uniquely prepared by God to be Israel’s deliverer, yet was not recognised.

1. First, we are told that Moses came at the time appointed for deliverance.
 - I have already mentioned how Stephen speaks of the appointed time of the promise drawing near in verse 17,
 - but notice how in verse 20, he says, “At this time Moses was born.”
 - Do you see the connection?
 - Moses came at the time of the promise in fulfillment of the promise.
 - He came right at the time of the fulfillment just as Jesus did.
2. And we are told of the uniqueness of Moses.
 - a. First, that he is said to be a beautiful child—one that was well-pleasing to God.
 - In other words, he was endowed with those abilities and gifts and graces that would be needed to deliver God’s people.
 - It was by the grace of God that He had these things.

- b. Secondly, that he was marvellously preserved through the providential working of God.
 - He was preserved because God has special plans for him.
 - His parents tried to preserve him as long as they could under the decree of Pharaoh to kill all the male babies in Israel.
 - In faith, they put him in a basket on the water, not knowing what would become of him.
 - The outcome was that Pharaoh's daughter found him and had compassion on him so that she adopted him as her own son.
 - In this way, Moses was preserved, but was at the same time cared for by his own mother whom Pharaoh's daughter appointed to care for him.

- c. And this brings us to a third thing that makes him unique...
 - Moses was given a most excellent education in Egypt.
 - Acts 7:22 describes this:
 - **Acts 7:22: And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds."**
 - He would have been taught mathematics, science, philosophy, astronomy, literature, and much more in Egypt's wonderful schools.
 - Little did his teachers know that they were helping to prepare him to deliver Israel!
 - This is not to say that the Lord is dependant on Egyptian schools, but it is rather to say that God works through a variety of ways to prepare His deliver.
 - Even Jesus, for example, was in a place where He had access to the scriptures as a child so that He could study them.

TRANS> In all these ways, Moses was uniquely qualified for the task that the Lord had for Him.

- The Lord has marvellous ways of preparing those whom He calls to serve Him.
3. But most importantly of all, we are told that Moses loved his own people!
- a. In verse 23, we are told that at the age of 40,
 - **"It came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel!"**
 - 1) This is not just a visit to come and say hello.
 - The word *visit* is επισκεπτομαι.
 - It speaks of visiting in the sense of bringing help or deliverance...

- As when the Bible speaks of God visiting His people with salvation...
 - Or tells us that true religion involves visiting widows and orphans in their affliction.
- 2) Stephen makes it clear that Moses already perceived himself to be the one that God was raising up to deliver His people.
- He knew about the promise of God to Israel.
 - He knew that the Lord had uniquely qualified him.
 - And God had put it into his heart to visit them in order to deliver them.
 - He begins to take action for them as described in verse 24:
 - **Acts 7:24: And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian.**
- 3) Moses coming to visit his brethren was truly a great act of love!
- Hebrews praises him for forsaking the pleasures and comforts he had enjoyed in Egypt to come and suffer affliction with his people!
 - Clearly, like Abraham, he saw in the promises of God hope that went far beyond this present life.
 - Like Abraham, he sought a city whose builder and maker was God.
 - Otherwise, he would have had no reason to leave Egypt.
 - He came to his brothers to deliver them in accordance with God's gracious promise.
 - What a marvellous thing that God had worked such love and such faith in him that he should care about his brothers!
- b. But Moses was greatly surprised when his brothers did not welcome him!
- **Acts 7:25: For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.**
 - They even noised abroad his slaying of the Egyptian so that Pharaoh sought to kill him.
 - This caused Moses to flee to land of Midian—to what is today called Saudi Arabia.
 - He was, as far as the people, as good as dead,
 - just as Joseph had been when he was sold into Egypt.
 - What folly it was to drive away the very one that God has raised up to deliver them!
 - The one that Moses sought to correct speaks for them all when he says:
 - **Acts 7:27: “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?”**
 - The answer, of course, is that God did!
 - But they will not have him.
 - They reject their own salvation.

- B. Is this not precisely what happened all over again in Stephen's day with Jesus?
1. Here is God's only Son who left the glories of heaven to visit His people with salvation!
 - Here is the one who is uniquely qualified, the very Son of God who came down from heaven and was made flesh—taking to Himself our nature.
 - He did this in order that He might truly represent us.
 - He actually took on the form of a creature in order that He might bear our sins for us.
 - Only Jesus is qualified!
 2. And He showed Himself to be the Son of God as He went about among the people healing them and casting out demons in His own name...
 - And preaching and teaching among the people with words that could not be refuted—showing them their need of His salvation and telling them that He had been sent to save them.
 - Oh how glad they ought to have been to have such a one come among them!
 - What qualities He possessed!
 - At His baptism, the Father declared that He was His Son in whom He was well pleased and anointed Him with the Spirit as the prophets had foretold.
 - He was truly the Christ—the Messiah—the anointed one!
 3. But instead of receiving Him, His own people rejected Him and delivered Him over the Romans who were oppressing them!
 - It was the same wicked spirit that rejected Moses.
 - How they needed Him—but they rejected Him!
- C. It is the very same spirit in man that causes him to reject Christ today.
1. There is no one like Him—He is the Saviour we all need!
 - He alone has lived a life of perfect righteousness that pleased the Father.
 - He alone is God and man, one person with two distinct natures.
 - He alone has provided an atonement for sin that appeases God's wrath.
 - He alone is anointed with the Spirit above measure and so is able to give the Holy Spirit to all who ask.
 2. But men in their pride cannot tolerate having one in their own flesh that they must depend on.
 - a. They will not have Him to rule over them—
 - As soon as He exposes their sin, they say, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?”

- And they complain about His judgements as being harsh and despise Him—the very one who came to save!
- b. Oh my friends—do any of you despise the Lord Jesus?
- Do you refuse to rely on Him for the forgiveness of your sins and for deliverance from the curse?
 - Do you say, “Who are you?”
 - I tell you, He is the Son of God, sent to save us!
 - He is declared by the Father to be Lord and Christ and is seated at God’s right hand to rule!
 - You must humble yourself and come to Him if you would be saved.
 - Why reject your own salvation—in one so special, so unique—so suited to us and our need.
- c. My brothers and sisters, you who know Jesus...
- Do you see how excellent He is?
 - Do you see His love in leaving the glories of heaven as Moses left Egypt to come and suffer our affliction?
 - Pray that you will love Him more...
 - And pray for those who reject Him—that they would be delivered from such folly.

IV. Fourthly, it is absurd to reject the one who comes forth from exile and who actually begins to save us!

- A. Moses was as good as dead during the forty years he spent in Midian.
1. The people had rejected him as their deliver, and had, as it were, driven him from their presence.
 - a. It seems that Moses was quite discouraged at this time.
 - He had left the glories of Egypt to visit his brethren and so had made himself odious to Egypt,
 - but now he is also rejected by the ones he had come to save.
 - b. He goes away, it would seem discouraged about God’s promise.
 - In Exodus, we are shown that he did not even bother to circumcise his sons.
 - He felt cut off from God’s promise.
 - How could he deliver the people?
 - c. You know how he also made excuses when the Lord came to him and called him to go to Egypt and lead the people out!
 - He was resigned to remain in the wilderness forever.

TRANS> But the Lord would not let him do that!

2. The Lord brings him forth from exile to deliver them.

- a. After a full forty years of exile, He comes to him at the burning bush!
 - It is a marvellous sign!
 - The glory of God, the consuming fire, is upon the bush, but the bush is not burned up!
 - So is God with His people!
 - His glory comes among them and by nature that glory ought to consume them, but it does not consume them!
 - They live on with God in their presence!
 - Surely, the Lord ought to have destroyed Israel for forgetting his promise and for rejecting the deliverer He had raised up for them...
 - But instead he picks up this deliverer and sends him back to His people again—endowed with salvation for them!
- b. See how the Lord sends Moses forth with salvation...
 - 1) Having shown him the sign of the bush, He identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - You can see that in verse 32...
 - As the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the LORD is still blessing them—
 - They are still alive and they are receiving the promises He made to them through their descendants.
 - By saying that He is their God, He reminds Moses of the promise of deliverance that He had made to them.
 - The promise is still good...
 - It is not over.
 - 2) Then the Lord declares to Moses that he has seen the oppression of His people and has come to deliver them.
 - Look at verse 34
 - **Acts 7:34: I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them.**
 - He is ready to act in mercy to His people!
 - Moses visited them, but now the Lord Himself is going to visit them.

- By the way, I might mention here that Stephen speaks of the one in the bush both as the LORD and as an angel...
- The Jews understood that God spoke through the mediation of Angels,
- But we understand that the Angel through whom He spoke was none other than the Son of God.
- Anyway, He has remembered His promise and He has heard His people's groans and He is coming to deliver them in His great mercy—despite their rejection.

3) Then He tells Moses that He is going to send him to do this,

- At the end of v. 34: **“And now come, I will send you to Egypt.”**
- Moses was not prepared for this and tries to get out of it, but the Lord will not let him—
 - But Stephen does not mention this.
- He goes straight to the point that this Moses that God sent to deliver His people is the same one they had rejected!
 - Look at verse 35
 - **Acts 7:35: This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush.”**
 - God is sending Him even though they had previously rejected him.
 - Wow! What grace is that!
 - He was rejected, but God is sending Him back again and He is going to deliver them!
 - What gratitude is due!

3. But now Stephen presents the most shocking thing of all!

- a. That even though God actually brought Moses forth when he was as good as dead and actually delivered the people through Him...
 - They still rejected him!
 - Even after he had come back to them a second time endued with God's promises and power...
 - declaring that the LORD remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and had compassion on them in their oppression...
 - Even after he had actually wrought signs and wonders upon Egypt so that Egypt released them...

- Even after he had parted the Red Sea and brought them across they rejected him.
 - Even after He had sustained them in the wilderness...
 - as it says in verse 36,
 - **Acts 7:36: He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.**
 - Even after Moses had received for them the very living oracles of God delivered to Him on Mount Sinai in which were the rich promises of forgiveness...as it says at the end of verse 38...
 - Even after all that—they still rejected him!
 - Verses 39-41 give the sad account...
 - **Acts 7:39-41: whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ "And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.**
- b. How could they reject their deliverer and refuse to obey him after all of these things had been done?
- How could they when God had brought him forth from exile and done all of these things through his hand?
 - When He had actually delivered them as promised...
 - But that is what they did...
 - They made a calf to worship.

B. How much more had Stephen’s accusers done this to the Lord Jesus!

1. Initially, they had rejected Jesus when He came to deliver them by delivering Him over to the Romans to be crucified!
 - Moses was as good as dead when he went into exile—but Jesus was actually delivered to the grave where,
 - it would seem, He would no longer be able to deliver them.
 - And why would He even want to when He had been so cruelly rejected?

TRANS> But you know what happened!

2. Like Moses, but in a far greater way, Jesus came forth from His exile with salvation for His people!
 - Moses came with God’s promise and brought them out of bondage,

- But Jesus came forth from the grave having secured eternal life for all His elect!
- He came forth having conquered sin, Satan, death, the curse, and the world.
- He came forth from the grave with justification and complete forgiveness.
- He came forth ready to bestow the Holy Spirit on all who asked.

3. Surely, no one could ever reject Him now!

- a. Indeed, there were many at Pentecost who heard what Jesus had done and believed and were baptised and added to the NT worshipping assembly...
 - The church in the wilderness that worships God in Spirit and truth.
 - The church that rejoices in the finished work of Jesus and that puts no confidence in the flesh!
 - The church that is filled with the Spirit that Jesus gives to all who believe.
 - There were many who came to Him and believed and received life.
 - They joined themselves to Jesus and His church.
- b. But there were many others who amazingly rejected Him—
 - Despite the resurrection—
 - Despite the signs and wonders that were done—
 - Despite the victory over sin, death, Satan, and the curse.
 - Despite the transformed lives of His disciples.
 - This is the One who actually accomplished deliverance and still He is rejected.
- c. And people still reject Him today!
 - Even though now we have added to all that He did the reality that He is delivering the nations before our very eyes—just as He promised.
 - An average of six thousand people a day are being saved by His powerful grace.
 - Why O why would anyone reject the One who is actually saving people!
 - Why would anyone spurn such love, such grace, such power, such deliverance!
 - What joy there is in His forgiveness!
 - What completeness of hope in His salvation!
 - But rejection?
 - Unthinkable!
 - New life is waiting for all who come!

C. But I say, apart from His transforming grace,

- It is in every one of us to reject Him!

- That is what Stephen's hearers had done and that is what so many of the people around us have done...
- And that is what we all do until the grace of God reaches us.

- How ashamed we are when we see what we have spurned!
 - How foolish we have been!
 - How wretched and ungrateful!
 - How hurtful even to our own good.

- But if God has opened your eyes, how thankful you ought to be!
 - Oh yes, come gladly and be His worshipper!
 - Don't go and worship the golden calf or some other way that man devises.
 - Come and worship Jesus in the way that God has appointed for us to worship in our day—in spirit and truth...
 - not with popish ceremonies...
 - not with pagan mutterings...
 - but in simplicity that is focused on Jesus Christ who is preached in the gospel and praised through the simple singing of the psalms with united human voices.
 - not on days of our own devising,
 - but on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, when he was raised from the dead.
 - It is not about us, it is about Jesus, the deliverer that God sent and that we reject until the Lord brings us to our senses.
 - He is risen with salvation for all of us who are in Him.
 - Pray for those who have not yet come.