

The Death of Scripture Precedes Spiritual Death
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From Acts 7:1-53. THE DEATH OF SCRIPTURE PRECEDES SPIRITUAL DEATH, PART 1

#1. Stephen was not attempting to defend himself at this dangerous moment in his life. His purpose was to make plain the relation between Scripture and spirituality.

#2. The people of his day did not comprehend this vital connection. The question is this: Do we, in our day, grasp it?

Here is how it works: FIRST: Revelation and Providence (v. 1-16). The Almighty personally and purposefully intervened in the life of Abraham (v. 1) -- "The God of glory appeared" to him. "and said to him" (v. 2.) Revelation not only changes the rules, it *becomes* the rule.

But rationalism will never accept this truth. The Word of God recast the nature of and the purpose of Abraham's life (v. 3-7.) This is precisely what the Bible does. The covenant of circumcision (v. 8) was established between the Lord and Abraham and his spiritual heirs. This is the mark of difference.

"Joseph" is a study in providence (v. 9-16) -- "rescued him from his afflictions and granted him favor and wisdom" (v. 10.)

A truth: We cannot live a life determined by revelation unless the Providence of God so enables us. These two eternal dynamics work hand in hand. The Jews had the text, but they did not trust in the Providence of God. No one can live the life of faith without the timely applied power of God. Believers are called to this proposition. Fear and the improbable are not allowed to overrule Revelation and Providence.

From Acts 7:1-53. THE DEATH OF SCRIPTURE PRECEDES SPIRITUAL DEATH, PART 2

#1. The new life in the Lord has an incomparable beginning: REVELATION and PROVIDENCE (v. 1-16.) However, such a supernatural beginning cannot guarantee a good end.

#2. The reason is: SECOND, there is the human will to disobey (v. 17-39). Disobedience to the word of God is proof of the attachment to the flesh and to time; in that era or any other era.

#3. The circumstances, in Egypt, facing Israel were grievous (v. 17-19.)

#4. But circumstance has no effect on revelation or Providence (v. 20-29.) What does affect is spiritual dullness (v. 25.) "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and

a judge?' is the one whom God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush" (v. 35.)

#5. Moses led Israel out of Egypt with "wonders and signs" (v. 36.) But "our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him" (v. 39.) Moses was thus "repudiated" (v. 39.)

#6. ANOTHER TRUTH: Whatever the Lord says, there will always be a strong reaction from the human will to disobey! Our flesh recoils against it. Here is the heart of temptation. The life of faith and obedience is time dedicated to the war against the flesh and the devotion to revelation.

#7. Our disobedience means that part of revelation is effectively dead! It is the prelude to incremental spiritual death! It is a human proclivity to kill off the Word.

Acts 7:1-53. THE DEATH OF SCRIPTURE PRECEDES SPIRITUAL DEATH, PART 3

#1. IDOLATRY was the next step in the sequence leading to spiritual death (v. 40.) The Word of God proved objectionable to the Israelites (v. 39.) It bore no relation to human wisdom, and that was unacceptable and even unforgivable from their point of view.

#2. So the Israelites turned to something of their own invention: idolatry-- "they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands" (v. 41.) The true idol, of course, is the human mind.

#3. The point of idolatry is Nature. Nature becomes the basic premise of human existence. Natural appetites suppress higher inclinations and perceptions. Here is man reduced to the lowest case. Idolatry is the complete surrender to the natural.

#4. There is A CRITICAL SYNTHESIS: Man --> and--> Nature are viewed as one piece. Man is no longer a spiritual being in pursuit of the eternal God. He is no longer a distinct creation, rather he is subsumed in nature.

This is by his own choice. Men who bow down to nature have created a false God: "the images which you made to worship" (v. 43.) And men will behave accordingly. A fetus becomes just a little protoplasm of nature. Euthanasia is a natural response to natural conditions. The Lord was displaced by "natural man" and the lust for self-gratification.

CONSEQUENCES: "But God turned away" (v. 42.) God and the Israelites became estranged. "It was not to Me that you offered ...sacrifices forty years in the wilderness" (v. 42.) Worship was withdrawn from the Creator.

#5. The spiritual part of them was dying and the correlate was gravitation to baser instincts. The people inclined to the more outlandish and garish. They "took along the tabernacle of Moloch

and the star of the God Rompha" (v. 43.) "Images" (v. 43) were elevated above the living Lord as the pretext for their natural obsessions.

#6. When the soul dies, society collapses by force of supernatural judgment. The word is, BEWARE!

From Acts 7:1-53. THE DEATH OF SCRIPTURE PRECEDES SPIRITUAL DEATH, PART 4

#1. The True Nature of God (v. 44-50.) After the Conquest of Canaan the Israelites set up the artifacts of worship in Canaan. "The Tabernacle" (v.44, 45,) and the practices associated with it; and later "Solomon" (v. 47) built the Temple.

#2. The Israelites were always enamored with the holy artifacts of Judaism. The understanding of God, however, became a glorified hostage to all those artifacts. This is a sign, perhaps *the* sign of dead religion. "However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands" (v. 48.) They made no distinction between spirit and material. Religion eventually became nothing but experience.

#3. In other words, "the Most High" cannot be poured into a mold of this world or of human wisdom and reason. There is no world mold for God. If the church rejects revelation, that mold will be used. The dead and dying spirits of men seek to redefine God away from revealed terms and introduce him in rational and natural terms.

The Most High is different in every category: "Heaven: His throne"; "Earth: footstool of My feet"; No one can "build" a house "for me"; no "repose" for Him (v. 49.)

#4. The Most High is the origin of all things (v. 50.)

The iteration (v. 51-53.) The Jews of Stephen's day were an iteration of this migration away from the word God and to spiritual death (v. 51.) "The Holy Spirit" is shunned by the spiritually dead (v. 51.)

Base Line: Dead spirits "received the law ordained by angels, and did not keep it" (v. 53.) Simple.