



Blackfoot Church of Christ

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Focus on God, Not Men

Series of Article shere by By Edwin Crozier on Acts 7

Back in Acts 6, the Jews had accused Stephen of speaking blasphemous words against Moses. They essentially equated that with speaking blasphemy against God. On the one hand, Stephen hadn't spoken anything against Moses. However, on the other, he had made and will make one really strong point. The Jews were putting too much emphasis on Moses and not enough emphasis on the God who used Moses. Stephen proves his point by weaving together several stories. What do they all have in common? The focus was not supposed to be on the man God used, but on the God who used the man. Stephen points out that Moses was not the only man God ever used. There was Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, David, Solomon. The consistent point in the stories of all these men was God, not the men themselves. Stephen, of course, was not saying that these men should not be remembered with honor for their part in God's plan. He was saying, however, that the important part was God, not the particular man. Therefore, don't get fixated on a particular person. Stay focused on God. And with that in mind, how shocking is it at all that God had raised up another man and used another man to be the redeemer and ruler of His people? That man is Jesus. Of course, the difference there is Jesus is not just a man, He is the God upon whom we should focus. Let's stick with God. Let's stick with Jesus no matter what.

Focus on God, Not Places

In Acts 6, the Jews had accused Stephen of speaking against the temple in Jerusalem. You would think that they could start getting creative with their misleading accusations, but they were essentially making the same accusation against Stephen they had against Jesus (see Matthew 26:61). The interesting thing is this accusation actually may not be completely off base. Stephen may well have been saying Jesus would destroy the temple. After all, that is exactly what Jesus did

in 70 AD. In his sermon, Stephen does not make a defense saying, “No, you’ve completely misunderstood me. I would never say the temple is going to be destroyed.” Instead, just as he was weaving together stories that showed we should focus on God and not men, he wove together stories that explained we should not focus on holy places, but on the God who made them holy. As Stephen told the stories of the men God used, he also told stories of the places God met them. The God of glory (don’t forget that the glory of the Lord dwelt in the temple) met Abraham not in Jerusalem but Mesopotamia. God was with Joseph, of all places, in Egypt. God first met Moses, not at the temple in Jerusalem, but on Mt. Sinai. Further, God told him to take off his shoes because it was holy ground. There is a subtle reminder that even when they got into the Promised Land it wasn’t until David that the tabernacle was brought to Jerusalem. We know it had been in Bethel, in Shiloh, and in Kiriath-Jearim. Finally, it wasn’t until Solomon that the temple was built. The point behind all of these stories is simple. As important as the temple was, it really wasn’t the temple that was important, but the God who dwelt there—the God who made the temple Holy. Because the Jews had focused too much on the temple, they had missed God when He came into their midst in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ. We must not make that mistake. The focus is not on holy places, but on the Holy God. Hang on to Him no matter where He leads.

God’s Hand not Mine

Over the last two days, we’ve noticed Stephen’s not so subtle messages about not focusing on holy men and holy places, but on the God who made them holy. In both of those streams of thought, Stephen brings together an interesting contrast. In his look at Moses, in Acts 7:25, he explains that at one time Moses had supposed the folks would know God was delivering the people by Moses’s hand. Of course, we know that didn’t happen. Then in Acts 7:35, we see this Moses was sent as redeemer and ruler by the hand of the angel (that is, of the Lord) to lead the people out of Egypt. Granted, the play on the word “hand” is not in the original Hebrew, however the meaning is. I appreciate the ESV bringing it out. Israel wasn’t led out of bondage by the hand of Moses, but by the hand of the Lord. In Stephen’s look at the temple, in Acts 7:48, Stephen highlights that the temple was made by men’s hands. This was a jab against the Jews because it hearkened back to their time worshiping the golden calf which was the work of their own hands (Acts 7:41). The Jews were actually doing the same thing with the temple they had done with the calf. They had made the temple into an idol. Then Stephen quotes Isaiah 66:1-2, in which God explains His hands had created the entire world. That is, God can treat any place He wants as Holy. In both streams of thought, Stephen makes a contrast—

our hands vs. God's. And in both streams, he highlights a struggle I have. I can get fixated on what my hands can accomplish. I can start to think that what my hands have built, what my hands have forged, what my hands have constructed, what my hands have done is really, really important. Not so. God's hands are the power. God's Kingdom, Christ's Body, the Spirit's Temple will not be built by my hands, but by God's. I may be an instrument He uses. I hope and pray so. The power is not in my hands, but God's. Praise the Lord!

The Prophet

If you have been able to read with us earlier in the week, you've already noticed some great parallels between Moses and Jesus. Both were rejected by their brethren. Both performed signs and wonders. Both were raised up by God to be the ruler and redeemer of His people. In the midst of all this, Stephen brings to mind a promise given by Moses: "God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers." Moses had promised this. In other words, allowing another prophet to come along and supersede Moses was not rejecting Moses at all, but believing him. However, the Israelites were making their same mistake over again. But it is an interesting and subtle mistake. Israel didn't worship the golden calf because they had no trust for Moses or because they hated him or because they simply rejected him. It is actually trickier than that. The problem was the people got scared because it seemed to them Moses had disappeared. They had a leader they had followed and trusted, but now he had gone up into the mountain and been gone for 40 days. It may be that God had even killed him up on that fiery mountain. Rather than trusting God, who had just told them not to make idols, they had put their trust in Moses. Because Moses wasn't coming back, they freaked out and rejected God. What happened here? It wasn't that they didn't trust Moses, it was that they put too much trust in Moses and the devil was able to twist that very trust to get Israel to abandon God for idols. In Stephen's day, they were doing the same thing again. They were putting too much trust in the man Moses, and the devil was twisting that trust to get the people to ignore the very words of the man they supposedly trusted. He had said the Prophet was coming. He had said they should listen to the Prophet. But the people weren't listening to him. What an amazing and shocking twist. It also shows how the devil works. He is subtle and crafty. His tricks run deep. The point for us is Jesus is the Prophet. Jesus is the one God was bringing. Don't put your faith in Moses the man, but in the God who spoke through him. We have a Prophet. We have a Redeemer. We have a Ruler. His name is Jesus. Let's put our faith in Him.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Kass' Mom is in the hospital recovering from surgery.
- Vicki's Dad is in the hospital suffering from several health conditions
- Sylvia Ward, Ross's Mom, is making progress in rehab
- Scott Boucher (Sparks NV) cancer treatment
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines

For prayer requests, call or text

Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

Worship Assignments

Today

Song Leader – David Porter

Lord's Table – Larry Thompson

Wednesday

Song Leader – David Porter

Invitation – Ben Palmer

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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