

**Sermon Study Notes 10 July '16**  
**Acts 7:1-8 The Story – God and his people**

Stephen, *“a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”* (6:5), one of those chosen for the team caring for widows, also *“full of God’s grace and power, did wonders and miraculous signs among the people.”* (6:8), was arrested and brought before the Jewish religious leaders where false charges were made against him. When asked by the high priest if these charges were true, Stephen answered by recounting the story of faith from Abraham to the present day – a story of God’s faithfulness and the people’s unfaithfulness.

**Our whole story is important.**

7:2 *“Brothers and sisters, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our Father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.”*

- In a difficult situation, he spoke of God interacting with his people throughout history. Our whole life story is important – it puts today’s situations in perspective. We can begin to see why things have happened, why we are in the situation we are in today – either good or difficult.

**Reflect:** When I connect up my whole life story so far, what stands out to me – repeating patterns, root causes, links from the past to today?

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**2. Facing Painful Truth**

7:6 *“God spoke to him (Abraham) in this way: ‘Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated for four hundred years.’ ”*

- There were hard times ahead, but God would be faithful to his people.

How they react to these hard times would determine their future, not only on earth but eternally.

**Reflect:** How do I react when faced with the truth of my life?

When I look at it from the perspective of ‘No blame root cause analysis’, what difference does that make for me?

**3. Heaven in sight**

7:54 *“When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”*

- There is much more to life than what we experience here on earth.

**Reflect:** What are my thoughts and feelings relating to eternal life – heaven or hell, eternity with God or without God?

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**Conclusion:** Was this all wasted effort regarding the people he was addressing? Had Stephen died without achieving the mission Jesus had commissioned him for? Most in the crowd, it seemed, didn’t choose the path of life set before them at that time, but we can! ...

As Moses said people:

**Deut 30:19** *“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life ...”*

**Reflect:** Take time to contemplate the scripture above.

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