**Preaching Christ in the Shadows**

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

 Two men were walking home from a bar one night, when they decided to take a shortcut through a cemetery. They soon began to regret this decision, however, as the full moon was casting some pretty creepy shadows from some of those tall tombstones. And in their inebriated state (having just come from the bar), things got even worse when suddenly they heard a mysterious tapping noise coming from up ahead. Trembling with fear, they came upon an old man with a hammer and chisel, chipping away at one of the headstones. One of them exclaimed, “Holy cow, Mister! You scared us half to death. We thought you were a ghost! What are you doing working so late at night?” The old man replied by grumbling, “Those idiots misspelled my name!”

 Speaking of shadows, in our last lesson we saw that God’s man of the hour, a man named Stephen, was on trial for his life before the Jewish council for preaching Christ. And some false witnesses had charged him with blaspheming Moses and the law and the temple. So you’d think he’d take the opportunity to defend himself. But instead, he took the opportunity *to preach Christ some more!*

 But he sensed that the mere mention of the Lord’s name might keep them from allowing him to continue, as the mere mention of the word “Gentiles” would later keep them from allowing Paul to continue (Acts 22:21,22). So instead, he decided to preach Christ from the shadows of their Old Testament Scriptures, to prove to them that their Scriptures were all about Christ. Besides he knew they *loved* hearing about the history of their nation rehearsed, so he knew he would have their undivided attention.

 But if you’re not sure what I mean when I say he chose to preach Christ from the shadows of their Old Testament Scriptures, let’s begin our study by reading what the high priest asked Stephen about the charges that he had blasphemed Moses, his law, and the temple:

 **“Then said the high priest, Are these things so?**

**“And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,**

**“And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee” (Acts 7:1-3).**

Now first, when Stephen begins by addressing the Jewish council as “brethren” and “fathers,” that shows that while they considered him an enemy, he considered them to be family. Is that how you think about those who falsely accuse you of things? It’s hard, I know, but it’s what Stephen did, and what God would have us to do as well (Rom. 12:14).

And when he said that “the God of glory” had appeared to Abraham, that would have gotten those Jews to thinking. For you see, God wasn’t *called* “the God of glory” until long after Abraham was dead (Ps. 29:3). That means you’d have to read the God of glory back *into* those vers in the Old Testament about Abraham. And that’s what Stephen is about to do with Christ! He’s going to read Christ back into those verses about Abraham as well.

For instance, when God told Abraham, “Get thee out of thy country,” that’s a picture, a type—and Old Testament *shadow* of how in eternity past, God the Father told the Son to get out of *His* country of heaven. Now if you think the Father wouldn’t talk that way to the Son, if you think about it, that’s just another way of saying, “God sent forth His Son” (Gal. 4:4).

As Stephen noted, Abraham lived in Mesopotamia, which is located in modern day Iraq. Mesopotamia was the location of the Garden of Eden. So Abraham lived in the place that was *the beginning of life on earth.* That’s a picture of where God the Father lived “in the beginning” in Genesis 1:1, before He created heaven and earth. We know from Scripture that *that’s when He planned our redemption,* before the foundation of the world. That’s when He told His Son that He would have to get out of His country in heaven and go into the land He would show Him *after it was created.*

And when God told Abraham to leave “his kindred” behind, that’s a picture of how the Lord had to leave *His* kindred behind—all the principalities, and powers, and all the angels that ministered to Him in heaven. In other words, the Lord would have to leave all the comforts of home behind—just as we see pictured in the type of Abraham. And *that’s* how Stephen began preaching Christ.

 Now if you are thinking that the Jews on the council wouldn’t catch all of that, I assure you that just because most dumb Gentiles like us wouldn’t notice those types that Jews who knew their Bibles well would. Besides, Stephen is just getting started in preaching Christ from the shadows.

 Listen, there’s a reason these unsaved Jews stoned Stephen when he finished this lengthy oration, even though he never once mentioned the Lord Jesus. It was because they knew he was preaching Christ from the shadows of their Scriptues.

 We see another type or shadow as Stephen went on to say of Abraham,

**“Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell” (Acts 7:4).**

Now when Abraham obeyed God and came to the place where God asked him to go, that foreshadowed how the Lord came to earth, the place where God asked *Him* to go. Of course, before Abraham got to the place where the Jewish council now dwelt in Jerusalem, he spent some years in Charan—just like the Lord spent some years in Bethlehem and Nazareth before coming to the Jerusalem area, where they council now dwelt. You’ll notice that Stephen spoke of that area as the place where “ye” dwelt, not “we.”

 In other words, Abraham waited until his father died to go where God told him to go, and the Lord waited until *his father Joseph* died to go where God told *Him* to go. We know Joseph was dead when the Lord was on the cross, for He asked John to care for His mother with his dying breaths (John 19:27), something He wouldn’t have had to do if Joseph had still been alive.

 But we know that Joseph was already dead at the very *beginning* of the Lord’s ministry when “the water…was made wine” (John 2:9), and we read:

**“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee…After this He went down to Capernaum, He, *and His mother, and His brethren,* and…went up to Jerusalem” (John 2:10-13).**

You’ll notice that the Lord’s mother and brethren are mentioned, but Joseph is conspicuous by his absence. I think it is safe to assume that Joseph was dead at the outset of the Lord’s ministry, and indeed that the Lord had waited until His father was dead to begin his ministry. That’s when we read things like,

**“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him” (Matthew 3:13).**

That’s when the Lord came into the land where the Jewish council now dwelt, after His father was dead—just as we see pictured in Abraham.

Next Stephen continues with the story of Abraham in Acts 7:5 where, speaking of what God gave Abraham in the promised land, we read:

**“And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child” (Acts 7:5).**

Now if you know the story, you know that Abraham was promised the land of Israel for an inheritance—that’s why it’s called the promised land! But you also know that he didn’t *get* his inheritance during his *first* trip to Planet Earth. He won’t receive it until his *next* trip to earth *in the resurrection.* That’s why it says of him in Hebrews 11:9,

**“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, *dwelling in tabernacles* with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.”**

Abraham lived in *tents* because he couldn’t put down roots in a land that didn’t officially belong to him yet! Doesn’t that remind you of what we read about the Lord?

**“…Jesus saith…The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; *but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head”* (Matthew 8:20).**

Does that sound like the Lord received *His* inheritance during *His* first trip to Planet Earth?

If you’re wondering what His inheritance *was,* Hebrews 1:1,2 says,

**“God…Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, *whom He hath appointed heir of all things,* by whom also He made the worlds”**

Someday the Lord will inherit “all things,” including the “worlds” that He created, include *this* world. But only *after* He died and rose again—just as Abraham had to die before he could receive *his* inheritance when *he* rises from the dead.

When the Lord returns, He and his *spiritual* seed, the Jews who believed on Him, will inherit the earth in the kingdom of heaven on earth—just like we see foreshadowed in the type of Abraham (Acts 7:5).

But before the Lord’s seed can inherit the earth in the kingdom, they’ll have to go through the Tribulation. And Abraham’s seed *also* had to go through some tribulation before they could get to their promised land, something we see as Stephen continues his narration:

**“And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years” (Acts 7:6).**

God told Abraham that his seed would have to suffer bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt before getting to their inheritance in the promised land, just as the Lord’s spiritual seed will have to suffer bondage to the Antichrist in the Tribulation before getting to their inheritance in the kingdom.

Now here’s an easy question: what happened to Pharaoh and his people in Egypt after the time of Israel’s bondage was through? In case you forgot, Stephen reminds us as he went on to say about the Egyptians,

**“And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place” (Acts 7:7).**

Did God “judge” the nation of Egypt before Abraham’s seed got to go to their inheritance? Just ask Pharaoh and his Soggy Bottom Boys! Will the Lord judge the Antichrist before the Lord’s spiritual seed gets to go to their inheritance in the kingdom? Just ask the birds who will feast on the flesh of Antichrist’s armies!

Now the *reason* Abraham’s seed had to go through that time of bondage in Egypt was because of something we read about in Genesis 15:13,16, where God told Abraham,

**“…thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years…*for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full”***

Compare that to what we read about the Antichrist in Daniel 8:23,24:

**“…*when the transgressors are come to the full*, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up…and…destroy the mighty and the holy people”**

Abraham’s seed couldn’t get their inheritance in the land until the iniquity of the Amorites was full, and Christ’s spiritual seed won’t get *their* inheritance in the kingdom until the transgressions of *the Antichrist* is full.

Now if you don’t think those 400 years that Abraham’s seed suffered in Egypt were a type of the Tribulation, do a study of the 10 plagues that *ended* those 400 years. You’ll see those plagues will match the judgments that will fall in the Tribulation. The waters turning to blood, the frogs, the locust, the darkness—it’s all coming when that fateful day befalls the earth.

Of course, before Abraham and his seed could inherit the promised land in the next life, they would need a Savior to save them from the Antichrist and their sins, as we see pictured in Acts 7:8, where Stephen tells us about something *else* that God gave Abraham:

**“And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.”**

Now if you’re not sure *why* God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision, it was because God had promised him a son, but when God took so very long to *give* him a son, he got tired of waiting and had a son with his wife’s maid. That happened in Genesis 16, and God gave him the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17. That was God’s way of looking at Ishmael and saying, as it were, “What’s this? I didn’t ask for this! And I’ll show you what I think of this! Cut the head off the thing that *produced* this.”

And *that* part of the shadow of Abraham’s life was a type of how God promised the Jews a Messiah, but since they rejected *Christ* as their messiah, they are going to be plenty tired of waiting for their promised One by the time the Tribulation arrives. So they are going to take matters into their own hand and produce *their own* messiah in the Antichrist, just as we see foreshadowed when Abraham fathered Ishmael.

But as you know, *Isaac* was the seed of Abraham that counted with God. And as it says in Acts 7:8, Isaac begat Jacob, who begat the twelve patriarchs. And that brings us to *another* beloved figure in Israel’s history who was *also* a type of Christ:

**“And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him” (Acts 7:9).**

One of those twelve patriarchs was a man named *Joseph,* who said,

**“…I seek my brethren…And Joseph went after his brethren…and when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, *they conspired against him to slay him”* (Genesis 37:16-18).**

Now if that sounds familiar, its because of what we read about the Lord in Matthew 21:38:

**“…when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; *come, let us kill him,* and let us seize on his inheritance.”**

Not long after the Lord began His ministry in Israel, we read:

**“…the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, *how they might destroy Him”* (Mark 3:6).**

You probably remember *why* Joseph’s brethren wanted to kill him. “His brethren *envied* him” (Gen. 37:11), they were “moved with envy” against him (Acts 7:9). Isn’t that why the Lord’s brethren wanted to kill Him too? “Pilate…knew that *for envy* they had delivered Him” (Mt.27:7,18).

Next we read of Joseph,

**“…when Joseph was come unto his brethren…*they stript Joseph out of his coat,* his coat of many colours that was on him” (Genesis 37:23).**

What a picture of how we read of the Lord Jesus that “they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe” (Mt. 27:28).

Of course, it was *the Roman soldiers* who did that. The Jews didn’t want His blood on *their* hands, so they got the Romans to do their dirty work—just like we read about Joseph when his brother Reuben said to his brethren,

**“…*Shed no blood…lay no hand upon him*…and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, *and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites*…and they brought Joseph into Egypt” (Genesis 37:22,23).**

Joseph’s brethren sold him to the Ishmeelites, the enemies of Abraham’s seed in Isaac—just as the Lord’s brethren sold *Him* to the Romans, the enemies of Abraham’s seed in His day.

And when Genesis 37 says they lifted Joseph out of a “the pit,” that’s a type of how God raised Christ from the dead out of the pit of the tomb. Stephen hastens to add that “God was with him” in the tomb (Acts 7:9)—just as He was with the Lord in the tomb, as He Himself had predicted when He told His disciples,

**“I leave the world, and go to the Father…ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, *because the Father is with Me”* (John 16:28,32).**

Now the reason Stephen was telling the Jews this was to remind them that Joseph’s brethren thought they got rid of him, then later found out they were wrong about that—just like the Jewish council thought they got rid of the Lord, and were finding out that they were wrong about that when the Lord sent His Spirit to fill His disciples and enable them to work miracles that the council couldn’t deny.

Now so far, Stephen has been telling the Jews about what *they* did to the Lord in these shadows. But now he’s about to compare what *God* did to Him by comparing what God did to Joseph in Acts 7:10, where we read how God was with Him,

**“And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.”**

As you can see, God not only delivered Joseph out of that deadly pit, He exalted him to be the governor over all of Egypt. And since Egypt came to rule the world during his reign, this foreshadowed how the Lord will someday be the governor of the world, now that God has raised Him from the dead.

Did you know that Psalm 22 talks about the Lord’s resurrection? Everyone knows that the first half of this well-known psalm is about the Lord’s death on the cross, for the Lord *quotes* it:

**“…My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?...” (Psalm 22:1).**

But the second half of this psalm is about the Lord’s resurrection, as we see in Psalm 22:24,27,28:

**“*For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;* neither hath He hid His face from Him; *but when He cried unto Him, He heard*…All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee.  *For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and He is the governor among the nations.”***

God the Father didn’t abhor the Lord’s afflictions on the cross, He heard Him when he cried (Heb. 5) and will someday make him “governor among the nations.” Well, isn’t that what God did for Joseph, deliver him out of all of *his* afflictions in the pit, and make *him* governor among the nations?

Speaking of God hearing the Lord’s cry, look what the Lord said about His resurrection in these prophetic words of the psalmist:

**“I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto Me, and heard My cry. *He brought Me up also out of an horrible pit,* out of the miry clay, and set My feet upon a rock, and established My goings” (Psalm 40:1,2).**

God delivered the Lord out of the pit of His tomb, just as He delivered Jospeh out of the horrible pit that his brethren had cast *him* into.

And that’s when the Lord was supposed to become Israel’s king. But the Lord *couldn’t* be Israel’s king until something else happened, something we see foreshadowed in Joseph’s life in Acts 7:11:

**“Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.”**

And how long did that “dearth” last? *Seven years,* a clear picture of the coming seven years of the Tribulation. You see, even if the Jews had made the Lord their king, those seven years of Tribulation would still have had to come to purge the unbelievers out of Israel before the kingdom could begin. Zechariah talked about this, right after talking about the Lord’s arrest:

**“…Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: *smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered…*And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. *And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:* they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (Zechariah 13:7-9).**

And when Acts 7:11 says that Joseph’s brethren “found no sustenance” in that dearth, that’s a type of how God’s people in Israel will find no sustenance in the Tribulation when they won’t be able to buy food without the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16,17).

You know, they say Bible prophecy is *history written in advance,* and it is! It’s history written in advance by the only One who knows the future, God Almighty. But these shadows that Stephen is pointing out here are a dress rehearsal for Israel’s future, as we see as we read on in Acts 7:12:

**“But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.”**

Joseph’s father Jacob had no idea that his son Joseph had become governor of Egypt. And when he and his family ran out of food, he sent Joseph’s brethren to get some from Joseph. His brethren didn’t recognize him *the first time* they met him, but that changed the *next* time, as we see as we read on in our text:

**“And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh” (Acts 7:13).**

When Joseph’s brethren didn’t recognize him the first time they met up, that’s a shadow of how *the Lord’s* brethren didn’t recognize Him when they first met *Him* on His first visit 2,000 years ago. But when Joseph’s brethren recognized him *the second time,* that’s a type of how the Lord’s brethren in Israel will recognize Him at His Second Coming, just as the prophet predicted when he wrote,

**“…and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, *and they shall mourn for Him…”* (Zechariah 12:10).**

The Jews will be sure to recognize the Lord by the wounds in His hands and feet where they pierced Him. If you think that they will find those wounds troubling, you’re right, and we see this too foreshadowed in the life of Joseph when

**“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph…And his brethren could not answer him; *for they were troubled at his presence”* (Genesis 45:3).**

Joseph’s brethren were thinking, “We betrayed him, and he’s going to be *furious* with us.” Just as the Lord’s brethren in Israel will be thinking of how they betrayed Him, and how He will be furious with them at His Second Coming, just as John predicted in Revelation 1:7:

**“Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, *and they also which pierced Him:* *and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him”***

The Lord’s brethren will be wishing that they hadn’t pierced their Messiah when they had Him nailed to a cross, just as Joseph’s brethren were wishing they hadn’t sold him into bondage.

When Acts 7:13 goes on to say that Joseph’s brethren were made known to Pharaoh, that’s described in Genesis 45:16-18, where we read:

**“And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: *and it pleased Pharaoh well*…And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren…*I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land”***

After Joseph told Pharaoh, “These are my brethren,” Pharaoh gave Joseph’s brethren the best land in Egypt, and they were soon enjoying the fat of the land. Isn’t that what will happen to the Lord’s spiritual brethren in Israel in the kingdom of heaven on earth? Speaking of the kingdom, Isaiah wrote,

**“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; *and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*  It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing” (Isaiah 35:1,2).**

Well, at this point in Joseph’s life, there was nothing left to do except what we read about in the final verse of our text:

**“Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls” (Acts 7:14).**

This gathering of “all” of Joseph’s kindred foreshadows the gathering of the Lord’s spiritual seed of Israel into the kingdom of heaven on earth described in Matthew 24:31:

**“…He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, *and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”***

Joseph’s life tells the story of Christ in shadows *three times in succession.* Kind of like how Matthew, Mark and Luke tell it, with John focusing more on His deity.

But I’m sure that what Stephen has already shared with the Jewish council about Christ in the types was enough to get them smoldering. Of course, they couldn’t say a word in protest, for technically all Stephen was doing was rehearsing Israel’s illustrious history as God’s people!

Only God could have written a Book such as this.

This passage began with the high priest asking Stephen if the charges against him were true. But rather than give any kind of defense, Stephen chose to go on the *offense* and preach Christ. You see, it wasn’t *Stephen* who was on trial in this chapter, it was the whole nation of Israel. With this message that was given by a man filled with God’s Spirit, God was testing them to see if they would stand by their heinous crime of crucifying the Son of God, or “repent” as Peter had called on them to do (Acts 2:38).