



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Congress of Israel Sees a Face Like an Angel

JUNE 18-20, 2014

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Acts 6:8-15

“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9) Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. 10) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. 11) Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ 12) And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. 13) They also set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; 14) for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.’ 15) And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.” (NKJV)

“GOD HIMSELF ANSWERED THEIR FALSE CHARGES BY PUTTING HIS GLORY ON STEPHEN’S FACE—SOMETHING EXPERIENCED BY NO OTHER PERSON IN HISTORY EXCEPT MOSES (EX. 34:27-35). HE THUS SHOWED HIS APPROVAL OF STEPHEN’S TEACHING IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY HE DID THAT OF MOSES.” JOHN MACARTHUR

Had anyone else, besides Stephen, done “*great wonders and signs*”? What is the significance of Stephen’s name? Was it possible that there was one who may have debated Stephen who also masterminded his trial and eventual death? Why were those in the Synagogue not able to withstand the wisdom of Stephen? Was this the first time that the people turned against the Church? Who else had been falsely accused with the same charges? What is the significance of Stephen’s glowing face? Did God give anyone else such a glowing face in history?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES/EVENTS:

- JUNE 25-27: ACTS 7:1-10 THE THIRD SERMON IN THE CAPITOL: SIN AGAINST GODLY JOSEPH
- SEPTEMBER 10: LEGISLATIVE INVITATIONAL FISHING TOURNAMENT

The Apostles had been overwhelmed with the immense growth of the Church and their flock had become so enormous that the Hellenistic widows were complaining due to neglect. They presented the perfect solution in calling all the Church together and requesting that they choose seven men to care for the widows, so that they could concentrate on their most important priorities, “*prayer and the ministry of the Word*” (6:4). Stephen, “*a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit*,” is listed as the first of the seven who all had Greek names and therefore would have all been Hellenistic Jews. Immediately as a result of the leaders being able to return to their priorities, the Church flourished so abundantly that “*the Word of God was continually growing*” in influence and obedience, and there was an explosion in growth as “*the number of disciples in Jerusalem continually greatly multiplied exceedingly*.” And then the Gospel spread to the leadership, “*most importantly, a great crowd of the priests became continually obedient to the faith*” (6:7). Hundreds of former persecutors now led others to the truth as they obeyed their Risen King, Jesus Christ! Of course, the unbelieving leadership is looking for a way to stop this strategic advancement.

“FOR AT FIRST THEY RAGED AGAINST CHRIST WITH THIS BRAG, ‘HATH ANY OF THE RULERS BELIEVED IN HIM? BUT THIS MULTITUDE, WHICH KNOWETH NOT THE LAW, ARE ACCURSED.’” (JOHN 7:48) JOHN CALVIN

I. THE FULLNESS OF LOVE

ACTS 6:8-10

Stephen, whose name means “*crown*,” was the crowning extension of the Apostles as he demonstrated his faith

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 8:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3 AND 12:00NOON – OAKTON – BOB EVANS AT THE 66 AND 123

THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)

FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT

Virginia

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with “*grace and power*,” the loving balance of gentleness and strength. His gracious power was so strong that he is the first in the Church to do “*great wonders and signs among the people*” His miraculous, loving power probably even eclipsed the Apostles’ whose signs and wonders are described as “*many*,” while only Stephen’s are called “*great*.” Most importantly, he was a loving extension of the Apostles in his powerful evangelism. With his Greek name, we can assume that he had attended the Hellenistic “*Synagogue of the Freedmen*.” And as he had proclaimed the Gospel in their midst, they began “*disputing with Stephen*.” Yet he was so winsome and cogent in his defense of the truth, “*they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke*.” With his thorough knowledge of the Word of God and the promised ability given him by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, he never lost the debate (Luke 12:11-12). This would have intensely angered one rising leader in the Congress of Israel, a student of Gamaliel, who was from Tarsus in *Cilicia*, if he had been attending that particular synagogue, and particularly if he had been one of those unsuccessfully debating Stephen!

cultivated favor with the people, but that favor could vanish instantly with suspicion of blasphemy against their lawgiver and their God. “*And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council*.” It was done so fast that no one had time to ask questions. “*They also set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.’*” In the specifics it is obvious they are lying. Jesus was tried with the same false accusation (Mt. 26:59-66). What Jesus had really said was, “*Ye destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (Jn. 2:19), “*He was speaking of the temple of His body*” (Jn. 2:21). The false accusation of changing Moses’ customs must have come from Matthew 5:21-48 where Jesus corrects many false interpretations taught from the Law of Moses.

“STEPHEN’S FACE, LIKE MOSES AT SINAI, SHONE LIKE AN ANGEL (EXODUS 34:29). BOTH MOSES’ MINISTRY OF THE LAW AND STEPHEN’S INTERPRETATION OF IT HAD THE APPROVAL OF GOD.” DAVID COOK

“AMONG THE JEWS FROM CILICIA WAS AN ARDENT AND EXTREME PHARISEE, WHO IT MAY BE CONJECTURED WAS THE LEADING SPIRIT IN THE ACTIONS NOW TO BE NARRATED. HE WAS THAT ‘YOUNG MAN NAMED SAUL’ (VII:58). RICHARD RACKHAM

II. THE FABRICATION OF LIES ACTS 6:11-14

Are there any today, when they cannot win the debate with logic, resort to lies? “*Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’*” The word for “*secretly induced*” only occurs here in the New Testament and it means “to bribe and instruct privately, to secure a person who will take a false oath or speak false testimony.” They found liars willing to commit perjury in order to lynch Stephen. They knew all the loving miracles of healing had continually

III. THE FACE OF LIGHT

ACTS 6:15

What a final witness to the Congress of Israel! These leaders, who so revered Moses (who was the only man who had lived through seeing God Himself), whose face was shining so brightly afterwards that they had to put a veil over it so that people could look at him, these leaders now saw an exact re-enactment of the same radiant glory of God in the face of Stephen as they accused him of changing “*the customs which Moses delivered to us*.” No wonder they were “*looking steadfastly at him*”! For the first time, they saw the blazing glory of God, picturing His actual presence, in the face of the man whom they were accusing of dishonoring God, His Man, and His message!

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Do you reveal that you are filled with the Holy Spirit by being a bold witness for God?
- 2) What do you do when you are losing the debate, do you shade the truth with deceit and lies?
- 3) Does your life radiate the glory of God because you are full of faith and His power, wisdom and Spirit?