

## **Acts 7 “Stephen and Saul” June 2, 2024**

**Intro:** Three weeks ago, we left off in our study in Acts with the appointment of those blue collar and bold deacons of which the man, Stephen was the focal point. Today, we continue to see how the drama unfolds and gain not only some understanding but also Spirit empowered motivation to be radical for the gospel.

This text is in two main parts. First there is the majority of the chapter that is Stephen’s sermon (if you want to call it that). This is v2-53 of 60 verses. The second part is the Sanhedrin’s response (v-54-60). Let’s get into it.

### **I. Stephen’s Defense (v2-53)**

While the vast majority of the chapter is Stephen’s sermon (if you want to call it that), it is important to remember that he is responding to the high priest’s question in verse 1 that references the accusation leveled against him in 6:13-14. The accusation is twofold. First, they claim that he is speaking against the “holy place” or temple. Namely, that Jesus will destroy it. You’ll remember that this is indeed what Jesus said in Matthew 24:2, Mark 13:2, & Luke 21:6.

Secondly, they are accusing him of altering the law and customs of Moses.

A. Summary of the OT **Question 1** What is the summary of Stephen’s message in verses 1-50?

1. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (v2-16, Genesis 12-50, 38 chapters!)

“The point that Stephen is making is that all through their history, the Jewish people persecuted and killed the prophets sent to them, just as Joseph’s brothers persecuted Joseph.”

-JM Boice, Acts; p122

2. Moses (v17-44, Exodus, 40 chapters!) especially v39 “our fathers rejected him...”

3. Joshua (v45)

4. David (v46)

5. Solomon (v47-50) Quote from Is 66:1; see also 1Kings 8:27

All of this is Stephen’s summary of the Old Testament to show that there has been a history of people, these people, rejecting God and His messengers. They rejected Joseph, Moses and Aaron, didn’t listen to Joshua. Secondly, they are forgetting that Solomon himself recognized the limitations of the temple. Isaiah reminded them of this and now, they too are rejecting God’s messenger, Jesus and disregarding what He said about the temple. Judgement is coming. Now Stephen will make it unmistakably clear what he is getting at.

## B. Accusation and Tense Change (v51-53). **Question 2**

We do not know if this is a complete account of what Stephen said, it certainly feels fairly extensive. However, at verse 51, the tone shifts drastically. He goes from speaking about the Old Testament history, to confronting them head on. He does not pull any punches and

## II. Response of the Sanhedrin

### A. Anger (v54)

### B. Stephen's Vision (v55-56) **Question 3**

Only place in the Bible that we see the ascended Jesus standing. You'll recall that we've pointed out that the Bible makes much about Jesus having been "seated" at the right hand of the Father. This refers to Psalm 110 which the disciples used to defend the deity and rule of Jesus. However, here we see that Jesus was standing. Perhaps this is signifying Jesus' acceptance and advocacy on behalf of Stephen. Stephen has been testifying about the work of God. Now, the great God of heaven is up on His feet actually testifying for Stephen.

There is a powerful image here. Paul will later pen, in Romans 8:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed." No one will ever suffer or die for Jesus, get to heaven, look upon His face, and say it was not worth it. Jesus said "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God." -Matt 5:10; In Matt 10-28-33, Jesus says that He will acknowledge before the Father, those who have acknowledged Him before men. This is what is going on here.

### C. Stoning of Stephen (v57-60) **Question 5** Stephen is the first Christian martyr.

1. Saul v(58) **Question 4** There is a sense in which it is appropriate to say that Luke reviews this information to get us to the person of Saul, who most of the book will turn to later.

2. Stephen's response similar to Jesus (v59-60).

We need men like Stephen. Men full of the Holy Spirit. Men who serve. Men who lead. Men who are blue collar and bold. Men who know their Bibles. Men who stand on the promises and don't back down. Men who are willing to give their lives for the gospel. Men who walk worthy of their calling. This is what He calls us to church. This is our purpose. This is the great commission that Jesus gave us in Matt 28:18-20.

**Go through questions 6 -9 and fill in blanks.**

6. What is the “great commission”? Where is it found in the Bible? Why is it important that we keep the mission of God at the forefront of our lives? How does the great commission impact our family goals, schedules and planning?

7. How does the GC scratch the itch of the child for adventure, teenager for excitement, young adult for conquest, middle aged adult for purpose, older adult for meaning?

8. How many of the first 12 disciples were martyred?

For further study: Foxe’s Book of Martyrs; Voice of the Martyrs: [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)

9. What do we need to do as a result of hearing this message?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Our great God and Father, thank you for Your Son, Your Spirit, and Your Word. Would you help us to value You and Your mission more than even our own lives? Convince us of the overwhelming value of the gospel in comparison to anything else. Make us bold for You and Your Son Jesus, by the power of the Spirit. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### **Questions:**

1. What is the summary of Stephen’s message in verses 1-50?

2. What is the tense change in v51? Why is that important?

3. How is Stephen seeing Jesus standing in v55-56 significant?

4. Who is introduced in v58? Why is this important?

5. Stephen is the first Christian martyr.

6. What is the “great commission”? Where is it found in the Bible? Why is it important that we keep the mission of God at the forefront of our lives? How does the great commission impact our family goals, schedules, and planning?

7. How does the GC scratch the itch of the child for adventure, teenager for excitement, young adult for conquest, middle aged adult for purpose, older adult for meaning?

8. How many of the first 12 disciples were martyred?

For further study: Foxe’s Book of Martyrs; Voice of the Martyrs: [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)

9. What do we need to do as a result of hearing this message?