



MIDWEEK FILLUP | THE STUDY OF ACTS

ACTS 7

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

1. To review Stephen's defense to the charge of blasphemy against the temple and the Law
2. To note the remarkable manner in which the first martyr for Christ died

SUMMARY

The previous chapter ended with Stephen before the Sanhedrin council facing accusations that he spoke blasphemy against the temple and the Law (cf. 6:13-14). Chapter seven contains Stephen's defense to these charges, and the account of his martyrdom.

Stephen responded by reviewing the call of Abraham and God's promise to him and the nation of Israel. He then described how God used Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage and led them for forty years through the wilderness. Yet Israel rebelled against Moses, through whom God gave the Law. Not only in the incident involving the golden calf, but throughout their wilderness wanderings Israel continued to worship false gods (cf. Am 5:25-27). Turning to the matter of God's dwelling place, Stephen acknowledged the role of the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon, but contended that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (cf. Isa 66:1-2). He concluded by charging the council of resisting the Holy Spirit just like their ancestors, for as their fathers persecuted and killed the prophets who foretold the coming of the Just One (Christ), so they became His betrayers and murderers. Indeed, they were the ones who have not kept the Law (1-53).

Cut to the heart, those in the council gnashed at Stephen with their teeth. Full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God with Jesus standing at His right hand. Upon telling the council what he saw, in rage they cast him out of city and began stoning him. The witnesses who brought the false charges laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul (later known as Paul, the apostle). As Stephen was stoned, he called upon Jesus to receive his spirit, and to not charge his murderers with his death. In this way Stephen became the first martyr for Christ (54-60).

OUTLINE

1. **STEPHEN'S DEFENSE (1-53)**
 - a. **GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ABRAHAM (1-8)**
 - i. The call to leave Mesopotamia
 - ii. The sojourn in Canaan

- iii. The promise of possession to his descendants
- iv. The covenant of circumcision
- v. His descendants: Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs

b. THE PATRIARCHS SOJOURN IN EGYPT (9-16)

- i. Joseph sold into Egypt, becomes governor
- ii. Jacob and his sons move to Egypt during the famine
- iii. The patriarchs buried in Canaan

c. GOD'S DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL BY MOSES (17-36)

- i. The children Israel in Egypt become slaves
- ii. The work of Moses, deliverer of Israel
 - 1. Raised by Pharaoh's daughter
 - 2. Kills an Egyptian, but despised by his brethren
 - 3. Flees to Midian where he lives for forty years
 - 4. The Lord appears to Moses in a burning bush at Mount Sinai
 - 5. Returns to Egypt, delivers Israel and brings them into the wilderness

d. ISRAEL'S REBELLION AGAINST GOD AND MOSES (37-43)

- i. Moses is the person:
 - 1. Who said God would raise up another prophet like him
 - 2. Who spoke to the Angel on Mount Sinai
 - 3. Who received living oracles to give to Israel
 - 4. Whom the fathers would not obey but rejected
- ii. Israel is the nation:
 - 1. Who turned back into Egypt in their hearts
 - 2. Who pressured Aaron to make a golden calf
 - 3. Whom God gave up to worship the host of heaven for forty years in the wilderness
 - a. They may have offered sacrifices to the Lord
 - b. They also worshiped Moloch and Remphan - cf. **Amos 5:25-**

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e. GOD'S TRUE TABERNACLE (44-50)

- i. The fathers of Israel had the tabernacle of witness
 - 1. In the wilderness, built according to the pattern shown Moses
 - 2. Brought into the promised land by Joshua
- ii. They also had the temple
 - 1. Asked for by David, who found favor before God
 - 2. Built by his son Solomon
- iii. Yet the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands
 - 1. For heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool
 - 2. His hand has made all these things - cf. **Isa 66:1-2**

f. ISRAEL'S RESISTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (51-53)

- i. Stephen charges the council of resisting the Holy Spirit, just as their fathers did
- ii. Their fathers persecuted and killed the prophets, so they have killed the Just One
- iii. They received the law, but did not keep it

2. STEPHEN'S DEATH (54-60)

a. THE REACTION OF THE COUNCIL (54-58a)

- i. Cut to the heart, they gnashed at Stephen with their teeth
- ii. Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven
 - 1. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God
 - 2. He tells the council what he saw
- iii. In response, the council:
 - 1. Cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears
 - 2. Ran at him with one accord, and cast him out of the city

b. THE STONING OF STEPHEN (58b-60)

- i. The witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of Saul
- ii. They stoned Stephen as he was calling on God
 - 1. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"
 - 2. "Lord, do not charge them with this sin"
- iii. Having said this, he fell asleep (i.e., died)