

Acts 6:8-7:53

July 27, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

When false charges were brought against Stephen because of his Holy Spirit-filled preaching and teaching, he was brought before the Sanhedrin and delivered a powerful, truth-filled sermon.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Does anyone have any new takeaways they'd like to share from our study of Acts? What are you learning?

The apostles have had a couple of brushes with the Sanhedrin so far in our study of Acts. Summarize these events to this point.

How have we seen the apostles respond after being arrested?



In our study of Acts, we've read multiple accounts of the apostles being arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, and today, we'll read the account of Stephen being brought before the Sanhedrin. We were introduced to Stephen last week when he was appointed to help oversee distributions to the needy widows. Last week's passage called him "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5) and we will see that in action today.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

🌿 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 6:8-15.

What stands out to you in this passage?

How was God using Stephen in these verses?

What was the response of the leaders?

Luke described Stephen as being "full of grace and power" (v.8), and, because of this blessing from the Lord, Stephen performed many wonders and signs. The Holy Spirit used Stephen as a tool to bless those around him, glorifying God and acting as a witness to the good news of Jesus. When we are fully bought into following Jesus like Stephen was, God wants to use us powerfully, too.

These signs and wonders Stephen performed attracted dangerous opposition. The Jewish people began to argue with him (v.9). When they couldn't stand against a Holy Spirit-filled Stephen in debate, they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen (accusing him of blasphemy). This incited a riot and prompted his arrest, which was based on fake charges.

The Jewish leaders did the same thing to Jesus when they presented false charges against Him and accused Him of blasphemy in Matthew 26:59-66.

This section ends with Stephen being falsely accused and brought before the Sanhedrin, the powerful Jewish governing body.

🌿 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 7:30-41.

What Old Testament events did Stephen recap here?

What point was Stephen making in highlighting these events?

What message might be applied today from Stephen's words here?



A large part of chapter seven records the account of Stephen's sermon before the Sanhedrin with this passage covering a select portion. Stephen chronicled the history of God's people, beginning with Abraham and emphasizing God's faithfulness and, in contrast, Israel's unfaithfulness to God throughout history. While God was faithful, they were not.

It is interesting to note that Stephen didn't offer a defense before them. When the high priest asked him if the accusations were true (Acts 7:1), he could have simply responded by saying no and correcting their assumption on what he was teaching (remember, they lied). He didn't. Instead, he continued to speak truth, acting as the Holy Spirit's tool on a mission to glorify God.

In these verses, Stephen recounted the story of Moses with an emphasis on the disbelief and unfaithfulness of the people. God called and sent Moses to them, but the people still rejected him (v.35). The Israelites were disbelieving and unfaithful many times during Moses's life, but the specific example Stephen gave was their rebellion in the wilderness when they created the golden calf. Instead of remaining faithful to God, after everything they had witnessed in their exodus from Egypt, they formed an idol and began to worship it.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 7:51-53.

How did Stephen exhibit godly boldness here?

How does this give evidence that he was acting for God's glory and not his own?

How might we apply Stephen's points from this section today? What warning might there be for us?

Stephen's powerful sermon culminated. He brought his sermon to a close by calling out the Jewish leaders for resisting the Holy Spirit, betraying and murdering Jesus, and not truly keeping the law. Just like their ancestors rejected Moses, they had rejected Jesus. Just like their ancestors rebelled against God in the desert, they betrayed the Messiah, whose coming was foretold. He called them stiff-necked, using language like the Old Testament prophets they rejected. They were unyielding and prideful, very different from the devout and upstanding image they sought to present.

Stephen's sermon is an inspiring example. When we put Jesus first in our lives, we can have a similar reaction to opposition: staying rooted in our faith and faithful in what the Holy Spirit is telling us to do, even when our actions have negative consequences. Faced with the truth of powerful accusations, the Sanhedrin could receive the truth and repent or remain rooted in pride and react with anger. We'll read their response next week.



APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What can we learn from this passage about the dangers of being driven by our own pride?

Stephen's sermon focused heavily on disbelief and unfaithfulness. In what ways do we deal with disbelief and unfaithfulness today?

How do we prepare now to respond in godly boldness when given opportunity?

How does living this way give us opportunity to shine a light for Jesus?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Thank Him for all you and your group are learning in your study of Acts and ask for His help as you seek to live with greater faith no matter what it costs you, like Stephen did.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.

August 3, 2025 --- Acts 7:54-8:1



COMMENTARY

Acts 6:8–7:53

Stephen's Arrest and Trial (6:8–7:1). One of the seven was Stephen. Filled with “God’s grace and power,” he performed miracles and bore a powerful witness to Christ. In particular, he preached in the Greek-speaking Jewish synagogues comprised of Jews from various parts of the Roman empire who had come to live in Jerusalem. Stephen encountered considerable resistance in these synagogues, but no one could refute his persuasive arguments. So his opponents resorted to treachery. They “hatched a frame-up” and brought false accusations against him before the Sanhedrin. Two false charges were made: he spoke against the Jewish law (= Moses), and he spoke against God. Specifically, the charge of speaking against God maintained that he had threatened to destroy God’s house, the temple. In verse 15 Luke prepares us for Stephen’s martyrdom that is to follow. Stephen’s face shone with the radiance of divine inspiration for his testimony, a testimony which would lead to his death.

Stephen's Speech (7:2–53). On the surface Stephen’s speech, the longest in Acts, seems like a bare recital of selected events from Israel’s history. It does not appear to answer the charges against him. In actuality, it is a carefully chosen summary of Israel’s history which serves to turn the charges back on Stephen’s accusers. They, not he, were the resisters of God. They, not he, had blasphemed God’s temple. His speech can be divided into five main parts.

1. The Promises to Abraham (7:2–8). Stephen began with God’s covenant with Abraham. His main point was that Abraham never owned so much as a “foot of ground” in the holy land. The promises to Abraham all came outside the Holy Land. Stephen was beginning a critique of the narrow Jewish nationalism that confined God to the land of Israel and particularly to the temple.

2. The Deliverance through Joseph (7:9–16). Stephen continued his implicit critique of the “Holy Land” theology by pointing out how God had delivered Israel through Joseph, again outside the Holy Land. He also began a second theme. The sons of Jacob rejected Joseph, whom God had chosen. Israel always rejected its leaders. This is a major theme throughout the speech.

3. The Deliverance through Moses (7:17–34). The treatment of Moses is the longest of the speech. It falls into three sections, each covering forty years of Moses’ life. Verses 17–22 cover Moses’ early years, his birth and education in Pharaoh’s house. Verses 23–29 cover the forty years between Moses’s flight from Egypt and his vision of the burning bush. Verses 30–34 begin the final section of Moses’s life—the Exodus and wilderness wandering. Again, the same two themes are prominent: God was with Israel in a special way outside the Promised Land, and Israel continued to reject its leader whom God had sent.



4. The Apostasy of Israel (7:35–50). In this section Stephen’s polemic became more direct. Israel rejected Moses’ leadership. They turned from God to idolatry. In verses 44–47 he began a critique of the temple. He implied that Israel did a better job of worshipping God in the wilderness, when they had a tent of worship that could be moved from place to place. With Solomon God was tied down to a single holy place, the temple. Yet God cannot be confined to buildings made by human hands. Their charge against Stephen was not altogether erroneous. He did criticize the temple worship of his day. The temple was supposed to be a house of prayer, but it had become a place where Israel confined God, where it tied Him down exclusively to its own land and people.

5. The Rejection of the Messiah (7:51–53). Stephen launched into a frontal assault. Israel had always rejected its leaders—Joseph, Moses, and now Jesus, the “Righteous One.” Stephen’s accusers had heard enough. They abruptly ended his speech. Stephen’s speech is highly significant to the early Christian mission. He criticized the Jewish nationalism with its exclusive theology of temple and land. This critique provided the rationale for an inclusive worldwide mission. His martyrdom launched that mission.

