

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

ACTS Chapter 7- Stephens Words To His Persecutors (p. 1012) *

After Stephen's opposition had him arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, they brought in false witnesses and told lies about what he had said. This was the very same thing that they did to Jesus not long before. And like Jesus, Stephen was asked if this was true (v 1). Stephen's reply is surprising. He never defends or even speaks about himself. He details the gospel story from Abraham to Jesus Christ. In other words, he chooses the gospel as his defense. In doing this, the accused becomes the accuser.

Verse 1-8 – Stephen outlines God's promises to Abraham and his offspring (Isaac, then Jacob) **Genesis 12:1-7 (p.9) and Genesis 15:13-14 (p. 12)**

Verse 9-10- Stephen points out the Jewish leaders' first offense- the patriarchs' (Jacob's sons) jealousy against their own brother Joseph, "but God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom with Pharaoh." **Genesis 37:26-34 (p. 35)**

Verse 11-16- Stephen talks about the famine and how God allowed Joseph to forgive his brothers and send for them to be cared for, pointing to the forgiveness and love of God for his people. **Genesis 50:20-21 (p. 49)**

Verse 17-39- Stephen outlines the Jewish people's relationship with God through Moses. **Exodus 1:22- 2:25 (p. 50-51)**

Verse 40-43- Stephen mentions how they turned to idols even after Moses had led them out of Egypt, so God exiled them. **Exodus 32:7-9 (p. 80)**

Verse 44-47- Stephen reminds them the tent of witness was given to them for worship from the time of Moses and remained until the time of David, who asked for a more permanent dwelling place for them to meet with God. God didn't give it to David, but He did allow Solomon to build it. **Exodus 38:21-40:33 (p. 87-89), 2nd Samuel 7:27 (p. 288), 1 Kings 6:14 (p. 315)**

Verse 48-53- Here, Stephen summarizes the entire story that he has just shared. He gets to the point here. Remember their entire case against Stephen is:

- 1- He blasphemed against Moses and God.
- 2- He never stops speaking against this holy place (their synagogue) and against the law.
- 3- He says Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.

Stephen says to this:

1. God does not live in houses made by human hands. Heaven is His throne, and Earth is His footstool.
2. How can you think that you have made a dwelling place for Him, when he made everything.
3. You stubborn conceited people. Your hearts and ears are unclean. You always resist the Holy Spirit. Was there ever a prophet that you did not persecute? Your ancestors killed anyone who predicted the Son of God and now you have even betrayed and murdered Him. You received the law that was delivered by God's messengers, but you have never obeyed it.

Verse 54-60- The Sanhedrin were so furious at Stephen's words that they never heard his last statements. They covered their ears, rushed him, dragged him from the city and stoned him to death while others looking on watched and threw their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. Was this a sad ending for a man full of the Holy Spirit, wisdom and God's grace? No, verse 55, 59 and 60 proclaim victory for Stephen.

-His face was like the face of an angel even before his speech started. (Acts 6:15) He was already in God's presence.

- Stephen looked up to heaven and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He tried to point this out to the Sanhedrin, but they couldn't see it. (Acts 7:55-56) Most other accounts of Jesus at the right hand of the Father have him seated, but Stephen saw him standing. Most bible scholars believe this was meant to show Jesus was welcoming Stephen home. [Mark 16:19 \(p.947\)](#), [Ephesians 1:20 \(p. 1079\)](#), [Hebrews 1:3 \(p.1102\)](#), [Psalm 110:1\(p.565\)](#)

- While they were stoning him, he prayed for Jesus to receive his spirit and for forgiveness for his persecutors. Then, he fell asleep. Even in death, Stephen was following in the image of Christ. (Acts 7:59-60)/ [Luke 23:34 and 23:46 \(p. 979\)](#).

*all page numbers refer to ESV bible distributed during the church retreat

**passages in red are other relevant verses for reference