

- iv. Why does God allow one of the most Godly men who has ever lived die so quickly?
- v. What is God's purpose in allowing the church that has just been gathered from the nations in order to be His people to so quickly be scattered again?

C. The mission that began with the crucifixion of God's Son, will not continue with comfort and ease. It is a mission for the worship of God from the idol worshipers of the world.

LIVE THE STORY

We must not only love the Gospel Story, we must begin to live the Gospel Story, indeed, to have the Central Character live in us.

- What are some of the ways Stephen models Christ-likeness?
- What was it about Stephen's message that provoked the offense that we see in this account?
- Why must we never gauge success in evangelism by a lack of offense to the hearers? What about our message will at times offend those we speak to?
- What kinds of things might we offend unbelievers with that we should never do?
- How is it possible that the Word has conquered Jerusalem, and yet Stephen is stoned? Why does the Lord Jesus, who is looking on, not deliver Stephen?
- What is God's purpose in allowing the church that has just been gathered from the nations in order to be His people to so quickly be scattered again? How does this account lead us to redefine what it means to be *victorious*?
- What do you notice about Stephen's knowledge of the Scriptures from his message? How does that speak to you?
- How is Stephen's message to these Jewish leaders similar to Paul's message to the Athenians in Acts 17?

Stephen: The Martyr, His Manifesto, and God's Mission

Jerry Cisar — August 3, 2014

Text: Acts 6:8 – 8:4

Introduction: Stephen – The Martyr

A. “a man **full of God's grace and power**”

- i. Luke 4:22
- ii. Luke 4:28-29

B. Stephen's Opposition

C. Stephen's Prayers (7:59-60)

I. The Accusation (6:10-14)

A. What were the charges?

- i. That Stephen had spoken blasphemy **against Moses and against God**.
- ii. That he speaks against **the Holy Place** (the temple) and **the law**.
 - a) They say he claimed that Jesus would **destroy the temple**.
 - b) That Jesus would **change the customs** handed down to the Jews.
- iii. **speaking blasphemous words...**
- iv. and that they said he **never stopped...**

B. Jesus and the destruction of the temple. (Luke 21)

- i. Luke 21:5-6, 32.
- ii. Luke 21:12-15 with Acts 6:10

C. *Are these charges true?*

II. Stephen's Defense – Manifesto (7:2-53)

A. Observations:

B. Abraham: central to God's election of Israel (7:2-8)

- i. God appeared to Abraham **in Mesopotamia**.

- ii. 7 God's promise was about worship, not the temple.

C. Joseph: Central to God's preservation of Israel (7:9-16)

- i. God was with Joseph in Egypt.
- ii. God used Joseph's being in Egypt to preserve Israel.

D. Moses: Central to God's deliverance of Israel (7:17-42a)

- i. 17 Israel went from a family to a nation in Egypt.
- ii. Moses was born in Egypt. And raised by an Egyptian. Educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.
- iii. 25, 27 Their ancestors, however, did not recognize Moses and rejected Him as ruler, judge and deliverer.
- iv. 29, 30 God appeared to Moses in a burning bush in Midian at Mt. Sinai.
- v. 33 Since God was there that place was Holy Ground.
- vi. 36 God worked salvation, signs and wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the Wilderness.
- vii. 38 It was in the wilderness that God then gave Moses the law!
- viii. 37 Stephen quotes the law of Moses here, and it points to Jesus!
- ix. 38-39 The law is living words intended to effect our hearts! Unfortunately it did not have that effect in Moses' day or in Stephen's day!
- x. 40-42 Stephen quotes the law regarding idol worship.

E. The Prophets: Applied God's Truth (7:42b-53)

- i. 42b-43 The Prophets (Amos 5:25-26)
 - a) 1 Kings 8:27
 - b) Act 17:24

- ii. A moving tabernacle served God just fine. (44-46) God never asked for a house. (47-50)

- iii. 51-53 Stephen lumped the unbelieving Jews in with all the nations—idolaters!

III. The Dispersion Begins... Again (8:1-4)

A. Persecution breaks out against the whole church.

B. Questions & Answers

- i. How does a man who so effectively models the grace of our Lord Jesus, in the process of being a witness, offend the audience so much that they want to kill him?

- ii. If we do not hold people's sins against them, does that mean we will never offend them? Does it mean we should never bring up their offenses in evangelism?

- iii. If the Word, as I proposed last week, has conquered Jerusalem, why is Stephen stoned? Why does the Lord Jesus, who is looking on, not deliver Stephen?