

# Acts 7

## Review of the book of Acts

**-Who was the author of Acts?** Luke

**-Proofs?**

1. Compare Luke 1.1-4 with Acts 1.1 (very similar)

2. Luke was a doctor (Col. 4.14, 2 Tim. 4.14, and Philemon 24) – In Acts, Luke usually gave the age, gender, cause of the illness, and the nature of the illness for the person to be healed (example: Acts 14.8)

3. We have the four "we" passages when Luke joins the missionary group:

a. 16.10-17

b. 20.5-15

c. 21.1-18

d. 27.1-28.16

-In these four passages, Luke switches from to third person ("he" and "they") first-person plural ("we") as he is writing, indicating that he was present

4. The early Christian writers also told of Luke as the author of Acts

-Irenaeus (178 AD)

-Clement of Alexandria (190 AD)

-Tertullian (200 AD)

-Eusebius (325 AD), etc.

**What do we know about Stephen?**

-Acts 6.3 – of a good reputation, full of Spirit and wisdom

-Acts 6.8 – full of grace and power (worked miracles)

-He had a Greek name (possibly a convert to Judaism)

**The charge against Stephen?** Acts 6.13-14 (notice that Jesus prophesied this in Matt. 24.2)

## Acts 7.1-7

**V1 – What did the high priest say to Stephen?** Are the charges against you true?

**V2 – How did indicate his Jewish background?** "Our father Abraham"

**-Explain: "Brethren and fathers"** – Fellow Christians and Jewish leaders

-One major theme of Stephen's speech: God does not dwell just in the temple in Jerusalem, but he goes with his people (this is an answer to the charge against Stephen)

**-Where is this seen in this verse?** God appeared to Abraham in Haran (not in Judea)

-Elsewhere:

-v 9 – God was with Joseph in Egypt, a foreign country

-v 30 – The angel appeared to Moses in the wilderness (not in Judea)

-v 38 – Mt. Sinai in the desert (not in Judea)

-v 47-50 – Not just in Solomon's temple

**V3 – Where was Abraham when God called him?** In Ur of the Chaldees

**V4 – Abraham settled in Haran (again, not in Judea)**

**V5 – Did God give Abraham an inheritance in Haran?** No

**V 6 – How long would the bondage last?** About 400 years

## **Acts 7.7-16**

**V 7 – What would God do to the nations that held the Israelites in bondage?** "...judge them" (in other words, bring punishment on them)

-**What was the first nation to put the Israelites into slavery?** Egypt

-**Where was the burning bush located?** Mt. Horeb (adjoins Mt. Sinai – *Exodus. 3.1*)

-Again Stephen is reminding the Sanhedrin that God is not worshipped exclusively at Jerusalem

**V 8 – What else was in the covenant (or promise) with Abraham?**

-*Gen. 17.2-8* – That God would multiply his seed

-Kings would come from him

-His name would be changed from Abram to Abraham

-The land of Canaan would be given to Abraham and his descendants

-Sarai would have her name changed to Sarah

-Sarah (90 years old) would have a baby; Abraham would 99-100 years old

**V 9 – What was a sign (example) of the rebellion of the Jews (toward Joseph)?** His brothers sold him into slavery

-**Why did Joseph's brothers sell him?** *Gen. 37.3-4* – Because of the coat of many colors; they were jealous, because their father Jacob was partial to Joseph

-But notice: God was with Joseph in a foreign country

**V 10 – "His afflictions"** – He refused to have relations with Potiphar's wife; he was put in prison

-He became an interpreter of the dreams of the cupbearer and baker, then Pharaoh's dream

**V 11 – Note: "our fathers" – What is Stephen trying to emphasize?** His common ancestry with the members of the Sanhedrin

- "food" = fodder, food for cattle, etc.

**V 12 – "Our fathers" again**

-**Did his 10 brothers recognize Joseph?** No

-**Which brother was not sent?** Benjamin (*Gen. 42.2*)

-**Why?** Jacob was afraid harm might come to him

**V 13 – Maybe a characteristic of Jews – to miss the truth the first time (as in dealing with Jesus)**

-Example: Masada – Jews were very stubborn people; they chose to commit suicide, rather than to submit to the Roman army

-**How did Joseph make himself known to his brothers?** *Gen. 44* – gradually

**V 14 – Where did Joseph's relatives live?** In Goshen (still not in the Promised Land)

**V 15 – Joseph and his fellow Israelites died in Egypt (a foreign land)**

**V 16 – Cave of Machpelah**

-**Who was buried there?** Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob

-Stephen is showing the God goes with his people

## **Acts 7.17-29**

**V 17** – **What promise?** *Gen. 12.8* – To take possession of the land of Canaan

-**To whom was this promise made?** Abraham

**V 18** – A new pharaoh, who "knew not" Joseph

**V 19** – *Exod. 1.16* – **What did the king tell the midwives to do?** Kill the Jewish babies

-**How did they reply?** They deliver too quickly

**V 20** – **What do we learn about Moses here?** His parents defied the command of Pharaoh

**V 21** – **How was Moses rescued after he was discovered?** By Pharaoh's daughter (a foreigner and a non-Jew) - *Exod. 2.1-10*

**V 22** – Stephen had been accused of blaspheming Moses, but notice how reverently he retold the story of Moses

**V 23** – **What were the three 40 year periods in the life of Moses?**

1. 40 years as the son of Pharaoh's daughter
2. 40 years in the land of Midian (a desert)
3. 40 years in the wilderness with the Children of Israel

**V 24** – A familiar incident – *Exod. 2.11, Heb. 11.24-26* – The Egyptian was beating an Israelite; Moses killed the Egyptian

**V 25-28** – **The point that Stephen was making?** The Israelites did not understand Moses! In fact, they persecuted Moses, a prophet of God

-See *Matt. 5.10-12* – Jesus said that his people would also be persecuted

**V 29** – **Why did Moses flee?** News of the murder got out and was spread far and wide

**What was Pharaoh trying to do?** Kill Moses

**V 30** – **The point that Stephen was making?** An "angel" of God appeared to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai

**V 31** – **Why did Moses marvel at the burning bush?** It was not consumed (*Exod. 3.2-3*)

**V 32** – **How did Moses treat the burning bush?** With great reverence; he did not even want to look directly at the bush

**V 33** – Another jab that Stephen is making at the Sanhedrin – **What was it?** There was "holy ground" down in Arabia

**V 34** – Stephen continued to give honor to Moses

**V 35** – He showed that the Jews had always persecuted God's chosen prophets and leaders  
-An identical situation in the First Century  
-Stephen is really talking about Jesus!

**V 36** – Irony against the Jews! The one they had rejected earlier had become their leader

**V 37** – An Old Testament prophecy about Christ  
-It was used by Peter in *Acts 3:22*  
-**So who was honoring Moses, Stephen or the Sanhedrin?** Obviously Stephen

**Acts 38-50** – Stephen's speech hits its climax

**V 38** – The church (or congregation) in the wilderness  
-Stephen is beginning to make the application  
-**Moses and the Israelites = \_\_\_\_\_?** Christ and the Jewish nation  
-In other words, just as the ancient Jews rebelled against Moses, so also the First Century Jews and their leaders rebelled against Jesus

**V 39** – **Significance of these words?** Just as the Israelites wanted to reject Moses and go back into slavery in Egypt, so also the Jews in the First Century wanted to reject Jesus and go back into slavery to Satan and sin

**V 40** – **The Israelites even went so far as to do what?** Make an idol to worship in the wilderness

**V 41** – **What kind of idol was it?** A calf made out of gold from their jewelry

**V 42-43** – **How did God punish the Israelites for what they did in making the golden calf?**  
Turned them over to their pagan gods (and they all died in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb)

**Acts 7.44-50**

**V 44** – **Did God make his wishes known to the Israelites in the wilderness?** Absolutely  
-**In what way?** He gave them his plans for the tabernacle  
-Notice: "the pattern"  
-**Significance today?** Some liberal preachers are saying that there is no pattern for us to follow in the New Testament church, that these were only customs of the First Century that are not binding on us  
-Example: Instrumental music in worship, the use of women as preachers, etc.  
-But God has always given his people a pattern to follow

**V 45** – **What helped Joshua and the people when it came to taking the land of Canaan from the pagan people?** The tabernacle in their midst

**V 46** – **What did David find out about the pattern that God wanted?** The building of the temple in Jerusalem

**V 47** – Who actually built the temple in Jerusalem? Solomon (David's son)

**V 48** – But what did the Jews find out about human temples? God does not dwell in such structures (since he is God of the universe)

**V 49-50** – God's presence fills the universe (not just Palestine)

### **Acts 7.51-53**

**V 51** – How did Stephen describe the members of the Sanhedrin? Stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears

-What was their reaction to the truth? They were always resisting the Holy Spirit (just as their fathers had done)

**V 52** – What did Stephen charge the Jewish leaders with? Persecuting the prophets of God

-What did Stephen say the Jewish leaders had become? Betrayers and murderers

**V 53** – Why? The law of God was ordained by angels, but they had rejected it and did not keep it

### **Acts 7.54-60**

**V 54** – What was the immediate reaction of the Jewish leaders? They began gnashing their teeth at Stephen (like mad dogs)

**V 55** – Members of royalty usually sit on a throne (*Acts 2.35*), but Jesus was standing beside the father

-But why was Christ standing at this time? In honor of Stephen and to get ready to receive Stephen into heaven (*Psalms 23.4*)

-Side note: This shows that the story of the rich man and Lazarus (*Luke 16.19-31*) is not a parable, but a real story

-Lazarus was welcomed into heaven by Abraham, because Christ was on the earth at that time

-But Stephen was welcomed into heaven by Christ (since the days of Christ on the earth were completed)

-So both accounts are technically correct in terms of where Jesus was on these two occasions

-See the notes on *Luke 16.19-31* for more details

**V 56** – Notice the blasphemy of the Sanhedrin

**V 57** – Why did they cover their ears? They could not stand to hear any more of the truth about Jesus

**V 58** – Where did they lay their clothes for the murder of Stephen? At the feet of a man named Saul

-Who was this man in terms of later chapters of *Acts*? The Apostle Paul

**V 59** – How did Stephen die? By being stoned to death by the Sanhedrin

-His words as he was dying? "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"

**V 60** – His final words? "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!"

-**What does this remind us of?** The words of Jesus on the cross (*Luke 23.34*)

-**How did Luke describe the death of Stephen?** As falling asleep

-Our English word "cemetery" comes from the Greek word "to sleep"

-**Why did Luke refer to death as a sleep?** Because it is very temporary

-**Were these members of the Sanhedrin forgiven at that moment, because of the words of Stephen?** Absolutely not – See *Acts 12.24* – they were forgiven when they obeyed God's plan of salvation through his son Jesus Christ

-Remember that "Saul" had to obey the plan of salvation by being baptized by Ananias – "Saul" was not automatically forgiven, just because Stephen prayed this prayer (the prayer just expressed Stephen's wishes about these evil men)

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