



**The Overcomers Christian Fellowship International
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OCFI BIBLE STUDY.

01/02/16 "ACTS OF THE APOSTLES" - CHAPTER SEVEN.

Memory Verse: Acts 7:56 "And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God".

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING CHAPTER SEVEN.

- 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.

INTRODUCTION:

Acts of the Apostle chapter six ended with Stephen before the Sanhedrin council facing accusations that he spoke blasphemy against the temple and the Law -**Acts 6:13-14**. Chapter seven contains Stephen's defense to these charges, and the account of his martyrdom. This is the longest speech in the book of Acts. Stephen describes some highlights from Jewish history, starting with Abraham & all leading to Jesus.

OUTLINE

I. STEPHEN'S DEFENSE (1-53)

A. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ABRAHAM (1-9)

1. The call to leave Mesopotamia
2. The sojourn in Canaan
3. The promise of possession to his descendants
4. The covenant of circumcision: as a sign of the special relationship between God and Abraham & his descendants.
5. His descendants: Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs.

Lesson to learn: To act "in faith" when God has not spoken is spiritually reckless & irresponsible. To not act when He has spoken is disobedient & faithless.

B. THE PATRIARCHS (SONS OF JACOB) SOJOURN IN EGYPT (9-19)

1. Joseph sold into Egypt & became governor.
2. Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt during the famine.
3. The patriarchs buried in Canaan.

Lesson to learn: God is bigger than the Jew's obsession with the promised land. God provided for His people in Joseph's day in another land i.e. Egypt. Are you limiting God to a specific narrow geographical boundaries for your breakthroughs?

QUESTION: What can we learn from the history of the Old Testament & from the story of the Church? Why is it important?.

'... greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world' 1 John 4:4



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C. GOD'S DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL BY MOSES (20-32)

1. The children of Israel in Egypt became slaves.
2. The work of Moses, deliverer of Israel
 - a. Raised by Pharaoh's daughter- miraculous preservation of Moses in the early months of his life.
 - b. Kills an Egyptian, but despised by his brethren
 - c. Flees to Midian where he lives for forty years
 - d. The Lord appears to Moses in a burning bush at Mount Sinai
 - e. Returns to Egypt, delivers Israel and brings them into the wilderness.

Lesson to learn: Moses waited a long time (v.23) before God's purpose was revealed. We need to remind ourselves that God's timetable may be different from ours- 2 Pet.3:8-9.

D. ISRAEL'S REBELLION AGAINST GOD AND MOSES (33-43)

1. Moses is the person:
 - a. Who said God would raise up another prophet like him.
 - b. Who spoke to the Angel on Mount Sinai
 - c. Who received living oracles to give to Israel
 - d. Whom the fathers would not obey but rejected
2. Israel is the nation:
 - a. Who turned back into Egypt in their hearts
 - b. Who pressured Aaron to make a golden calf
 - c. Whom God gave up to worship the host of heaven for forty years in the wilderness
 - 1) They may have offered sacrifices to the Lord
 - 2) They also worshipped Moloch and Remphan - Amos 5:25-27.

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

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

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

1. Stephen charges the council of resisting the Holy Spirit, just as their fathers did. Stephen now moved from defence to attack, like the ancient prophets did (**Exod. 33:5; Isai. 63:10**).
2. Their fathers persecuted and killed the prophets, so they have killed the Just One (i.e. Jesus Christ). This last accusation must have stung the Council!
3. They received the law, but did not keep it; disobeying God.

QUESTIONS:

(1) The Jews placed great emphasis on the land, the law & the temple; which has blinded them to the significance of Jesus the Messiah. What were the limitations of these three as pointed out by Stephen?

(2) Can a Christian worship an idol? What do "idols" look like in our day?

(3) In what ways do we reject God's messengers today? What are the results?

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II. STEPHEN'S DEATH (54-60)

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

1. Cut to the heart, they gnashed at Stephen with their teeth. Wild with anger!
2. Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven with peaceful and serene countenance.
 - a. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God
 - b. He tells the council what he saw
3. In response, the council:
 - a. Cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears
 - c. Ran at him with one accord, and cast him out of the city

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

1. The witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of Saul, who later became the same "heretic" Christian for the Lord Jesus Christ!
2. They stoned Stephen as he was calling on God
 - a. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"
 - b. "Lord, do not charge them with this sin"
3. Having said this, he fell asleep (i.e., died).

Stephen was the first Christian martyr; he will not be the last!

QUESTIONS

- (1) Do you think Stephen's example played a part in Saul's conversion?. List the people who played a part in yours & thank God for them.
- (2) How can we learn to forgive our enemies when we feel more like taking revenge?
- (30) Which countries / groups are trying to "destroy the Church". What can we do to help the persecuted Christians in the world?

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER SEVEN.

- 1) **What are the main two points of this chapter?**
 - (1-53)
 - (54-60)
- 2) **When did God first appear to Abraham? (2)**
 -
- 3) **What did God tell Abraham to do? (3)**
 -
- 4) **Where did Abraham finally settle? (4)**
 -
- 5) **Who did God promise to give the land to? When? (5-7)**
 -
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- 6) What covenant did God give Abraham? (8)
-
- 7) What was the lineage of Abraham leading to the formation of the nation of Israel? (8)
-
-
- 8) What bad and good thing happened to Joseph? (9-10)
-
- 9) What resulted in the rest of Jacob's family moving to Egypt? How many? (11-15)
-
- 10) Where was Jacob and his sons eventually buried? (16)
-
- 11) Who eventually led Israel out of Egyptian bondage? (17-36)
-
- 12) Who did Moses tell the children of Israel would eventually come? (37)
-
- 13) What two examples does Stephen provide of Israel's disobedience? (38-43)
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- 14) What two dwelling places did Israel have for God? (44-47)
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- 15) Yet what did God say through the prophet Isaiah? (48-50)
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- 16) How did Stephen describe the religious leaders of the council? (51)
-
- 17) What did he accuse them of doing? In what way? (51-52)
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- 18) What final charge did Stephen accuse them of? (53)
-
- 19) How did those who heard this react? (54)
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- 20) Filled with the Holy Spirit, what did Stephen see? (55-56)
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- 21) How did the council then act? (57-58)
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- 22) What did they then do? At whose feet did the witnesses lay their garments? (58)
-
- 23) As Stephen was stoned to death, what two things did he pray? (59-60)
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PRAYER POINT:

O LORD MY FATHER, QUICKEN ME AND INCREASE MY DESIRE FOR THE THINGS OF HEAVEN, IN JESUS NAME.

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