

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit**  
**Stephen's Witness**  
**Acts 7**

Last time...The Church was attacked by Satan

- murmuring from within
- opposition from without

The Holy Spirit led the Church/the apostles to repulse the attack from within

The murmuring was stilled with the appointment of 7 Spirit-filled men to oversee the  
Daily Distribution Ministry

The Word of God increased, as did the number of disciples in Jerusalem, including many  
priests

The Holy Spirit “shut down” the first wave of opposition from without, the Jews-not-  
from-Jerusalem were not able to resist the spirit and wisdom of Stephen

But the opposition did not go away, it was amped up and Stephen was taken by force to  
stand before the Sanhedrin for interrogation

In a room filled with hatred and anger and fear, Stephen is calm and peaceful

This time...Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit,

- confronts the evil with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God
- shares insight on the history of Israel as it relates to the Messiah
- bears witness of the Person and love of Jesus Christ
- is killed by those consumed with hatred and fear

We are in Acts 7

This is a pivotal chapter in the history of the Church

And we again will see as Jesus promised

Matt 10:16-20 **Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore  
wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will  
deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their  
synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my  
sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they  
deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be  
given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that  
speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.**

v1     Are these things so:

Stephen is before the Court of Israel and the chief justice asks him if Ch 6:13-14  
is true

Stephen responds with a Legal Brief, a synopsis of the Law and of those guilty of  
breaking the Law

Stephen's Holy Spirit inspired response is far reaching...  
back in time and forward in time

v2-8    our father Abraham:

A crisp summary of Gen 12-17, 25-35

Key points:

- inheritance (v5)
  - this land (v4)
  - a possession (v5)
- his seed (v5)
  - live in a strange land (v6)
  - bondage and mistreatment for 400 years (v6)
- “said God” (v7)
- serve Me in this place (v7)

v9-16   sold Joseph into Egypt:

A crisp summary of Gen 37-50

Key points:

- moved with envy (v9)
- sold Joseph into Egypt (v9)
- but God was with him (v9)
- the second time Joseph was made known unto his brethren (v13)  
i.e. his brethren did not recognize Joseph the 1<sup>st</sup> time

v17-38   In which time Moses:

A crisp summary of Ex 1-12

Key points:

- when the time of the promise drew near (v17)
- cast out their young children (v19)
- he supposed his brethren would have understood...  
but they understood not (v25)
- Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? (v27)
- affliction...groaning...am come down to deliver them...send you into  
Egypt (v34)

- whom they refused...ruler and a deliverer (v35-36)  
i.e. rejected the 1<sup>st</sup> time, received by them the 2<sup>nd</sup> time
- a prophet (v37)

v39-44 not obey...hearts turned back...Aaron:

A crisp summary of the nation's apostasy in Ex 32 – Numbers  
and quotes Amos 5:25-27

Key points:

- would not obey...hearts turned back (v39)
- we know not what is become of him (v40)
- tabernacle of witness (v44)

v45-50 Jesus...David...Solomon:

A very pointed summary of Joshua – 1 Kings 9

Key points:

- Joshua the son of Nun, “successor” to Moses...possess the land the 2<sup>nd</sup> time the nations enters it (v45)
- David (v45)
- Solomon (v47)
- not in temples made with hands (v48)

v51-53 stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and ears:

Ending his Legal brief of the Law...sharing insight about the Messiah...  
Stephen now confronts the evil lawbreakers that have seized him

Stiff-necked...as God testified against them 7x in the Law/Torah

Repeatedly refused the Word of God, even unto violence of His prophets

Uncircumcised of heart and ears...disobedient to the Word of God, not letting the  
Word of God change their hard hearts and closed ears

As testified thru Moses in Deut 10:16

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more  
stiffnecked.

As testified thru the prophet Jeremiah in Jer 4:4

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins  
of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest  
my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*,  
because of the evil of your doings.

As will be testified by the 12<sup>th</sup> Apostle in Rom 2:28-29

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

You are the Lawbreakers, not me!

You have learned nothing from the Holy Spirit, our teacher and guide into all truth!

The Holy Spirit reveals and teaches the Substance of the Messiah in the shadows of the Law and prophets

You persecuted the Messiah just as your fathers did all the prophets... and are persecuting me, just as Jesus

- promised His disciples in Matt 5:10-12
- condemned His enemies in Matt 23:33-36

What have they not learned in all this time and with all this revelation from God (Ps 40:7-8)?

The identity of the Messiah...they did not recognize/know Him when He came

Before His arrival, the Holy Spirit had foretold His appearance  
Jesus had Personally told them John 5:39

Let's look back on the Key points of Stephen's legal brief, which testify of Jesus Christ

Note: Real people, places, and events  
But in the hand of the Almighty God, shadows of the greater reality to come...seen by faith, with eyes of the spirit

Abraham

- inheritance/this land/a possession (v4-5)  
“said God”...serve Me in this place (v7)  
The promise of God was kept in v45, the 2<sup>nd</sup> time entered the land

- his seed (v5)  
Gal 3:16-22
  - live in a strange land (v6)
  - in bondage and mistreated (v6)

John 1:14

Heb 2:9

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man

2 Cor 5:21

Joseph...a type/shadow of Christ

- moved with envy (v9)  
Matt 27:18
- sold Joseph into Egypt (v9)  
Matt 27:22-24
- but God was with him (v9)  
God raised Jesus from the dead (as testified 6x thus far in Acts)
- at the second time Joseph was made known unto his brethren (v13)  
i.e. his brethren did not recognize Joseph the 1<sup>st</sup> time  
Zech 12:9-12a  
Zech 13:6

Moses...a type/shadow of Christ

- when the time of the promise drew near (v17)  
When Israel was in affliction, waiting for God to do something He had promised to do, God kept His promise of v7  
Gal 4:3-5
- cast out their young children (v19)  
Matt 2:1-19  
Note: extermination of a threat by killing the children...  
very Planned Parenthood-esque  
Both are Satan-inspired
- he supposed his brethren would have understood...  
but they understood not (v25)  
Luke 13:34-35 ref: Triumphal Entry  
Luke 19:41-44  
Matt 23:37-39 ref: 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming
- Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? (v27)  
Luke 19:14
- affliction...am come down to deliver them...send you (v34)  
1<sup>st</sup> time: Incarnation (looking back)  
John 4:34 My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.  
John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life  
John 6:38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me  
John 13:20 He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me  
Matt 28:19-20

2<sup>nd</sup> time: Return for His own (looking forward)

Rom 8:22-23 we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body

John 14:1-3

1 Thes 4:13-18

- whom they refused...brought them out (v35-36)  
i.e. rejected the 1<sup>st</sup> time, received him the 2<sup>nd</sup> time  
Zech 12:10
- a prophet (v37)  
Deut 18:15-19

times of apostasy (starting with Aaron)

- would not obey...hearts turned back (v39)  
The ones interrogating Stephen are apostates  
v52a  
v53
- we know not what is become of him (v40)  
Moses and Jesus ascended to the presence of God...out of sight  
2 Cor 5:7 walk by faith, not by sight
- tabernacle of witness (v44)  
Acts 6:14 and John 2:19, 21  
1 John 5:9-13

Joshua and the judges/kings

- Joshua...possess the land the 2<sup>nd</sup> time the nations enters it (v45)  
Gr form is "Jesus"...a type of Christ  
John 1:17  
Gal 3:13 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith  
After deliverance/salvation (Red Sea), he leads in sanctification  
(John 3:30, Rom 6:6, 1 Cor 15:31) to our inheritance  
(Jordan River)...2 different baptisms
- David (v45)  
God's King  
Ps 2  
Ps 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool  
Rev 19
- Solomon (v47)  
The Son of David  
As proclaimed by people 6x during His ministry

- not in temples made with hands (v48)  
Acts 17:23-30  
John 4:24  
1 Cor 3:16

v54 cut to the heart...gnashed on him:

The religious leaders had their hearts shredded again by the Holy Spirit  
(Acts 5:33)

Filled with hatred, they gnashed their teeth in rage at Stephen

v55-56 full of the Holy Ghost, looked up:

Opposing them, Stephen is filled with the Holy Ghost

How does Stephen respond to the hatred and rage of the Jewish leaders?

He looked up...steadfastly, intently

In heaven, he saw into the Throne Room of God

- the glory of God the Father
- Jesus standing at the Father's right hand...  
ready to receive His faithful witness,  
to keep His promise in Matt 5:12

He shared what was revealed to him – Jesus Christ

Dan 7:13-14

v57-58 cried out...stopped...cast out...stoned:

The response of the religious leaders to what Stephen shared was...  
violently ungodly, even demonic

v51a...again

and executed an innocent man...again

as prophesied to them by Jesus Himself in Luke 13 and Matt 23

The one holding their cloaks to free up their stone throwing...

a young man named Saul

An accomplice to murder, he is a murderer (Rom 1:32)

And what he witnesses next...the 1<sup>st</sup> Christian martyr...will greatly impact him

v59-60 receive my spirit...lay not this sin to their charge:

Not returning evil for evil

but returning blessings for curses and love for hatred (Matt 5:42-48),

Stephen, with a loud voice so all could hear, echoes his Lord,  
thereby honoring Jesus Christ with his final breaths

- Receive my spirit...Luke 23:46
- Lay not this sin to their charge...Luke 23:34

1 Peter 3:9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but  
contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called,  
that ye should inherit a blessing.

To Stephen, this was his sacrifice unto the Lord Who sacrificed Himself for him

Gal 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us  
from this present evil world, according to the will of God  
and our Father

1 Peter 2:20b if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently,  
this *is* acceptable with God

And he was received into heaven (not Paradise), greeted by the Lord Jesus Christ

2 Cor 5:8

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears  
*are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is*  
against them that do evil.

Watching and listening is the man Jesus will choose to be His 12<sup>th</sup> Apostle

At the end of his ministry, Paul will echo Jesus and Stephen

2 Tim 4:6-8 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my  
departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have  
finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there  
is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord,  
the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me  
only, but unto all them also that love his appearing

2 Tim 4:16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men*  
forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their  
charge

Jesus, Stephen, Paul...all were alone at the end of their ministries



Jesus was a faithful witness, unto death (Phil 2:5-11)

Stephen was a faithful witness, unto death

So will be Paul

In several centuries, Jesus will encourage the persecuted church to be also

Rev 2:9-10    *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

btw...if the scene had shifted to heaven, we would have heard

Matt 25:21    *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord*

This was a far-reaching testimony of Jesus Christ by Stephen...

reaching far back in time to Scriptures already given

and

reaching far forward in time to Scriptures yet to be given

This is a pivotal chapter in the history of the Church

In an Adventure in Faith, one thing leads to another

Persecution fuels Acts 1:8

Acts 8:1

Acts 9:1

The groundwork of Peter and John was used by Stephen

The groundwork of Stephen greatly impacted Saul and was used by Paul

Acts 5:31-39

Acts 7:48-56

Acts 17:24-25

Acts 21:18-31a

Acts 22:19-21

Acts 26:15-29

When we read Paul, we hear Stephen

## Application

This Adventure in Faith continues to this day...

2 Tim 3:12 all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Phil 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him,  
but also to suffer for his sake

Jer 17:9-10 with Rom 5:20

Therefore...

- A. For those of us who were brought out of a religion (Egypt) by Jesus Christ...  
we still have loved ones in that religion who are proud and stubborn...  
stiffnecked and uncircumcised of heart and ears

May Stephen be a witness to us to

- skillful, Spirit-filled use of the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God
- speak the truth in love, not condemnation
- look up steadfastly into heaven
- receive Matt 10:16-20

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore  
wise as serpents, and harmless as doves...take no thought how or what ye  
shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.  
For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in  
you.

- B. In these days of hatred and rage and fear...  
times of affliction while we are waiting for God to do what He promised to do...  
may we, the Church:

1. be Spirit-filled, as was Stephen
2. fast and pray for national repentance and revival  
Ezra 8:21 that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of  
him a right way for us, and for our little ones
3. be discerning and bold, as was Stephen
4. be prepared, as was Stephen  
Ezra 7:10 Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD,  
and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments  
1 Peter 3:15 sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always  
to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of  
the hope that is in you with meekness and fear

5. be encouraged, knowing God sees our affliction while we wait for Him  
(and sees the affliction of the lost also), as was Stephen  
1 Sam 30:6  
Ezra 7:28 I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God *was*  
upon me  
Neh 6:9 O God, strengthen my hands  
James 1:12 Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is  
tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord  
hath promised to them that love him.

6. be watching, waiting, looking steadfastly, as was Stephen  
Luke 19:13 *Occupy till I come*  
Luke 21:28 *when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and*  
*lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*  
Luke 21:36 *Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be*  
*accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come*  
*to pass, and to stand before the Son of man*  
James 5:7-8 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.  
Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of  
the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the  
early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your  
hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh

7. be not silent but speak with a loud voice, as did Stephen  
James 3:13-18

C. For those listening who have resisted the Holy Spirit (not believed in Jesus Christ)...  
may your heart be pricked and pierced...unto salvation

Receive God's gift of repentance and gift of salvation,  
in the Person and work of Jesus Christ