

ACTS LESSON 7

Acts Chapter 7

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Memory verses for this week: *Col 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Col 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

Introduction: In Chapter 6, we saw Satan attacking the first church in Jerusalem from both outside persecution, and from the inside as some were upset with how the widows of the Grecians were being treated. The Apostles showed great wisdom as they chose out certain men to put in charge of this task (the first deacons of the church we believe), and they stopped the problem before it began.

At the end of the chapter, we saw Stephen being questioned by the Sanhedrin, and a man named Saul watched as Stephen put forth the Gospel. We continue with his defense in the meeting in Chapter 7.

I. Stephen Addresses the Council

Acts 7:1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

Acts 7:2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

Acts 7:3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.

Acts 7:4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

The high priest asked Stephen to address the two charges placed against him. The charges were speaking against the Temple and changing the customs given by Moses. The high priest asked “*Are these things so?*” Stephen did not give a simple guilty or not guilty answer to these charges for there was a grain of truth in each charge.

What Stephen did was present a historical context of how God worked apart from the Temple in ages gone by. To the second charge, Stephen replied that God

had many dealings with their forefathers prior to Moses and that Moses had foretold the coming of the Messiah, who is Jesus.

We see that Stephen begins with the Glory of God in verse 2 and ends with it in verse 55.

Acts 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

Stephen uses his knowledge of the Old Testament to tell them about how God appeared unto Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia. Abraham is a good example of how God can use anyone in His service when we accept Christ as our Savior. Before he was called of God, he was an idolater.

Josh 24:2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

After Abraham was called, he came into the land of Haran and dwelt there until his father died. The word Terah means delayed. Abraham was delayed in Haran about five years. After the death of Abraham's father, he took Lot, his nephew, and went into the land of Canaan where they dwelled together until a disagreement came up between them.

At that point, Lot separated from Abraham and pitched his tent towards the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God told Abraham to lift up his eyes and look upon the land that He would give him.

Gen 13:14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

Gen 13:15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

Gen 13:16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

Gen 13:17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

Acts 7:5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his

seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

Acts 7:6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

Acts 7:7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

Acts 7:8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

Stephen reviewed how God dealt with Abraham. Notice in verse 5 that God promised the land to Abraham and his descendants. That promise remains to this day, notwithstanding pressure upon Israel to relinquish parts of the land to their enemies. Notice further that God ordained for Israel to serve him in the land (verse 7).

It is noteworthy in verse 8 that the covenant spoken of is with Abraham. According to Romans 4:11, Abraham's circumcision was a sign or symbol of that covenant. The circumcision did not affect the covenant. It merely became the symbol of it after the fact. Old Testament circumcision was a symbol and did not confer any standing before God. Consider the ordinance of baptism. Some have sought to make infant baptism a New Testament extension of the Old Testament circumcision.

Abraham died without ever possessing any of the land of Canaan save the grave in which he buried his wife, Sarah. God promised that Abraham's seed would possess this land before Abraham had any children. Abraham had an excellent attitude towards God's promise, even though he was very old at this time. (about 100 years old.)

Rom 4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Rom 4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

Rom 4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

Rom 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

Rom 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

We see in verse 8 that the covenant of circumcision was given to Abraham. (Gen 17:9-14)

J. Vernon McGee pointed out some good points about Stephen's message.

This book, written to the nation Israel, traces the genealogy of Jesus Christ back to Abraham. If you want to trace it all the way back to Adam, you must turn to the Gospel of Luke. Stephen starts with Abraham, a man of faith.

Even though he traces the resistance and rebellion against God by the nation, still there was always a believing remnant.

This is true today, too. In the organized church, in the visible church which you and I can see, there is a remnant of believers. Not every one in the visible church is a true believer. People may ask, "Do you think So-and-So is a Christian?" The answer is that even though he goes to church and is a church officer, he may not be a Christian. Just as in the nation Israel there was the believing remnant, so in the visible church there is the little remnant of true believers.

Abraham was a man of faith. He believed God, and he obeyed God. Faith always leads to obedience. Stephen starts his narrative with Abraham in Mesopotamia, down in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. That was the place of Abraham's hometown. It was there that God called him. ¹

II. The Egyptian Bondage

Acts 7:9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

Acts 7:10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

Acts 7:11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

Acts 7:12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

Acts 7:13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

Acts 7:14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

Acts 7:15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

1J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

Acts 7:16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

Stephen proceeds to remind his tormentors how God continued to work through Jacob and Joseph. *Notice that the Holy Spirit commented about how God was with Joseph during his affliction.*

Stephen goes back and reminds the council of how that God permitted the people of Israel to go down into the land of Egypt where they eventually were taken into bondage and slavery. Joseph's brothers, who sold Joseph into slavery, were now reaping what they had sown.

Gal 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Gal 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

We see in verse 9 how that God was with Joseph, even while he was in the prison there in Egypt. We know from our prior study of Hebrew History that Joseph told his brothers that God had used his bad fortune to bring him to a place where he could be used to save many lives. What a wonderful thing to know that God can take even the bad times of our lives and use it to bring about good.

Gen 45:5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

Gen 45:6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

Gen 45:7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Gen 45:8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

We know that God promoted Joseph to second in command to Pharaoh, the Prime Minister of Egypt. Stephen reminds them of how Jacob was buried in the cave where Sarah and Abraham were buried. (Gen 49:29-33)

Genesis 49:29-33

And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, [30] In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace. [31] There they buried Abraham and Sarah his

wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. [32] The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. [33] And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

III. Stephen Tells of the Deliverance of the People through Moses

Acts 7:17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

Acts 7:18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

Acts 7:19 The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

Stephen remembers how that God multiplied the people while they were in Egypt. From the beginning of time, God's plan has been for his people to be fruitful and to multiply. His instructions to Adam and Eve were very plain.

Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The promise he mentions in verse 17 is the promise of deliverance. Than another king arose that knew not Joseph, and the people of Israel fell out of favor. This new king was called an Assyrian in Isaiah 52:4

Exo 1:8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

Isa 52:4 For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

The new king in Egypt feared that the children of Israel, being a large number, would join in with the enemies of Egypt and overthrow his kingdom.

Acts 7:20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

Acts 7:21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

Acts 7:22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

Acts 7:23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

Stephen recounts how that God raised up Moses to deliver the people. Moses' life is divided into three sections of 40 years each. He spent his first forty years learning the wisdom of the Egyptians right in Pharaoh's court. His second forty years were spent on the back side of the desert where God taught him patience and wisdom. True wisdom from God was given to Moses while being away on the back side of the desert.

Acts 7:24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

Acts 7:25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

Acts 7:26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

Acts 7:27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

Acts 7:28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

Acts 7:29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

The narrative continues describing the early years of Moses. Notice that the birth of Moses is related to the time of promise drawing nigh (verses 17, 20). As God moved to fulfill his promise to Abraham and Jacob, He raised up a leader suitable to the task.

IV. Moses Spoken to in Burning Bush

We see after those 40 years went by on the desert, at the tender age of 80, God speaks to Moses in the burning bush and calls him out to lead the people out of Egypt.

Acts 7:30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

Acts 7:31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

Acts 7:32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

Acts 7:33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

Acts 7:34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

Acts 7:35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

Acts 7:36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

Acts 7:37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

Stephen continues to rehearse the initial ministry of Moses and his reluctance to lead Israel. After being Pharaoh's court for 40 years and being on the backside of the desert forty years, God used Moses to lead the people through the wilderness. This happened because the spies came back with an evil report of the promised land. All of those men who were 20 years and older all died before entering the promised land except the two spies who came back with a positive report, Joshua and Caleb.

Num 14:37 Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

Num 14:38 But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.

V. The Children of Israel would not obey Moses

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Stephen now begins to focus his remarks to the situation at hand. He quotes from Deuteronomy 18:15-19 which is prophetic of the coming Messiah. In effect, Stephen said, this is the same Moses who prophesied of the coming Messiah. Moreover, this is the same Moses which received the commandments of God on Mount Sinai.

The reference to the "church in the wilderness" refers to the 'assembly in the wilderness,' referring to Israel. It has no connection or allusion to the New Testament church. The Holy Spirit in so inspiring Stephen to speak and Luke to write may be revealing specific detail not revealed in Exodus. It may be that God spoke through an angel (messenger) on Mount Sinai rather than directly. Consider the fact that Jesus was seen in the old testament on several occasions. The mention of the "lively oracles" received by Moses and the fathers is a reference to the Law given on Mount Sinai. The word translated as lively (zaw zao) could be translated as 'living.' The word translated as oracles (logion

logion) literally means a brief statement or 'word.' The latter is derived from the basic Greek word for word (logos). The greater thought (i.e., living word) undoubtedly is a reference to the condensed law found in the Ten Commandments.

Moses was blessed of the Lord and was given the lively oracles and was instructed to give them unto the children of Israel.

Acts 7:39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

Acts 7:40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Stephen begins to bring the elements of his discussion together and make a point. The point was that the forefathers of Israel which they so revered were disobedient to that Law. They in fact disregarded Moses.

The children of Israel would not listen to Moses, but turned their backs on him and desired to be back in Egypt.

Psa 78:40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!

Psa 78:41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

Psa 78:42 They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

We see the reason they did this in verse 37

Psa 78:37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

Acts 7:41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

Acts 7:42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

Acts 7:43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

God after their blatant disregard of His Word "gave them up to worship the host of heaven." This is the same form used by Paul in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. It is not so much the idea of God giving up on them as it is of letting them do what

they will. The “host of heaven” is reference to the stellar heavenly bodies. The ancient Egyptians certainly were sun worshipers.

A modern counterpart is found in astrology and the sign of the Zodiac. The reference to the “book of the prophets” alludes to how the Jews viewed the twelve books of the prophets as one.

In Verse 43, Stephen quotes from Amos 5:25-27.

Amo 5:25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

Amo 5:26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

Amo 5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

Stephen pointedly reminds his antagonists that their forefathers were idolaters. Ancient Israel, even under Moses, was involved with the abomination of Moloch. This was the offering of infant children to a hollow metallic god shaped like an ox or pig head with a large open mouth. Children were sacrificed to this monstrosity by allowing them to slide down the idol’s outstretched arms through its gaping mouth into the fire burning within. It is comparable to the modern abomination of abortion.

Stephen also reminded his listeners that their forefathers were involved in idolatry of a god called Remphan. This also involved star worship. He alludes to Jeremiah 25:9-12 where God warned Israel that they would be taken into captivity for their sin. And so, Stephen answered the charge against him that he allegedly disregarded the law of Moses. He reminded his Jewish prosecutors that their forefathers had in fact done far worse.

We see that when Moses was away, they demanded that Aaron make them ‘gods’ to worship that brought them out of the bondage of Egypt. And Aaron responded and made a golden calf. This false idol worship was why God allowed them to be taken away into Babylonian captivity.

VI. Stephen Charges his Audience of Following the Pattern of their Fathers

Acts 7:44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

Acts 7:45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the

possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;
Acts 7:46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

Stephen proceeds to briefly review the history of the Tabernacle and the later Temple. The Jesus mentioned in verse 45 is a reference to Joshua.

Stephen tells of how Moses built the tabernacle, and then how Solomon was allowed to build the temple. David had the desire to build God a house, but God would not allow him to do it since he had been a man of war. But David's son Solomon was allowed to build that house to the honor of God.

Acts 7:47 But Solomon built him an house.

Acts 7:48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

Acts 7:49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

Acts 7:50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

In answering the charge of diminishing the importance of the Temple, Stephen proceeded to point out that God is not constrained by a physical building. He quotes first from I Kings 8:27 when Solomon dedicated the first Temple. Then, he quotes further from Isaiah 66:1, 2. Stephen notes the universality and spirituality of God, free from the racial and national restraints of Judaism. All of this enraged the Sanhedrin to desperate reaction.

We know that God dwells not in temples made with hands... (Matt: 28:18-20 and Matt 18:20) Today, the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the Christian.

1 Cor 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1 Cor 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Acts 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Acts 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

Acts 7:53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Stephen now delivers his final blow of truth. His Spirit-filled boldness becomes pointed. He reminded his persecutors that even as their forefathers persecuted

the prophets of old, so did they then. He called them “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.” He essentially called them proud and hard-hearted.

Stephen, the accused, at this point became the accuser of the Sanhedrin. He realized that official Israel had treated the Messiah as the patriarchs had treated Joseph and the Hebrews had done to Moses. Stephens mingled grief and indignation broke out into fiery condemnation of those before him. Even as their forefathers had slain the prophets who foretold the coming of the “Just One,” they had betrayed and murdered Him. They who revered the law given them totally violated it. Notice also how that Jesus Christ is referred to as the “Just One.” Indeed He is.

1John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

Stephen brings heavy accusations against these religious leaders. They have resisted the Holy Spirit as did their fathers. He points out how that they had persecuted the prophets that foretold of the coming of Jesus. And perhaps the hardest for them to take, he accuses them of betraying and crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. He calls them betrayers and murderers, resisting the law given by disposition of angels.

VII. The Death of Stephen

Acts 7:54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

Acts 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

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

The pompous, Jewish dignitaries were “cut to the heart.” This is the same word (diapriw diaprio) used concerning Peter’s message before the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:33. It bespeaks conviction, resulting in anger and rage.

The reference to them gnashing “on him with their teeth,” literally means they gnashed their teeth at him. These pious hypocrites could not contain their rage at being confronted with the truth. As wolves preparing for the kill, their wrath was evident.

The key to Stephen’s powerful witness is found here. He was “full of the Holy Ghost.” As his death was imminent, God allowed him a glimpse of heaven awaiting him. He saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Though elsewhere Jesus is noted as sitting at the right of God (Matthew 26:64, Mark 16:19, Acts 2:24, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3), here, He is standing. It has been suggested that as Stephen had so forcefully and eloquently witnessed before his impending executioners, Jesus stood in respect, perhaps to welcome him home.

Saints homeward bound on occasion are given a glimpse of God’s glory and their waiting destination.

Acts 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

Acts 7:58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

The Sanhedrin lost all appearance of propriety. They, in a furious frenzy, first put their hands over their ears symbolizing their hypocritical refusal to listen to blasphemy. They, in an almost psychotic rage, threw him out of the city and stoned him to death. No vote was taken. There was only mob action fueled by frenzied rage. They literally went berserk.

The penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning. Yet, no formal action had been taken. They reacted as a mob intoxicated by rage. Those who had falsely accused him were given the first opportunity to stone him. They laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul, the young Pharisee watching the proceedings.

Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Acts 7:60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

As Stephen became the first Christian martyr, he uttered two noteworthy comments. Like Jesus, he committed his spirit into God’s keeping. (See Luke 23:46.) Moreover, as he died, he manifested forth the same spirit of Jesus in not retaliating against his persecutors. (See Luke 23:34). There was no carnal threat against his enemies nor malice toward them. Rather, there was an

intercessory prayer for God's forgiveness. As he saw Jesus standing in heaven awaiting his arrival, he kneeled in worship praying to Him. The reference to him falling asleep is a euphemism of death. As his enemies raged in violence against him, he had the *peace of God* as he fell asleep in Jesus.

We see that they did not even let Stephen finish his speech, but rush headlong into him and gnashed upon him with their teeth. The religious leaders put Stephen to death by stoning him. Stephen's last words were like the Lords.. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And "Lord lay not this sin to their charge."

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Verse 58 is important in that they laid their clothes at the feet of Saul, the great persecutor of the church. This was a moment that never left Saul (who was later renamed Paul after he was saved and became a great worker and apostle for the Lord.) This showed how that all this was done at his direction and leadership.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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