

## INTRODUCTION

**Acts 6** introduced a man named Stephen, one of seven men chosen to assist in the serving of food to poor widows. Stephen is also noted as being a powerful proclaimer of God's word and one with whom the enemies of the Gospel could not argue. As a result, he is brought before the council on false charges of blasphemy. In **Acts 7:1**, the High Priest said, "*Are these things so?*"

Stephen's gives the longest recorded defense in Acts. In it he outlines the history of Israel to demonstrate the fulfillment of God's purpose. His defense has five major points.

1. God has shown consistent and constant progress towards fulfilling His purpose.
2. God never limited Himself to a specific territory. God's plan is universal in scope.
3. God's people always resisted Him and His messengers.
4. The Jews of Stephen's day were opposed to divine revelation.
5. These same Jews participated in the sins of their fathers.

He concludes by showing that they killed the promised Messiah, the "*Righteous One*" in **Acts 7:52**.

In **Luke 12:11-12** Jesus told His disciples, "*(11) When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; (12) for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.*" Jesus would repeat this before His crucifixion in **Mark 13:11**. This promise, given to His Apostles, was specific to the time of miraculous gifts. We don't know if Stephen was endowed with this gift, or if he spoke based on his own knowledge.

**Acts 7:54** says that the members of the council were "*cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.*" They drug him out of the city and stoned him to death.

### **Stephen becomes the first martyr for Christ.**

The stoning of Stephen, recorded in **Acts 7:54-8:1**, introduces a man named Saul. He will become the Apostle Paul, but now he is in agreement with putting Stephen to death, even offering assistance to those who were killing him. After the death of Stephen, Saul is instrumental in starting the first large scale persecution of the young church.

The Jews might have imagined that this persecution would finally put an end to this new religion, but it only caused the church to grow and spread. Driven from their homes by the persecution, they were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria taking the Gospel message with them.

In **Acts 8:4-8**, Philip one of the seven, went to Samaria to preach the Gospel, performing many signs and wonders.

### **Philip is the first recorded missionary.**

Many were converted, including a man named Simon, a magician, well known to the people for his magic arts. It is interesting to note that the Gospel preached in Samaria produced the same result as it did on the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2:38ff**. According to **Acts 8:12-13**, the people believed, and responded by being baptized.

**Survey of Acts - 04 (Acts 7-8)**  
First Martyr, Persecution, The Gospel Spreads

The Apostles sent Peter and John down to Samaria so that these new disciples might receive the Holy Spirit. We learn from **Acts 8:14-17** that it is through the laying on of the Apostles hands that the Holy Spirit was received. **Acts 8:16** tells us that the Spirit had not yet FALLEN on them, but they had simply been baptized. This is clearly something different from what happened on Pentecost in **Acts 2:38** where all who are baptized are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In **Acts 8:18** we read, “Now when Simon saw that *the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands*, he offered them money.” Simon is rebuked for his sin and after the Apostles preached in Samaria for a while, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching along the way.

Philip, sent by an angel, went south towards Gaza where he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a high official in the royal court of Queen Candace. This man was reading Isaiah and asked Philip who the prophet was talking about. Philip used this opportunity to preach Jesus. The Eunuch was baptized and went on his way.

The promise made in **Acts 1:8** is shown as starting to be fulfilled in this section, “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*”



**QUESTIONS**

**1. STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR (Acts 7:1-60)**

1.1 In **Acts 7:2-9**, Stephen speaks of four of the great leaders who helped bring about the nation of Israel. Name them and list one thing mentioned about each one.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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1.2 In Acts 7:1-53, did Stephen mention Jesus by name? What reference(s) does he make to Jesus?

1.3 In **Acts 2:37** the people were “*pierced to the heart,*” while in **Acts 7:58** they were “*cut to the quick.*” These passages, while slightly different in the Greek, mean essentially the same thing. Answer the following questions.

What do these phrases mean?

How were the responses different in each case?

What can we learn about how people might respond when we share the Gospel message?

1.4 What vision did Stephen see while he was being stoned?

**2. THE PERSECUTION IN JERUSALEM (Acts 8:1-3)**

2.1 Who led the persecution in Jerusalem and what was the result?

2.2 Read **Acts 22:5; 26:11; Galatians 1:13**. Explain why Saul/Paul was persecuting the church and what he did.

2.3 **THOUGHT QUESTION:** Why would Luke make a point in **Acts 8:1** to state that “*Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death?*”

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**3. THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA (Acts 8:4-25)**

- 3.1 Who took the Gospel into Samaria? When and how did he get the power to perform signs and wonders? (Consider Acts 8:18; 6:5-6)
- 3.2 What did the Samaritans do to be saved? (Compare with Acts 2:38,41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7)
- 3.3 Why did the Apostles go to Samaria?
- 3.4 What do the events of Acts 8:9-13, 8-24 tell us about the possibility of falling away, and what we should do to if we find ourselves caught up in sin?

**4. THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH (Acts 8:26-40)**

- 4.1 What was the official position of the Ethiopian eunuch in Queen Candace's court?
- 4.2 What passage was the eunuch reading?
- 4.3 What did Philip preach to the eunuch?
- 4.4 How can we KNOW that baptism was part of what Philip preached?