

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 29TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

## LOOKING BACK (ACTS 7:37-43) SOMETIMES LISTENING AND FOLLOWING

Moses prophesied that a prophet "like me" would one day come, who the Israelites should follow. But they didn't follow Moses like they should have. They didn't listen to Moses like they should have. They will probably reject this prophet, too.

- **We know that most of Israel did reject Jesus. We must be careful not to reject Jesus by not listening to or following Him.**

### ANY GOD WILL DO

Moses received living oracles from God (the 10 Commandments). Even though God was leading and providing for His people, they wandered off to worship idols and creation rather than their Creator.

- In Egypt, the Israelites had seen polytheism in full force. A seed was planted in them.
- **Because of our culture, we must fight the impulse to worship other gods.**

### NOTHING HAD CHANGED

Stephen is becoming more pointed in his defense. The Israelites of old rejected Moses, rejected the law, and rejected God. Stephen is insinuating that the Jews of his day were no different than their ancestors. The very Moses they said they followed was the very Moses they were rejecting by rejecting Jesus.

- **Beware of patterns of disobedience.**

## GOD'S THRONE (ACTS 7:44-50) FROM PATRIARCHS TO MOSES TO THE TEMPLE

Stephen had demonstrated that God was with Abraham and Joseph, even though they were in foreign lands. He then shows that God was with Moses, even though he was in foreign lands. Now Stephen will speak to the temple (where), one of the pillars of Jewish worship along with the Mosaic Law (how).

- **Worship God, not the ways to worship Him.**

### A SYMBOL OF GOD'S PRESENCE

The first place built to "house" God was the tabernacle. It was a movable tent that the Israelites used while they were in the wilderness and up to the time of David in the Promised Land. God was a "wandering God," in that He was present everywhere and not limited to a place.

- **Because God is everywhere, He doesn't need a "home" in which to live.**

### A "PERMANENT" HOME

In David's time, with Israel prospering as a nation under his leadership, he desired to build God a permanent home. God said David could prepare for a temple, but Solomon would build it. But even Solomon acknowledged that the temple was a symbol because all creation is God's throne.

- The temple wasn't bad; worshipping it was.

## RESISTANCE (ACTS 7:51-53) AS THEIR ANCESTORS IN THE PAST, SO TODAY

For a Jew to be called "uncircumcised" was an awful accusation. But Stephen said their hearts were so because they wouldn't listen to the Holy Spirit. As their ancestors had persecuted and killed the prophets, so they had done to the "Righteous One" the prophets pointed to. As their forefathers rejected the law, so had they. These Jews were no different than their ancestors.

### PRIVILEGES, PROMISES, REJECTION

The Israelites had all the privileges of being the people of God. They had their patriarchs, their covenants, their law, their promises, and their temple. But those privileges meant nothing if they rejected the Messiah to whom those things pointed.

- **We have the great privileges of access to God's Word and the gospel. Does it matter?**

## MARTYRED (ACTS 7:54-60) RESPONSES

After Peter's sermon in Acts 2, the people were convicted and asked how to be saved. As Stephen taught, they were enraged and would hear no more.

- Are we prepared for people's responses to the gospel of Jesus? **Some will receive it gladly, some will want to hear more, and some will reject it, maybe even violently.**

### AN ENCOURAGING VISION

Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. He's about to pay the ultimate price for following Jesus, and in His kindness, God gives Stephen a vision of Heaven to encourage him.

- **God is always good to give us what we need to remain strong and faithful to Him in our times of need—if we will not shrink back.**

### IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS

Stephen sees God's glory and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, the place of power and authority. That Jesus is standing may indicate that He is honoring Stephen's sacrifice. Whatever this is, Jesus wants Stephen to glimpse his future despite his present trials.

- **Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whether people believe it or not.**

### THE MOB ACTS

Those listening to Stephen respond with violence. They yell, cover their ears, and rush at him. He's dragged out of the city since no one was to be killed in Jerusalem. Stephen is stoned by the mob whose garments are laid at the feet of Saul (later to be called Paul).

- **We don't know how our courageous actions for Jesus will be used by Him.**

## THE FIRST MARTYR

As rocks are hurled at Stephen (a particularly painful death), he cries out to Jesus, whom he has just seen, to receive his spirit. Like Jesus, he asks for this sin to not be held against the mob. Then Stephen dies.

- **Stephen paid the ultimate price for following Jesus. If required, are we willing to do the same?**

## BEWARE OF THE PULL TO THE OLD LIFE

- **We never drift towards Jesus but can easily drift away from Him.**
- **We live in an anti-Jesus culture.** Pretty much all we consume through our culture will encourage us to deny Jesus, not embrace Him.
- We are crucified with Christ to live a life that's pleasing to God and fulfilling to us.

## ONLY JESUS IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

- Because we can make idols of anything, we must fight our desire to lift up anything over Jesus alone.
- **Don't turn good things into God things.**
- We carry Jesus with us wherever we are. While we can experience Jesus' presence in wonderful ways here (this building), He never leaves us or forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5).

## IS IT WORTH IT?

- Many have sacrificed much to make sure we are able to worship our Lord freely with easy access to the Word and the gospel.
- Standing for the truth of the gospel may cost us something. **Is Jesus greater than any "sacrifice" we're called to make?**
- Nothing changes the fact that Jesus is who He said He is. **Will we worship Him?**