

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 28TH-29TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

## REBELLION (ACTS 7:37-43)

### THE FIRST HALF OF CH. 7 IS A HISTORICAL SET-UP

Stephen is about to drop a truth bomb on the Sanhedrin. Verse 39 says, "Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him. Instead, they pushed him aside..."

- Stephen showed that just like the Jews disregarded Moses (a type of Christ), the Sanhedrin rejected the actual Savior.

### "...AND IN THEIR HEARTS TURNED BACK TO EGYPT"

Moses delivered the law that defined morality. Jesus perfectly embodies the law, offering grace and forgiveness so we can be saved.

- The Israelites preferred the slavery of Egypt over the sacrifice for freedom. **When we choose sin over obedience, we are also choosing "Egypt" or bondage.**

### AND SIN CAN TAKE US TO EXTREME PLACES

Stephen quotes Amos 5 to show the depths of depravity the rebellious Jews drifted into because of their rebellion against God and Moses.

- Though we may not build golden calves or worship "star gods," **sin will lead us astray, and we will partake in destructive thoughts and behaviors.**

### ANOTHER WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

At this point, Stephen rests his case against his blasphemy charge and will now address the charge of claiming the temple would be destroyed.

- Like the Exodus Jews, the Sanhedrin loved land and religion more than the God who gave them. This will lead them to another wilderness period.

## RESIDENCE (ACTS 7:44-50)

### RESPECT AND HONOR WITHOUT IDOLATRY

The temple served many purposes in the OT and even in the NT. The ceremonies performed there and the layout of the facilities foreshadowed the work Christ would complete and the intimacy He would enable with God the Father.

- **Honoring the place of worship is good, but making an idol of it is wrong.**

### GOD NEVER NEEDED A "HOUSE"

God's command to the patriarchs to "buil[d] Him a house" doesn't imply God was confined to a temple. The first half of Ch. 7 explains this.

- The human mind cannot comprehend the expanse and ability of God. That being said, the fact **that He would make us the temple and dwell in us is astounding!**

### ALL SCRIPTURE POINTS TO GOD

The temple foreshadowed Jesus and how people should interact with Him: **in reverence, sacrifice, obedience, intentionality, and as the means to be in the presence of God.**

- **No word of the Bible is empty or wasted. It all makes us better (2 Timothy 3:16) and points to Christ.**

### JESUS AS OUR WAY, TRUTH, AND LIFE

Stephen and the early Church emphasized that Jesus is **the path, answer, and reward** and that **He has chosen to dwell in us in Spirit until He physically returns.**

- Buildings, music, iconography, etc. are helpful, but **knowing and being full of Jesus is the focal point of our faith.**

## SEEING GOD (ACTS 7:51-60)

### THE ACCUSED BECOMES THE ACCUSER

Stephen goes from "our" history to what "you" have participated in. The one on trial flips the script and indicts the real guilty party.

- "Stiff-necked," "uncircumcised hearts and ears," and "always resisting the Holy Spirit" clearly show how a **lack of humility prevents one from seeing the truth.**

### "BETRAYERS AND MURDERERS YOU HAVE... BECOME"

Stephen tells the Sanhedrin that they are acting exactly the same as their ancestors who persecuted and "even killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One."

- **Self-centeredness makes us blind to the lessons of history and hostile towards anyone who suggests we need to change.**

### "UNDER... ANGELS AND YET HAVE NOT KEPT IT"

The Israelites received the law through supernatural means (Ex. 19-20) and God had miraculously protected and provided for them for centuries, but **the people grew entitled and would not acknowledge their sin.**

- This sounds like another nation that has been blessed but has forsaken truth.

### STEPHEN NEVER GOT TO FINISH

Luke writes, "When they heard these things, they were enraged and gnashed their teeth." At this point, Stephen knew he had done all he could, and his time was about to end.

- In this moment, he "gazed into Heaven" and gave a direct witness of "Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

## THE SCHOLARS BECAME A LYNCH MOB

The Sanhedrin "yelled," "covered their ears," and "together rushed" Stephen.

- The response of self-centered people who are unwilling to humble themselves is irrational anger, refusal to hear truth and correction, and a mob mentality aimed at attacking those they disagree with.

## SOME INTERESTING FORESHADOWING

After they dragged Stephen outside the city and began to stone him, the "witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul."

- You couldn't come up with better foreshadowing of one of the most important people in history.

### HOW TO RESPOND TO HOSTILITY AND EVIL

Typically, people getting stoned would lie on their backs, but Stephen fell to his knees, he cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (see Luke 23:34), then "he fell asleep."

- **The real enemies are Satan, evil, and our flesh, not people. We should want and pray for all people to come to know Jesus.**

### JESUS WELCOMES HIS FIRST MARTYR

Similar to Christ on the cross calling out to the Father, Stephen looks up during his execution and says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

- Stephen seeing Jesus standing by the throne indicates that He was waiting to welcome His first martyr into eternity. Revelation 20 alludes to exclusive honor for martyrs.

### WHAT DO WE REALLY WANT?

- It is easier and more culturally accepted to live selfishly, sinfully, and by "our truth."
- **The great lie of selfishness is revealed in the long-term ramifications. Putting self first will inevitably end in chaos, division, destruction, and a "wilderness experience" that may be eternal.**
- Virtually everyone would say they don't want the consequences of selfishness, but **many are unwilling to put forth the effort to avoid them.**
- To be saved, we must humble ourselves. To mature and remain focused, we must pray, read, obey, and live intentionally.

### JESUS WANTS MORE FOR US!

- It is hard to comprehend that God loves us so much that **He wants to reside in His followers via the Spirit as we wait for His physical return and the promise of Heaven.**
- Buildings, other people, crucifixes, etc. can all be helpful, but **Jesus and the Word are the true source for understanding God.**

### HOW DO WE RESPOND TO TRUTH?

- Are we like the Sanhedrin? **In the face of our selfishness and sin, do we get angry, stubborn, and self-righteous? Or do we humble ourselves and listen to the truth of our depravity and broken paths?**
- This is not exclusive to non-believers. **Many "Christians" deny truth in its totality.**

### DO WE TRULY LOVE ALL PEOPLE?

- **People are not the enemy.** It is the evil inside some people (and ourselves) that we are truly fighting against.
- Like Jesus and Stephen, **we are to uphold the truth at all costs but also biblically love, pray for, and desire salvation and hope** for even the worst people.