



## *ACTS - Living in the Promises of Jesus*

### **Acts 6,7**

### **Lesson 5**

The book of Acts contains many sermons. Acts 7 contains the longest. We will see how, in Stephen's testimony, he was less interested in his own acquittal than in proclaiming the truth. May you be inspired as you study the story of a man full of wisdom and of the Holy Spirit, who thought not of his safety, but of God's glory. And, in seeking glory for God, he was able to see it and experience it himself.

#### **OBSERVATION: Read Acts 6,7**

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns that refer to the *God, Jesus, or believers* (including Stephen).  
  
Chapter 6: Key Words: *God, Jesus, Holy Spirit*, any reference to believers (i.e. disciples, apostles), *Stephen, witnesses*, and evidences of the working of the Holy Spirit (i.e. *power, wisdom, faith, wonders, signs*)  
  
Chapter 7: Key Words: *God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Stephen*, and *witness/witnesses*  
Challenge: words that refer to *Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and David/Solomon*
3. The contrasting word *but* was used one time in Acts 6 and eleven times in Acts 7. Mark each time the word is used. Choose one of those times (in each chapter) and record what is being contrasted.
4. The term of conclusion, *therefore*, was used in Acts 6:3. Mark the word; record the conclusion and what it was based upon.

## SERVING TABLES: Read Acts 6:1-7

1. *Now in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplying...* Acts 6:1. What complaint arose?
  - a. The *Hellenists* were Greek speaking Jewish Christians. The church distributed food and clothing daily to those in need. Apparently the Hellenist widows were being *neglected*. What did this *complaint* cause the apostles to realize? verse 2
    - 1.) *Serving tables* was an expression used to refer to the many areas of taking care of the people's physical needs. The apostles viewed this to be an important responsibility of the church. What does this say to you about God's concern for your physical needs?
    - 2.) What were the apostles called to do? See Acts 6:2,4
2. What solution is presented in verse 3?
  - a. Some may view *waiting on tables* as being spiritually inferior. What were the requirements presented?
  - b. Once the seven were selected, what did the apostles do? verse 6
    - 1.) How do the answers to "a" and "b" above reveal the importance of *waiting on tables*?
3. What was the result of the *apostles* returning to their calling and the *seven* fulfilling theirs? verse 7
  - a. What does this teach us about the importance of each member of the body of Christ fulfilling their part and not expecting others to fill the gaps?

*He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much .... Luke 16:10*

## **STEPHEN ACCUSED: Read Acts 6:8-15**

1. How is Stephen, a man chosen to *wait on tables*, described in Acts 6:8?
2. What does verse 10 tell us about those who were taking a stand against Stephen and his teaching?
  - a. What did Paul say about his own teaching? See 1 Corinthians 2:4.
  - b. What is the difference between a talented speaker and a speaker who speaks in the power of the Holy Spirit?
3. In response to their frustration, in what way did these Jews seek to bring about Stephen's fall? Acts 6:11-14
  - a. How had they attempted to bring a charge against Jesus, hoping for His downfall? See Matthew 26:59 and Mark 14:55-59.
    - 1.) In what way are these reminders of the confrontive effect of the Holy Spirit an encouragement to you when you face rejection after sharing about Jesus?
      - a.) Paul experienced the same kind of rejection. What did he write in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16?
4. To add to their dismay, what did they observe when they *looked steadfastly at Stephen*?
  - a. Their ancestors had taught them about that kind of countenance. What does Exodus 34:34,35 reveal about their patriarch, Moses?

## **STEPHEN'S REBUTTAL - ISRAEL RESISTED GOD'S MESSENGERS:**

### **ABRAHAM - Read Acts 7:1-8**

1. Stephen chose to use this time to enlighten the religious leaders to the history of Israel's rejection of those whom God had sent to save them. He began with Abraham, the father of their nation. Considering these verses, what are the promises God made to Abraham?

- a. God was faithful to fulfill all of His promises to Abraham. He also made a *covenant* with Abraham, the *covenant of circumcision*. What exhortation had God given them in Deuteronomy 10:16?

- 1.) What might the religious leaders, that Stephen was addressing, determine about God and about themselves through these words about Abraham?

### **JOSEPH – Read Acts 7:9-16**

1. Joseph was another favorite of the Jews. Just the mention of him would bring back memories of the stories they had heard. They would probably first remember how he was treated by his brothers. Jot down a few things his brothers did to him. Scan Genesis 37 if you need a refresher.
2. According to Acts 7:10, what did God do for Joseph?
3. Contrast the way Joseph's brothers treated him as their brother in Israel, to the way they treated him as Pharaoh's assistant in Egypt.
4. What can we learn from the story of Joseph about God's ability to perform what He promises and purposes to do?

### **MOSES – Read Acts 7:17-50**

1. Scan Acts 7:17-29,39 and summarize Israel's treatment of Moses.
2. Carefully write the words of verse 35 as you consider Stephen's intended impact on his audience.
3. In Acts 7:37, Stephen reminded them of Moses' prophesy of the Prophet that God would send and of His command to *hear* Him. What did the LORD say (Deuteronomy 18:19) would happen to those who will not *hear*?
4. In Acts 7:44-50 Stephen spoke of the *tabernacle of witness in the wilderness*, and the *house built by Solomon*. Verse 48 begins with the word *However*. *However*, where does God dwell?

5. Go back to Acts 6:11,13 and record their accusations against Stephen.
  - a. In his rebuttal to them, Stephen showed that they were the guilty ones. In what ways did Israel:  
  
speak against Moses  
  
violate God's temple  
  
speak (even act) against the law
6. Both Joseph and Moses were rejected as deliverers the first time, yet accepted (and even revered) later. Stephen was warning them that they were making an even graver mistake in their rejection of Jesus. Record the words of Jesus in John 12:48

#### **THE HOLY SPIRIT - Read Acts 7:51-53**

1. Stephen called those he was speaking to *stiff-necked* and *uncircumcised*. God used these same words against them, most often in anger. What did Stephen accuse the religious leaders of doing?
2. Read verse 52. How is persecuting the prophets an example of *resisting the Holy Spirit*?
  - a. What are some other ways we can *resist the Holy Spirit*?
3. What did the prophets *foretell*?

Challenge: Record just a few of their prophet's prophecies that they should have been well aware of.

4. The remedy for their hard-heartedness was the same as it was when God called them stiff-necked and uncircumcised. What did He call them to do in Leviticus 26:40-41?

#### **STEPHEN'S MARTYDOM: Read Acts 7:54-60**

1. Rather than turning from their wicked ways, what does Acts 7:54 tell us these men did?
  - a. Describe what you think the expression on their faces was like.

2. Using verses 55,56, describe Stephen's experience.
3. Acts 7:57 tells us Stephen's opposers were functioning *in one accord*. This is not the unity God desires. What did they do? See verses 57-59.
  - a. What did Stephen do? See verses 59,60
    - 1.) Record some of the last words of Jesus (Luke 23:34) as He was suffering at the hands of His accusers.
    - 2.) Faced with the violent mob, Stephen seemed fearless. How was he able to face this danger?

**REVIEW: Read Acts 6 and 7**

1. What did you learn about *waiting on tables*?
2. Share some of the ways Stephen was a witness for Jesus.
3. What qualities of Stephen would you like to see in your life?
4. What stiff-necked attitudes prevent us from seeing what God wants us to see?
5. In what ways have you been challenged or encouraged by this lesson?

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.  
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.  
- Romans 12:14,21*

## Observation Worksheet

### Acts 6:1-15

<sup>1</sup> Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup> but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, <sup>6</sup> whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. <sup>7</sup> Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. <sup>8</sup> And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup> Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. <sup>10</sup> And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. <sup>11</sup> Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." <sup>12</sup> And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon *him*, seized him, and brought *him* to the council. <sup>13</sup> They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; <sup>14</sup> for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." <sup>15</sup> And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

## Acts 7:1-60

<sup>1</sup> Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?" <sup>2</sup> And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, <sup>3</sup> and said to him, '*Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.*' <sup>4</sup> Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. <sup>5</sup> And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even *enough* to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. <sup>6</sup> But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress *them* four hundred years. <sup>7</sup> '*And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,*' said God, '*and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.*' <sup>8</sup> Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs. <sup>9</sup> "And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him <sup>10</sup> and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. <sup>11</sup> Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. <sup>12</sup> But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. <sup>13</sup> And the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh. <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to *him*, seventy-five people. <sup>15</sup> So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers. <sup>16</sup> And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, *the father* of Shechem. <sup>17</sup> "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt <sup>18</sup> till another king arose who did not know Joseph. <sup>19</sup> This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live. <sup>20</sup> At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. <sup>21</sup> But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. <sup>22</sup> And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. <sup>23</sup> Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup> For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. <sup>26</sup> And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and *tried* to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?' <sup>27</sup> But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, '*Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?* <sup>28</sup> *Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?*' <sup>29</sup> Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons. <sup>30</sup> And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. <sup>31</sup> When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe,



the voice of the Lord came to him, <sup>32</sup> saying, '*I am the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*' And Moses trembled and dared not look. <sup>33</sup> '*Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.*' <sup>34</sup> '*I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.*' ' <sup>35</sup> This Moses whom they rejected, saying, '*Who made you a ruler and a judge?*' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. <sup>36</sup> He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. <sup>37</sup> '*This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear."*' <sup>38</sup> This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, <sup>39</sup> whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, <sup>40</sup> saying to Aaron, '*Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.*' <sup>41</sup> And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. <sup>42</sup> Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: '*Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?*' <sup>43</sup> '*You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*' <sup>44</sup> "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, <sup>45</sup> which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, <sup>46</sup> who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup> But Solomon built Him a house. <sup>48</sup> However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: <sup>49</sup> '*Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest?*' <sup>50</sup> '*Has My hand not made all these things?*' <sup>51</sup> "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. <sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, <sup>53</sup> who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*." <sup>54</sup> When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. <sup>55</sup> But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup> and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" <sup>57</sup> Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; <sup>58</sup> and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.