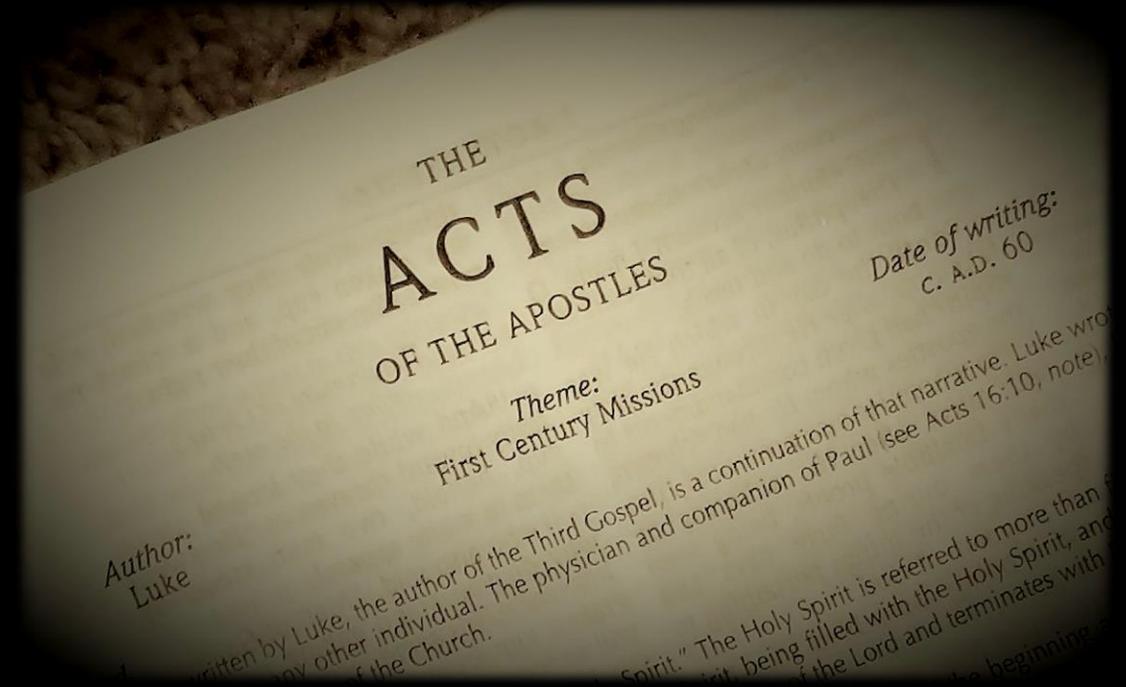


Verse by Verse

Acts 7



Previously in *Acts*

Previously in Acts

- Last week we saw the selection of **the Seven**.
- These men were chosen to help in the daily distribution of food, mainly to widows.
- **Stephen**, one of the Seven, had a remarkable ministry including many **wonders and signs**.
- Nonetheless, he was falsely accused before the Jewish council or **Sanhedrin**, which is where we left him.

Acts 7 Introduction

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- Stephen has been accused of **blasphemy** against Moses, God, the Temple and the Law.
- After hearing these false accusations in **Acts 6**, this week we will hear Stephen's response.

Acts 7 Introduction

- His speech consists of **five main sections**.
- The chapter ends with **a sixth – the Sanhedrin's reaction** to what Stephen said.
- His speech will also focus on **three themes**.

Acts 7 Outline

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1. Promises to Abraham 7:1-8
2. Deliverance through Joseph 7:9-16
3. Deliverance through Moses 7:17-34
4. Rebellion by Israel 7:35-50
5. Rejection of Christ 7:51-53
6. Martyrdom of Stephen 7:54-60

Acts 7 Main Themes

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1. The **activity of God** is not confined to one land – as in the land of Israel.
2. The **worship of God** is not confined to one place – as in the Jerusalem temple.
3. The **people of God** (the Jewish nation) have repeatedly rejected God's chosen leaders.

Acts 7 Key Verses

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- Acts 7:59-60 (ESV)

⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 7 Reading the Chapter

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1. We are going to read the whole chapter straight through, highlighting the beginning of each section.
2. We will then go back and discuss the three themes, all of which are relevant to us in this present day.

1. Promises to Abraham 7:1-8

2. Deliverance through Joseph 7:9-16

3. Deliverance through Moses 7:17-34

4. Rebellion by Israel 7:35-50

5. Rejection of Christ 7:51-53

6. Martyrdom of Stephen 7:54-60

Acts 7 Main Themes

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Theme 1: The Activity of God

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- The **activity of God** is not confined to one land – as in the land of Israel.

Theme 1: The Activity of God

- Stephen begins with Abraham – in Mesopotamia.
- **Acts 7:2** (ESV)

Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’

Theme 1: The Activity of God

- He moves on to Joseph – and God working in Egypt.
- **Acts 7:9-10** (ESV)

⁹ And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him ¹⁰ and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.

Theme 1: The Activity of God

- And then Moses – first in Sinai.
- **Acts 7:30** (ESV)

Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.

Theme 1: The Activity of God

- Moses – next in Egypt – then in the wilderness of Sinai once more.
- **Acts 7:36** (ESV)

This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

Theme 1: The Activity of God

- The activity of God is not confined to one land – as in the land of Israel.

Theme 2: The Worship of God

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- The **worship of God** is not confined to one place – as in the Jerusalem temple.

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- For example, when he appeared to Moses in the burning bush at Mt. Sinai,
- **Acts 7:33** (ESV)

Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- Before they had a temple, they had a tabernacle.
- Acts 7:44-45 (ESV)

⁴⁴ “Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen.

⁴⁵ Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David.

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- John Polhill of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville puts it like this,

The tabernacle was the prototype of the true worship of God; for it symbolized God's movement with his people, a pilgrim people on the move, not tied down to land or place.

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- God simply doesn't need a *place* for worship at all.
- **Acts 7:48-50** (ESV)

⁴⁸ Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

⁴⁹ ““Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?

⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things?’

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- The **worship of God** is not confined to one place – as in the Jerusalem temple.

Theme 3: The People of God

Theme 3: The People of God

- The **people of God** (the Jewish nation) have repeatedly rejected God's chosen leaders.

Theme 3: The People of God

- They sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt.
- **Act 7:9** (ESV)

And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him.

Theme 3: The People of God

- They did not at first see that Moses was chosen by God to lead them.
- **Act 7:25** (ESV)

He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.

Theme 3: The People of God

- And later they rejected his leadership.
- **Act 7:37-39** (ESV)

³⁷ This is the Moses ... ³⁸ ... the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. ³⁹ Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt,

Theme 3: The People of God

- Worst of all, they have now rejected Christ.
- **Act 7:51-53** (ESV)

⁵¹ “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? ...

Theme 3: The People of God

- Worst of all, they have now rejected Christ.
- **Act 7:51-53** (ESV)

... And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

Theme 3: The People of God

- Stephen turns their accusations of blasphemy back on the Sanhedrin.
- They have rejected the Law, the Prophets and the Messiah promised by Moses and the Prophets.

Theme 3: The People of God

- The **people of God** (the Jewish nation) have repeatedly rejected God's chosen leaders.

Acts 7 Three Main Themes

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1. The **activity of God** is not confined to one land – as in the land of Israel.
2. The **worship of God** is not confined to one place – as in the Jerusalem temple.
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Theme 1: The Activity of God

- The activity of God is not confined to one land.

Theme 1: The Activity of God

- The **activity of God** is not confined to one land.
- This is why we always have to keep some focus upon international missions.
- It's not that the world needs us personally or even our church – the world needs Jesus.
- And we need the perspective that keeps us connected to what God is doing around the world.

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- The **worship of God** is not confined to one place.

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- The **worship of God** is not confined to one place.
- This is relevant to us of course as we are presently facing a move.
- In our situation, it is fine to be a little sad about leaving a place with a lot of great memories.
- That is especially true when those memories are connected with Jesus.

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- What we have to keep in mind is that our need to move is fully in keeping with the character of God.
- It is something that God intends for our good.
- What better way to teach a lesson like this than for God to more or less force us to move?

Theme 2: The Worship of God



The God of the Old Testament was the living God, a God on the move and on the march, who was always calling his people out to fresh adventures, and always accompanying and directing them as they went.

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),
All Souls Church, London*

Theme 2: The Worship of God

- The God of the New Testament is still the same.
- We need to go in order to make disciples.

Theme 3: The People of God

- The **people of God** (the Jewish nation) have repeatedly rejected God's chosen leaders.

Theme 3: The People of God

- The **people of God** (the Jewish nation) have repeatedly rejected God's chosen leaders.
- Ultimately this led to a rejection of Christ.
- When God does not do what we want him to, we still need to stay faithful to Jesus.
- We must never let disappointment, difficulty or disillusionment cause us to turn our backs on him.

Stephen: The Church's 1st Martyr

Stephen: The Church's 1st Martyr

- The Sanhedrin rejected Christ, imprisoned the apostles and now they are angry with Stephen.
- Stephen took the opportunity to remain bold in his witness for Christ.
- Let's be determined to stay faithful to Jesus no matter who or how many oppose him.

Stephen: The Church's 1st Martyr

- Let's end by reading once again **Acts 7:54-60**.
- And this time let's end with **Acts 8:1a**.
- This “**young man named Saul**” will be an important figure in **Acts** and in the history of the church.

Acts 7 A Prayer

Acts 7 A Prayer

- Heavenly Father,
- We live in a world not much different from ancient Israel in certain ways.
- We can always forget that you are with us wherever we may go.
- We can be tempted to think that you can only be worshiped in certain places at certain times.
- Worst of all, we can turn our backs on Jesus.

Acts 7 A Prayer

- Help us to remember that you are not confined to any special land or location.
- And help us to stay faithful to Jesus, just as Stephen did, not matter what difficulties or opposition we face in this life.
- In Christ,
- Amen

Acts 7 References

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3. Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (New American Bible Commentary, Vol. 26). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.