

# Studies in Acts

## Study nine

**Key verse:** Acts 7:51

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

**Kick Off**



**Big Idea:** God's word reveals how he works evil human actions together for his good purposes.

How irritated do you get by people who beat you in an argument?

When you don't want to listen to someone what do you do?

### STUDY

**Read Acts 6:8-7:59.**

*This section covers the martyrdom of Stephen whose name means 'crown'. Stephen is falsely charged with blasphemy. His long defence is a detailed account from Israel's history which **incriminates his accusers**. This results in them rejecting him which is how Joseph, Moses and Jesus were treated by Israel before him and brings about blessing for God's people.*

1. Who is Stephen and how does Luke describe him in Acts 6:3, 5, 8?

- what does it mean to 'be full of' something?

2. We are not told exactly what the opposition to Stephen was but we are told his opponents couldn't stand up him. What do they then resort to instead and why?

3. If we can understand the false charges we can better understand Stephen's defence. Which two people is Stephen accused of blaspheming v11 and what statements are produced to back up the accusation?

- v15 says Stephen's face shone like an angel. Who else in the bible had a shining face?  
Ex 34:29

*Stephen's defence falls into three parts vv 2-16 the period of the Patriarchs, vv17-43 the period of Moses and the Law and the Exodus, and vv44-50 dealing with the place of the tabernacle and temple. Stephen has been charged with blasphemy against God and Moses. His defence is history the court is familiar with but his interpretation is revolutionary.*

4. What clear point is Stephen making about God's deliverers and Israel's behaviour in these three examples? Joseph vv9-13. Moses vv25,35. Jesus v52.

- God intended Joseph and Moses to deliver his people from suffering. Think about the places where they lived, the work they did, the treatment they received from their brothers and the results they achieved. How well do they illustrate the life and work of Jesus?

5. In relation to the charge of blasphemy against God what does Stephen say from Israel's history on the subject of their obedience to God in vv39-41.

6. What is Stephen stressing in vv48-50 regarding God and the temple? Why would this upset his listeners?

- how was Israel's attitude toward the temple actually wrong and dishonouring to God?

*Stephen's clear reasoning and ability to present the truth was too much for his opposition. Those Stephen condemns are exposed as unrepentant, guilty criminals. They react by losing control and in a rage, v54 they take the law into their own hands. They illegally impose capital punishment v58.*

7. Consider the likeness between Stephen and Jesus in his life, character and death. What caused this likeness?

- what is the positive result for the church from Stephen's death 8:4-8?

## THINK AND APPLY

How could you use this passage to show God's Spirit-filled servants are not assured of safety, security and prosperity in this life?

The likeness between Stephen and Jesus, is it something all of us should be aiming for also in life or not? cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18.



**For next week  
Read  
James 1:1-18**