

Acts 7 - Lesson 8

1. In Acts 7, Stephen is building a case against the nation of Israel for rejecting God's promised Messiah. This is not the first time in history that the people have rejected God's choice leaders and His laws. Each paragraph contributes to the ways that the nation of Israel has been "stiff-necked" and "uncircumcised in their hearts". Stephen gives a long case history of Israel's rejection of Yahweh, His people and His plans. Stephen also puts forth his defense to the charges brought against him in Acts 6:11 & 13.

Write the charges down from memory or look at the last lesson to remind yourself.

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
2. As you read the text below, look for the ways that Stephen answers the four false charges set against him by the religious rulers of Israel, you may want to read the original Old Testament information on the specific rejection Stephen is talking about in his sermon.

Blasphemy = rejection of God or irreverence toward God/something holy

1. Defense regarding the blasphemy of God*

- Take a yellow colored pencil and shade in the paragraph/s where Stephen defends his belief in God.
- Write how Israel was the one to reject God.

*Read Genesis 12:1-3 and 37:5-8 for the original OT account.

2. Defense regarding the blasphemy of Moses*

- Take an orange colored pencil and shade in the paragraph/s where Stephen defends his belief in Moses as God's leader and prophet.
- Write how Israel was the one to reject Moses.

*Read Exodus 32:1-20 for the OT account

3. Defense regarding the blasphemy of the Law*

- Take a blue colored pencil and shade in the paragraph/s where Stephen defends his belief in Moses as God's leader and prophet.
- Write how Israel was the one to reject the Law.

*The OT account is also found in Exodus 32:1-20 for the OT account

4. Defense regarding the blasphemy of the Tabernacle*

- Take a green colored pencil and shade in the paragraph/s where Stephen defends his belief in Moses as God's leader and prophet.
- Write how Israel was the one to reject the tabernacle.

*Read 1 Kings 8:22-30 for the OT account

5. In Acts 7:51-53, Stephen concludes by accusing the religious leaders of certain sins. How do these relate to the charges against Stephen and his defenses above?

Acts 7

The high priest said, “Are these things so?”

² And he said, “Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.’ ⁴ Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, *God* had him move to this country in which you are now living. ⁵ But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and *yet*, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM. ⁶ But God spoke to this effect, that his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS. ⁷ ‘AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I MYSELF WILL JUDGE,’ said God, ‘AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.’ ⁸ And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so *Abraham* became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac *became the father of* Jacob, and Jacob *of* the twelve patriarchs.

⁹ “The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. *Yet* God was with him, ¹⁰ and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household.

¹¹ “Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction *with it*, and our fathers could find no food. ¹² But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time. ¹³ On the second *visit* Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family was disclosed to Pharaoh. ¹⁴ Then Joseph sent *word* and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons *in all*. ¹⁵ And Jacob went down to Egypt and *there* he and our fathers died. ¹⁶ *From there* they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

¹⁷ “But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸ until THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT JOSEPH. ¹⁹ It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. ²⁰ It was at this time that Moses was born; and

he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home. ²¹ And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. ²² Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. ²³ But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. ²⁴ And when he saw one *of them* being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵ And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. ²⁶ On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?' ²⁷ But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?' ²⁸ YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?' ²⁹ At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he became the father of two sons.

³⁰ "After forty years had passed, AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH. ³¹ When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look *more* closely, there came the voice of the Lord: ³² 'I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB.' Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look. ³³ BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM, 'TAKE OFF THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND. ³⁴ I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM; COME NOW, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT.'

³⁵ "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one whom God sent *to be* both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush. ³⁶ This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷ This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.' ³⁸ This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and *who was* with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. ³⁹ Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, ⁴⁰ SAYING TO AARON, 'MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT—WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.' ⁴¹ At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. ⁴² But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, 'IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?' ⁴³ YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.'

⁴⁴ “Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. ⁴⁵ And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David. ⁴⁶ *David* found favor in God’s sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. ⁴⁸ However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says:

⁴⁹ ‘HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET;

WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?’ says the Lord, ‘OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE?

⁵⁰ ‘WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?’

⁵¹ “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. ⁵² Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³ you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it.”

⁵⁴ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. ⁵⁸ When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” ⁶⁰ Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.

3. Take a moment to write out our memory verse for this week: Acts 10:42-43.

4. As you read through chapter 7, there are many references to God as Stephen spoke his only recorded sermon through Old Testament history. Underline each time you see a reference to God and Jesus. Write what you learn about them from this chapter. The HOLY SPIRIT is also a key theme, so your observations will be noted in the next question.

God:

Jesus:

5. Highlight/mark key words and write down what you learn about them and how they continue to express the theme of Acts.

HOLY SPIRIT-

POWER-

WITNESSES-

6. Stephen's sermon focuses on the Old Testament; however, in our day and age, people do not see the importance of reading the Bible in its entirety with its many examples of genuine faith. They give attention only to the New Testament. Nevertheless, "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable..." In the verses below, we find some people who model faithful teaching of the Old Testament which bore much fruit in the early church. Read Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:5 and 2 Timothy 3:14-16 BEFORE you answer the following questions:

a. What are the names of the people who faithfully taught the Holy Scriptures?

b. To whom did they teach/read them? _____

c. What was the result of the Old Testament being faithfully taught? What fruit was born?

d. Have you read through the Old Testament? It would take an average of 10 minutes a day to read through the entire Bible in one year.

e. Take time to evaluate how many minutes you are reading the Holy Scriptures with your child during the week? What are some ways you can regularly implement this in your home?

- Ideas for toddlers:

- Ideas for elementary school age children:

(Recommendation: The Children's Illustrated Bible by Selina Hastings)

7. How can you APPLY what you learned? You can use the acronym EPICS to help us look for specific ways.

Examples to follow:

*Stephen is the first martyr in Acts and follows the example of the Lord Jesus Himself. What was Stephen's response to the evil that was done to him in Acts 7:60? God gives examples as powerful tools to renew our minds in difficult situations. Is there someone in your life with whom you are having trouble extending forgiveness? How might Stephen's example help you in a current situation?

Promises to expect:

Identity reminders:

Commands to follow:

Sins to forsake: