



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 2:37-39

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

## Acts 7:44-50

**44** “Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen.<sup>45</sup> After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David,<sup>46</sup> who enjoyed God’s favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.<sup>47</sup> But it was Solomon who built a house for him.<sup>48</sup> “However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:<sup>49</sup> “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?<sup>50</sup> Has not my hand made all these things?”

- Acts 7:44-50 forms the conclusion of Stephen's historical survey in his defense speech, where he argues that God is not confined to the Temple in Jerusalem and that placing too much emphasis on physical structures can lead to a rejection of God's true messengers.
- Stephen traces the presence of the "tabernacle of witness" from the wilderness, carried by the ancestors under Joshua into the promised land, up to the time of David. David, having found favor with God, desired to build a more permanent dwelling place for the God of Jacob.
- It was Solomon, not David, who ultimately built the physical house (temple) for God.
- ❖ Why Solomon, and not David?  
[https://biblehub.com/q/Why\\_Solomon\\_not\\_David\\_built\\_God\\_s\\_house.htm](https://biblehub.com/q/Why_Solomon_not_David_built_God_s_house.htm)
- Stephen culminates his argument by quoting the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 66:1-2**), emphasizing that the "Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands." Heaven is God's throne, and the earth is his footstool, reinforcing the point that the Creator of the universe cannot be contained within any physical structure and has no need for a "resting place" built by human hands.

## Review 7:44-50

1. Stephen implies that the temple had become an idol to the Jewish leaders of his day, whom he accused of valuing buildings and rituals over a true relationship with God. Are there physical objects, traditions, or church buildings today that can similarly become objects of misplaced reverence?
2. Stephen demonstrates a pattern in Israel's history: God often worked outside established religious norms (e.g., appearing to Moses in the wilderness, not the temple). How does this principle apply to the Christian faith today?
3. In what ways do you see modern believers or religious communities attempting to “contain” God within specific buildings or practices?
4. How can we, as individuals, ensure our worship is focused on God's transcendence and presence, rather than on the “work of human hands?”
5. Stephen's speech paved the way for the gospel to move beyond Jerusalem. How does understanding God's unlimited presence impact your view of local church ministry and global missions?

## Acts 7:51-53

51 “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

## Review 7:51-53

- This was the climax of Stephen's speech. He made his main point loud and clear. Israel had always persecuted God's prophets, and his audience was no different. This group denied Jesus and was responsible for His death.
- They also denied the teachings and miraculous works of the disciples (remember their treatment of Peter and John in **Acts 4**). And they had clearly demonstrated their resistance to the Holy Spirit and total disregard for God's plans and purposes.
- It can be easy to read through Israel's history and think, *Wake up Israel. Don't you see what God is doing?* But the reality is we sometimes don't see what God is doing in our own lives. or we may see it but stubbornly choose to ignore it.
- Some days we might find ourselves acting like the Israelites or Jewish leader and missing what God is up to.
- ❖ Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas you are ignoring or resisting God. Ask God to help you obey Him and demonstrate faith in what He is doing in your life.

## Acts 7:54-60-The Stoning of Stephen

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

## Review 7:54-60

- The Jewish leaders clearly did not like what Stephen had to say, and their actions confirmed his main point. They followed in their father's footsteps and stoned Stephen. Notice how the glorious language used to describe Stephen, what he saw, and how he died is contrasted with the hideous description of the people and their actions.
- Stephen was a man chosen by God and used by God in a powerful way. He died full of the Holy Spirit, and his last words requested forgiveness for his enemies.
- ❖ Why did Stephen see a vision?
- ❖ How did Stephen's prayer for his executioners reflect Jesus's character?
- ❖ What is the significance of Stephen's final prayer?
- ❖ What is the significance of the Sanhedrin “gnashing their teeth” at Stephen?
- ❖ Why did the Sanhedrin react with such anger to Stephen's words?
- ❖ What was Saul's role in Stephen's martyrdom and how do you think this event affected him?