

# KEEP JESUS WEIRD

An 8-Part Study of the Book of Acts - **Part 7: Martyr** - Sermon Study Guide 5|19|19

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## **Study Questions:**

What do we know about Stephen from the book of Acts?

What was the "Synagogue of the Freedmen?" What specific group of Jews belonged there, and what's the possible connection in these verses to the man who would later be known as "the Apostle Paul"?

Stephen responded to his interrogation with a four-part sermon in which he reprised key moments in Jewish history to more clearly illustrate how Jesus is truly the fulfillment of Hebrew scripture.

### Part 1: Abraham

Abraham demonstrated \_\_\_\_\_ in his \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part 2: Joseph

Joseph showed \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part 3: Moses

Moses offered \_\_\_\_\_ in spite of \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Bible References:**

**Acts 6:8-12, 15** Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen - Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia - who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." They brought him before the Sanhedrin.

**Acts 7:1-4, 9-10, 17, 20, 30-39, 44-50** Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?" He replied, "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to Abraham... 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.' So he left..."

"Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and... So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt..."

"[O]ur people in Egypt greatly increased... At that time Moses was born...he heard the Lord say, 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have come down to set them free.' This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He led them out of Egypt and performed signs and wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and for 40 years in the wilderness...But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt.

"Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness.

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## Part 4: Temple

Solomon built \_\_\_\_\_ even though God  
\_\_\_\_\_.

“Stiff-necked” with uncircumcised hearts and ears. Stephen throws out some unorthodox insults here. What is he getting at?

Why did the religious leaders react so violently against Jesus and his followers, to the point of shedding their blood?

Have you ever seen someone have a visceral, hateful reaction against people who publicly champion the love of God? What was the source of their rage? What was the outcome?

Why was Saul (a.k.a. the apostle Paul) present at the execution of Stephen?

What does this story reveal about God’s capacity to turn awful events into reasons for hope?

It remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God’s favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me?’ says the Lord.”

**Acts 7:51-53** “You stiff-necked people!

Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

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 - you who have received the law that was given through the angels but have not obeyed it.”

**Acts 7:54-8:3** When the members of the

Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God.

“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, they laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” ...he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul approved of their killing him.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for

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him. But Saul began to destroy the church.  
Going from house to house, he dragged off  
men and women and put them in prison.