

Living in the Promises of Jesus

Acts 6-7

Lesson 5

OBSERVATION: Read Acts 6,7

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Bible and another translation or paraphrase.

After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?

2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text.

Chapter 6: Key Words: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, any reference to believers (i.e. disciples, apostles), Stephen, witnesses, and evidences of the working of the Holy Spirit (i.e. power, wisdom, faith, wonders, signs)

Chapter 7: Key Words: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Stephen, and witness/witnesses

3. The word *but* was used one time in Acts 6 and eleven times in Acts 7. Choose one of those times (in each chapter) and record what is being contrasted.

4. The term *therefore*, was used in Acts 6:3. Mark the word; record the conclusion and what it was based upon.

SERVING TABLES: Read Acts 6:1-7

1. Now in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplying... Acts 6:1. What complaint arose?

The Hellenists were Greek speaking Jewish Christians. The church distributed food and clothing daily to those in need. Apparently the Hellenist widows were being neglected.

What did this complaint cause the apostles to realize? verse 2

Serving tables was an expression used to refer to the many areas of taking care of the people's physical needs. The apostles viewed this to be an important responsibility of the church. What does this say to you about God's concern for your physical needs?

What were the apostles called to do? See Acts 6:2,4

How would others serving tables help the Apostles do what they were called to do?

2. What solution is presented in verse 3?

Some may view waiting on tables as being spiritually inferior. What were the requirements presented?

Once the seven were selected, what did the apostles do? verse 6

How do the answers above reveal the importance of waiting on tables?

3. What was the result of the apostles returning to their calling and the seven fulfilling theirs? verse 7

What does this teach us about the importance of each member of the body of Christ fulfilling their part and not expecting others to fill the gaps?

STEPHEN ACCUSED: Read Acts 6:8-15

1. How is Stephen, a man chosen to wait on tables, described in Acts 6:8?

2. What does verse 10 tell us about those who were taking a stand against Stephen and his teaching?

What did Paul say about his own teaching? See 1 Corinthians 2:4.

What is the difference between a talented speaker and a speaker who speaks in the power of the Holy Spirit?

3. In response to their frustration, in what way did these Jews seek to bring about Stephen's fall? Acts 6:11-14

How had they attempted to bring a charge against Jesus, hoping for His downfall? See Matthew 26:59 and Mark 14:55-59.

In what way are these an encouragement to you when you face rejection after sharing about Jesus?

Paul experienced the same kind of rejection. What did he write in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16?

4. To add to their dismay, what did they observe when they looked steadfastly at Stephen?

Their ancestors had taught them about that kind of countenance. What does Exodus 34:34,35 reveal about their patriarch, Moses?

ABRAHAM – Read Acts 7:1-8

1. Stephen chose to use this time to enlighten the religious leaders to the history of Israel's rejection of those whom God had sent to save them. He began with Abraham, the father of their nation. Considering these verses, what are the promises God made to Abraham?

God was faithful to fulfill all of His promises to Abraham. He also made a covenant with Abraham, the covenant of circumcision. What exhortation had God given them in Deuteronomy 10:16?

What might the religious leaders, that Stephen was addressing, determine about God and about themselves through these words about Abraham?

JOSEPH – Read Acts 7:9-16

1. Joseph was another favorite of the Jews. Just the mention of him would bring back memories of the stories they had heard. They would probably first remember how his brothers treated him. Jot down a few things his brothers did to him. Scan Genesis 37 if you need a refresher.
2. According to Acts 7:10, what did God do for Joseph?
3. Contrast the way Joseph's brothers treated him as their brother in Israel, to the way they treated him as Pharaoh's assistant in Egypt.
4. What can we learn from the story of Joseph about God's ability to perform what He promises and purposes to do?

MOSES – Read Acts 7:17-50

1. Scan Acts 7:17-29,39 and summarize Israel's treatment of Moses.
2. Carefully write the words of verse 35 as you consider Stephen's intended impact on his audience.
3. In Acts 7:37, Stephen reminded them of Moses' prophesy of the Prophet that God would send and of His command to hear Him. What did the LORD say (Deuteronomy 18:19) would happen to those who will not hear?
4. In Acts 7:44-50 Stephen spoke of the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, and the house built by Solomon. Verse 48 begins with the word *however*. However, where does God dwell?

God was faithful to fulfill all of His promises to Abraham. He also made a covenant with Abraham, the covenant of circumcision. What exhortation had God given them in Deuteronomy 10:16?

What might the religious leaders, that Stephen was addressing, determine about God and about themselves through these words about Abraham?

5. Go back to Acts 6:11,13 and record their accusations against Stephen.

In his rebuttal to them, Stephen showed that they were the guilty ones. In what ways did Israel:

Speak against Moses

Violate God's temple

Speak (even act) against the law

6. Both Joseph and Moses were rejected as deliverers the first time, yet accepted (and even revered) later. Stephen was warning them that they were making an even graver mistake in their rejection of Jesus. Record the words of Jesus in John 12:48

THE HOLY SPIRIT – Read Acts 7:51-53

1. Stephen called those he was speaking to *stiff-necked and uncircumcised*. God used these same words against them, mostly in anger. What did Stephen accuse the religious rulers of doing?

2. Read verse 52, How is persecuting the prophets an example of *resisting the Holy Spirit*?

What are some of the ways we can resist the Holy Spirit?

3. What did the prophets foretell?

4. Remedy for their hard heartedness was the same as it was when God called the stiff necked and uncircumcised. What did he call the to do in Lev 26:40-41?

STEPHEN'S MARTYDOM: Read Acts 7:54-60

1. Rather than turning from their wicked ways, what does Acts 7:54 tell us these men did?

Describe what you think the expression on their faces was like

2. Using verses 55,56, describe Stephen's experience.

3. Acts 7:57 tells us Stephen's opposers were functioning in one accord. This is not the unity God desires. What did they do? See verses 57-59.

What did Stephen do? See verses 59,60

Record some of the last words of Jesus (Luke 23:34) as He was suffering at the hands of His accusers.

Faced with the violent mob, Stephen seemed fearless. How was he able to face this danger?

REVIEW: Read Acts 6 and 7

1. What did you learn about waiting on tables?
2. Share some of the ways Stephen was a witness for Jesus.

3. What qualities of Stephen would you like to see in your life?

4. What stiff-necked attitudes prevent us from seeing what God wants us to see?

5. In what ways have you been challenged or encouraged by this lesson?