

## THE EARLY CHURCH GROWTH

- A few thousand believed and added since the start of Acts 4
- All believers were in one heart and mind
- Believers shared everything they had
- There were no needy persons among them
- Apostles persecuted but continued to testify boldly the person, death & resurrection of Jesus
- Holy fear & obedience to God
- Work of the Spirit

## THE OPPOSITION

- a two-faced couple influenced by satan (opposition from within)
- Apostles arrested and thrown into jail by jealous religious leaders (external opposition)
- Apostles flogged (external opposition)
- ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus (external opposition)

## Acts 6:1 - 8:3 outline

About the one who is innocent (Stephen)	Acts 6:1-10
What was the charge against the innocent	• Acts 6:11-14
Who then are the guilty (Jewish leaders, false witnesses & Sanhedrin)	• Acts 6:12-15
What are they guilty of?	Acts 7:1-8:3
How did the innocent respond?	Acts 7:59-8:3

# ***About Stephen***

- one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to widows
- A man full of faith & of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5)
- performed great wonders and signs among the people (Acts 6:8)
- a man full of God's grace and power (Acts 6:8)

# ***Charges against Stephen***

- blaspheming against God
- anti-God's law
- and also disregarding the temple and hand-down customs from Moses

Acts 6:11-14

***Read & share  
what do you  
think is 1-2  
main point of  
this paragraph  
assigned***

- Acts 7:2-8 (Abraham)
- Acts 7:9-19 (Joseph)
- Acts 7:20-43 (Moses)
- Acts 7:44-50 (David & Solomon)

***Religious  
leaders were  
stubbornly  
guilty of failing  
to see***

- God's chosen God never **confined** Himself to one place
- God's chosen prophets have always been **mistreated** by stubborn Israel
- The intent of building the temple is to **worship** God
- Israel failed to see God's saving **grace** time and time again

God's <u>prophets</u>	God's <u>presence</u> is not confined geographically	God's saving <u>grace</u> from time to time	<u>Stiff-necked</u> just like your ancestors for ....
Abraham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>While still in Mesopotamia (v2), Harran (v2),<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Shechem</li></ul></li><li>Descendants in foreign land (v6), Mount Moriah, Cave of Machpelah</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>God of glory appeared (v2)</li><li>Would possess the land (v5)</li><li>punish the nation they serve as slaves (v6)</li></ul>	Prized their righteousness to ancestry link to Abraham
Joseph	Egypt (v9) Canaan (v11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>But God was with him (v9)</li><li>Rescued from all troubles (v10)</li><li>Gave wisdom (v10)</li><li>Ruler over egypt</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rejected by his jealous patriarchs</li><li>Sold as slave (v9)</li></ul>
Moses	Egypt (v36) Mount Sinai (v30) Red sea (v36) 40 years in wilderness (v36)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ruler and deliverer by God himself (v35)</li><li>performed wonders and signs</li><li>Tabernacle made as God directed Moses (v44)</li><li>God drove the enemies out (v45)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rejected by 2 Israelites (v26)</li><li>our ancestors refused to obey him. (v39)</li><li>Made an idol (v41)</li><li>Grumbled &amp; rebel against Moses (Numbers 14:2-4)</li></ul>
David & Solomon	Judah	<p>In spite of Israel's repeated rejection....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tabernacle &amp; temple</li><li>Enjoyed God's favor (v46)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>confronted their idolatry of the temple.(v48)</li></ul>

***Religious  
leaders were  
heinously  
guilty of***

- Rejected and conspired to kill the righteous one Jesus (Acts 7:52)
- Stone Stephen to death (Acts 7:58)
- Persecuting the church (Acts 8:1)

Acts 6:1 - 8:3 outline

About the one who is innocent (Stephen)	<p>Acts 6:1-10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• one of the seven men chosen to distribute food to widows</li><li>• A man full of faith &amp; of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5)</li><li>• performed great wonders and signs among the people (Acts 6:8)</li><li>• a man full of God’s grace and power (Acts 6:8)</li></ul>
What was the charge against the innocent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acts 6:11-14</li><li>• blaspheming against God</li><li>• anti-God’s law</li><li>• and also disregarding the temple and hand-down customs from Moses</li></ul> <p>Acts 6:11-14</p>
Who then are the guilty (Jewish leaders, false witnesses & Sanhedrin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acts 6:9-14</li><li>• Members of the synagogue of the freedmen</li><li>• False witnesses</li><li>• Elders and teachers of the law</li><li>• Sanhedrin</li></ul>
What are they guilty of?	<p>Acts 7:1-8:3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God’s chosen God never <b>confined</b> Himself to one place</li><li>• God’s chosen prophets have always been <b>mistreated</b> by stubborn Israel</li><li>• Idolatry &amp; their failure to see the temple is to <b>worship</b> God</li><li>• Israel failed to see God’s saving <b>grace</b> time and time again</li><li>• Reject the Messiah and persecuted the church</li></ul>
How did the innocent respond to persecution?	<p>Acts 7:59-8:3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make time to defend his charges with explaining Israel’s historical shortcoming<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Filled with Holy Spirit &amp; the vision of glorious Jesus</li><li>• Forgiving just like his Lord</li></ul></li></ul>



## **Big picture of** **Acts 6:8 to 8:3**

Before his death, Stephen tells the story of how Israel **just like their** forefathers is guilty of rejecting God's prophets and Jesus; the Righteous One. Stephen's life models after Jesus of the gospel and continue to reflect characteristics of boldness, truth and love.

These 2 event marks the beginning of **serious persecution** (stoning of Stephen & great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem)

Yet even amid the rising opposition, **God's power** can be seen at work preparing for the gospel to scatter from Jerusalem out to the nations. Beginning with Greek-speaking Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1–7), the Christian gospel is proclaimed to an ever-widening circle—to Samaria (Acts 8:4–25), to an Ethiopian (Acts 8:26–40), to a Gentile God-fearer (Acts 10:1–48), and to the Gentiles of Antioch (Acts 11:19–30).

# Applications

1. What can we learn from Stephen's **non-hasty** approach to answer hard questions?
2. What can we learn from Stephen's posture in the face of **persecution**?
3. Are we also guilty of being **"stiff-necked"** at times?