

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

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

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)

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

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?*