

UNSTOPPABLE POWER

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

“THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR”

ACTS 6:8 - 8:1

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NOVEMBER 21, 2021

Introduction: Opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ is at times subtle, while at other times opposition is blatant as illustrated in today's passage. Acts 7 records the death of the first Christian in history and provides a model for how Christians should respond to the inevitable attacks from unbelievers.

I. The Detention Of Stephen (Acts 6:8-15)

A. The Ministry of Stephen (Acts 6:8)

Acts 6:8 “Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.”

B. The Opposition to Stephen's Message (Acts 6:9-15)

Acts 6:9 “But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.”

Acts 6:10-11 ¹⁰ “But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹ Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.’”

Acts 6:13-14 ¹³ “They put forward false witnesses who said, ‘This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us.’”

Acts 6:15 “Fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.”

II. The Defense Of Stephen (Acts 7:1-53)

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A. Stephen's Defense Against Blasphemy: The Patriarchs (Acts 7:2-16)

Acts 7:2 “And Stephen said, ‘Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.’”

B. Stephen's Defense Against Slander: Moses (Acts 7:17-43)

Acts 7:41 “At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.”

Acts 7:37 “This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, ‘GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.’”

C. Stephen's Defense Against Anarchy: Isaiah (Acts 7:44-53)

Acts 7:48-50 ⁴⁸ “However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: ⁴⁹ ‘HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?’ says the Lord, ‘OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE? ⁵⁰ WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?’”

Acts 7:51-53 ⁵¹ “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. ⁵² Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³ you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

III. The Death Of Stephen (Acts 7:54-8:1)

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A. The Reaction of the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:54)

Acts 7:54 “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.”

B. The Reaction of Stephen (7:55-8:1)

Acts 7:55-56 ⁵⁵ “But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”

Acts 7:58 “When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”

Acts 7:59-60 ⁵⁹ “They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ ⁶⁰ Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ Having said this, he fell asleep.”

Acts 8:1 “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Hebrews 10:11-12 ¹¹ “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.”

Conclusion