

STEPHEN'S SPEECH!
A RELIABLE, FAITHFUL AND GODLY WITNESS!
ACTS CH7:44-60

ILLUSTRATION

Leonardo da Vinci's iconic **Mona Lisa**, the world's most famous, recognizable, and copied artwork, has a storied history. Painted between 1503 and 1519, it was owned by French royalty for centuries. Liberated by Revolutionary forces, the painting briefly adorned Napoleon's bedroom, then was installed in the Louvre. Over 80% of Louvre visitors come specifically to see Mona Lisa. Due to new queuing practices, visitors have only 30 seconds to admire the painting's legendary mystique.

There are 19 Christian Speeches in Acts:

8 by Peter - Ch1:15-22; 2:14-41; 3:6-26; 4:8-22; 5:29-42; 10:34-48; 11:4-18; + 15:7-11.

1 by Stephen Ch7:2-53

1 by James Ch15:13-21

9 by Paul, **5 in sermons** Ch13:16-41; 14; 17; 20 + 28 + **4 in defence speeches** Ch22:1-21; 23:1-8; 24:10-21; 26:2-27

In relation to Stephen's long speech, we need to consider some questions:

1. What is Stephen's speech all about?
2. Does it have any themes?
3. What is it meant to achieve?

To help us understand Stephen's speech John Stott, a beloved PASTOR and writer, in his commentary on Acts, says, "What Stephen did was pick out four major epochs (periods of time) of Israel's history, dominated by four major characters. **First** he highlighted Abraham and the patriarchal age (Ch7:2-8); **then Joseph** and the Egyptian exile (Ch7:9-19); **thirdly Moses**, the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings (Ch7:20-44); and **lastly David and Solomon**, and the establishment of the monarchy (Ch7:45-50). **The connecting feature of these four epochs is that in none of them was God's presence limited to any particular place.** On the contrary, the God of the Old Testament was the living God, a God on the move and on the march who was always calling his people out to fresh adventures, and always accompanying and directing them as they went (John Stott, Commentary on Acts, pg 130-131)."

Another way to understand Stephen's speech is to consider the accusations laid against him (Ch7:13-14) and think about what themes (what is Stephen saying) he is raising to counteract the accusations. Therefore, the speech could also be understood in the following way:

1. The Land – Ch7:2-36
2. The Law – Ch7:37-43
3. The Temple – Ch7:44-50
4. The Indictment by Stephen (the Charge) – Ch7:51-53
5. The stoning of Stephen – Ch7:54-60

THE POINT OF THE TENT AND TEMPLE EXPLAINED! V44-50

- What was the point of the ark?
- What was in the ark? - Hebrews Ch9:4
- The tent was mobile, remember God, moving throughout the land Ch7:2-36?
- Man wanted to build God a house!
- V46 – David asks to build a house for God!
- V47 – He is not allowed, but Solomon is!
- Yet when Solomon builds the Temple, he himself admits, that God cannot live in this house 1st Kings Ch8:27!
- V49-50 Quoted from, Isaiah Ch66:1-2, Stephen reiterates this truth!
- ***The mistake the Israelites made was thinking and believing that God could be restricted to the Temple!***

THE POINT OF THE REAL BLASPHEMY EXPLAINED! V51-53

- They had accused Stephen of blasphemy Ch6:13-14
- Stephen now reveals that the real blasphemy is committed by the Israelites!
- V51 – You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised of heart, not saved, hard hearted, deaf to God!
- V52 – You killed the prophets (***1st Kings Ch19:10; Neh Ch9:26; Jer Ch26:20-24; Luke Ch6:23; Luke Ch11:49; Luke Ch13:34; 1st Thess Ch2:15; Heb Ch11:36-38***)
- V52 – You killed Jesus, God's Righteous One!
- V53 – You broke the Law!
- Having revealed to his accusers their forefathers unfaithfulness to God, His Law, His prophets and the Temple Ch7:2-50, Stephen now charges his judges with the same unfaithfulness and blasphemy Ch7:51-53!

THE POINT OF BEING CHRIST LIKE EXPLAINED! V54-60

- Stephen full of the Holy Spirit - Luke Ch12:11-12
- V55 – Sees an amazing vision of the glory of God and the Risen Christ Jesus, remember his audience!
- Luke deliberately records Stephen's last 3 sentences!
- V56 – Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (***Luke Ch9:22 – Stephen sees Jesus in His role as the suffering servant who was raised from the dead!***)
- V59 – Lord Jesus receive my spirit
- V60 – Lord, do not hold this sin against them – ***The Sanhedrin had no power to facilitate the death sentence John Ch18:31***
- V55 + V56 But Jesus is ***standing*** not sitting at the right hand of God, ***10 times sitting!*** (Matt Ch26:64; Mark Ch14:62; Mark Ch16:19; Luke Ch22:69; Acts Ch2:34-35; Col Ch3:1; Hebrews Ch1:3b; Hebrews Ch8:1; Hebrews Ch10:12; Hebrews

Ch12:2b), why?

- ***Jesus stands as Stephens' heavenly advocate, ready to welcome him, His first martyr! As Stephen witnesses for Christ before men, Christ witnesses for Stephen before God! Luke Ch12:8-12***

APPLICATION

Should we be brought in front of the authorities, Jesus will give us the words!

In the midst of our persecution ***Jesus stands with us***, watching and ready to welcome us!

Jesus replaces the Temple ***according to the Gospel of John Ch2:19 - "Jesus answered them `Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.'"*** However, the false witnesses testified falsely that Jesus had said "We heard him say `I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another'" (***Matthew Ch26:61 + Mark Ch15:58***). When Jesus was dying on the cross people hurled insults at Him, and misquoted Him regarding the destruction of the Temple (***Matt Ch27:40; Mark Ch15:29***).

Jesus fulfils the Law! When it came to the Law, Jesus stated that "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Matt Ch5:17). ***See how the pattern of falsity repeats itself, from Jesus to Stephen?***