

Acts: Jesus at Work through the Church - Part 4
Jerusalem, Part 3 - The Ever Expanding Temple
Selections from Acts 6:1-8:3
May 15, 2022

I. What we have SEEN this FAR. (Acts 1-5)

- A. A new HABITATION of the PRESENCE of God. (Acts 1:8)**
- B. The TEMPLE is now EMBODIED. (Acts 2:1-4)**
- C. The rhythm: INDWELT, empowered, WITNESSING. (Acts 2-5)**

The theme of the first 7 chapters of Acts is pretty consistent. The presence of God is now within His people. The temple has become “embodied”. This first was focused in Jerusalem. Let’s call it the launching phase, but today we’re going to see a trigger event that moved the church out beyond Jerusalem.

1. Kid’s question: If God lives inside of you what does that mean?
2. What has God been challenging you with through this first part of the book of Acts? How are you responding?

II. The STORY of STEPHEN. (Acts 6-8)

- A. Full of the SPIRIT, POWER, and WISDOM. (6:5,8)**
- B. Falsely ACCUSED by the OPPOSITION. (6:9-14)**
- C. Focused on the TEMPLE and the TRADITION. (6:13-14)**

God always works through a person. Stephen steps into the spotlight for this short section of Acts and embodies what it means to be the temple of God in the world. His words and actions challenge the status quo and things get bumpy fairly quickly.

3. When have you been falsely accused? How did you respond?
4. Is tradition good or bad or both? How can we be mindful of how we use tradition in the church?

III. Stephen’s LONG and WINDING response. (7:1-53)

- A. A JEWISH history LESSON. (7:1-47)**
 - 1. Theme #1: Continually RESISTING God’s CALL. (7:9-10, 35, 39, 51-53)**
 - 2. Theme #2: God’s PRESENCE cannot be CONTAINED. (7:48-50)**
- B. A VIOLENT and ANGRY response. (7:54-8:3)**

Stephen’s response in chapter 7 is a long meandering journey through Jewish History. But it’s not just random stories. He is focused around two specific themes that build toward his final declaration. One that is not well received by his accusers.

5. When have you been aware of God's presence with you? What did that awareness contribute to the situation that you were in?
6. When have you gotten angry most recently? What was it about? As you reflect on that situation what can you learn about yourself?

IV. How the CHURCH moves forward TODAY. (8:1-4)

- A. Indwelt with a PRESENCE, not managing a SYSTEM. (6:10-15; Jn. 5:39-40)**
- B. As a WITNESS, not an ENFORCER. (7:56; Acts 4:18)**
- C. EMBODYING the EXAMPLE of Jesus. (7:59,60; Lk. 6:40)**
- D. Letting God ADD those He CALLS. (8:1,3; Acts 2:47)**

So what can GBC learn and apply out of this? How does the church move forward in Hope and beyond? There are a few things that seem clear in this text to me. Let's call them fundamental truths about who and how we are to be in the world today.

7. How can we tell when our relationship with God has become more of a religious system that we manage? What are some of the danger signs?
8. How can we live as a witness and avoid trying to be an enforcer? What is the difference?