#### Lesson 7:

#### Stephen

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Acts 7

MEMORY WORK:

Mark 16:15

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I can tell others that Jesus loves them. I can invite them to Bible class and worship.

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| **LESSON STARTS HERE** |

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we learned about the seven men chosen to serve the Church in a special way. A man named Stephen was one of the men chosen. He was a great man, and we are going to study about him and how he wanted to teach others about Jesus no matter what happened to him. He was very brave. We also must tell others about Jesus and do the right thing even when it is the hard thing to do

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Stephen was one of the seven men chosen by the Christians in Jerusalem to be a special servant (deacon). He was chosen to help the widows who did not have enough food (Acts 6:1-6) in the weeks that followed the beginning of the Church on Pentecost. Stephen was a well-educated young man, a young Christian who was said to be “full of faith and filled with [controlled by] the Holy Spirit.” He was a very spiritually minded man who wanted to do all he could for the Lord and the Lord’s Church.
2. Stephen spent much of his time teaching about Jesus and performing miracles. One day when Stephen was teaching in the synagogue, a group of Jews, from several different places outside of Jerusalem, angrily argued with him. They did not want to hear about Jesus and did not want others to hear either. They were afraid that they would lose their influence and power if many people became followers of Jesus (i.e., Christians). Nothing the Jews said or did could stop Stephen from preaching or others from listening. So they convinced some men to lie about Stephen and accuse him of **blasphemy** against Moses and God.

**Blasphemy:** “to spurn or treat with contempt…to slander or speak lightly of the sacred; slanderous, abusive, and damaging speech” (*Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*,

L.O. Richards, p. 131). Since the Jewish leaders refused to accept the divinity of Jesus, anyone who taught that He was the Son of God or performed miracles in His name was considered guilty of treating Almighty God with contempt. To blaspheme Moses was to have the same contempt and disrespect for him and for the Law which God established to set the Jews apart from all other nations.

1. The Jewish leaders grabbed Stephen and took him by force to the Jewish court called the Sanhedrin. The men who lied about Stephen testified before the court. Then Stephen was given the opportunity to speak. He was not afraid of these men who had also mistreated Jesus. Acts 6:17 tells us that his face looked “like the face of an angel.”

**NOTES:**

The Sanhedrin was made up 72 men, and could make judgments about religious matters instead of turning the problem over to the Romans.

Most commentators do not think that the phrase “face of an angel” indicated a supernatural glow, but rather, obvious confidence on his face.

1. Acts 7 is Stephen’s speech or sermon; it is the longest sermon in the book. He spoke to the court about some of the most important events and people in Jewish history. He told the Jews that throughout their history, their ancestors refused to follow those chosen by God to lead them. They rejected God’s promises over and over. They even refused to listen to Moses and others who told them about the coming Messiah.

**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the articles “[**Jacob’s Journey to**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&amp;article=808)[**Egypt**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&amp;article=808),” “[**How Many of Jacob’s Descendants Moved to Egypt?**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=13&amp;article=2744)” and “[**Was Moses**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=6&amp;article=4640)[**Ineloquent or ‘Mighty in Words’?**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=6&amp;article=4640)” by Eric Lyons on the Apologetics Press Web site for discussions about alleged biblical discrepancies from this section of Scripture.

1. At the end of his speech, Stephen told the Jewish leaders that they were stubborn people, like their ancestors, because they refused to follow God’s Son. He called them murderers because they had killed Jesus, the last Prophet and the Savior Who was sent by God, just as their ancestors killed the prophets whom God had sent before (See Jesus’ similar comments in Matthew 23:34-36). When the men heard Stephen call them murderers and accuse them of not obeying God, they became very angry. He looked toward heaven and told them that he could see Jesus standing at the right hand of God. This made the Jews even angrier. They rushed toward him, dragged him outside the city, and stoned him to death. Standing to the side, holding the coats of those throwing rocks, was a man named Saul of Tarsus.

**NOTES:** It was against Jewish law to carry out an execution inside the gates of their holy city.

1. As Stephen was dying, he asked God to forgive the angry mob, just as Jesus had done from the cross. After Stephen’s death, there was a terrible sadness among the Christians in Jerusalem. This was a turning point in the history of the Church. The Jews made their rejection of Jesus and the Gospel very clear, and persecution of Christians began in earnest. Most of the Christians, except for the apostles, left Jerusalem. Everywhere they went, they taught others about Jesus. So the Church continued to grow, and the Gospel was spread to many places all over the world—because of and in spite of persecution.
2. Until this time, the apostles were the ones being persecuted. Now all Christians had to decide how much their faith meant to them and whether or not they would remain faithful. At some point, each of us may have to stand up for what is right and not be ashamed that we believe in Jesus. We probably won’t be faced with death, like Stephen was, but we will often be in situations where people make fun of us or try to get us to do something we know God would not want us to do. No matter what other people say about us or do to us, we must never be afraid to tell others that we believe in Jesus, or be embarrassed to do what He wants us to do.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL VISUALS (note disclaimers):

##### Betty Lukens’ felt pieces

* ABeka Flash-a-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book;)
* Free Bible Images – Saved on flash drive. Can be presented on classroom tv. Script included in lesson file.
* Large stones – Let student feel the weight of the rocks and imagine how Stephen must have felt.

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS:

**“I’M A** **HARD FIGHTING SOLDIER ON THE BATTLEFIELD”**

Author: Unknown\*

I’m a hard fighting soldier on the battlefield. (3X) I keep on bringin’ souls to Jesus,

By the service that I yield.

I’ve got a helmet on my head, in my hand a sword and shield. (3X) I keep on bringin’ souls to Jesus,

By the service that I yield.

You gotta walk right, talk right, sing right, pray right, on the battlefield. (3X) I keep on bringin’ souls to Jesus,

By the service that I yield.

If I die let me die in the service of my Lord, (3X) I keep on bringin’ souls to Jesus,

By the service that I yield.

**“THIS LITTLE** **CHRISTIAN LIGHT OF MINE”**

Author: Unknown\*

This little Christian light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. (3X)

Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.

All around the neighborhood, I’m gonna let it shine. (3X)

Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.

Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m gonna let it shine. (3X)

Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.

Won’t let Satan [blow on finger] it out. I’m gonna let it shine. (3X)

Let it shine, all the time let it shine.

### SUNDAY

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* G – Great Sermon for ABC’s of Acts in NT Binder

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday’s lesson. (See [Review Questions](http://www.apcurriculum.com/dcirfol/4-24-32RQ.pdf) for example questions.)
2. Spend more time talking about how some people are mistreated for their faith. Also discuss Bible characters who were persecuted: Daniel; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Paul; Joseph. What can we do when we face persecution?

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LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Bible Timeline Review – Small timeline flashcards should be in the lesson file. Discuss the events on the cards and see if the students can put them in the right order. Discuss how Stephen preached to the crowd about events from the Bible. The people agreed with him, except about Jesus. It is important for us to believe the entire Bible, including Jesus.

### Review Questions

1. In the book of Acts, how is Stephen described?
   1. As being “full of faith and filled with the Holy Spirit”
2. About what did a group of Jews from the synagogue argue with Stephen?
   1. About Jesus being the Son of God
3. Why could they not successfully argue with Stephen?
   1. Because God was helping Stephen
4. Of what did the Jewish leaders accuse Stephen when they had him arrested?
   1. Blasphemy against Moses and God
5. Where did they take Stephen after he was arrested?
   1. The Sanhedrin
6. How did Stephen’s face look to the Jewish men who crowded around him in the Sanhedrin?
   1. Like the face of an angel
7. What is significant about the speech that Stephen made in Acts chapter 7?
   1. It is the longest single speech in the book of Acts and the turning point in the history of the Church.
8. What did Stephen want the Jews to understand about Jesus?
   1. That He is the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah)
9. What did Stephen call the Jews?
   1. “Betrayers and murderers”
10. What did Stephen say as he looked upward?
    1. That he could actually see Jesus standing at the right hand of God
11. What did the crowd do after they heard these words from Stephen?
    1. They stopped up their ears, grabbed him, dragged him outside of the city gates, and stoned him to death.
12. Who was the man standing nearby holding the coats of the angry mob that killed Stephen?
    1. Saul of Tarsus

Additional Notes / Activities Performed & Curriculum Feed Back

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