

Subject	Lessons from Acts Series	4407
		Acts 7
Title	7 Lessons from Acts 7	
Proposition	To study Acts 7.	
Objective	To consider seven lessons which Acts 7 helps me to consider and appreciate and apply in my own life.	

## 7 Lessons from Acts 7

### Introduction:

1. Acts 7 is the **LONGEST** chapter in Acts with **60 verses**.
2. It contains the longest record of a sermon available to us.
3. It also has many important lessons for you and me to consider and allow to benefit others by living them out in our own lives for Jesus Christ.
4. How amazing is the prospect of learning from God's word ways to please Him by the things we do and say!

### DISCUSSION: Acts 7 Helps me in that it—

#### I. Describes a **GREAT** servant of the Lord by the name of Stephen.

*SEVEN distinguishing qualities Luke ascribes to Stephen...*

1. **Being full of faith.** (6.5; 6.8).
  - 1) There is a bit of a textual problem here at verse 8.
  - 2) The ASV has **GRACE AND POWER**—in verse 8.
    - 1- If grace is correct, it could have reference to the **PERSUASIVENESS** and **SPIRITUAL POWER** of the preaching of Stephen
    - 2- Notice the same word being used by the people in the **NAZARETH SYNAGOGUE** to describe Jesus' preaching— Luke 4:22 **And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?**
  - 3) Since Romans 10.17 teaches us that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, we can know what it takes to develop this very same quality today!
2. **Being full of POWER** (6.8).
3. **Being, in appearance, like an angel** (Acts 6.15).
  - 1) What they saw was **NOT AN ANGEL**, but there was something about his face that reminded them of an angel.
  - 2) **McGarvey puts it this way:** *Emotions so lofty spread a glow upon his countenance which attracted the attention of the whole audience. There is no need to suppose anything supernatural in his appearance, such as a halo of light enveloping his countenance; for a countenance naturally fine and expressive, when lit up by the emotions so intense and heavenly as those which must then have swelled the breast of Stephen, would be sufficient to suggest such a comparison.*
4. **Being full of wisdom** (6.3, 10).
5. **Being full of courage** (7.51-56).

6. **Being full of Scripture (Acts 7).**
7. **Being full of LOVE for his enemies— Acts 7:60** And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 7 Helps me in that it—

## II. Demonstrates the GREAT danger of SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS (Chapter).

*SUMMARIZED: Stephen's sermon FOCUSES IN ON the Spiritual Blindness of many 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews. Which is also such a MAJOR PROBLEM in any age.*

**Wayne Jackson:** Of all the peoples of the ancient world, only the Hebrews had a sense of divine destiny; only they lived in contemplation of the fulfillment of a plan that was to find fruition in Christ. It is one of the monumental tragedies of history that the very Hebrew generation that witnessed the arrival of the Messiah, in large measure rejected Him. Stephen's speech, the longest recorded in Acts, focuses upon the spiritual blindness of many first-century Jews.

1. **How can we say that the Jews were spiritually BLIND?**
  - 1) **They were given the OT Scriptures.**
  - 2) **Those Scriptures were filled with 333+ prophecies of the coming Messiah.**
  - 3) **Through the words of Malachi, the prophet, God foretold the coming of the messenger He would send to prepare the way for the Messiah—Malachi 3:1** Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.
  - 4) **John came and announced that the Messiah had come: John 1:29** The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.
  - 5) **Jesus performed many miracles: John 20:30-31** And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: (31) But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.
  - 6) **Jesus warned these very Jews—Matthew 23:37-39** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (38) Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (39) For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
  - 7) **Stephen preached a great sermon reminding them of these things (Acts 7).**
  - 8) **Paul continually went from city to city, stopping FIRST in their synagogues, but had to come to the conclusion that the prophecy of Isaiah 6 applied to them—FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE IS WAXED GROSS AND THEIR EARS ARE DULL OF HEARING (Acts 28.27).**
2. **Those Jews simply refused to acknowledge the obvious truth of Stephen's sermon.**

- 1) **The only result that can come from such spiritual blindness is eternal separation from God.**
- 2) **It is an extremely serious matter not to heed the warnings of Scripture.**
- 3) **To continue rejecting the gospel is the most foolish thing anyone could ever do.**
- 4) **The Jews learned that THE TEMPLE, THE TEMPLE, THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD was not going to save them from spiritual blindness in A.D. 70.**
  - 1- **Jeremiah had warned them against having the false confidence that since the temple was in Jerusalem, all was well.**
  - 2- **Jeremiah 7:4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.**
3. **We ALL need to learn from the SAD reaction to Stephen's sermon how very destructive it is to be SPIRITUALLY BLIND.**
4. **We have the truth and need to develop strong motivation to help others be able to SEE their rebellion against God's truth!**

Acts 7 Helps me in that it—

### III. Shows me that Stephen's God was a GOD OF GLORY (7.2).

Acts 7:2 **And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,**

1. **Is that the way you see God?**
2. **In your prayers, do you ever address God as THE GOD OF GLORY?**
3. **Stephen teaches us something about theology—the study of God.**
4. **Stephen was a FAITHFUL preacher and he preached about God.**
5. **You and I need to be students of THEOLOGY—we need to know more about God. Besides being the GOD OF GLORY, He is.**
  - 1) **The God of truth—Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.**
  - 2) **The God of all grace—1 Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.**
  - 3) **The God of peace—Philippians 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.**
  - 4) **The God of love—2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.**
  - 5) **The God of all comfort—2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;**

- 6) **The God of patience—Romans 15:5** Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:
- 7) **The God of hope—Romans 15:13** Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.
- 8) **A God of judgment—Isaiah 30:18** And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

6. What an AMAZING God we worship and serve today—How very blessed we are by Him!

Acts 7 Helps me in that it—

**IV. Teaches me something about ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS of the Bible (7.5, 14).**

**Acts 7:6** And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

**DRL Note:** We must always use the word ALLEGED when we speak about contradictions of the Bible. There is no contradiction simply because someone alleges one. We must study and gather all of the facts. Having done that, if there is a way to harmonize the Bible text that is sufficient. That is ALL we need to do.

1. **In verse 6, we have a contradiction alleged between the number 400 and the number 430 found in Exodus 12.40-41.**
  - 1) Many scholars simply say that Stephen was rounding off the number.
  - 2) Also, Moses himself gives both 400 (Gen 15.13), AND 430 (Exodus 12.40-41).
  - 3) The main problem is that it seems to conflict with Paul's statement in Galatians 3.17 that from the PROMISE to the giving of the law was 430 years. *Two different solutions have been proposed.*
    - 1- It is possible that the four centuries took up the period from the CALL of Abraham, or the birth of Isaac to the exodus, during which time Abram was actually a stranger and pilgrim in the land (Heb 11.13).
    - 2- It may be that the 430 year era dates from the FINAL EXPRESSION of the promise to Jacob (Gen 46.2-4).

**Acts 7:14** Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

1. Was it 75 or 70 of Jacob's family that went down into Egypt?
2. Stephen says 75 migrated from Canaan to Egypt.
  - 1) The OT record suggests that 70 were in that caravan.
  - 2) Do we have a contradiction?
    - 1- I won't take the time to give all of the methods of harmonizing the accounts.
    - 2- Vardaman offers this explanation...

*The Hebrew text, which has been followed in our English translations, states that 70 people went with him. (cf., Ex 1.5). The Dead Sea Scrolls now help to explain this difference in numbers. Old Hebrew manuscripts, dating 200 years before Jesus' time, recently found at Qumran, likewise read SEVENTY-FIVE; just as the LXX had it. Thus, Stephen was not in error (nor Luke, the author of Acts), as some have supposed. –Vardaman, 86.*

3. **So, do either of these alleged contradictions stand?**
4. **I think not!**
5. **The Bible was written by inspiration of God and will not be found to contain any contradictions within the sacred text!**

Acts 7 Helps me in that it—

#### **V. Indicates an HONORING of Stephen by the Lord (7.55).**

**Acts 7:55** But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

1. **This is an amazing statement!**
2. **F.F. Bruce points out that...**
  - 1) **Not many years earlier, Jesus had stood before the same court—charged with almost the same offenses as Stephen.**
  - 2) **He could NOT say NO to the question about being the Messiah.**
  - 3) **But, He also added—Mark 14:62 ...and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.**
  - 4) **NOW, Stephen is in the same place and making the SAME CLAIM on Jesus' behalf as Jesus had earlier made for Himself.**
  - 5) **He was claiming that what Jesus had acknowledged on that occasion was ABSOLUTE truth.**
2. **But we have to notice that the verb SITTING is now found to be STANDING.**
  - 1) **What is the significance of STANDING in the place of SITTING?**
  - 2) **Many commentators believe that Jesus is here pictured as RISING UP from the throne of God to greet this magnificent defender of the truth.**

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#### **VI. Shows the reaction of worldly people when truth hurts—STOPPED THEIR EARS (7.57).**

**Acts 7:57** Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

1. **Those who STOP UP THEIR EARS to the truth have absolutely NO HOPE for eternity!**
  - 1) **In stopping up their ears, they were showing how much they despised the truth that was being presented.**
  - 2) **And yet—John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**
2. **The simple fact is that whenever we find people in our day who have done this—STOPPED UP THEIR EARS, there is not much that we can do except...**

- 1) Keep on living the truth before them.
- 2) Pray to God that something might cause them to get serious about eternity.
- 3) Always be ready to give them an answer (1 Peter 3.15).
- 4) Jesus had something to say about this—Matthew 7:6 **Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.**
  - 1- The gospel is for all and we should make efforts to preach it to all.
  - 2- However, when the Jews were HARDENED and spoke evil of that way before the multitude, the apostles left preaching to them (Acts 19.9).

Acts 7 Helps me in that it—

**VII. Provides context to understand a statement Jesus made to Saul (8.1 + 9.5).**

**Acts 8:1** And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

**Acts 9:5** And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

1. What could Jesus have meant by his statement to Saul: **IT IS HARD FOR THEE TO KICK AGAINST THE PRICKS?**
2. **TO KICK AGAINST THE PRICKS...**
  - 1) It is a proverbial saying, taken either from oxen or slaves.
  - 2) Those driving oxen would use GOADS to prick the oxen on to their work of pulling.
  - 3) The oxen would KICK AGAINST, or OPPOSE themselves to those goads.
  - 4) When they did this—they did not hurt the pricks, only themselves.
  - 5) Is that what Saul of Tarsus had been doing in persecuting the church?
3. Maybe Jesus was telling Saul that He recognized Saul's guilty conscience for being a part of what took place with Stephen.
  - 1) Saul must have been bothered in his own mind by being a participant in opposing the powerful preacher, Stephen.
  - 2) Saul must have been struggling to justify what he had done in his own mind, even though we know he did what he did in all good conscience (Acts 23.1).
  - 3) Jesus gives Saul something to think about as he goes on into Damascus to await a message of what to do from Ananias, whom Jesus would send to him.

**Conclusion:**

1. What an abundant provision of faith-strengthening lessons God has provided us through his servant Luke.
2. You and I are much the richer for having opportunity to study from the pages of our history book!