

The Case Against Stephen

1. Stephen Is Proclaiming that Jesus Is the Christ.
2. Christ's Opponent's Use the Same Playbook.
3. The Glory of Christ Shines Through His People.

Scripture records the resistance that Stephen (representing this new office of Deacons) encounters from those opposed to Christ. It seems crazy that anyone would oppose caring for widows, but they hate Christ and all for which He stands. Their strategy is predictable. They distort the truth and stir up dissension just like the Father of Lies always does. The way of Life is always opposed by the forces of death. At least for the moment. Stephen's radiance points us to the coming glory when we will be with our Savior King face-to-face. Let us so trust in the coming of that Day that we are willing to live to His glory today and every day until then.

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Galatians 3:7 – 9

“Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Matthew 5: 17 – 20

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Taken from *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*.

Question #27: How does Christ execute the office of a king?

Answer: Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

Acts—Series Overview

The Expansion of the Gospel Witness with Power

Acts records God’s faithful accomplishment of all that He promised in taking the gospel to the nations. It lays the groundwork for all that will take place as His Church awaits His return. Just as Jesus lived and spoke as the Father commanded, we now are called to do in the power of His Holy Spirit. While Jesus did this perfectly, we will strive imperfectly, constantly in need of the Holy Spirit’s direction, power, and correction. Nevertheless, our faithful God will work even through our failing efforts and His gospel witness through us will prevail and penetrate every nation, tribe, & territory. For the praise of our King!

Taking Gathered Worship Home

You have been charged with the sedition of charity! That sounds like an outrageous charge, but in the Soviet Union charity was illegal. Why? Because to admit others needed help was seen as a criticism of the state. Here Stephen is charged too for similar acts of kindness. But it's not his actions that're offensive, but rather for whom he does them.

Please use the devotional material below each day this week to praise Christ. Ask Jesus to teach us His ways that we may walk in them to accomplish His purposes.

Sunday Morning

READ Acts 6:8-15; Matthew 5:17-20; Galatians 4:1-7. DISCUSS, What does it mean that Jesus is the Christ? Why does that bother so many of the Jews? How does Christ fulfill all the law and the prophets? How are you (we) serving Christ? PRAY for God to enable us to serve Him and one another well. Ask God to give our deacons and elders wisdom and strength.

Sunday Evening

In lieu of the evening worship service tonight, please set apart some time to pray for God to bring repentance and renewal to us at FCCW and throughout His Church.

Monday

READ Acts 6:8-15; Exodus 15:1-27. DISCUSS, How did those opposed to Stephen grumble against him? How is this similar to the grumbling against Moses? PRAY, "Lord Jesus, thank You for the servant leaders You have provided us in the elders and deacons. Teach us to work together to serve You faithfully as our King."

Tuesday

READ Acts 6:8-15; Psalm 47:1-9. DISCUSS, How is Jesus our only rightful King? PRAISE Him as Lord and King. PRAY, "Jesus, You are the King of All, the promised Messiah, Savior of the World. Enable us to serve You as we should and to give You faithful service as our Lord and King."

Wednesday

READ Acts 6:8-15; Genesis 3:1-7; John 8:39-47. DISCUSS, Why do those opposed to Christ lie? How have you personally encountered those lies? Why is the truth so critical? PRAY, "Lord, You have set us free with the truth. Help us to trust You in speaking the truth in love."

Thursday

READ Acts 6:8-15; Matthew 4:17; Galatians 3:7-9. DISCUSS, What does it mean for Christ's Kingdom to have come? What are you repenting of today? PRAY, "Lord, teach us to trust You and obey You faithfully as our rightful King."

Friday

READ Acts 6:8-15; Matthew 5:17-20; Galatians 4:1-7. How has God been teaching you from these passages this week? REJOICE if Christ has counted you as part of His own! PRAY for renewal in the Church and revival in our land.

Saturday

PREPARE today for the worship service tomorrow.

READ Acts 7:1-60; Genesis 17:1-27. Invite others to watch the *live-stream service* with you tomorrow. Pray for Christ to grant us obedience.

Galatians 4: 1 – 7

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But **when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son**, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.