

ACTS: PRACTICING CHRISTIANITY

THE BIRTH, DEVELOPMENT & EXPANSION OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

THREE: GROWING PAINS

SECTION LEAD-IN: The good news about “growing pains” is that you have to be growing to have them! And this newborn church of Christ in Jerusalem was definitely growing by leaps and bounds. But Satan wastes little time going after the Lord’s church, hitting it from all sides. But Jesus was with His people and He gave them all the spiritual resources they needed to face and overcome all these challenges. But the best part is that, in spite of all the “growing pains,” the church kept on growing!

SECTION BREAKDOWN: (See INTRODUCTION-F)

III. THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM (3-7) A.D. 30-35?

- A. (3:1-8) Another amazing SIGN (miracle)!
- B. (3:9-11) Another astonished CROWD!
- C. (3:12-26) Another inspired SERMON!
- D. (4:1-22) Peter and John arrested and THREATENED
- E. (4:23-31) The church's prayer for CONTINUED boldness
- F. (4:32-37) The church's caring and SHARING
- G. (5:1-11) Two “BAD APPLES” in the church
- H. (5:12-16) More ministry, more growth
- I. (5:17-42) The 12 arrested, BEATEN and released
- J. (6:1-7) INTERNAL conflict and resolution
- K. (6:8-15) Stephen's brief ministry ends in his arrest
- L. (7:1-53) Stephen's speech: Not a defense, but an INDICTMENT!
- M. (7:54-60) First BLOOD: Stephen is martyred by the high council!

SUPPLEMENT A: Conflict Resolution in the Early Church (Acts 3-8)

The CONFLICT/CHALLENGE

1. Material LACK
(Acts 2.44-45; 4.32-37)
2. PUSH-BACK/pressure
(Acts 4.1-22; 5.17-42)
3. GREED, deceit
(Acts 5.1-11)
4. NEGLIGENCE, complaints
(Acts 6.1-11)
5. All-out PERSECUTION
(Acts 7.54-8.4)

The RESPONSE/RESOLUTION

1. COMMUNICATION, CARING, SHARING!
2. PRAYER & CONTINUED BOLDNESS!
3. DISCIPLINE → FEAR → CONTINUED GROWTH!
4. ASSEMBLY, PLAN, RECRUIT, APPOINT,
PROBLEM SOLVED, CONTINUED GROWTH
5. FLED, BUT TOOK THE GOSPEL WITH THEM,
AND SHARED IT WHEREVER THEY WENT!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What challenges do 21st Century believers face out in the world?

How should we meet these challenges?

2. What challenges do 21st Century believers face in the home?

How should we meet these challenges?

3. What challenges do 21st Century believers face within the church?

How should we meet these challenges?

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SUPPLEMENT "B" – STEPHEN'S BRIEF MINISTRY

SECTION BREAKDOWN: (See K, L, M)

IV. THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM (3-7) A.D. 30-35?

- N. (3:1-8) Another amazing **SIGN** (miracle)!
 - O. (3:9-11) Another astonished **CROWD**!
 - P. (3:12-26) Another inspired **SERMON**!
 - Q. (4:1-22) Peter and John arrested and **THREATENED**
 - R. (4:23-31) The church's prayer for **CONTINUED** boldness
 - S. (4:32-37) The church's caring and **SHARING**
 - T. (5:1-11) Two "**BAD APPLES**" in the church
 - U. (5:12-16) More ministry, more growth
 - V. (5:17-42) The 12 arrested, **BEATEN** and released
 - W. (6:1-7) **INTERNAL** conflict and resolution
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- X. (6:8-15) Stephen's brief ministry ends in his arrest
 - 1) Before the laying on of the apostles' hands, Stephen was full of **FAITH** and the **HOLY SPIRIT**¹. Afterward, he was also full of **GRACE**² and **POWER**!³
 - 2) According to vv 9-10, what two things did Stephen's ministry consist of? **WORKING MIRACLES** and **TEACHING** with great **WISDOM**
 - 3) What did his opponents do? Those of synagogue of Freedmen, some North Africans and some from Turkey, tried to debate him, but no luck! So, as they did with Jesus, they set up lying witnesses, stirred up the people, elders and scribes, who seized him and took him to the Sanhedrin.
- Y. (7:1-53) Stephen's speech: Not a defense, but an **ENDICTMENT**!
 - 1) How does Stephen initially address the members of the Sanhedrin? **AS BROTHERS & FATHERS**
 - 2) His synopsis of Israel's history begins with the **GOD** of **GLORY** and ends with the **RIGHTEOUS ONE (JESUS CHRIST!)**

¹ Acts 6:5 and v3

² Ephesians 3:1-3,7-8; 4:7-12; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11

³ Acts 8:4-23

- 3) *What important ancestors are referenced in Stephen's discourse (Write them in order): ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, 12 PATRIARCHS, JOSEPH, (PHARAOH), MOSES (PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER), AARON, JOSHUA, DAVID, SOLOMON, PROPHETS, THE RIGHTEOUS ONE!*
- 4) *What main events in Israel's history does Stephen reference? (7:2-50) Call of Abram, promises, covenant of circumcision, Joseph sold into Egypt, ascends to throne, Jacob and family to Egypt, people multiply greatly, new pharaoh kills males, Moses adopted by pharaoh's daughter, brought up, educated in Egypt, at age 40: he visits his fellow Hebrews, killed an Egyptian presuming to be their "savior," fled to Midian, had two sons; at age 80: burning bush, meets Yahweh God, sent to Egypt to deliver Israelites! The Exodus, in the Wilderness (40 more years!), the prophecy of The Prophet (Deut 18:15-19), the Law ("living oracles!"), Golden calf (turned to Egypt in their hearts!), Amos 5:25-27 prophecy, the Wilderness Tabernacle, brought in at the conquest under Joshua, until David wanted to make a house for it; Solomon built that house (even though ... Isa 66:1-2), The historical narrative ends abruptly and the indictment begins ...*
- 5) *What specific "charges" does Stephen makes against the Jewish high council? (7:51-53) Stiff-necked (stubborn, unyielding), uncircumcised in heart (worldly, not holy and set apart), being like their unfaithful fathers, they killed the prophets, you killed the subject of their prophesies, the Messiah! They received and revered the Law, but didn't keep it!*

Z. (7:54-60) First BLOOD: Stephen is martyred by the high council!

- 1) *What were their hostile acts against Stephen?⁴They were enraged, ground their teeth at him, cried out loudly, stopped their ears, rushed at him, cast him out of the city, stoned him (funny, they said to Pilate (Jn 18:30-32) they didn't have authority to execute, but they sure did it this time, didn't they?)*
- 2) *How did Stephen respond to their hostilities?⁵Like an angel! He saw heaven and told them! He committed his spirit to Jesus! (Lk 23:46). He forgave them, as Jesus did (Lk 23:43)! Those were his last words!*
- 3) *How does the world today show its hostility to Christ and to His followers?*

⁴ Acts 22:19-20

⁵ Luke 23:34; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9; 2 Tim 3:12; Mat 24:9; John 15:18-20