

To the Gentiles!

Book of Acts – Week 2



The Good News Spreads to Judea and to Samaria

Where was the focus of the disciple's preaching before Stephen?

Acts 2:46, 3:1, 4:1, 5:42

The story of Stephen begins the journey outwards from the temple to the rest of the world.

The Jewish culture of this time had as its focus four main items;

1. The Temple
2. The Law
3. The holy Land with its centre in the Temple at Jerusalem
4. The King

Behind these 4 foci was the belief that these things represented a correct belief in God.

Stephen Tells His Story – 7:2-53

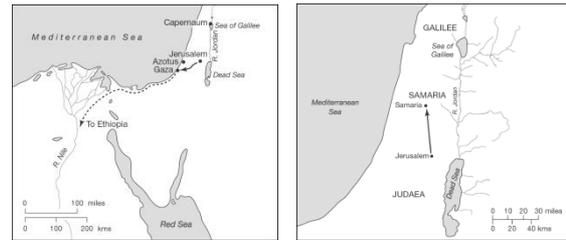
Here are the points Stephen bring out in his story, among the multitude of ones he could have told he chose these;

- It begins with God – The term 'God of Glory' is found only one other place in scripture, Psalm 29:3. Stephen is avoiding add to the charge of blasphemy.
- Israel's story begins with Abraham. Notice Stephen's emphasis
- God's covenant with Abraham
- Abraham is buried in the land he purchased
- The Exodus story is introduced
- The exodus is focused on Moses and 3 particular points;
 - Moses is trained up by God but in an unexpected way
 - Moses became the rejected saviour
 - It was to Moses that God revealed his glory
- With Moses heaven and earth touched or came together
- Instead of all the great 'winning' moments of the exodus story Stephen reminds his listeners of the idol worship that the Israelites soon fell into. They celebrated things they made with their own hands. This is an allegiance question.
- Even the tabernacle and the temple were built with human hands and of course God does not dwell in them.

The Story Spreads

Acts 8:5, 14

Acts 8:27-28



Saul Meets Jesus

Acts 9:1-9

Saul's encounter with the risen Jesus was what changed his life. He knew all the theology of the OT but it was radically changed when he met the risen Jesus. Through this encounter the whole world changed, which is perhaps why Luke includes this part of the story 3 times in the book. (9, 22, 26)

This encounter showed him that the God he had been right to serve, right to study, right to seek in prayer, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had done what he always said he would, but done it in a shocking, scandalous, horrifying way. The God who had always promised to come and rescue his people had done so in person. *In the person of Jesus.*¹

¹ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 141.