

# POWER FOR LIVING

— Acts of the Apostles —

Living All In \*4/8

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## BIG IDEA

Jesus's witnesses experienced him as the Messiah who came to replace God's presence in the temple and fulfill his demands in the law.

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Stephen's ministry provoked fierce **hostility**.

**Acts 6:13–15 (NLT)** 13 The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking **against** the **holy Temple** and **against** the **law of Moses**. 14 We have heard him say that this **Jesus of Nazareth** will **destroy the Temple** and **change the customs** Moses handed down to us." 15 At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

## *How does Stephen defend against the religious accusations?*

He confronts them for getting stuck on their sacred **leader** & their sacred **building**.

**Acts 7:37 (NLT)** 37 "Moses himself told the people of Israel, 'God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people.'

- Jesus is our true & better **Moses** who leads us out of death by fulfilling God's demands in our place.
  - **Matthew 5:17 (NLT)** "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to **accomplish their purpose**."

**Acts 7:48 (NLT)** 48 However, the Most High **doesn't live** in **temples** made by human hands.

- Jesus is our true & better **temple** who's presence among his church replaces God's presence in a building.

- **John 2:21 (NLT)** But when Jesus said “this temple,” he meant his own body.

He **judges** harshly both religious traditionalists who resist the Holy Spirit by minimizing Jesus.

**Acts 7:51-53 (NLT)** “You **stubborn** people! You are **heathen** at heart and **deaf** to the truth. Must you forever **resist** the Holy Spirit? That’s what your ancestors did, and **so do you!** 52 Name one prophet your ancestors didn’t **persecute!** They even **killed** the ones who predicted the coming of the **Righteous One—the Messiah** whom you **betrayed** and **murdered**. 53 You **deliberately disobeyed** God’s law, even though you received it from the hands of angels.”

- Spirit-filled believers accept that Jesus the Messiah had come to **replace** the temple & **fulfill** the law, both of which drew & directed God’s people to him.

“Anything & everything that God is doing is intended to lead you to Jesus.”

“Jesus is the real Rock of Moses, the real Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He’s the true temple, the true prophet, the true priest, the true king, the true sacrifice, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread.” ~ **Timothy Keller**

In his death as a disciple, Stephen...

- will be **with** Jesus.

**Acts 7:55-56 (NLT)** 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and **saw** the **glory of God**, and he **saw Jesus** standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. 56 And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the **Son of Man** standing in the **place of honor** at God’s right hand!”

- was **like** Jesus.

**Acts 7:59 (NLT)** 59 As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, **receive my spirit.**”

- Then **Jesus** shouted, “Father, I **entrust my spirit** into your hands!” And with those words he breathed his last. **Luke 23:46 (NLT)**

**Acts 7:60 (NLT)** 60 He fell to his knees, shouting, “Lord, **don’t charge them** with this sin!” And with that, he died.

- **Jesus** said, “Father, **forgive them**, for they don’t know what they are doing.” **Luke 23:34 (NLT)**

## WHAT NOW?

1. Don't miss or minimize Jesus by protecting your sacred leaders or buildings.
2. Expect hostile resistance from religious political leaders who enforce their rules & protocols to protect their power.
3. Overcome the fear of death by believing that persecution & death for Jesus can only end this life — but it begins our eternal life with Jesus.
4. Keep refocusing yourself on following Jesus rather than following more religious rules.

## CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever come across powerful religious people who seemed willing to “fight to the death” over following their sacred rules & protecting their sacred buildings?
2. What part of the persecution & martyrdom of Stephen struck you most?
3. Which of these **WHAT NOW's** might you need the most?
  - a. *Overcome the fear of death by believing that persecution & death for Jesus can only end this life — but it begins our eternal life with Jesus.*
  - b. *Keep refocusing yourself on following Jesus rather than following more religious rules.*