

## The Acts of the Holy Spirit

### Acts 7:54-8:24

Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin, the longest speech in Acts, radically re-interprets Israel's history in light of the rejected-and-resurrected Jesus and ultimately calls the Jerusalem Temple a place "made with hands," an Old Testament euphemism for a pagan shrine. The people present take him in a rush and attack him without a proper trial. What does Stephen say in the following verses, and what Biblical echoes would a first-century Christian have heard in the three sayings of Stephen?

Acts 8:1-4 recount what happened in the wake of Stephen's murder. Compared to the big-picture summaries between episodes up to this point, what is the tone of this one, and how does Saul of Damascus make his first appearance in Acts?

Philip, probably the deacon/minister (Acts 6:5) rather than the apostle (who would still have been in Jerusalem), gets his own summary in 8:5-8. He comes into contact with the man traditionally called Simon Magus in Acts 8:9-13. What is most significant about Simon's early story, and how is his career an interesting foil to Philip's? What special meeting of Jerusalem and Samaria happens in Acts 8:14-17, and why is this "border crossing" so important?

Note what "powers" did not impress Simon Magus and which one ultimately spurs him to offer money in exchange for the powers. How does the "other Simon" react to this, and how does Simon in turn respond to Peter? How does Simon Magus's last appearance in the book end, and how does the ending match up with old Church traditions that Magus went on to become a false teacher?