

# Creating a Scene

(Series: Reimagining Church; Message Seventeen)

Acts 6:8-7:60

## A. Stephen was the first martyr in the Church

1. He was an ordinary person with an extraordinary faith
2. His spirit-empowered faith gave him an extraordinary vision

## B. The early church began to distinguish themselves from their Jewish heritage

### FIRST SCENE

#### A. Scene One begins in a Courtroom; Stephen is on trial before the Sanhedrin

1. He was seized and charged with blaspheming God
2. The chief prosecutor initiates the interrogation: “*Are these charge’s true?*”

#### B. How would you answer?

### SECOND SCENE

#### A. Scene Two is Stephen’s Speech

1. Stephen underscores the historic rebelliousness of the Jews
2. Stephen concludes, “*You’re no better than your forefathers*” (cf. 7:51-52)

#### B. Listen to the charges and Stephen’s responses...

1. Charge One: “*You have blasphemed against the Torah*” (6:14)
  - a. Answer: “*Israel sins when she declares Torah is God’s only and final Word*”
  - b. Answer: “*Embracing Jesus is actually embracing the Mosaic tradition*”
2. Charge Two: “*You have spoken blaspheme against the Temple*”
  - a. Answer: “*God ordered a ‘tent of witness (7:44), but not the Temple*”
  - b. Answer: “*If you stop with Moses (Torah) you should stop with the Tent of Witness*”

“*The most high does not dwell in houses made with hands*” (Isaiah 66:1-2)

“*When they heard this they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him*” (Acts 7:54)

### SCENE THREE

#### A. This would be a tragedy except for one phrase: “*I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*”

1. Everywhere else in Scripture Jesus is seated at the right hand of God

#### 2. When Jesus taught, he sat

- a. But now the teaching is over; Stephen’s recital is complete
- b. And Jesus stands!

#### B. When your recital (life) is over, will Jesus be standing?

### SCENE FOUR: THE EPITAPH

#### A. At some point, Stephen had made two courageous decisions

1. His first decision was to become a disciple of Jesus Christ

*Have you made that decision yet?*

2. His second decision was to allow God to use him any way God wanted

*Have you made that decision yet?*

#### B. It cost Stephen his life. But then, he knew it wasn’t his life

1. God had given it to him. He had given it back to God
2. The call to Jesus is the call to die for him - if necessary
  - a. It’s a commitment to take up our cross and follow him (Luke 9:23)
  - b. Jesus: “*If you’re not willing to take up your cross, you can’t be my disciple*”
  - c. If we’re willing to die for him, we should be willing to live for him
3. Heroic faith comes one day at a time, one decision at a time, one step toward Jesus at a time - until it is time
  - a. Heroes don’t set out to be heroes
  - b. Heroes become heroes when God calls and they're ready to respond!