

**Acts 7:1 ¶ Then said the high priest, Are these things so?**

This is another unfortunate chapter break. The high priest is asking Stephen if the charges against him (end of previous chapter) are true. Had he blasphemed both Moses and God? Was he declaring that Jesus would destroy the temple and presume to change the law of Moses?

Focht notes that this is about 14 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

**Acts 7:2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,**

**Acts 7:3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.**

Stephen doesn't hesitate; he takes full advantage of the opportunity to speak the truth by a summation of Jewish history culminating in their murder of Jesus, their Messiah. He will show that the blessings of God are not limited to location nor is His presence.

Deffinbaugh makes an interesting observation: "The Abrahamic covenant is Stephen's focus because it is a covenant of grace that is to extend to all peoples.

Stephen calls for his audience to pay attention so as to understand what he wants to tell them. He begins with God calling Abraham out of Mesopotamia. "Before he dwelt in Charran" (or Haran) to his first being called out of Ur of the Chaldees. The record in Genesis reflects that the Lord had already talked to Abram before he left Haran, and that fact is confirmed in a later chapter in Genesis.

*Genesis 11:31–12:1 "And Terah took Abram his son...they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there....Now **the LORD had said** unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee...."*

*Genesis 15:7 "And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it."*

God makes a point of the fact that He will personally lead Abram to the land of promise.

**Acts 7:4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.**

**Acts 7:5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.**

As seen in the quote from Genesis above, it is stated that Terah initiated the departure of the family from Ur to go into Canaan; however, once they arrived in

Haran, a city in northern Mesopotamia, they established a new home base. It seems to imply that Terah was aware of God's call on Abraham since he did not venture to take the family on into "this land, wherein ye now dwell," Israel. Stephen declares that Abram did not leave Haran until after the death of his father at the age of 205.

*Genesis 11:26 & 32 "And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran....And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."*

Since we know that Abram was 75 years old when he left for the Promised Land...

*Genesis 12:4 "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."*

...I agree with Adam Clarke that Abram must have been born when Terah was 130 years old. He states: "Haran was certainly the eldest son of Terah, and he appears to have been born when Terah was about seventy years of age, and his birth was followed in successive periods with those of Nahor his second, and Abram his youngest son. Many have been greatly puzzled with the account here, supposing because Abram is mentioned first, that therefore he was the eldest son of Terah: but he is only put first by way of dignity."

After the death of his father, Abram journeyed on to the land of promise, but God did not allow him to take possession of it. God promised Abram that his descendants would be the ones to establish it as their homeland. At the time of this promise, Abram was childless. He could only accept God's terms in faith. Maybe he had doubts to begin with, but we know that before the covenant between God and Abram was formalized, he no longer doubted.

*Genesis 15:3-6 "And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness"*

Point is made that Abram would not be established as heir to the land during his lifetime. According to Webster, an inheritance is obtained from "an ancestor or other person; a heritage; a possession which passes by descent." God is sovereign over His creation, and He can give any portion of it to whomsoever He chooses. In fact, Moses tells us that God is the one who apportioned the land among the nations.

*Deuteronomy 32:8 "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."*

Abram did, however, purchase some land as a family burial plot after Sarah died.

*Genesis 23:16–19 “...Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.”*

**Acts 7:6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.**

**Acts 7:7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.**

It is still amazing to me how Abraham’s faith grew to be so strong in light of the fact that God told him that he would not live to see the promise fulfilled. He, in fact, told Abraham that his descendants would actually serve as slaves to another nation. After 400 years God promised to judge the nation that enslaved them and bring Abraham’s descendants to the Promised Land, the land of Israel.

**Acts 7:8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.**

**Acts 7:9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,**

**Acts 7:10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.**

Stephen goes on to relate that God established circumcision as a sign of the covenant between Him and Abraham and his descendants. Every Jewish boy is circumcised on the eighth day of life according to God’s instruction.

*Genesis 17:11–12 “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.”*

Point is made that the nation was descended from Abraham through Isaac through Jacob and his twelve sons, the twelve patriarchs or fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. The older brothers became envious of Jacob’s obvious preferential treatment of Joseph, the son of his beloved Rachel. So, when the opportunity presented itself, they sold him to some slave merchants who took him to Egypt and sold him into service there. God, however, was with Joseph and over time and through some testing, He gave him favor in the sight of Pharaoh who made him the second in command in Egypt.

I liked Guzik's comment on verse 9: "Stephen mentioned the story of Joseph because he is a picture of Jesus, in that the sons of Israel rejected Joseph, who later became a savior to them (and the *only possible* savior).

**Acts 7:11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.**

**Acts 7:12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.**

**Acts 7:13 And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.**

Joseph was actually promoted to his position for interpreting a dream in which God had revealed to Pharaoh a coming 7-year famine and for making a wise proposal as to how to prepare for that time.

*Genesis 41:38–40 "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."*

During the famine Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to get food for the family. Eventually, that led to reconciliation between the brothers. Pharaoh soon learned about Joseph's family. This resulted in an invitation for him to bring his entire family to Egypt.

*Genesis 45:16–18 "And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land."*

Pulley makes an interesting observation on verse 13: "Just as Joseph was recognized by his brethren the second time saw him, so too will Jesus be recognized by His brethren at His second coming. Rejected originally—accepted the second time.

**Acts 7:14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.**

**Acts 7:15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,**

**Acts 7:16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father* of Sychem.**

Joseph urged his brothers to go and convince his father that he was still alive, and he wanted him to bring the whole family to Egypt to live. Stephen declares that the family totaled 75 souls, while Genesis states the number as 70. I think

Jacob eagerly headed to Egypt with the family—not only because it would solve their material needs through the famine, but mainly because he wanted to experience his reunion with Joseph.

All the founding patriarchs of the family of Israel died while in Egypt. Again, we confront another discrepancy. It sounds as if Stephen is saying that Jacob, as well as his twelve sons, was buried at Shechem in a tomb that Abraham bought from the sons of Hamor. We know from the record of Moses in Genesis that Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah (Genesis 49). Joshua tells us that the tomb at Shechem was where Joseph was buried; he also states that it was an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

I've looked at several reasonable explanations of these insignificant discrepancies; and I'm sure that if we still care to know, they will be resolved once we get to heaven.

**Acts 7:17 ¶ But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,  
Acts 7:18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.  
Acts 7:19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.**

“the time of the promise” = the time that God had promised Abraham that his people would be delivered from bondage

God allowed the family of Israelites to grow into a great multitude. When a king came to power in Egypt that did not know Joseph, he began to plot against the growth of the people. He ordered that the baby boys be killed at birth.

Note: Scripture reveals that the nation had grown to a population of over 600,000 by the time they left Egypt.

*Exodus 12:37 “And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.”*

**Acts 7:20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:  
Acts 7:21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.  
Acts 7:22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.**

Moses was born during the time of this edict of death for the baby boys. He was hidden by his family for three months and then entrusted to God's protection when his parents could hide him no longer and placed him in the river in a basket. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and decided to adopt him as her own son. He was instructed to the highest level of the Egyptian educational

system and “became both a powerful speaker and a man of action.” (CJB)

“was exceeding fair” – Several translations include the notation that he was “beautiful in God’s sight.” Hebrews 11:23 seems to imply that his parents knew that Moses had a special place in the plan of God for his people; we aren’t told how they knew that.

*Hebrews 11:23 “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”*

**Acts 7:23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.**

**Acts 7:24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:**

**Acts 7:25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.**

The book of Exodus also reveals that when the princess rescued Moses, his sister was instrumental in having his mother hired to nurse him.

*Exodus 2:7–10 “Then said his sister to Pharaoh’s daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child’s mother. And Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son.”*

Evidently, he learned through that connection that he was a Hebrew by birth and was taught to believe that God had a special plan for him to bring deliverance to his people. One day, when he was forty years old, he went to visit the camp of the children of Israel. He saw an Egyptian beating up an Israeli, and ended up killing the Egyptian. The following incident provides evidence that the people of Israel did not recognize Moses as their deliverer.

**Acts 7:26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?**

**Acts 7:27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?**

**Acts 7:28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?**

**Acts 7:29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.**

The next day Moses came upon two Hebrews fighting each other, and he attempted to intervene. The man in the wrong pushed him aside and basically called him a hypocrite; he had seen him kill the Egyptian the day before. Moses

knew that his life was in danger if this became known, so he ran away to the land of Midian. While in Midian, he got married and had two sons.

Guzik points out that the religious leaders would have understood the application Stephen was making to their treatment of Jesus: "...You have rejected Jesus, who was like Moses yet greater than him, and you deny that Jesus has any right to be a ruler and a judge over you."

**Acts 7:30 ¶ And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.**

**Acts 7:31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,**

**Acts 7:32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.**

After living in Midian for forty years (so he is now 80 years old), the "angel of the Lord" appeared to Moses through a burning bush. The sight of a bush burning, yet not being destroyed, caused Moses to want to get a closer look. When he got near the bush, God spoke to him and identified Himself as "the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses became very afraid and turned his gaze away from the bush.

**Acts 7:33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.**

**Acts 7:34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.**

**Acts 7:35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.**

God instructed him to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground—the place of God's presence. He told Moses that he had seen the mistreatment of "my people" in Egypt and was now prepared to deliver them. Moses was to go to Egypt and deliver them.

Stephen makes special note of the fact that this Moses is the same man that was originally rejected as their deliverer.

**Acts 7:36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.**

**Acts 7:37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.**

Stephen continues to summarize their history by declaring that Moses did eventually bring the people out of Egypt after performing wonders and signs in Egypt to convince Pharaoh to let the people go. In his last teaching to the people

before his death, Moses prophesied that God would eventually raise up a Hebrew prophet among them that would once again serve as their deliverer. Eventually, they would accept that prophet as their Messiah.

*Deuteronomy 18:18–19 “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”*

The implication—Jesus was that Prophet, and one day you will recognize that truth just as I have.

**Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:**

**Acts 7:39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,**

**Acts 7:40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.**

**Acts 7:41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.**

“church” = a calling out, a religious congregation – a reference to the children of Israel

I think the NIV translation of verse 38 is more readily understood: *“This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.”*

I think this reference to “the angel” connects both the voice at the burning bush, the angel that went before the camp of Israel and the voice that delivered the law to Moses as one and the same—another affirmation of Father and Son as One.

Stephen again emphasizes that it was this same Moses that led Israel through the wilderness and received the word of God to instruct us.

*Exodus 3:2 “And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”*

*Exodus 14:19 “And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them....”*

*Exodus 34:4–5 “And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the LORD descended in the cloud, and*

*stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD."*

Stephen emphasizes that it was this same Moses that "our fathers would not obey" and chose instead to resume the worship of idols as they had practiced in Egypt. They actually convinced Aaron to make them an idol while Moses was with God on Sinai receiving the law. He quoted from Exodus.

*Exodus 32:1 "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."*

They couldn't even wait forty days before resorting to sacrificing to and worshipping an idol, and they even tried to excuse their actions by declaring their celebration of the idol to be a feast to the LORD.

*Exodus 32:5-6 "And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."*

I think this is a strategy that Satan loves to use. He appeals to our flesh to convince us that we can worship God in whatever way we choose; we don't have to follow the dictates of His word. This wrong thinking resulted in the downfall of Cain and to this day continues to lead many to eternal condemnation. God expects us to obey Him if we expect Him to bless us. This is a principle that permeates scripture.

*Deuteronomy 11:26-28 "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known."*

*1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."*

*Jeremiah 7:23 "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."*

*John 14:21 "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."*

*John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

**Acts 7:42 ¶ Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of forty years in the wilderness?***

**Acts 7:43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.**

“the book of the prophets” – Adam Clarke tells us that this is a reference to “the twelve minor prophets, which, in the ancient Jewish division of the sacred writings, formed only one book.

Stephen appears to be quoting from Amos: *Amos 5:25–27 “Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.”*

Because of their lack of faith, their rejection of Him as LORD, God judged the house of Israel by forcing them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. During that time they continued to worship their false gods, e.g., Moloch and Remphan, while at the same time making empty sacrifices to God. They still honored the idols they brought with them out of Egypt and even brought a special tent to serve as their worship center.

Moloch = A heathen god whose followers practiced child sacrifice; some associate this god with the Sun.

Remphan/Chiun = The star-god Saturn.

These definitions support Stephen’s claim that they were worshipping the “host of heaven.”

“beyond Babylon” – Because of the reference to idol worship, this would probably be a reference to the Assyrian captivity. Though Stephen is asserting that they are worshipping the temple as an idol, the dispersion by the Romans was a result of rejecting the Messiah.

**Acts 7:44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.**

**Acts 7:45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;**

**Acts 7:46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.**

**Acts 7:47 But Solomon built him an house.**

Stephen next describes how God showed Moses a specific pattern from which to

model the tabernacle, the designated place of God's presence with them during the wilderness wanderings. Joshua (Jesus) brought this tabernacle into the land of Canaan as they drove out the Gentiles that were under God's judgment. That tabernacle served Israel until the days of Solomon, who built the first temple structure in Jerusalem. It was King David, however, that first desired to make a beautiful house of worship to the Lord. God approved that desire by instructing him regarding the plan he was to use, but he was told that he could not build it. David even gathered together most of the materials that were needed for its construction.

*1 Chronicles 28:11–13 “Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD.”*

*1 Chronicles 29:2–3 “Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God”*

*1 Chronicles 29:16 “O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.”*

**Acts 7:48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,**

**Acts 7:49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?**

**Acts 7:50 Hath not my hand made all these things?**

Stephen now makes the point that though God allowed for the tabernacle and temple to provide a place for the people to worship God and seek atonement for their sins, “the most High” cannot be contained in a man-made temple. He quotes the prophet Isaiah in verses 49-50 (Isaiah 66:1-2) to support his statement.

The point: How could we ever hope to build a house worthy of God's dwelling place? He is the Creator. He fills heaven and earth.

*Jeremiah 23:24 “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.”*

I really liked Guzik's comment on this section regarding how many Christians pigeonhole God in their lives: “...the only place they meet God is at the church.

As far as they are concerned, God is absent from the rest of their lives. In the minds and lives of some today, God might as well only live at the church.”

**Acts 7:51 ¶ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.**

**Acts 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:**

**Acts 7:53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.**

Now Stephen takes the gloves off. He boldly declares that those accusing him of blasphemy are the ones with stiffnecked spirits, with uncircumcised hearts and ears. To be stiffnecked is to be stubborn and obstinate. To be uncircumcised is to be ruled by one’s flesh, by worldly passions—to be unyielding to the will of God. Clarke explains it a bit differently: “Where the spirit of disobedience was found, where the heart was prone to iniquity, and the ears impatient of reproof and counsel, the person is represented as uncircumcised in those parts, because devoted to iniquity, impatient of reproof, and refusing to obey.”

They were determined to resist the ministry of the Holy Spirit just as surely as their fathers determined not to yield to God as LORD. Scripture (as well as other historical Jewish writings such as the Talmud) reveals that the people of Israel often persecuted the prophets of God. Those that had prophesied of the coming “Righteous One” (a reference to the Messiah) e.g., Isaiah, were betrayed and murdered by their own people.

Rather than focusing on what role the angels played in delivering the law, also affirmed by Paul...

*Galatians 3:19* “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”

...the important point Stephen is making is that those accusing him had not kept the law! This was the very point upon which they prided themselves.

**Acts 7:54 ¶ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.**

The religious leaders weren’t convicted by Stephen’s message; they were furious with him.

**Acts 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,**

**Acts 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.**

Did Stephen fear them? No. He was “full of the Holy Ghost”—God’s provision for every person acting in submission to His will. He knew he was about to die, but his focus was on heaven. His gaze was transfixed. He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of the Father, and he publicly declared what he saw.

**Acts 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,**

**Acts 7:58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.**

**Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.**

**Acts 7:60 And he knelt down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.**

His accusers could stand it no longer. They covered their ears to indicate they were finished listening to him and ran toward him in anger. They threw him out of the city and stoned him. They acted with such irrational rage that he was not even granted a trial. Stephen responded by calling upon God and asking the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit. Then he knelt down while loudly asking God to forgive the people of their sin; this mirrored the heart of his Savior as He spoke from the cross.

*Luke 23:34 “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”*

I’m always amazed when I read of how God so often supernaturally provides for those who die as martyrs for their faith! Oh how I pray that I will be as full of faith and peace as well as a broken, tender heart if ever in such a circumstance. I never used to consider that to be a remote possibility as a Christian in the great nation of America; however, that scenario doesn’t seem so far-fetched anymore. Our nation as a whole has rejected God, and our laws and moral culture testify to that truth. I can’t believe how quickly times have changed and the depths of wickedness we have embraced in so short a time!

Significant point: Stephen called upon God while addressing “Lord Jesus.” This is another statement affirming the words of Jesus.

*John 10:30 “I and my Father are one.”*

Stephen also affirmed the words of Jesus spoken to these very accusers during his trial.

*Matthew 26:64 “Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power...”*

However, Stephen saw him standing—I believe with His arms stretched out ready to receive the soul of Stephen.

Luke also makes a point of noting that a young man named Saul witnessed the murder of Stephen. This young man would eventually have a supernatural encounter with the Lord Jesus resulting in a transformed life; he would later become known as the Apostle Paul.