

Acts 07 - Stephen Addresses the Sanhedrin, is Martyred

I. Outreach in Jerusalem (Acts 1:1—7:60)

- (14) Stephen's martyrdom (6:8—7:60)
 - (B) Stephen's speech (7:1-53)
 - (a) Abram's partial obedience (7:1-5)
 - (b) Israel's pattern of initial rejections (7:6-38)
 - (i) Example of Joseph (7:6-16)
 - (ii) Example of Moses (7:17-38)
 - (c) Rebellion against Moses (7:39-41)
 - (d) God gave Israel over to idolatry because they were not faithful to Moses' teaching (7:42-45)
 - (e) Tabernacle and Temple never intended as permanent manifestation of God (7:46-50)
 - (f) Current generation imitating previous generation (7:51-53)
 - (i) Resisting the Spirit (7:51)
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 - (C) Stephen's martyrdom (7:54-60)

Acts 7

- (B) Stephen's speech (7:1-53)

- (a) Abram's partial obedience (7:1-5)

1 Now the **highpriest** said, **“Are these things so?”**

1 The high priest said, “Are these things so?”

1 Then the high priest asked, “Is this true?”

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

— “...high priest” - probably refers to Caiaphas, the official high priest at the time; also possible Luke meant Annas (Cf. 4:6)

— Jesus stood before both of these men, separately, to face similar charges (John 18:13-14,24; Matt 26:57)

— “...Are these things so?” - Stephen is given an opportunity to mount his own defense against the charges (6:11-15); this basically means, “How do you plead—guilty or not

guilty?"

- Stephen's response runs from v2-53, and he only stopped talking because they began to stone him
- Other than the Sermon on the Mount, this may be the greatest sermon in the entire Bible

Purpose of Stephen's Speech

Luke recorded this speech to explain and defend this new way of worship. He showed that the disciples of Jesus were carrying on God's plan, whereas the unbelieving Jews had committed themselves to beliefs and behavior that God had left behind and disapproved. What Luke records is what Stephen actually said to the Sanhedrin. It was based upon the LXX, the Greek translation of the OT, not upon the Hebrew Masoretic text, which came 1,000 years later.

Stephen's defense was that he reviewed the history of Israel and highlighted elements of that history that supported his contentions. He built it mainly around outstanding personalities: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David and Solomon.

Verses 2-16 deal with Israel's patriarchal period, and refutes the charge of blaspheming God (6:11). Verses 17-43 deal with Moses and the Law, and responds to the charge of blaspheming Moses (6:11) and speaking against the Law (6:13). Verses 44-50 deal with the temple, and responds to the charge of speaking against the temple (6:13), and Stephen's allegedly saying that Jesus would destroy the temple and alter Jewish customs (6:14). Stephen then climaxed his address with an indictment of his hardhearted hearers (v51-53). Stephen's purpose was to show that Jesus experienced the same things Abraham, Joseph, and Moses had experienced as God's anointed servants. As the Sanhedrin recognized *them* as men whom God had anointed for the blessing of Israel and the world, so should they recognize Jesus. The people to whom these three patriarchs went as God's representatives *all* initially rejected them—but later accepted them—which is also Jesus' history.

Acts 7 – Stephen’s Speech

7:2-5	Abraham’s partial obedience
7:6-38	Israel’s initial rejections and later acceptances
7:39-41	Israel’s early rebellion against Moses
7:42-45	Israel reinterpreted Moses’ teachings through a polytheistic framework
7:46-50	Neither the Tabernacle nor Temple were intended as permanent habitations of God
7:51-53	Current generation imitating these same rebellions

2 And Stephen said, “Listen to me, brothers and fathers! The God of **glory appeared** to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

2 And he said, “Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

2 Stephen replied: “Listen, brothers and fathers! “The glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran.

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,

- Stephen’s presentation provides a summary of the entire OT; he points out many details that most Bible scholars overlook

— As a Hellenistic Jew, he possessed a clearer vision of the Hebrew Scriptures and the gospel than most of the Hebraic Jews; this knowledge drew attacks from the temple-bound Jews in Jerusalem, and led to his arrest

— This address was not a personal defense designed to secure an acquittal...it was an apologetic for the new way of worship that Jesus taught, and His followers embraced

— Who is on trial? By the end of the chapter, it will appear that the Sanhedrin are!

- Stephen begins his sermon with Abraham because Israel began with Abraham...

— Stephen will make the point that Abraham was a tremendous man of God, but his obedience graded around a C+. He obeyed God most of the time, but he never completely obeyed God.

- "...glory appeared" - Fruchtenbaum believes this was the Shekinah glory of God appearing to a pagan, outside the Land of Israel

— This interpretation melds very well with what Stephen will say later in this sermon (v48). Stephen will later make the point that God never intended the tabernacle nor the temple to be His permanent habitations.

— He begins that argument here by noting that God's glory appeared outside the tabernacle and temple, and even outside the borders of Israel



3 and He said to him, '**GO FROM YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME TO THE LAND WHICH I WILL SHOW YOU!**'

3 and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.'

3 God told him, 'Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land I'll show you.'

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.

- Quoted from Gen 12:1 [LXX]...

— Stephen highlights Abraham's partial obedience by quoting the initial command of God to Abraham, then describe how Abraham obeyed

- "...GO FROM YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES" - Abraham did leave his country (Ur of the Chaldeans), but he didn't leave his relatives (Lot, his nephew, went with him, Gen 12:4). God was clear that Abraham was to separate himself from his family, but Abraham only partially obeyed.
- "...COME TO THE LAND WHICH I WILL SHOW YOU" - Abraham obeyed this command initially, but then a famine broke out (Gen 12:10), so he fled to Egypt

4 Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. **And from there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.**

4 Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, **God had him move to this country in which you are now living.**

4 So he left the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. Then after the death of his father, God had him move to this country where you now live.

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.

- "...And from there, after his father died" - Abraham's original call was from Ur, not Haran (Haran was 50 miles up river; Cf. Gen 12:1-3)

— Abraham left his country, but he didn't travel directly to the Land that God would show him. Instead, he spent 25 years in Haran with his father. He didn't leave Haran to move to the Land under his father died.

— He didn't really do what God called him to do (partial obedience), *until* his father died. Stephen's point is that there was a lapse of faith on Abraham's part.

— See note: **Timeline for Abram's Departure from Haran** at Gen 11:32 for an overview and alternate interpretations.

Israel's Pattern of Failure

Watch carefully Stephen's key points in his speech: The unresponsive flow of Jewish history—yet God's persistent purpose. Their history was characterized by: Jewish rejection the first time, followed by their later acceptance the second time...

1. Abraham (Acts 7:4)
 - Abram didn't obey 1st time; after his father died, he obeyed the 2nd time
2. Joseph (Acts 7:13)
 - Rejected by his brothers 1st time; accepted by them the 2nd time
3. Moses (Acts 7:27)
 - Rejected by Israel 1st time after he killed Egyptian; accepted 2nd time to lead exodus
4. Law (Acts 7:35)
 - 10 commandments rejected 1st time and were destroyed; accepted the 2nd time

5. At Kadesh-Barnea / Joshua (Acts 7:45)

- They don't accept the challenge to go forward and take the land God gave them; they were condemned and forced to stay in the wilderness 38 more years; 2nd time they were successful under Joshua

5 But He gave him **no inheritance in it**, not even a foot of ground, and yet, **He promised** that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child.

5 But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him.

5 God gave him no property here, not even a foot of land, yet he promised to give it to him and to his descendants after him as a permanent possession, even though he had no child.

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.

- "...no inheritance in it" - God did not give Abraham any portion of the Land of Israel before he died. The only piece of the Land that Abraham owned was a cave he purchased in order to bury Sarah (Gen 23:3-19).

- "...He promised" - Cf. Gen 12:7

- Stephen contrasted the fact that Abraham would not inherit the Land with God's promise to give the Land to his descendants as an inheritance (Gen 12:7; Cf. Heb 11:8)

— God promised this when Abraham and Sarah had no children, and they were both well past childbearing age. Thus, God's promise was of future possession of the Land through descendants yet to come.

— The Jews in Stephen's day needed to realize that God had not exhausted His promises to Abraham in giving them the Land they had (and greatly valued). There was still greater inheritance to come, but it would be for future generations of their descendants, not to them. It would come to those who follow Abraham's example of faith by believing in Jesus.

— God wanted the Jews to know that there were spiritual descendants of Abraham who were not his physical descendants (Gal 3:6-9,29)

Genesis 12–25

Abraham's Early Journeys



(1) Unconditional promises (Gen 12:1-3)	(11) Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 18-19)
(2) From Haran to Canaan (Gen 12:4-5)	(12) Abraham & Abimelech (Gen 20)
(3) In Canaan (Gen 12:6-9)	(13) Isaac's birth (Gen 21:1-7)
(4) In Egypt (Gen 12:10-20)	(14) Ishmael's expulsion (Gen 21:8-21)
(5) Abram and Lot Separate (Gen 13:1-13)	(15) Abraham & Abimelech's covenant (Gen 21:22-34)
(6) Reaffirmation of Abram's promises (Gen 13:14-18)	(16) Abraham sacrifices Isaac (Gen 22)
(7) Abram Rescues Lot (Gen 14:1-24)	(17) Sarah's death (Gen 23)
(8) Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:1-21)	(18) Isaac's marriage (Gen 24)
(9) Hagar & Ishmael (Gen 16:1-16)	(19) Abraham & Keturah (Gen 25:1-6)
(10) Circumcision (Gen 17:1-27)	(20) Abraham's death (Gen 25:7-11)

(b) Israel's pattern of initial rejections (7:6-38)

(i) Example of Joseph (7:6-16)

6 But God spoke to this effect, that his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE STRANGERS IN A LAND THAT WAS NOT THEIRS, AND THEY WOULD ENSLAVE AND MISTREAT *THEM* FOR **FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.**

6 But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years.

6 "This is what God promised: His descendants would be strangers in a foreign country, and its people would enslave them and oppress them for 400 years.

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.

- Stephen will now provide examples of how Israel gets things right the second time; they never get it right the first time. He will use the examples of Joseph (v6-16) and Moses (v17-38) to prove his point.

— Stephen's overarching point is to demonstrate that the first generation of Jews to whom the Messiah was revealed rejected Him, but a later, future generation of Jews will accept Him

- The OT quote is from Gen 15:13...

— In 1876 BC, Jacob finally left Canaan with his sons and traveled to Egypt because his son Joseph had been elevated to second in command

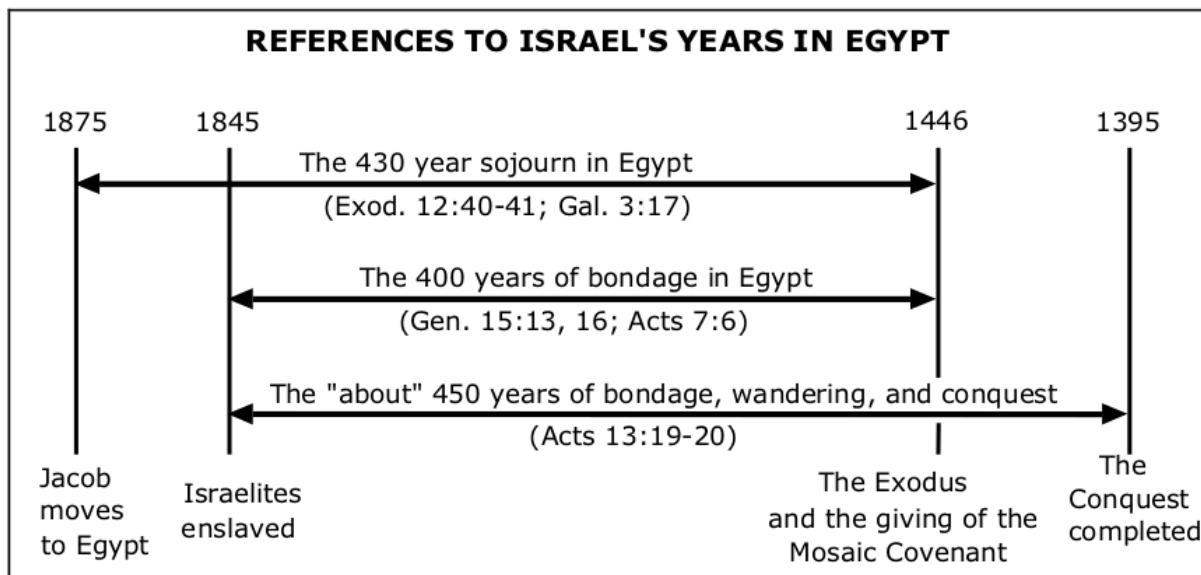
— Jacob had to leave Egypt for three reasons:

1. To preserve his family from the moral corruption of the Canaanites (Cf. Gen 38). If God had left Israel in the Land, they would have become as morally corrupt as their neighbors, so God had to get them out.
 - God had to incubate the nation in Goshen. The Egyptians viewed shepherds (which was the occupation of Joseph and his family) as loathesome.
2. The famine that God was going to strike the Land of Israel with (Cf. v11-12)
3. Because of the actions of Simeon and Levi after learning their sister Dinah had been raped. They killed the entire population of the city of Shechem.
 - When Jacob learned of what Simeon and Levi had done, it ruined Jacob's reputation in the Land and made him vulnerable (Cf. Gen 34:30)

- "...FOUR HUNDRED YEARS" - prophesied by God in Gen 15:13-14; their enslavement began in 1845 BC, and lasted until the Exodus in 1446 BC

- Ex 12:40 and Gal 3:17 both indicate that the Israelites were in Egypt a total of 430 years.

The chart below clears up these discrepancies:



7 'AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY ARE ENSLAVED I MYSELF WILL JUDGE,' said God, 'AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.'

7 'And whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I Myself will judge,' said God, 'and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place.'

7 'But I will punish the nation they serve,' said God, 'and afterwards they will leave and worship me in this place.'

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.

- Quoted from xxx and Ex 3:12
- God used Egypt to "rescue" Israel, but Egypt abused the Israelites and made them slaves, so God was forced to judge Egypt
- A couple examples of this are:
 - God took the Egyptian army through the Red Sea crossing, then drowned them (Ex 14:26-28). He did this because the Egyptians drowned newborn Jewish babies in the Nile River (Ex 1:22).
 - God killed the first born throughout the land of Egypt in the 10th and final plague. He did this because God calls Israel "His firstborn son" (Ex 4:22).
- Stephen's point was that God had promised to punish those who oppressed His people. But now, the Jews were oppressing Christians by prohibiting their preaching and even flogging them (4:18; 5:40).
- Gamaliel warned them that if Christians were correct, the Jewish leaders would be fighting against God by opposing them (5:39)
- God's promise to judge His people's oppressors went all the way back to the Abrahamic Covenant, which the Jews treasured
- "...IN THIS PLACE" - Mount Sinai (Cf. Ex 3:12); Stephen applies this phrase as the Land of Israel

8 And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and **so Abraham fathered Isaac**, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac *fathered* Jacob, and Jacob, the twelve patriarchs.

8 And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so *Abraham* became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac *became the father of* Jacob, and Jacob *of* the twelve patriarchs.

8 Later, God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. Later, he fathered Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day. Then Isaac fathered Jacob, and Jacob fathered the twelve patriarchs.

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.

- In Gen 17, God gave the Israelites a means to identify themselves as God's chosen people: circumcision

— Circumcision didn't save anyone; Abraham was already justified by faith (Gen 15:6). Abraham could not have been justified by either circumcision or the Mosaic Law because neither of them were in place in Gen 15 when God said Abraham was justified.

— This timeline is used by Paul in Rom 4 as evidence in favor of justification by faith alone

- "...so Abraham fathered Isaac" - a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah

9 "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. **Yet God was with him,**

9 "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. **Yet God was with him,**

9 "Joseph's brothers became jealous of him and sold Joseph as a slave in Egypt. However, God was with him

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

- At the age of 17, Joseph had two dreams that he would one day be elevated over his brothers, not for Joseph's benefit but for their benefit

— When his brothers heard of these dreams, they didn't like it. Where did the 11th born brother get off telling his older siblings that he was going to be elevated above them.

Reuben was the firstborn, so he was the only who had that right.

— So what happened here was that Joseph presented himself to his brothers (Israel) about what his future role would be, but he was rejected

— Later, when Joseph was 30 years old and second in command in Egypt, his brothers would submit to him

- "...God was with him" - the more his brothers tried to stop the outworking of Joseph's dreams (they believed the dreams were true), the more they were "greasing the wheels" to put God's plan into motion (Cf. Gen 50:20)

10 and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and his entire household.

10 and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household.

10 and rescued him from all his troubles. He granted him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler of Egypt and of his whole household.

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.

- A summation of God's dealings and hand on Joseph...

— God gave Joseph favor and wisdom in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams

- This is also the second example of God manifesting Himself outside the borders of Israel. The first time was His call of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldean, now here He pours His favor and wisdom onto Joseph as he's living in Egypt.

11 "Now **afamine** came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction *with it*, and our fathers could find no food.

11 "Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction *with it*, and our fathers could find no food.

11 "But a famine spread throughout Egypt and Canaan, and with it great suffering, and our ancestors couldn't find any food.

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

- "...a famine" - Cf. Gen 41:54; the famine was the tool that God used to move Jacob's family (the nation of Israel) out of the Land and into incubation in Goshen, Egypt

12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors on their first trip.

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

- When hard times befell God's people, He sustained them and brought them into blessing under the rule of Joseph

13 And **on the second visit, Joseph made himself known to his brothers**, and Joseph's family was revealed to Pharaoh.

13 On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh.

13 On their second trip, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph introduced his family to Pharaoh.

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

- "...on the second visit" - interesting note that it was his brother's second visit

- "...Joseph made himself known to his brothers" - Joseph revealed himself (his identity) to his brothers on their second visit

In every case of the patriarchs that Stephen discussed, God used a rejected one to save the rejecters. If history is their guide, then Israel will not recognize their Messiah until the second time!

14 Then Joseph sent word and invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come to him, **seventy-five people in all**.

14 Then Joseph sent word and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons *in all*.

14 Then Joseph invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come to him in Egypt—75 persons in all.

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

- "...seventy-five people" - Stephen was quoting from the LXX which says 75 souls; the Hebrew Bible says 70

— The additional five include the five grandsons of Joseph: the son and grandson of Manasseh and the two sons of Ephraim (Num 26:28-37; 1 Chr 7:14-27); see notes on Gen 46:8-27

15 And Jacob went down to Egypt, and he and our fathers died *there*.

15 And Jacob went down to Egypt and *there* he and our fathers died.

15 So Jacob went down to Egypt. Then he and our ancestors died.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

- This fulfilled Gen 46, which was God's plan all along

- Joseph, along with Jacob, both died in Egypt

— Joseph, before he died, because he believed by faith that Israel's time in Egypt was temporary, requested the Israelites to bring his bones back to Israel when they returned (Cf. Gen 50:25-26; Heb 11:22)

— Joseph believed in God's promise (Gen 15:13-15)

16 And they were brought back *from there* to **Shechem** and laid in the tomb which **Abraham had purchased** for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

16 *From there* they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

16 They were brought back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought at a high price from Hamor's descendants in Shechem.

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.

- "...Shechem" - the Israelites buried Joseph's bones there after their initial conquest of the Land (Joshua 24:32)

— Moses wrote that the location of the burial cave was in Hebron, not Shechem (Gen ??:???)

- "...Abraham had purchased" - Moses wrote that Jacob, not Abraham, had purchased the tomb in Shechem from Hamor (Gen 33:19; Cf. Gen 23:16; 50:13)

— This attribution to a forefather of something done by a descendant is common in Scripture (Cf. Heb 7:9-10)

— In the ancient Near East, people regarded an ancestor as in one sense participating in the actions of their descendants (Gen 9:25; 25:23; Cf. Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:11-13)

- There is some confusion over burial sites, but it turns out that there are two different burial sites in Genesis, one bought by Abraham and one bought by Jacob:

Bought by:	Abraham	Jacob
Where:	Machpelah	Shechem
From whom:	Ephron, Hittite sons of Hamor	Shechem's father
Reference:	Gen 23:17	Gen 33:19
Who buried:	Abraham & Sarah Isaac & Rebekah Jacob & Leah	Joseph (Joshua 24:32) 12 Patriarchs?

(ii) Example of Moses (7:17-38)

17 "But as **the time of the promise** which God had assured to Abraham was approaching, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt,

17 "But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt,

17 "Now as the time approached for the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to Abraham, the people's population increased a great deal in Egypt.

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

- "...the time of the promise" - refers to the promise that God gave to Abraham (Gen 15:16) that the fourth generation born in Egypt will return to Israel

— In Gen 15:13, God gave Israel a "clock" in order to allow them to understand and track the time period they were enslaved in Egypt (400 years)

— Note that in other passages (Ex 12:40-41; Gal 3:17) state that the time period was 430 years. The 430 years refers to the total time in Egypt; the 400 years refers to the time they were "enslaved" in Egypt.

— God began to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant when He delivered Israel out of the Land of Egypt

18 until **ANOTHER KING AROSE OVER EGYPT WHO DID NOT KNOW JOSEPH.**

18 until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph.

18 Eventually, a different king who had not known Joseph became ruler of Egypt.

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

- Some significant period of time occurs between Joseph and Pharaoh of the exodus.

- "...ANOTHER" - *heteros*, another of *adifferent* kind (vs. *allos*, another of the *same* kind); there are two different Greek words for "another" (Cf. Ex 1:8)

— The Pharaoh that oppressed the Hebrews was an Assyrian, not Egyptian (Is 52:4)

- The "new" Pharaoh did not recognize any obligation to Joseph's past help of the Egyptian people

19 It was he who shrewdly took advantage of our nation and mistreated our fathers in order that they would abandon their infants *in the Nile*, so that they would not survive.

19 It was he who took shrewd advantage of our **race** and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive.

19 By shrewdly scheming against our people, he oppressed our ancestors and forced them to abandon their infants to the elements, so that they wouldn't live.

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.

- Because the Israelite population grew so quickly, the new Pharaoh, who did not know Joseph or his history, began to worry that Egypt could not defend itself against an internal foreign population

— So he engaged in the infanticide/abortion of Jewish male newborn babies in order to control the population

- "...race" [NASB95] - interesting that the Jewish people here are referred to as a "race"

20 At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful to God. He was **nurtured** for three months in his father's home.

20 It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home.

20 "At this time Moses was born. He was beautiful in the sight of God, and for three months he was cared for in his father's house.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

- "...nurtured" - *anatrepho*, of young children and animals, nourished to promote growth; a technical medical term in Greek

— There are several places in this chapter where the term used is one that *only a doctor* would use, which is interesting in that Acts was written by Luke, a physician, using a larger vocabulary than Hypocrites, "the father of medicine."

21 And after he had been put outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son.

21 And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son.

21 When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

- In order for Moses to survive the infanticide/abortion that was taking place, his parents by faith had to put him in a basket in the Nile River
- God providentially caused Pharaoh's daughter to find the basket and "adopt" Moses as her own
- This was God's plan to get Moses away from his Jewish people group and to have an Egyptian upbringing and education

22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was **proficient in speaking** and action.

22 Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.

22 So Moses learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians and became a great man, both in words and in deeds.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

- God is raising up a deliverer for His people, to deliver them from Egyptian bondage and enslavement, according to His timeline given to Abraham in Gen 15:13
- Because of God's providence for Moses, he was able to receive the best education the world had at that time, which would be critical for God's calling on Moses' life
- Besides delivering His people out of Egypt, Moses would also become the lawgiver at Mount Sinai, he would shepherd God's people through the wilderness for 40 years, and God would call him to write the first five books of the OT (the Torah)
- "...proficient in speaking" - did Moses lie in Ex 4:10?
- Josephus points out that he was mighty in military arts; Moses was being groomed for leadership in Egypt
- Philo points out that Moses was tutored by the most celebrated foreign schools in arithmetic, geometry, music, philosophy, hieroglyphics, arts and sciences. They had developed mathematics, chemistry, engineering, architecture, and astronomy to a very fine point. They had calculated the distance to the sun. They had a highly developed culture and were not an ignorant people.

23 But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his countrymen, the sons of Israel.

23 But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.

23 "When he was 40 years old, he decided to visit his brothers, the descendants of Israel.

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

- The first 40 years of Moses' life, he received the best upbringing and education money can buy in Egypt. However, he did not yet have any spiritual training.

— When God tries to use someone has a natural education but they don't yet have a spiritual education, they are used to handling things by their own power

THREE PHASES OF MOSES' 120 YEAR LIFE				
LIFE PHASE	SCRIPTURE	YEARS	AGE	ACTIVITY
Natural Training	Acts 7:23	1526–1486 BC	1-40	Egyptian Education
Spiritual Training	Ex 7:7	1486–1446 BC	40-80	Midian Shepherding
Ministry	Deut 31:2; 34:7; Acts 7:36	1446–1406 BC	80-120	Exodus, Law, Wilderness Preservation, Write the Torah

24 And when he saw one of *them* being treated unjustly, he defended and took vengeance for the oppressed man by *fatally* striking the Egyptian.

24 And when he saw one of *them* being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian.

24 When he saw one of them being mistreated, he defended him and avenged the man who was being mistreated by killing the Egyptian.

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

- Moses recognized the role God had for him as liberator and deliverer of God's people, but still without the spiritual training needed, he ventured out, saw abuse, and thought he needed to take action because of the role God gave him. So he killed an Egyptian.

— Moses lacked the spiritual training needed to fill God's calling; he was used to handling things in his own way and his own timing. He had not learned to wait on the Lord or to trust in Him.

25 And he thought that his brothers understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand.

25 And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

25 He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was using him to rescue them, but they didn't understand.

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

- Moses, with his natural education and training, promoted himself as the deliverer of Israel, and the Israelites didn't want anything to do with him

— The nation of Israel is following the same pattern as Joseph and his brothers...initially, Moses was rejected as a deliverer by the Israelites

— But 40 years later, when he was 80 years old, they would accept him

26 And on the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting each other, and he tried to reconcile them to peace, by saying, 'Men, you are brothers, why are you injuring each other?'

26 On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?'

26 The next day, he presented himself to some of them while they were fighting and tried to reconcile them. He said, 'Men, you are brothers. Why should you be hurting another?'

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?

- Moses understood his role as a lawgiver and a ruler in Israel, so he tries to step in (through his natural power) and resolve the problem

27 But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?

27 But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?

27 "But the man who was harming his neighbor pushed Moses away and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?'

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

28 YOU DO NOT INTEND TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?'

28 You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?'

28 You don't want to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?'

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

- Although Moses offered himself as the deliverer of his brethren (Israel), they did not understand him

— The Jews did not recognize that God had appointed him as their ruler and judge, so they rejected him even though Moses sought to help them

29 At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME A STRANGER IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he fathered two sons.

29 At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

29 Because of this, Moses fled and lived as a foreigner in the land of Midian. There he had two sons.

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

- Moses fled Egypt because natural education doesn't teach you how to deal with fear; spiritual education does because we learn to trust in the Lord

— When we only have natural education, we don't know how to react to fear. The fact that Moses was afraid is evidence that Moses was not ready to lead anyone because he had not yet learned to trust in the Lord.

- This was the beginning of the second 40-year period of Moses' life, from age 40-80

— God said, Great, you have a formal, natural education, but I need to now educate you spiritually

— So God removed him from Egypt and sent him to Midian, which is a desert, where he would do the menial task of shepherding. This task was way below Moses' intellectual abilities, but God needed him to learn humility, patience, and God's sovereignty.

— The way God teaches us these things is to put us in menial tasks that are way beneath us in terms of talent and education, then just leave us there, sometimes for years. He left Moses there for 40 years.

- We often want to go from natural education to productivity, but God doesn't work that way. We need the spiritual training by God in order for our character to grow in such a way so that we can be used effectively and productively by God.

— Israel had to stay in Egypt 40 years longer because they did not recognize Moses as their deliverer the first time

— The implication here is that if they had accepted Moses initially, God might have delivered them then. Because they rejected Moses the first time, they were stuck with another 40 years of bondage.

— "Who made ye a ruler over us" echoes from Matt 21:23 (Cf. Hosea 5:15; John 1:11)

30 "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush.

30 "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush.

30 "After 40 years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai.

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.

- This was the beginning of the third 40-year period of Moses' life, from age 80-120

- As with Abraham, God appeared to Moses in a Gentile land

- It was after spending 40 years in Midian that the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and commanded him to go back to Egypt to deliver the Israelites

31 When Moses saw *it*, he was astonished at the sight; and as he approached to look *more* closely, the voice of the Lord came:

31 When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look *more* closely, there came the voice of the Lord:

31 When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and when he approached the bush to look at it, the voice of the Lord said,

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,

32 'I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND ISAAC, AND JACOB.' Moses shook with fear and did not dare to look closely.

32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.' Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look.

32 'I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Moses became terrified and didn't dare to look.

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.

- At age 40, Moses had his hand up telling everyone that he was the man that God would use

— But after his 40 years in the wilderness, Moses sees himself completely different, unworthy and humbled to be used by God

33 But the LORD said to him, 'REMOVE YOUR SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS **HOLYGROUND**.

33 But the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

33 Then the Lord told him, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground.

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

- "...HOLY GROUND" - Moses was not standing in Israel; he was standing in a Gentile desert

34 I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE WHO ARE IN EGYPT, AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANING, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM; AND NOW COME, I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT!

34 I have certainly seen the oppression of My people in Egypt and have heard their groans, and I have come down to rescue them; come now, and I will send you to Egypt.'

34 I have surely seen the oppression of my people in Egypt, I've heard their groans, and I've come down to rescue them. Now come, I'll send you to Egypt."

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.

- Earlier, we saw the revelation of God to Abraham while he was in Ur of the Chaldeans

— Then, we saw the revelation of God to Joseph in Egypt

— Here we see the revelation of God to Moses while he was in Midian

35 "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.

35 "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.

35 "This same Moses—whom they rejected by saying, 'Who made you ruler and judge?'—was the man whom God sent to be both their ruler and deliverer with the help of the angel who had appeared to him in the bush.

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.

- Back in v25, Stephen said the Israelites rejected Moses; 40 years later, the Israelites accepted Moses as their deliverer

— After the Israelite leaders rejected their "ruler and judge" the first time around, God sent Moses back to fulfill that role, with His help

36 This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

36 This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

36 It was he who led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for 40 years.

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.

- Moses proceeded to perform "wonders and signs" during the Exodus

THREE PHASES OF MOSES' 120 YEAR LIFE				
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37 This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR COUNTRYMEN.'

37 This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren.'

37 It was this Moses who told the Israelis, 'God will raise up a prophet for you from among your own brothers, just as he did me.'

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.

- Quoted from Deut 18:15...

— This is a messianic prophecy stating that God will raise up in the future a prophet "like" Moses

— When the Messiah comes, He will be a prophet like Moses

— Moses became the standard by which people could identify the coming Messiah

38 This is the one who was in the **assembly** in the wilderness together with **the angel who spoke to him** *at length* on Mount Sinai, and *who was with* our fathers; and he received **living words** to pass on to you.

38 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.

38 This Moses is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and to our ancestors. He received living truths to give to us,

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

- Stephen's point is that Moses himself predicted the very Person whom they are now rejecting

— In this entire passage Stephen is venerating Moses even more than they do!

- "...assembly" - *ekklesia*, sometimes incorrectly translated as "church" however *ekklesia* simply means a "gathering" or an "assembly" of people

-- To overload the use of *ekklesia* here with all the senses in which it is used later by the apostles (in references to the universal church) would be contradictory in this verse and engage in the logical fallacy of illegitimate totality transfer (the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context allows and may bring with it the word's entire semantic range, which the writer could not have intended).

— The KJV translation ("church") is used by Progressive Dispensationalists and Postmillennialists to equate Israel with the Church. Most other translations have more correctly translated this verse to read, "the congregation in the wilderness" or "the assembly in the wilderness"

— Translating *ekklesia* as "church" here infuses it with the meaning that Paul provides later (Eph 2:14), but that is not what Stephen is referring to here. Stephen is not saying that God took Jews and Gentiles in the wilderness and brought them together as one body, breaking down the dividing wall of separation, which is the meaning that Paul infused into *ekklesia*.

— *Ekklesia* is not a technical word, thus you have to refer to the context to understand its exact meaning and reference. For example, in 19:32,39,41 *ekklesia* refers to a group/assembly of rioters. The use of *ekklesia* in this verse no more proves that Israel is the Church than its use in 19:32,41 proves that the pagan Ephesians constituted the Church

— When Paul uses *ekklesia*, he's talking about something specific that was not revealed in the OT. He's talking about people, regardless of gender, regardless if they are Jew or Gentile, being brought together by God to form "one new man," the body of Christ.

- "...the angel who spoke to him" - another example of God revealing Himself outside the borders of Israel

— "the angel" - angels mediated God's Law (v53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2; Cf. Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17)

- "...living words" - "living truths"; the fact that Stephen spoke of the Mosaic Law in this way suggests the honor and respect that he had for it

(c) Rebellion against Moses (7:39-41)

39 Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him; on the contrary they rejected him and turned back to Egypt **in their hearts**,

39 Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,

39 but our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and wished to return to Egypt.

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

- The next topic that Stephen brings up before the Sanhedrin is the fact that Israel has always been disobedient to God, so why should you (the Sanhedrin) be any different
- "...in their hearts" - sin always starts in the heart; the nation of Israel turned against Moses so quickly after the Exodus because that's what was in their hearts

— You can take Israel out of Egypt, but it was difficult to talk Egypt out of Israel

- Israel was uncomfortable with the newfound liberty from slavery. They were hangry when they had to rely, by faith, on God to provide (Cf. Num 11:5).

— Freedom/liberty often doesn't provide the comfort and security that people want, because they must wait on the Lord by faith for our needs to be met

40 saying to Aaron, 'MAKE US A GOD WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT—WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.'

40 saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what happened to him.'

40 They told Aaron, 'Make gods for us who will lead us. This Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt—we don't know what happened to him!'

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.

- After only 40 days (Ex 24:18; 34:28), the Israelites rebelled against Moses (and God) and made for themselves a golden calf

— They went from monotheism to polytheism, which is what was practiced in Egypt

— The Israelites preferred slavery in a foreign land more than freedom in their own land because they did not want to walk by faith and trust God. They preferred "3 hots and a cot" with slavery over freedom and walking by faith.

— There was a full-scale rebellion going on in the Sinai Peninsula just days after the greatest redemptive event in human history (other than the cross of Jesus Christ)

41 At that time **they made a calf** and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

41 At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

41 "At that time they even made a calf to be their idol, offered a sacrifice to it, and delighted in what they had made with their hands.

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

- "...they made a calf" - Cf. Ex 32:22-24

— Israel turned from Moses to idolatry, and their high priest (Aaron) helped them

— In the same way, Israel had turned from Jesus to idolatry, and the high priest helped her

— Apostasy can happen quickly (Cf. Ex 32:8; Gal 1:6)

Ex 32:8: They have **quickly turned aside** from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a cast metal calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'"

Gal 1:6: I am amazed that you are **so quickly deserting Him** who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel,

(d) God gave Israel over to idolatry because they were not faithful to Moses' teaching (7:42-45)

42 But God turned away and gave them over to serve **the heavenly lights**; as it is written in the book of the prophets: 'YOU DID NOT OFFER ME VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FOR FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, DID YOU, HOUSE OF ISRAEL?

42 But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, 'It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel?

42 So God turned away from them and gave them over to worship the heavenly bodies. As it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'O house of Israel, you didn't offer me slaughtered animals and sacrifices those 40 years in the wilderness, did you?

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?

- Stephen's next point he will make before the Sanhedrin is the fact that Israel, later in history, reinterpreted Moses' teaching through a polytheistic framework

— Polytheism is not something that only the Exodus generation was involved in; you can trace polytheism throughout Israel's history

- Verse 42b-43 are quoted from Amos 5:26-27...
- Amos is dated about 755 BC; Stephen quotes Amos here to show that polytheism (worship of idols, namely luminaries, among others) was present from the Exodus generation at least until the mid-700s BC
- "...the heavenly lights" - the stars, sun, and moon
- God through Moses warned them about not worshiping the luminaries (Cf. Deut 4:19), but despite these warnings this is what characterized Israel from the Joshua generation all the way through the eve of the Babylonian Captivity
- God created light on Day 1, but created the luminaries (sun, moon, stars on Day 4). This was to demonstrate to Israel that God is Light, and the light of the luminaries are secondary. In the Eternal State, there will be no sun (Rev 22:5) and no moon (Rev 21:23) because God will illuminate everything.

43 YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF YOUR GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL DEPORT YOU BEYOND BABYLON.'

43 You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship. I also will remove you beyond Babylon.'

43 You even took along the tent of Moloch, the star of your god Rephan, and the images you made in order to worship them. So I will take you into exile as far as Babylon.'

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.

- As a result of their idolatry, God gave them what they wanted. He also decided to send them into captivity as punishment (Amos 5:25-27).

- "...I ALSO WILL DEPORT YOU BEYOND BABYLON" - Stephen's quotation of Amos 5:27 differs from the OT. Both the Hebrew text and LXX say "Damascus" instead of "Babylon."

— However, Stephen changes the quote from the original "Damascus" (referring to the northern kingdom and their exile by Assyria in 722 BC) to "Babylon" referring to Judah and their exile to Babylon (586 BC).

— God's purpose for deporting Israel to Babylon was to purge polytheism/idolatry/luminary worship

— When Israel came out of the 70-year captivity, they still had a lot of problems, but polytheism/idolatry was not one of them

— Amos was foretelling the exile of the northern kingdom under the Assyrians, which would take them beyond Damascus. More than a century later, the southern kingdom was captured because of her similar disobedience to God and was deported to Babylon.

Stephen has merely substituted this phrase in order to use this Scripture to cover the judgment of God on the entire nation.

44 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it **according to the pattern which he had seen**.

44 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen.

44 "Our ancestors had the Tent of Testimony in the wilderness constructed, just as the one who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern he had seen.

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.

- After refuting the charge that he had blasphemed God and Moses (6:11; Cf. v2-16) and spoken against the Law (6:13; Cf. v17-43), he now addressed the charge that he spoke against the temple (6:13)

- Long before Israel ever got into the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle where God would dwell

- "...according to the pattern which he had seen" - Moses was given, along with the Ten Commandments, detailed specifications on the Tabernacle

— God gave the Israelites very specific instructions about how to build it, set it up, tear it down, and carry it from place to place

— If anyone didn't follow God's instructions, the holiness of God immediately came upon them and they died

— The construction of the tabernacle was important, primarily because it contained God's revealed will, and it was the place where God's presence dwelt

— What he built was apparently a copy of something already in existence in heaven; the earthly Tabernacle was a copy of the heavenly one

— The entire tabernacle, from its layout to the instructions God gave, screamed monotheism

- Stephen again stressed the "wilderness," which was again outside the Land

— Throughout his sermon, Stephen has been trying to make the point that God's presence, blessings and work cannot be limited to the borders of the Promised Land

— Even the Tabernacle was built outside the Land

45 Our fathers in turn received it, and they also brought it in with Joshua upon **dispossessing** the nations that God drove out from our fathers, until the time of David.

45 And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David.

45 Our ancestors brought it here with Joshua when they replaced the nations that God drove out in front of our ancestors, and it was here until the time of David.

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

- The tabernacle existed through the wilderness wanderings, through the time Joshua entered the Promised Land, and up until the time of David
- Joshua used the tabernacle while he was dispossessing the Land of Israel from the Canaanites
- It was "God" (singular) and this monotheistic tabernacle that accomplished the dispossession of the Land
- Stephen's point is that, despite it's monotheistic roots, the nation of Israel was in rebellion against God until the eve of the Babylonian Captivity because they moved into polytheism

When you understand this background, you can better understand the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, is getting back to the original intent of the Law of Moses, before it was contaminated by idolatry. He is also getting back to the Law of Moses before it was contaminated by pharisaical regulations. Jesus wanted 1st century Israel to understand Moses' intent, before the Law was corrupted by polytheism.

There is a back-and-forth in the Sermon on the Mount of: "You have heard...But I say to you...". His point is that the Law of Moses was originally aimed at the heart. The 10th commandment is "Thou shalt not covet." Coveting is a sin of the heart; it is not visible to others whether or not I am coveting someone else's house, car, career, spouse, bank account, success, etc. So according to the Law of Moses, my heart has committed sins that my arms have not gotten around to yet. Idolatry did not reveal that to Israel, neither did the other extreme, legalism.

(e) Tabernacle and Temple never intended as permanent manifestation of God
(7:46-50)

46 David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob.

46 David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.

46 He found favor with God and asked to design a dwelling for the house of Jacob,

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

- God blessed David's reign, and it was the Tabernacle, not the Temple, that existed at the time. In 2 Sam 7:2-3, David got an idea to build God a temple.

- God stopped David and said, No, I'm going to build a house (dynasty) for you" which becomes the context for God giving the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:11b-16)

— David took the initiative to build the Temple, not God. David desired to build God a more permanent and glorious place in which to dwell, however God did not "jump" at this suggestion because He did not need another place to dwell.

47 But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.

47 But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.

47 but it was Solomon who built a house for him.

47 But Solomon built him an house.

- God did not want David to build the temple because he was a man of war; God felt David wasn't qualified to build the temple because of the blood on his hands

- God allowed Solomon to build Israel's 2nd temple, a king who did not find as much favor in God's sight as David. It was later destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC.

48 However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as **the prophet** says:

48 However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says:

48 However, the Most High does not live in buildings made by human hands. As the prophet says,

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

- This is a point Stephen has already made many times in the previous 47 verses of his sermon:

- v2 - God manifested Himself to Abram while he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans
- v10 - God manifested Himself to Joseph while he was in Egypt
- v38 - God manifested Himself to Moses at Mount Sinai
- v40 - God manifested Himself to Moses in Midian

— Stephen's point here to the Sanhedrin is that God is not limited by the temple (or tabernacle), and he proves his point by giving them four examples of how God manifested Himself to the patriarch *outside* the Land of Israel

— This did not sit well with the Sanhedrin because they viewed the temple in Jerusalem as the "end all be all" of spirituality, and they perceived that Stephen was countering that belief

— The Sanhedrin looked at the second temple as a "good luck charm"; if it was standing and functioning, nothing bad could happen to them

— Jeremiah preached an entire sermon (Jer 7) to Israel against this mindset in Judaism that the temple was a "good luck charm" (Cf. Jer 7:4)

- "...the prophet" - Isaiah, whom Stephen quotes in v49-50

49 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND THE EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?' says the Lord, 'OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REST?

49 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is the footstool of My feet; What kind of house will you build for Me?' says the Lord, 'Or what place is there for My repose?

49 "'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house can you build for me,' declares the Lord, 'or what place is there in which I can rest?'

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?

- Stephen quotes Is 66:1-2 for support of his point...

— He reminded Israel's religious leaders that the Temple, which they held in very high esteem, was not the primary venue of God's person and work

— He argues that Jesus was God's designated replacement for the Temple; the author of Hebrews taught the same thing (Heb 8:1-2; 9:11-28)

- By way of application, Is 66:1-2 refers to the Tribulation Temple, the third of four Temples in biblical history and prophecy, and the only one that God does not ordain

— Stephen applies this passage, referring literally to the Tribulation Temple, to the Temple in his day (the Second Temple or Herodian Temple)

50 'WAS IT NOT MY HAND THAT MADE ALL THESE THINGS?'

50 'Was it not My hand which made all these things?'

50 It was my hand that made all these things, wasn't it?"

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

- Verses 49-50 are quoted from Is 66:1-2...

— Stephen uses this quote to demonstrate to the Sanhedrin that their own prophet Isaiah proves that God does not need a temple...He can dwell wherever He chooses

— So if God switches His program from His presence in the temple, to the church, where He indwells individual believers, this shouldn't be a surprise

Although God commanded the building of the Tabernacle, and allowed the building of the Temple, it was not for the purpose of confining God's presence or God's work. It was this point that the leadership of Israel failed to understand. They tried to limit God's presence and work within the confines of the Land and the Temple. God is free to work or appear anywhere. Stephen is trying to make the point that God is and will continue to work outside the confines of the Temple and outside the confines of the Land with this new faith.

Stephen was able to see, before many or maybe all of the apostles, the universality of this new faith. As a Hellenistic Jew, he was able to see the logical implications of the new faith.

In his first speech to the Sanhedrin, Peter had been quite brief and forthright (4:8-12). He had presented Jesus as the only name by which people must be saved (4:12). In his second speech to that body, Peter had again spoke briefly but more direct (5:29-32). He had charged the Sanhedrin with crucifying the Prince and Savior whom God had provided for His people (5:30-31). In this third speech before the Sanhedrin, Stephen spoke extensively, giving even more condemning evidence. The Sanhedrin was guilty of unresponsiveness to God's Word, and of betraying and murdering the Righteous One (v52).

- (f) Current generation imitating previous generation (7:51-53)
 - (i) Resisting the Spirit (7:51)

51 "You men who are **stiff-necked** and **uncircumcised in heart and ears** are **always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.**

51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

51 "You stubborn people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do.

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

- The Sanhedrin brought charges against Stephen; in concluding his defense, he levels even more serious charges against them; the accused becomes the accuser...
- By rejecting Jesus, the Sanhedrin were doing exactly what their forefathers had done in rejecting God's other anointed servants, such as Joseph and Moses
- "...stiff-necked" - self-willed; stubborn; Moses used this word to describe the Israelites after they rebelled against God and worshipped the golden calf (Cf. Ex 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deut 9:6)
- "...uncircumcised in heart and ears" - this too was based on something God said about Israel in the OT (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; 9:26; Ezek 44:7)
- Stephen's hearers had been physically circumcised, they remained "uncircumcised" in their affections and responsiveness to God's Word. They were resisting the Holy Spirit rather than allowing Him to control them.
- Stephen is communicating to them that what really pleases God is not a person who is a Jew, but a believing Jew (Matt 3:9; Rom 2:28-29). The Sanhedrin was made up of Jewish unbelievers.
- "...always resisting the Holy Spirit" - Israel has always resisted the Spirit of God, and nothing had changed up until the time of Stephen's sermon
- This is a refutation of Irresistible Grace. If Irresistible Grace was biblical, how do you explain the centuries of Israel's resistance of God's Spirit that Stephen speaks of here? (Cf.

Gen 6:3)

- They were resisting the Holy Spirit just like their fathers did (Is 63:10). By resisting Stephen, who was full of the Holy Spirit (6:3,5), they were resisting the Holy Spirit.
- "...you are doing just as your fathers did" - you are just like your fathers; he uses Moses' very words (Ex 33:3,5)

(ii) Prophet killers (7:52)

52 Which one of the prophets did **yourfathers** not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, and you have now become **betrayers** and murderers of Him;

52 Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors fail to persecute? They killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers.

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:

- Israel's national trait: deadly hostility toward the messengers of God. Jesus makes the same point about Israel's rejection and persecution of the prophets (Cf. Matt 23:35).

— Part of the prophet's ministry was announcing the coming of the Messiah (Cf. Luke 24:27,44)

- "...your fathers" - Stephen previously associated himself with "our fathers" (v2,11-12,15,19,44-45), but now disassociated himself from the Sanhedrin by referring to "your fathers"

— "Our fathers" trusted and obeyed God; "your fathers" were the unresponsive apostates who persecuted and killed the prophets

— The Jews' ill treatment of their prophets was well known and self-admitted (Cf. 2 Chr 36:15-16; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30). They had consistently resisted God's messengers sent to them, even killing the heralds ("those who had previously announced the coming") of God's "Righteous One" (Cf. 3:14; 1 Kings 19:10,14; Neh 9:26; Jer 26:20-24; Matt 23:29-36; Luke 6:23; 11:47-51; 13:34; 1 Thess 2:15; Heb 11:36-38).

— Stephen then tells the Sanhedrin that they are repeating the exact same sin as their forebearers who ignored, rejected, mistreated, and oftentimes killed

— The sin of 1st century Israel was even worse because the One whom the prophets pointed to actually showed up in the flesh and talked to them face to face

- It's easy to make the case that every person who ever lived are the people who are responsible for crucifying Jesus Christ, but that is not the point Stephen is making here. He's concentrating on the guilt of the religious leaders in 1st century Israel.
- Stephen said the Sanhedrin members were responsible for the betrayal and murder of that same One, Jesus
- "... betrayers" - the same word used to describe Judas Iscariot
- The Sanhedrin had not only become His "betrayers," they have also become His murderers

(iii) Law breakers (7:53)

- 53 you who received the Law **as ordained by angels**, and yet did not keep it."
- 53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it."
- 53 You received the Law as ordained by angels, and yet you haven't obeyed it!"
- 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.
- "...as ordained by angels" - Cf. Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2
- Stephen is saying that the greatest manifestations of God, in this case the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, have nothing to do with the temple in Jerusalem
- It's one thing to break all the laws, which pointed to the Messiah (John 5:39,46), but it's another thing entirely to reject the One to whom the Law pointed to

The primary theme of Stephen's speech is that Israel's leaders had failed to recognize that God had told His people ahead of time that they could expect a change. They had falsely concluded that the present state of Judaism was the final stage in God's plan of revelation and redemption. We, too, can become so preoccupied with the past and the present that we forget what God has revealed about the future. We need to keep looking ahead. A second, related theme, is that Israel's leaders had departed from God's priorities to give prominence to secondary issues for their own glory (the Holy Land, Moses, the temple). We also can think too highly of our own country, our leaders, and our place of worship. Another related theme, the theme of Israel's rejection of the Lord's anointed servants, also runs through Stephen's speech. Jesus was another of God's anointed servants. The Jews had dealt with Him as they had dealt with the other anointed servants whom God had sent them. They could expect to experience the consequences of their rejection as their forefathers had. We need to observe the pattern of *humiliation followed by glorification*, that has marked the careers of God's servants in the past, and to anticipate that pattern in our own careers.

(C) Stephen's martyrdom (7:54-60)

54 Now when they heard this, they were **infuriated**, and they *began gnashing their teeth* at him.

54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began gnashing their teeth* at him.

54 While they were listening to these things, they became more and more furious and began to grind their teeth at him.

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

- "...infuriated" - *diapriō*, "cut to the quick" [NASB95]; convicted (Cf. John 16:8)

— The Jews had the same reaction to Peter's sermon (Cf. 2:37) and Peter and the apostles response to the Sanhedrin (Cf. 5:33)

— Why are the unbelieving Jews in Acts continually "infuriated" ("cut to the quick") when the Word is preached? Because of the nature of God's Word (Heb 4:12) and the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16-17).

— When God's Word is taught in an uncompromising way, it has a way of laying people bear and convicting them (John 16:8)

- "...gnashing their teeth" - typically used to describe people in hell (Matt 13:50)

55 But he, being **full of the Holy Spirit**, looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus **standing** at the right hand of God;

55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

55 But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

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,

- "...full of the Holy Spirit" - this was one of the criterion given to become a deacon (Cf. 6:3)

- "...standing" - Stephen saw a vision of Jesus, *standing* at the right hand of God

— Jesus is consistently viewed as *sitting* at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22)

— The only time Jesus is ever described as *standing* at the right hand of God is here (v55-56)

— When Scripture views Jesus as sitting at the right hand of God, it emphasizes that His work of providing salvation and sacrifice is a finished work. There is no remaining work to do to secure the salvation of mankind. It is finished.

— When Scripture views Jesus as standing, it views Him as stilling working in the area of sustaining the saints; this work continues

- This vision of God's Throne Room in heaven is similar to visions that Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and John saw
- This is one of the things that makes Jesus' high priestly ministry different from the ministry of the Aaronic priests in the OT. The animal sacrifices only temporarily dealt with the sin problem, so their work was never done. They simply kicked the can of indebtedness for sin down the road one more year on the Day of Atonement. See [Present Ministry of Christ](#) for details on Jesus' current job description.
- It may also imply Jesus' welcome of Stephen into His presence as the first Christian martyr

56 and he said, "Behold, I **see the heavens opened** and the **Son of Man** standing at the right hand of God."

56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

56 He said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

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

- "...I see the heavens opened" - the same claim made by Jesus at His trial (Matt 26:64)
- They heard this before from Jesus in the trial: "The next time you see me you are going to see me in glory" (Matt 27:64; Luke 2:69)
- "...Son of Man" - our Lord's usual designation of Himself, this is the only place where that is used by someone other than Jesus
- Jesus used this title for Himself when he stood before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69)
- Stephen was saying that his vision confirmed Jesus' claim to be the Son of Man, and that access to God was through Him, not through temple ritual as the Jews taught (1 Tim 2:5)
- This is the last time this title of Jesus is used in the NT; from this point forward, he is referred to only as the "Son of God"
- Stephen becomes the first martyr, but that is backwards: not "martyr" because he died, but he died because he was a martyr
- Martyr means being a good witness right to the end

57 But they shouted with loud voices, and covered their ears and **rushed** at him with one mind.

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.

57 But they shouted out loud, stopped listening, and together they all rushed at him,

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

- Stephen's vision amounted to blasphemy to the Sanhedrin. They knew that Stephen referred to Jesus with the title Son of Man.

— At that point, the Sanhedrin had heard enough; the conviction got so bad they couldn't stand it any longer. The Jews believed that no one had the authority to be at God's right hand in heaven.

— Because of this, they cried out in agony, covered their ears so they couldn't hear any more, and seized him to prevent him from speaking further or escaping

- "...rushed" - *hormaō*, same words used in Luke 8:33 about the swine rushing down the steep bank into the lake and drowned

— This "rushing" of Stephen was driven by a mob mentality. No vote, no deliberation, no trial. They are so enraged that they can't hold themselves back from killing him.

58 When they had driven him **out of the city**, they *began stoning him*; and the witnesses laid aside their cloaks at the feet of a young man named **Saul**.

58 When they had driven him out of the city, they *began stoning him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

58 ran him outside of the city, and began to stone him to death. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

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.

- "...out of the city" - interesting that they wanted to kill Stephen outside the city

— They did the same thing to Jesus (Heb 13:12)

— By taking Stephen outside the city to kill him, they are actually following the Mosaic Law (Lev 24:14). They pick and choose what laws they want to follow, when it suits their selfish desires.

- "...stoning him" - stoning was the penalty for blasphemy according to the Mosaic Law (Lev 24:16; Deut 17:7). The Romans had taken away the authority of the Jews to execute criminals (Cf. John 18:31); this is why the Jews turned Jesus over to the Romans for execution.

— So if Rome took away the Jew's right to execute, what is going on here with Stephen?

- Josephus (*Antiquities*) states that the Romans removed the right of the Jews to execute criminals, except in cases that involved the temple. Since Stephen was accused of speaking against the temple (Cf. 6:13-14).

- A second explanation is that this event may have occurred in 36 AD. In that year, Vitellus became the new imperial legate of Judea. He deposed Pontius Pilate from his procuratorship in 36 AD. Pilate's successor, Marullus, did not arrive until 38 AD. So there may have been a break between the deposing of Pilate and the arrival of the new procurator during this time, which would've left the Sanhedrin without tight Roman oversight. [Fruchtenbaum]
- A third explanation is that the Sanhedrin was in such a mob mindset that they didn't pay any attention to the law
 - The Sanhedrin laid their robes at the feet of Saul because they were now actually trying to follow the Law
 - In Deut 17:6-7 it says that you cannot execute someone without testimony/evidence from 2-3 witnesses. In addition, the first person to throw a stone at the guilty person had to be one of the witnesses.
 - The Sanhedrin are laying down their robes because they are the ones who will be throwing the first stones
 - "...Saul" - first mention in Scripture; Saul isn't just a casual observer or bystander; it implies that he was one that did some of the accusing (although does not imply he was a member of the Sanhedrin)
 - The fact that Saul was present, essentially overseeing and approving of the murder/martyrdom of Stephen, is a turning point in Acts and in Saul's life
 - Stephen's martyrdom becomes the transition from Peter to Paul in Acts

59 They went on stoning Stephen as he **called on the Lord** and said, "**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!**"

59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

59 As they continued to stone Stephen, he kept praying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

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

- "...called on" - *epikaloumenon*, to cry out to someone; Peter exhorted his hearers to do the same for deliverance (2:21)

- Stephen died just as Jesus did, with prayers for his executioners (Cf. Luke 23:34,46)

- "...Lord Jesus" - the typical pattern for prayer throughout the Bible is to pray to the Father, *through* Jesus the Son, *in the power of* the Holy Spirit

— However, this is not a hard and fast rule. Considering the unity of the Godhead, there are times in Scripture when people pray or cry out to Jesus (Cf. John 14:14).

- "...receive my spirit" - this is similar to what Jesus said to the Father when He committed His spirit to God the Father (Luke 23:46); Stephen committed his spirit to God the Son

— The soul of a believer immediately goes into the presence of the Lord (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21-23). The soul of an unbeliever goes immediate to torment in Hades (Luke 16:22-23)

60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out with a loud voice, "**Lord, do not hold this sin against them!**" Having said this, he **fell asleep**.

60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, don't hold this sin against them!" After he had said this, he died.

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

- "...Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" - similar words as used by Jesus from the Cross (Luke 23:34)

— This is evidence of Stephen's filling of the Holy Spirit, who is speaking through Stephen the very same words that Jesus spoke while He was unjustly dying at the hands of sinful men

- "...fell asleep" - his body, not his soul, fell asleep to await resurrection (Cf. 13:36; John 11:11; 1 Thess 4:13,15)

— "Sleep" is only used of believers, never of unbelievers; this shows God's viewpoint of the death of a believer. It is only a temporary suspension of physical activity, not spirit or soul activity.

- We don't know Saul's reaction to Stephen's death, however, this may have had an impact preparing him for the Damascus road experience yet to come...

- Stephen is not a martyr because he died, rather he died because he was a martyr (witness)

In the three trials before the Sanhedrin that Luke recorded thus far, the first ended with a warning (4:17,21), the second with flogging (5:40), and the third with stoning (7:58-60). The Sanhedrin had abandoned Gamaliel's former moderating advice (5:35-39). It did not have the authority to execute someone without Roman sanction, and Jewish law forbade executing a person on the same day as his trial. However, since witnesses were present to cast the first stones, as the Mosaic Law prescribed, Stephen's death seems not to have been simply the result of mob violence, but official action. Probably it was mob violence precipitated and controlled by the Sanhedrin along the lines of Jesus' execution (Cf. Matt 26:67-68).

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. — Terullian

Ps 116:15: Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.