

Acts 7:14f

We pick back up in the middle of Stephen's defense, which is more of a defense of the Gospel message than a personal defense. Remember the accusation is blasphemy (saying that Jesus is God) and that he has spoken against the Law and the Temple (which is how they would see the claim that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the embodiment of the Holy Spirit). Jews saw the Temple as the residence of the glory of God, the *Shekinah*. (1Kings 8:10-11) Christians saw Jesus as the manifestation of the glory of God. Stephen will attempt to show them that the glory of God was manifested in many ways. He quotes portions of 22 verses from the Law and the prophets. (Could you defend your beliefs with quotations of Scripture? (1Peter 3:15) The chapter ends with Stephen having a revelation of glory.

Going back to verse 9, we see Stephen pointing out that their revered forefathers didn't always get it right. It was jealousy that caused them to sell the brother that would be their savior, Joseph. In that sense, Joseph was a type of the Messiah to come who would also be sold because of jealousy (Mark 15:10). Their forefathers were also guilty of opposing God.

14-15 This is the section of Genesis we have yet to study. Joseph went down into Egypt and eventually the whole family of Jacob joined him there, spared from the famine. Jesus is the bread of life that spares us from spiritual famine.

16 "They" refers to Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's body was buried in Shechem. (Joshua 24:32) Some think that this was a mistake, but Stephen is very Bible literate. It may be that Abraham originally purchased it when he was in Shechem and built an altar (Genesis 12:6-7), and it reverted back to the native people only to be repurchased again. He has established that he believes in the same God, and acknowledges the same forefathers. He may also be showing that God has intervened in history in the lives of individuals before the Law was recorded and the Temple built.

17-37 Stephen focused the majority of his sermon on the life of Moses. The glory of God appeared to Moses in places other than the Temple. The reason he focused on Moses is evident in his final remark about him. God was going to raise up someone like him. He had been a deliverer who was rejected by his people. The picture of a rejected deliverer is also mentioned in verse 27. He clearly stated that he was a type of the Messiah to come. He was a worker of miracles. He was rejected from the beginning. He was a shepherd. He was to usher in a new work of God. He was delivering them from bondage and from the enemy that held them captive. It was also a rebuttal to the accusation that he spoke against the Law. He was saying that he believed the same stories they did about their lawgiver. Unlike them, he saw the life of Moses and his prophecy as pointing to Jesus of Nazareth.

38-39 He affirms that the Law was from God, (living word – *logia*) but quickly followed that affirmation by pointing out that the Children of Israel rebelled against Moses and God. They resisted the direction God was leading and wanted to go back to their old bondage of Egypt. It wasn't he who was rejecting Moses but Israel and now they are rejecting his message again. What a perfect parallel of rejecting the Messiah and wanting to stay under bondage of the Law. John 5:46

40-43 Rejecting God was a recurrent theme with Israel. Could they not miss that he was accusing them of repeating their history? Amos 5:25-27

44- 47 Then he responded to their accusation of contempt for the Temple. He tells how David had it in his heart and Solomon built it, affirming his belief that it was the work of God.

48-50 He reminded them that even though the Temple was built at God's direction, it was never meant to be a place that contained God. He is too big to be contained. Our physical hands can't really build Him a house. It was merely a place to worship. 1Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1-2 He powerfully proved his case from the Scriptures that the Temple wasn't the only place that the glory of God resided and that to say so was to deny Scripture. Who was misusing the Word?

51-53 Now that he has shown how they rejected Joseph and Moses and David and tried to confine God when the Word declared He can't be confined. He then connects what they are doing to the examples he has given. (Luke 11:47-51) If they were open to the work of the Holy Spirit they would have been convicted and repented. But he declared they always resist the Holy Spirit. He knew the outcome was not going to be good, that it would follow the pattern of history. Who was really on trial? Stephen laid out an airtight case for their conviction.

54-58 They acted exactly in keeping with the examples Stephen had given. In words reminiscent of Ezekiel's visions, Stephen saw the glory of Jesus, exactly what they were debating with him about. The right hand of God is the place the Messiah was to ascend, the place of authority. (Daniel 7:13-14) They didn't want to hear another word. His argument was so convincing and words so powerful that they felt they must silence him. So they dragged him out to stone him and had a man named Saul watch their cloaks while they stoned him. Saul may have been one that debated Stephen as he was trained under a leading rabbi. Watching Stephen graciously face death had to have a profound impression on him.

59-60 He died like his Savior, asking God to forgive them. Luke 23:34