ACTS 7

The Son of Man Standing

Stephen tells Israel's story to the Council, and heaven opens over the first martyr

> *"and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'"*
> ACTS 7:56

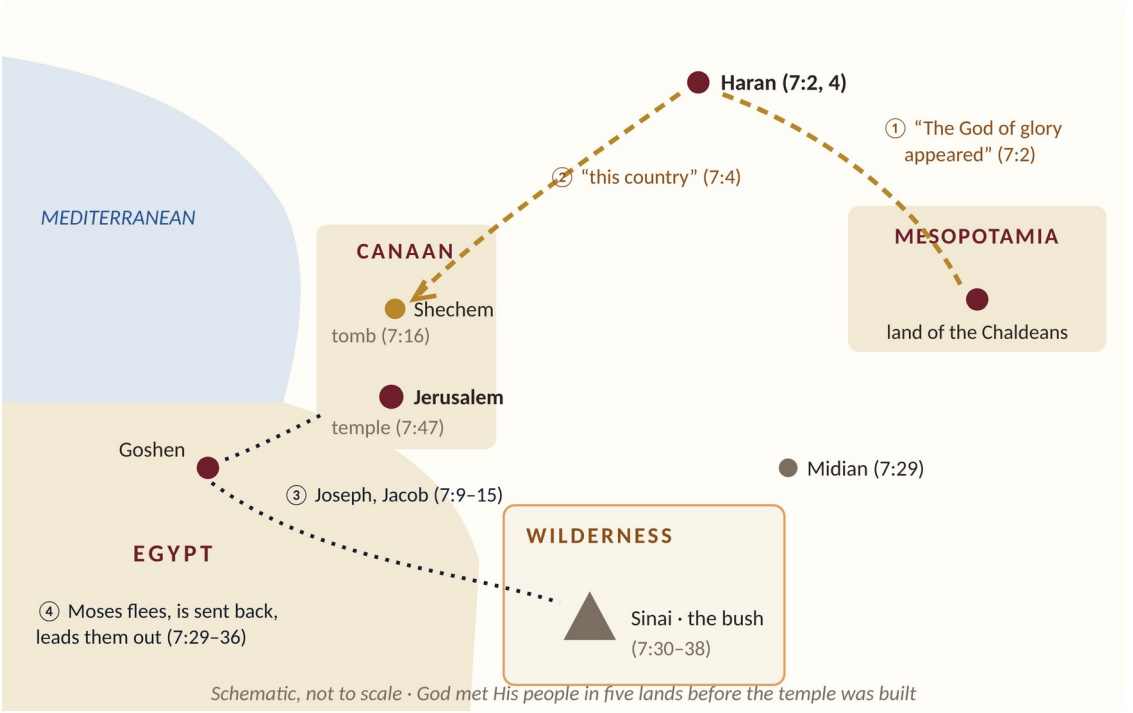
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Luke has brought us

1. Acts 6 introduced Stephen as one of the seven chosen to serve the widows: “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (6:5), “full of grace and power,” who “was performing great wonders and signs”…

2. Sproul sets the scene: “Stephen was on trial for his life before the highest earthly court of Israel.”

3. The speech has two threads running side by side.



The God of Glory Appeared

Abraham without a foot of ground, Joseph sold and raised up — God at work far from any temple

ACTS 7:2

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,

DAVID GUZIK

Not so much a defense; promise without proof; Joseph pictures Jesus.

R.C. SPROUL

On trial for his life; a lesson in redemptive history.

MATTHEW HENRY

A church long before the temple; promises slow but sure.

δόξα
DOXA · "GLORY"

Stephen opens with "The God of glory appeared" (v. 2) and his last sight on earth is "the glory of God" (v. 55).

This Moses Whom They Disowned

Born in the hottest persecution, pushed away by his brothers, sent back as ruler and deliverer

ACTS 7:35

"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.

DAVID GUZIK

Favored from birth; God appeared before there was a temple.

C.H. SPURGEON

A star of hope in the darkest night; eighty before his lifework.

MATTHEW HENRY

Born when persecution was hottest; suffering times are growing times.

σημεῖα
SĒMEIA · "SIGNS"

Moses led the people out "performing wonders and signs" (v. 36).

A Prophet Like Me — and a House Not Made with Hands

The Prophet promised, the calf preferred, the tent, the temple, and the Most High who cannot be housed

ACTS 7:37

"This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.'

DAVID GUZIK

Confronted their idolatry of the temple; God too big for it.

R.C. SPROUL

Only one charge was true — Jesus did say He would destroy the temple.

C.H. SPURGEON

Moses a type of Christ; idols out of what we can see.

MATTHEW HENRY

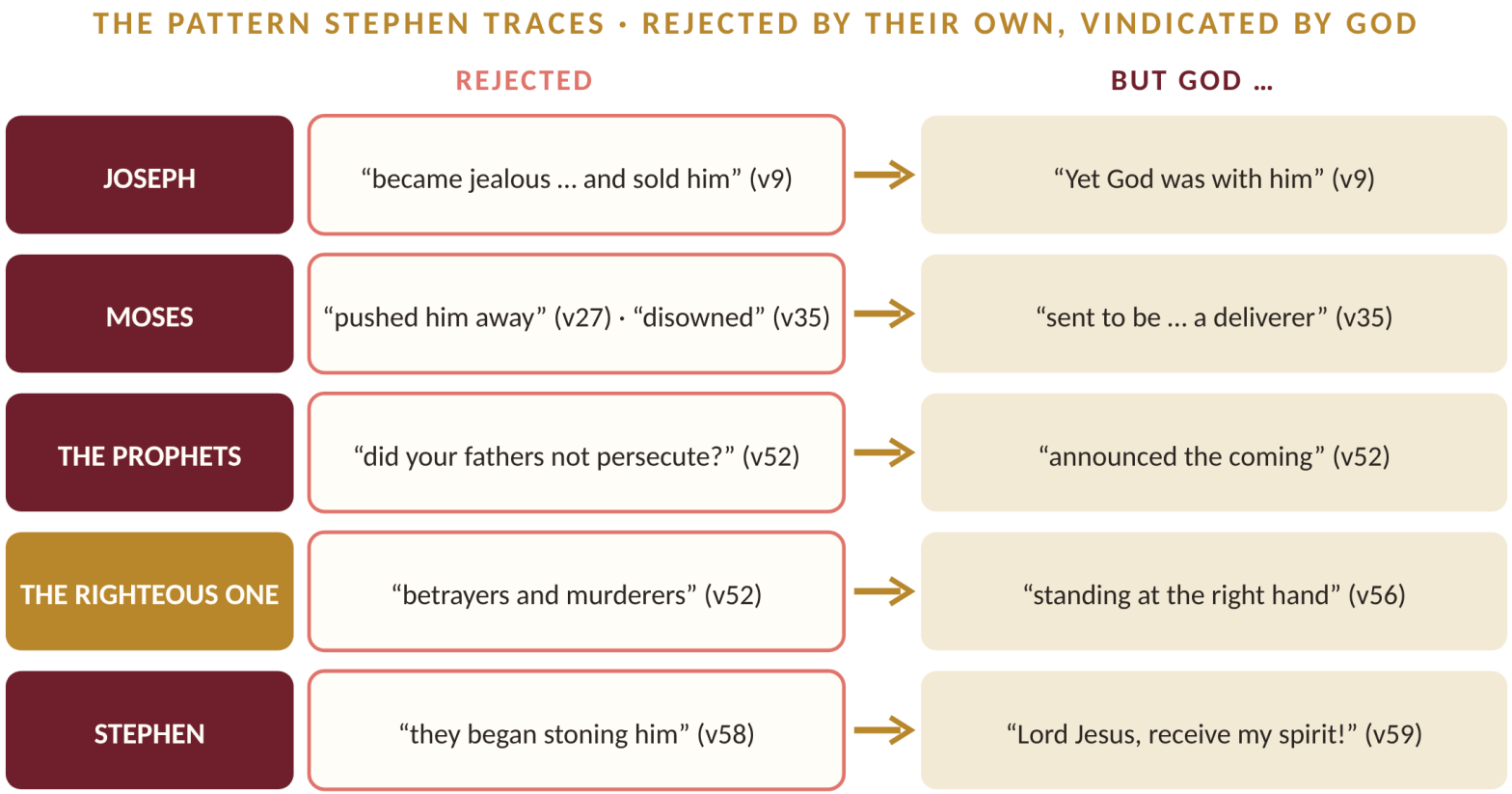
God not confined to places; the whole world His temple.

λόγια ζῶντα

LOGIA ZŌNTA · "LIVING ORACLES"

Logion is an utterance of God — Paul uses it when he says the Jews "were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2).

Rejected by their own, vindicated by God



"You are doing just as your fathers did" (v51) — and God is doing just as He always did.

Read each row left to right: every deliverer God sent was first refused by his own people, and every time God had the last word.

Always Resisting the Holy Spirit

The defendant becomes the prosecutor: stiff necks, deaf ears, and the murder of the Righteous One

ACTS 7:51

"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.

DAVID GUZIK

As Israel was in its history, so you are today.

R.C. SPROUL

It never reached your heart.

MATTHEW HENRY

Inflexible like their fathers; more left unsaid.

σκληροτράχηλοι
SKLĒROTRACHĒLOI · "STIFF-NECKED"

Only here in the New Testament: sklēros (hard) + trachēlos (neck), the picture of an ox that will not bend to the yoke.

Lord Jesus, Receive My Spirit

Heaven opened, the Son of Man standing, a prayer for killers, and a young man named Saul

ACTS 7:55

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;

DAVID GUZIK

Standing ovation or Advocate; fell asleep; no Stephen, no Paul.

R.C. SPROUL

The Judge became the defense attorney; enter Saul.

C.H. SPURGEON

Deacon, preacher, martyr — the Spirit's calm and the living Christ.

MATTHEW HENRY

Christ for him, no matter who is against him.

ἑστῶτα

HESTŌTA · "STANDING"

The perfect participle of histēmi, used twice (vv. 55, 56).

Like Master, like servant

LIKE MASTER, LIKE SERVANT · HOW LUKE TELLS TWO DEATHS

	JESUS (LUKE)	STEPHEN (ACTS)
THE CHARGE	false witnesses: “this temple”	false witnesses: “this place” (6:13–14)
THE VISION	Son of Man “SEATED” (Lk 22:69)	Son of Man “standing” (7:56)
THE PLACE	“outside the gate” (Heb 13:12)	“driven him out of the city” (7:58)
HIS SPIRIT	“INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT”	“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” (7:59)
HIS KILLERS	“Father, forgive them” (Lk 23:34)	“do not hold this sin against them!”
THE CRY	“crying out with a loud voice” (23:46)	“cried out with a loud voice” (7:60)

The first martyr dies the way his Lord died — and sees his Lord risen to receive him.

Luke wrote both books; set the two columns side by side and see how closely the first martyr’s death follows his Lord’s.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The speech is an answer, not an apology.

Charged with speaking against the temple and the Law (6:13), Stephen shows from Israel's own story that God met His people before the temple, gave the Law as "living"…

2

Glory at both ends.

"The God of glory appeared" to Abraham in Mesopotamia (v2); Stephen dies seeing "the glory of God" (v55).

3

Holy ground was in the desert.

The only place the speech calls holy is the bush in Sinai (v33).

4

Every deliverer was refused first.

Joseph sold, Moses pushed away and disowned, the prophets persecuted, the Righteous One murdered.

More to carry

5

Hand-made religion.

The fathers rejoiced “in the works of their hands” (v41); God does not dwell in houses “made by human hands” (v48).

6

Outward signs, uncircumcised hearts.

Sproul: “It never reached your heart.”

7

The Judge stood up.

Christ is seated in Luke 22:69 but standing in Acts 7:56.

8

He died the way his Lord died.

Committing his spirit, praying for his killers, crying with a loud voice, outside the city — Luke tells Stephen’s death in the colors of Jesus’ death.

Talk it through

1. Abraham received “not even a foot of ground,” only a promise (7:5). What promise of God am I being asked to live on without outward proof yet?

2. Joseph and Moses were both rejected by their own brothers before God used them. Where have I been rejected — or where have I rejected someone God sent?

3. Stephen’s hearers had the temple, the Law and the right family tree, but resisted the Holy Spirit. What religious “good things” could I be hiding behind?

4. What do I treat as if God lived there — a building, a ministry, a routine, a past experience — instead of meeting Him wherever He speaks?

5. Jesus stood for Stephen. How does knowing Christ is “for me” change the way I face hostility, a parole board, a diagnosis or my own death?

CLOSING

Acts 7 is the story of a God who will not be boxed in and a people who kept refusing the men He sent. Stephen told that story to the men about to kill him, and then saw the Righteous One standing at God's right hand. The same Lord stands for His witnesses today — and the man holding the coats is never beyond His reach.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Acts study page.