

## Transition from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria(6:8-15; 7:1-60)

The winds of change began soon after the seven were appointed. For the first time the power to perform miracles was done outside of the apostles with Stephen as Joel had prophesied as quoted by Peter:

*"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. Acts 2:16-18*

*They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, 6:5  
And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 6:8  
And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. 6:10  
being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand 7:55*

We know nothing else about Stephen but since his name is Hellenistic, he was probably not a native of the land of Israel. Since Tarsus is in Cilicia and Saul was born there, it may be that Saul also knew him.

*Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. Acts 6:9*

*But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people." Acts 21:39*

A great debate was held and Stephen's wisdom and power were unassailable.

*And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Acts 6:10-11*

*But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Mt 10:19-20*

*But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Mark 13:11*

Since they were arguing with the Holy Spirit they could not possibly out think or out reason the discussion. Their integrity and honor were non-existent. They followed the example of Jezebel.

*She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; 10 and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, "You have blasphemed God and the king." Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die. I King 21:9-10*

The False Charges against Stephen:

*We have heard him speak blasphemous words against **Moses** and **God**." 6:11*

*This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this **holy place** and **the law**; 6:13*

*Jesus of Nazareth will destroy **this place** and change the **customs which Moses delivered**. 6:14*

The court is the same one Jesus faced and the one Peter and John faced and later all of the twelve.

### The Goal of Stephen's Words

Since we know Stephen was inspired, but that unlike Peter and John and the apostles, Stephen followed Jesus in death, it was not the purpose of the Spirit here to vindicate Stephen or bring about his release. Nor was it the goal to keep the church intact in Jerusalem for this defense also resulted in the scattering of the entire church into Judea and Samaria. Since the Word always accomplishes its goal,

*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Isa 55:11*

In fact, the results were what God desired and what Jesus had already affirmed would occur(Acts 1:8). Luke's words just before this event may imply that this part of the work (being His witness in Jerusalem) had been completed.

*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7*

The words of Stephen are the final indictment and the final chance of those in the Counsel and all who were present at that event.

**1. God called / blessed Abraham before he entered the land and long before there was a temple, Law, or Moses. He received no inheritance, only promised thru a child not yet born(7:1-5).**

Paul who is even then in the audience would make some of these same points in Romans and Galatians. That God blessed Abraham before circumcision(Rom 4). That he was reckoned righteous by faith and not the Law. The possibility also exists that the Spirit begins with words all can agree upon to calm them down and get them to listen to the words that would come later. God wants and Abraham's Native land was Ur of the Chaldees, but at God's word he left there and with Terah went to Haran:

*This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ... 27 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out*

with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. 32 So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran. Gen 11:27-128; 31-32

What Stephen revealed is that Abraham left Ur at God's word then left Haran at God's word.

*The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 "and said to him, "Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' 4 "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. Acts 7:1-3*

This occurred before the words recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 which were given after Terah died in Haran.

## **2. Gave Abraham covenant of circumcision, short genealogy of Patriarchs, Acts 7:5-7**

## **3. God delivered Israel into Egypt so they could be saved from the famine, but they rejected the deliverer that brought them there(Joseph). Acts 9:9-16**

Here is the first major point. Because of Joseph's dreams that predicted a future good, they sold him, but in spite of their God hatred, God used him to bless them(just like Jesus).

## **4. God delivered Israel out of Egypt by Moses but they too rejected him as their deliverer. 7:17-37**

### **A. They rejected him when he was forty**

*"This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. Acts 7:35*

### **B. When he was 80 he came and became their deliverer through many mighty works but they again rejected him and went after idols.**

*"whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, 40 "saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' Acts 7:39-40*

### **C. This is the Moses the lawgiver who prophesied of a second lawgiver(7:37)**

## **5. Although Moses gave them the Law they didn't keep it but worshiped the host of heaven 38-43**

## **6. First they had a tabernacle they took from place to place and even when David asked, It was not so important it could not wait for Solomon to build the house. Acts 7:44-47**

## **6. God made it clear that he doesn't dwell in houses made with hands. Acts 7:48-50**

*Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? Isa 66:1*

*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! 28 Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O Lord my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today; 29 that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. 30 And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive. 1Kings 8:27-30*

*blasphemous words against **Moses** and **God**. (6:11) against this **holy place** and **the law**; 6:13*

*He extolled God throughout the entire discussion;*

*Israel had never accepted or listened to Moses(and his hearers were no different).*

*Jerusalem and the temple were late comers in God's plan.*

*Jesus of Nazareth will destroy **this place** and change the **customs which Moses delivered**. 6:14*

*Moses promised another lawgiver and plainly stated they would have to follow him.*

## **Conclusion:**

*You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.*

*Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, Acts 7:52*

*you who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." Acts 7:53*

## **Result:**

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

*But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" Acts 7:55-56*

*Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. Acts 7:57-58*

*And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 7:59-60*