

# The Acts of the Apostles

## Lesson 8: The First Martyr

Acts 6:1 to 7:60

### **Acts 6:1**

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

The persecution of the church by the Jews was not the only trouble the apostles had to face. There was also trouble inside the church.



### **Acts 6:1**

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Up to this time, the collection and distribution of goods had been managed by the apostles. But with the growing number of people all needing spiritual and physical care, twelve men were no longer enough.



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The church was dividing into two groups:

1. the **Grecians** or Greek-speaking Jews from outside Judea.
2. the **Hebrews** or Palestinian Jews,



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The Greek-speaking Christians thought the apostles were favoring the Hebrew-speaking Christians.

(It could have simply been that none of the twelve spoke Greek!)



### **Acts 6:1**

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Persecution draws Christians together.  
Murmurings tear the church apart.



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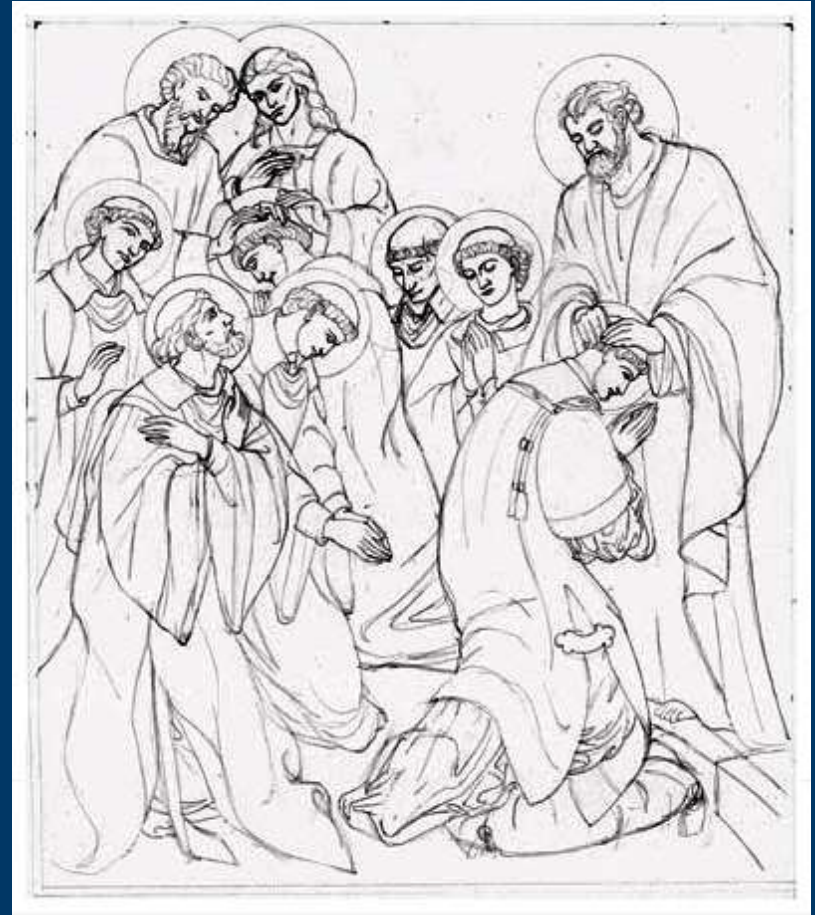
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The apostles' leadership was being challenged. How would they respond?



## Acts 6:2-4

- <sup>2</sup> Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.
- <sup>3</sup> Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.
- <sup>4</sup> But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.





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How does this compare with the qualifications they looked for when they chose a replacement for Judas?

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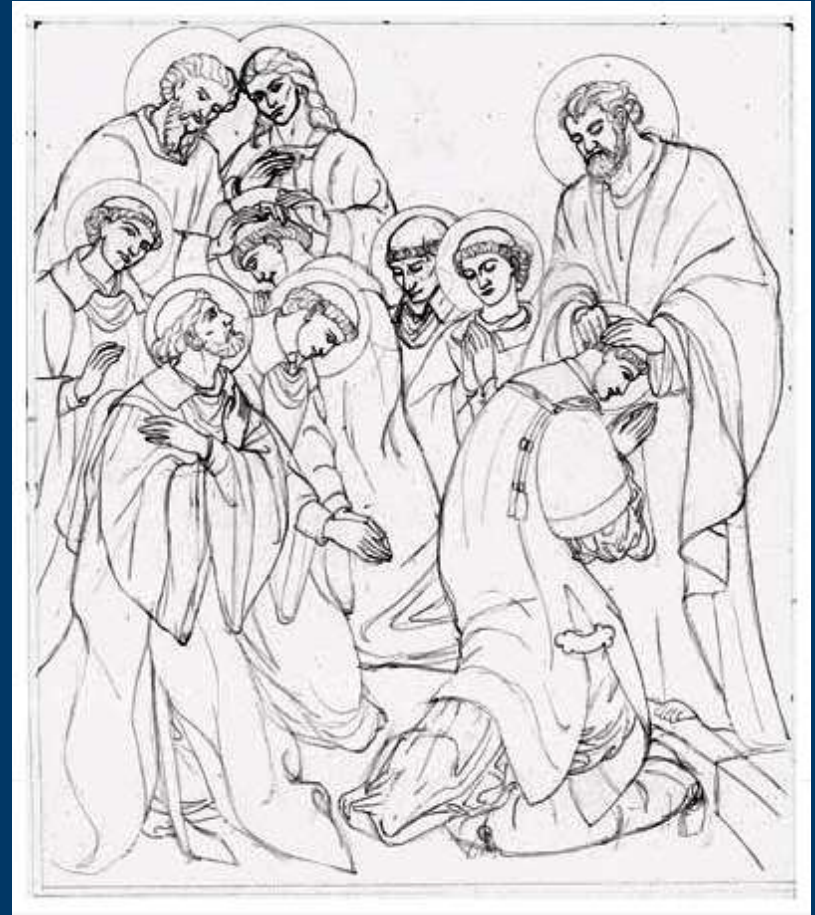
Now they were looking for Spirit-filled men of a good reputation who were walking in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## Acts 6:5-6

<sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole multitude:

and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

<sup>6</sup> Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their hands* on them.

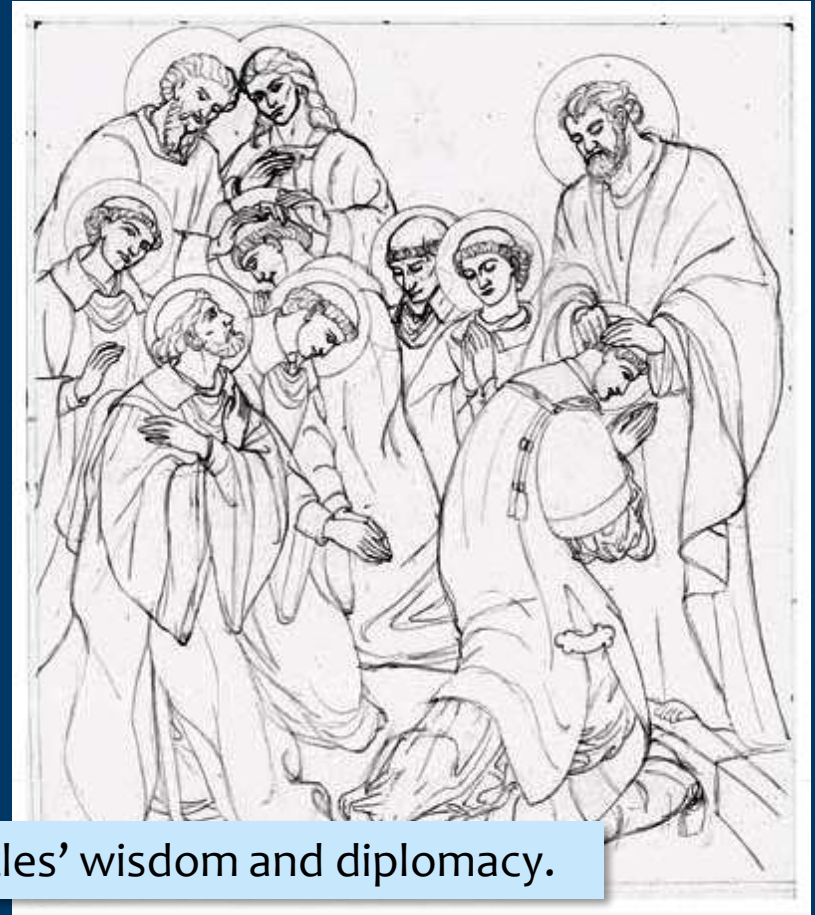


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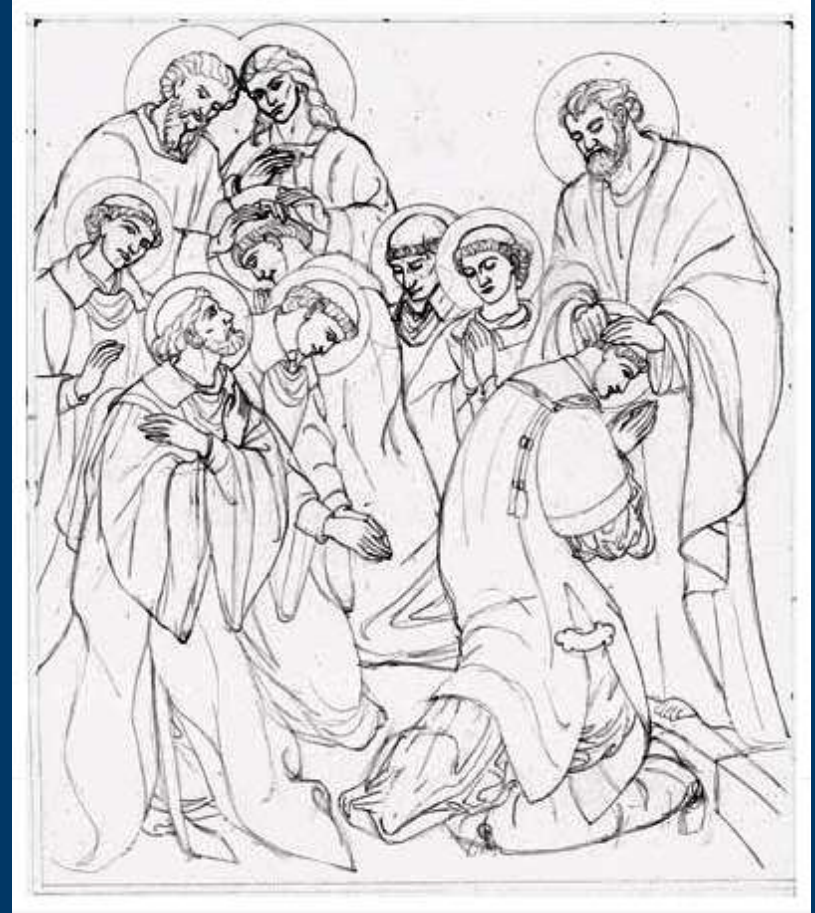


These are all Greek names, which shows the apostles' wisdom and diplomacy.

The work was now able to continue.

**Acts 6:7**

And the word of God increased;  
and the number of the disciples  
multiplied in Jerusalem greatly;  
and a great company of the priests  
were obedient to the faith.



The remainder of Chapter 5 and all of Chapter 6 focus on the short but powerful ministry of the man of God named Stephen.



## Acts 6:8

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.



## Acts 6:9-10

- 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.*
- 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.





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From the 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica:

“The Synagogue of the Libertines was an assembly of Hellenistic [Greek-speaking] Jews, ‘the Freedmen’ from Rome who were descendants of the Jews enslaved by Pompey after his conquest of Judaea in 63 BC.

These returned Jews, instead of being liberalized by their residence abroad, were more tenacious of Judaism, and more bitter against Stephen than those who had never left Judaea.”



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**Acts 21:39a**

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**Acts 21:39a**

But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia ...

**Acts 22:27-28**

<sup>27</sup> Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

<sup>28</sup> And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom.

And Paul said, But I was *free* born.



This would explain why Paul had been “more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers” (Gal. 1:14), and why he was there the day Stephen was put to death.

## Chapter 6 ends with the accusations that were made against Stephen:

### Acts 6:11-13

- <sup>11</sup> Then they suborned [bribed] men, which said, **We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.**
- <sup>12</sup> And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,
- <sup>13</sup> And set up false witnesses, which said, **This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:**



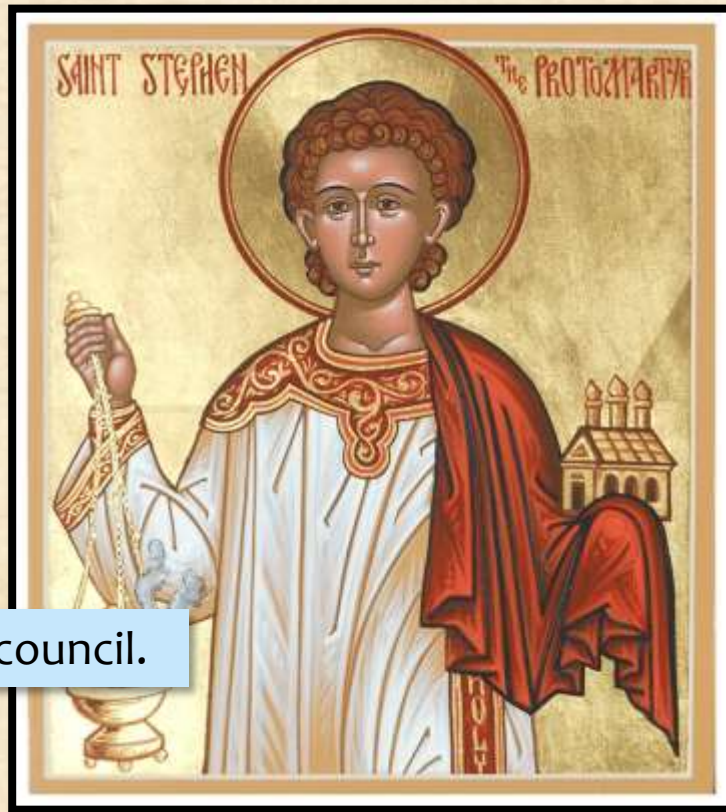
## Acts 6:14-15

- <sup>14</sup> For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.
- <sup>15</sup> And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.



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Now, Chapter 7 tells of his testimony to the Jewish council.



**Acts 7:1**

Then said the high priest,  
Are these things so?



Stephen was accused of speaking blasphemous words against God, Moses, the Law, and the temple.



Stephen was accused of speaking blasphemous words against God, Moses, the Law, and the temple.

He answered his accusers with a history of the Chosen People from Abraham to Jesus – a period that spanned about 2,000 years.



# ABRAHAM

## Acts 7:2-3

- <sup>2</sup> 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,
- <sup>3</sup> And said unto him,  
Get thee out of thy country,  
and from thy kindred,  
and come into the land which  
I shall shew thee.



# ABRAHAM

This is where the story of Abraham takes place.



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The term *Chaldeans* usually refers to the Babylonians, but it can also refer to a specific tribe that lived in the southern part of Babylon.





## Acts 7:4-5

- 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.
- 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.



# ABRAHAM

Genesis 12:5 tells of this:

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.



# ABRAHAM

## Acts 7:6-7

- <sup>6</sup> 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.
- <sup>7</sup> And the nation to whom they shall  
be in bondage will I judge, said God:  
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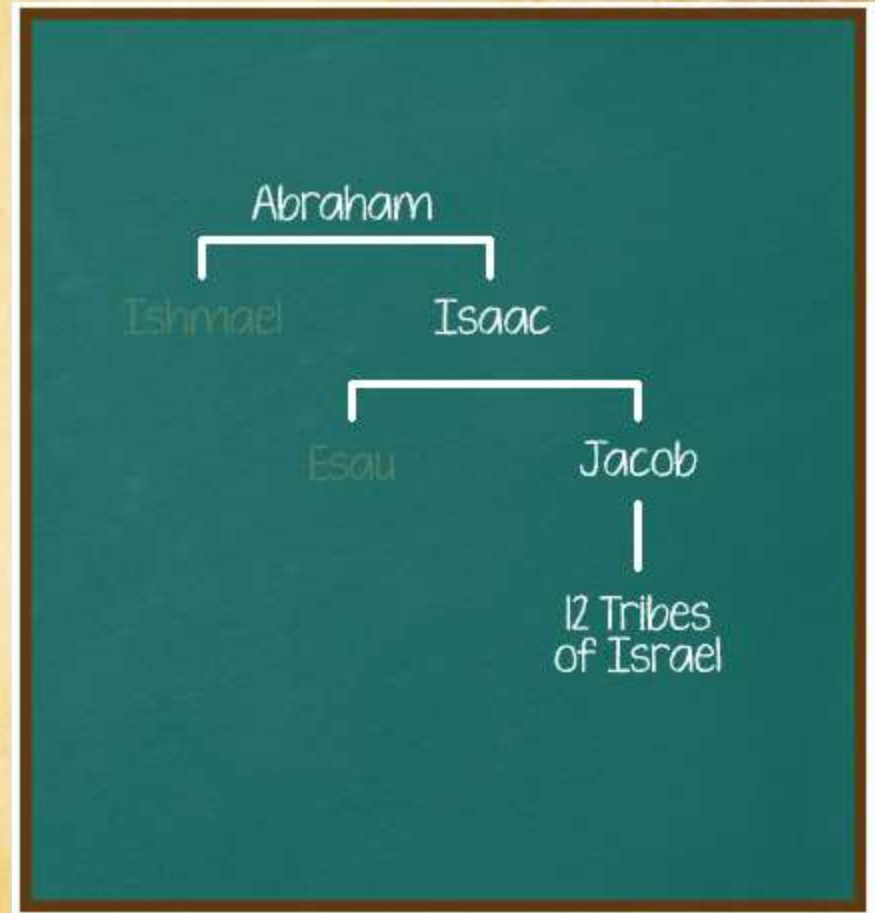
## This is quoted from Genesis 15:

- <sup>12</sup> And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.
- <sup>13</sup> And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is not theirs*, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;
- <sup>14</sup> And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

# ABRAHAM

## Acts 7:8

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



# JOSEPH

## Acts 7:9-10

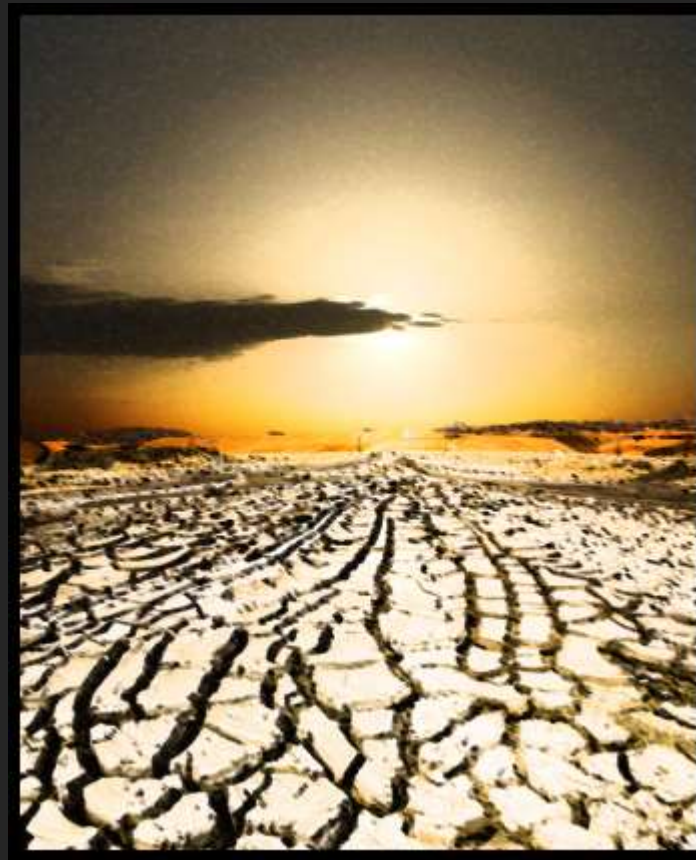
- <sup>9</sup> And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,
- <sup>10</sup> And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.



# JOSEPH

## Acts 7:11-12

- <sup>11</sup> Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.
- <sup>12</sup> But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.



# JOSEPH

## Acts 7:13-14

- <sup>13</sup> And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.
- <sup>14</sup> Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.





# JOSEPH

## Acts 7:15-16

<sup>15</sup> So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

<sup>16</sup> 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.*



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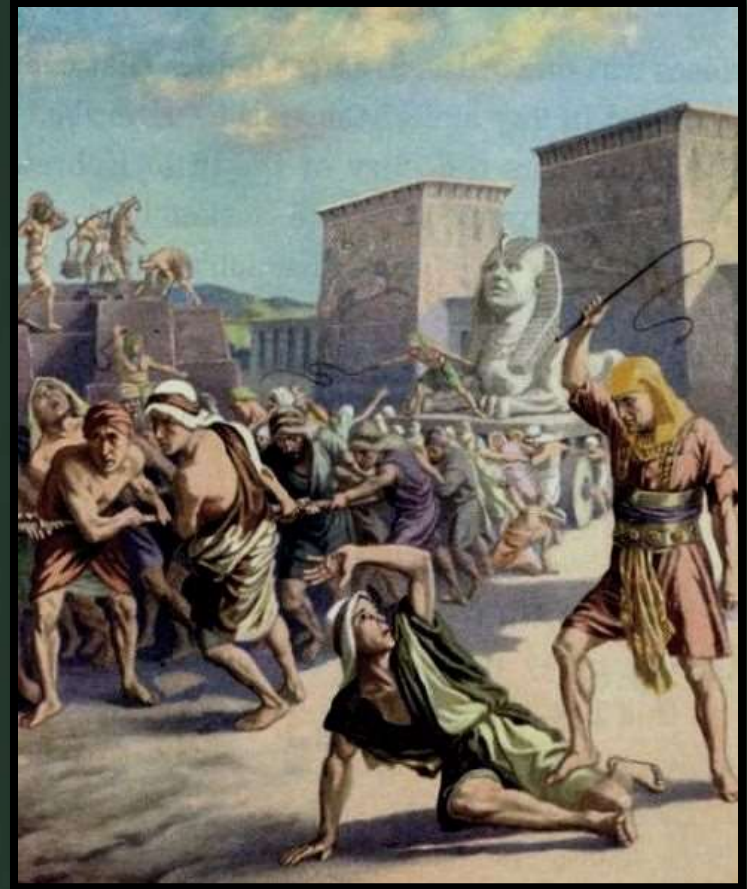
We read of Jacob's instructions for his burial in Genesis 49.

- <sup>29</sup> And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,  
<sup>30</sup> In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.  
<sup>31</sup> There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

## Between Joseph and Moses

### Acts 7:17-19

- 17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,
- 18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.
- 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.



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This is the promise Stephen spoke of in v. 6:

- <sup>6</sup> 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.

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- <sup>19</sup> 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.

This part is told in Exodus 1:

- <sup>15</sup> And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one *was* Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah:
- <sup>16</sup> And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see *them* upon the stools; if it *be* a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live.

# MOSES

## Acts 7:20-22

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



# MOSES

## Acts 7:23-25

- <sup>23</sup> And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.
- <sup>24</sup> And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:
- <sup>25</sup> For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.



# MOSES

## Acts 7:26-28

- 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?
- 27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?
- 28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?



E. J. POYNTER: 'Moses Slaying the Egyptian'  
[Dulwich's Bible Gallery]



# MOSES

## Acts 7:29

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



# MOSES

**Acts 7:29**

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

**The sons of Moses are named in 1 Chronicles 23:15:**

The sons of Moses were, Gershom, and Eliezer.



# MOSES



## Acts 7:30-32

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> 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,

<sup>32</sup> 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.

# MOSES

## Acts 7:33-34

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



# MOSES

## Acts 7:35

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



**Acts 7:36**

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



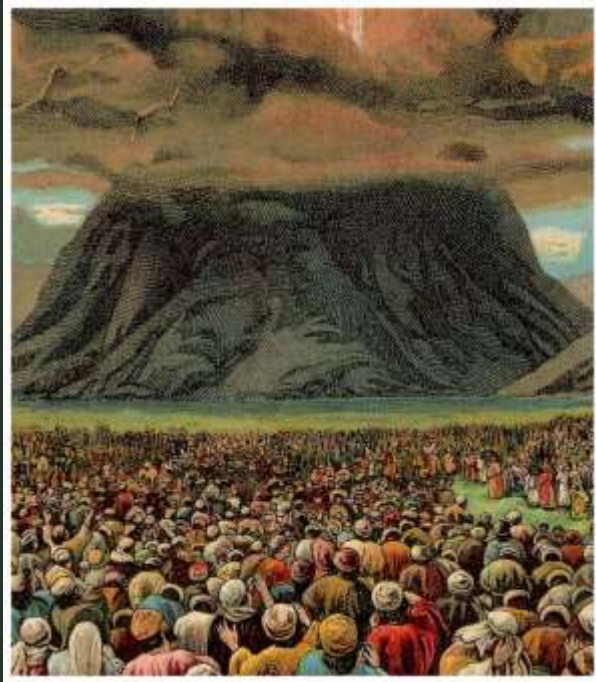
# MOSES

## Acts 7:37

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



# MOSES



## Acts 7:38-40

- <sup>38</sup> This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:
- <sup>39</sup> To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt.
- <sup>40</sup> 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.



# MOSES

## Acts 7:41

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



## Acts 7:42-43

- 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?
- 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.



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## This quote is from Amos 5:

- <sup>25</sup> Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
- <sup>26</sup> But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.
- <sup>27</sup> Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name *is* The God of hosts.

# MOSES

## Acts 7:44

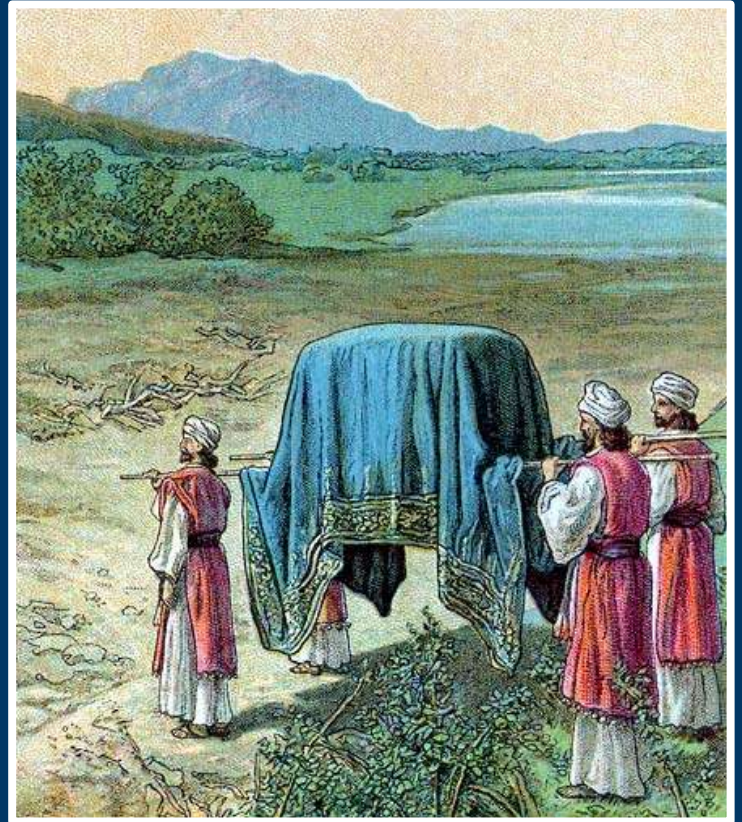
Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.



# JOSHUA

## Acts 7:45

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;



# JOSHUA

## Acts 7:45

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 Greek name *Jesus* and the Hebrew name *Joshua* both mean “Jehovah the Savior.”

There are two places in the King James Bible where Joshua is called by his Greek name, *Jesus* –

here in Acts 7 and also in Hebrews 4.

# JOSHUA

The Revised Standard Version uses the Hebrew name, JOSHUA.

## **Acts 7:45**

Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations which God thrust out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David,

## **Hebrews 4:8**

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day.

Perhaps sensing the growing anger of his audience, Stephen went straight from Joshua to King David.





# DAVID

## Acts 7:46-47

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

<sup>47</sup> But Solomon built him an house.



# DAVID

## Acts 7:48-50

- 48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,
- 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?*
- 50 Hath not my hand made all these things?



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- <sup>48</sup> Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,
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- <sup>50</sup> Hath not my hand made all these things?

## This is from Isaiah 66:

- <sup>1</sup> Thus saith the LORD,  
The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?
- <sup>2</sup> For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD:  
but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Stephen now brought his message to a fiery conclusion:



### **Acts 7:51-53**

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

<sup>52</sup> 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:

<sup>53</sup> Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it.*



Chapter 7 ends with the martyrdom of this faithful and courageous man of God.



### **Acts 7:54-56**

- <sup>54</sup> When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.
- <sup>55</sup> 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,
- <sup>56</sup> And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.



### **Acts 7:57-58**

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

<sup>58</sup> And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*:

and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a  
young man's feet, whose name was Saul.





**Acts 7:59**

<sup>59</sup> And they stoned Stephen,  
calling upon God, and saying,  
**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.**



**Acts 7:60**

<sup>60</sup> 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.



### **Acts 7:60**

<sup>60</sup> 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.

**End of Chapter Seven**

UP NEXT:  
Beyond Jerusalem

## Questions to test your understanding of this lesson:

1. Acts 6:1 talks of trouble between two groups of Christians. Who were they?
2. In Acts 6:3, what kind of men were the apostles looking for serve with them?
3. In Stephen's history of the Jews, who does he speak of in verses 2-8?
4. Who does he speak of in verses 9 to 17?
5. Who does he speak of in verses 20 to 44?
6. Who does he speak of in the FIRST PART of verse 45?
7. Who does Stephen speak of in the SECOND PART of verse 45 to verse 50?
8. In verse 52, what question does Stephen ask the council?
9. In verses 59 and 60, what are the two last things said by Stephen?
10. In Luke chapter 23, what were the very similar words said by Jesus on the cross?

Each question is worth 10 points. Do NOT share your answers with other students.



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