

Acts 7:30 to 60; Preaching of Stephen! And Death of Stephen!



**Acts 7:30-60;
God's Time.**



Acts 7:30-33; Moses:- Rejected by Israel but Accepted by God!

When Moses was 80 years old

and had a wife and two sons, God appeared to him
as the angel of the burning bush.

Conditions were ripe in Egypt. Now God was ready.

**The four hundred years of Israel's enslavement
in Egypt have come to an end. According to
God's promise to Abraham, He would bring them
out of Egypt and back to the Land of Canaan.**

**Moses, God's chosen Deliverer, has been born
and is now eighty years old and God
is ready to use him to lead His people
out of Egypt to the Promised Land.**

Acts 7:30-33; Moses:- Rejected by Israel but Accepted by God!

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.”

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

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. 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.’”

The LORD Represented by an Angel



Acts 7:30-33; Moses:- Rejected by Israel but Accepted by God!

**As we learn here and in verses 35, 37 and 53,
most appearances and representations of God
in the Old Testament were in human form
or the form of an angel.**

**Other scriptures that help to clarify this point are
Hebrews 2:2; Genesis 22:15 & 16; Exod 23:20-23;
John 1:18; and Galatians 3:19;**

**No one has ever really seen God. A special angel,
called “The Angel of the LORD”
represented
the Name, the glory and the voice
of the LORD in Old Testament times.**

ANGEL OF THE LORD



Acts 7:33-34; God Sends Moses Back to Egypt!

**33 "Then the Lord said to him,
'Take off your sandals; the place where you
are standing is holy ground.'"**

**34 "I have indeed seen the oppression of my
people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning
and have come down to set them free.
Now come, **I will send you back to Egypt.**"**

God sends Moses back to Egypt.



Acts 7:35-36; Moses:- Rejected by Israel but Accepted by God!

It was not in Israel or in a temple where the Lord appeared to Moses, but on a mountain in the Sinai wilderness. This place was designated by God as "holy ground." And it was from here that Moses was sent with the message of freedom.

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."

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."



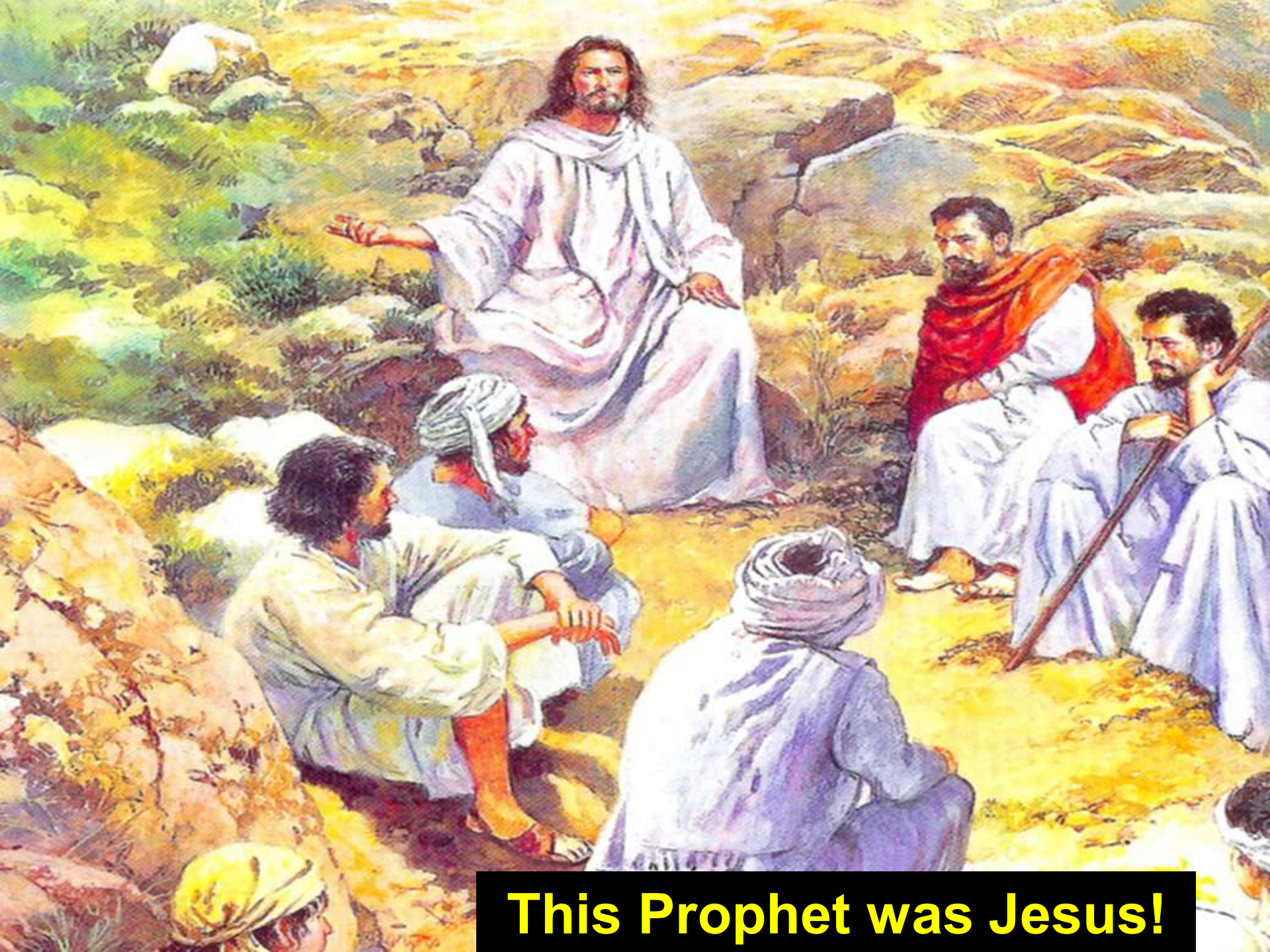
God Promised Another Prophet Like Moses.

**Acts 7:37-38; Moses:- Rejected by Israel
but Accepted by God!**

**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.'"**

**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."**

**Moses, the very one whom the Israelites
had rejected as being a "ruler and a judge"
was chosen by God
to be both ruler and judge and law-giver.**



This Prophet was Jesus!

Acts 7:37; Another Prophet Like Moses!

**When we studied chapter three,
we saw that **the prophet** Moses
said would come and be like him, was Jesus.**

**Jesus, like Moses, was a human being,
a Jew and the Prophet, Lawgiver, High Priest
(before Aaron) and Judge of God's Nation.**

**Moses had said that whoever disobeyed
this Prophet would be cut off from His people.
They were lost and deserved to be killed.**

Acts 7:37; Another Prophet Like Moses! Deut 18:18;

When Moses defended the Israelite who was being beaten and killed the Egyptian taskmaster, his own fellow Israelites failed to understand that he had been called by God to liberate them and they rebuffed him, threatening to turn him over to the Egyptian authorities, because of this, Moses was forced to flee the land of Egypt.

Stephen is continuing to tell of the rejection of the Israelites in the past. The contrast is still obvious.

The Sanhedrin is guilty of doing the same thing that Israel did in the days of Moses. They had rejected the Second Moses in the person of Jesus. They had essentially asked the same question:- Who made you a ruler and judge over us?

Moses:- Rejected by Israel but Accepted by God!
Here is the reason that Stephen is relating this. He gives it for the purpose of contrast and comparison. His hearers are supposed to see themselves in the story. They are the leaders of the nation of Israel. And they are to identify themselves with the actions of their forefathers.

Israel in Moses day.	Israel in Stephens day.
Disowned Moses.	Disowned the prophet who was like Moses-Christ. (v37)
God sent Moses to be Both ruler & deliverer.	God sent Christ to be both ruler and a deliverer.
Moses performed Wonders and signs.	Christ and His Apostles performed wonders & signs.

Turned Back to Egypt in Their Hearts!



Acts 7:39-41; Israel's continued rebellion!

**Stephen continues, showing
that the Israelite rejection of Moses
did not end with the deliverance from Egypt.**

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

**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.'**

“Rebelled Like Our Fathers did!”



Acts 7:39-43; Israel's continued rebellion!

As their fathers had done, so they were doing.
This is the point Stephen is driving home.

**Just because our fathers did something
does not mean we will be punished for it.**

But when we have seen what our fathers did
and how God punished them for what they did,
yet we go on and do the same things –
that will get us in big trouble with God.

“Rebelled Like Our Fathers did!”



Acts 7:41; “At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.”

**Their ancestors actually refused to obey Moses,
and prevailed on Aaron
to make an idol for them to worship,
a golden bull-calf, which reminded them of Egypt.**

**They said, "As for this Moses, we do not know
what has become of him!" And, they even turned
to the worship of THE SUN, MOON AND STARS.
(2nd Chron 33:33-35;)**

Acts 7:39-45; Israel's continued rebellion!

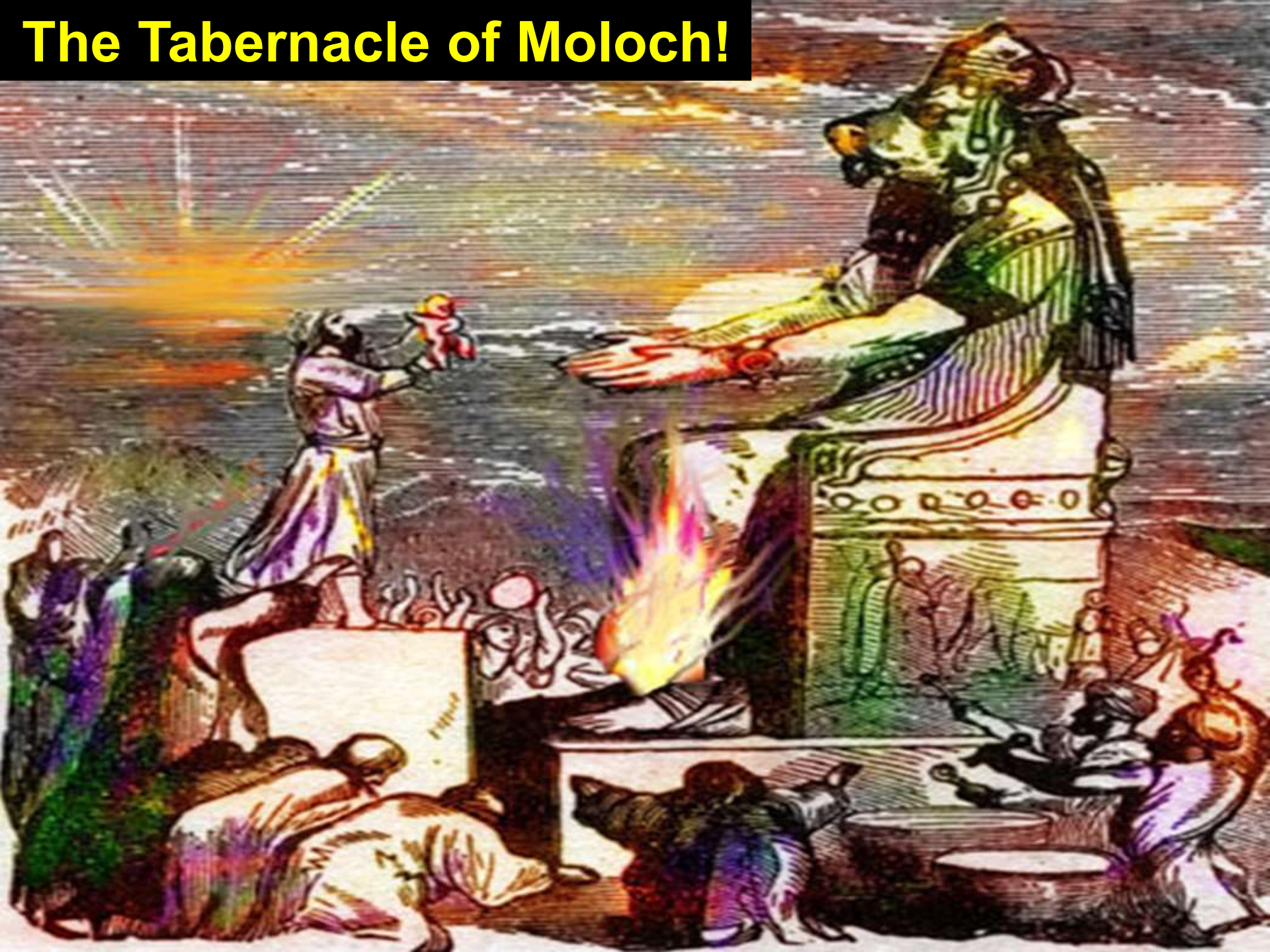
42 “But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, “It was not to me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel?”

42 “But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies.” This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets.”

“Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?”

Amos 5;

The Tabernacle of Moloch!



Acts 7:43; '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.'

Their worship of the idol **MOLOCH** is specifically mentioned and what this involved is described in Lev 18:21; **The sacrifice of their infants.**

Moloch was a hollow idol of brass or bronze, in which a fire was kindled. Babies were placed in his out-stretched arms, and their screams were drowned by the beating of drums.

Hence, the valley in which this evil worship was carried out was called **'The VALLEY OF TOPHETH'** (or Tophet) the word **topheth** means **'drum'**.

Acts 7:43; '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.'

Their worship of **REPHAN** is also mentioned by Stephen. Some scholars identify this as the worship of SATURN, but there is no evidence that SATURN was known by the name Rephan at this time.

However, the outcome of this unfaithfulness to God was that their rebellious ancestors **were sent into BABYLONIAN captivity.**

Acts 7:39-45; Israel's continued rebellion!

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.”

**The prophecy as given in the NIV says,
“...beyond Damascus.”**

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.”



Acts 7:44; “Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness,”

Stephen reminds the people that before the Temple, there was a TABERNACLE - a tent - a portable structure, easily erected and easily taken down, far more appropriate for a PILGRIM PEOPLE, than a TEMPLE.

After all, the TABERNACLE WAS BUILT AT THE COMMAND OF GOD HIMSELF. It was David who first proposed the building of a permanent place of worship. He deplored that the Lord 'dwelt in a tent', whilst he lived in a house!

But David was not permitted to carry out the construction of the Temple, even though he prepared the plans.

Acts 7:44; Israel's continued rebellion!

The Jewish Tabernacle symbolized
the church on earth (the Holy Place)
and in heaven (the Most Holy Place.)

**Each item in the Tabernacle represented
something about the church.**

**So Moses was cautioned to make it exactly
like the pattern that God had showed him on Sinai.
(See also Hebrews 8:5-6;)**

“Make according to the Pattern!”



Acts 7:44; Question?



What patterns should we follow today?

Acts 7:44; “According to the Pattern!”

When we establish or organize a congregation of God’s people in our community we should set up everything according to the pattern shown us by the Apostles in their writings.

2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 John 4:6;

The way of Salvation, the worship, the work, organization and qualifications should be the same as proscribed by the Apostles teaching. 2 Tim 2:2;

May we continue to “make all things according to the Pattern.”

Acts 7:39-45; Israel's continued rebellion!

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.”

This time the Israelites rejected Moses and the God whom he represented when Moses went up into Mount Sinai to receive the Law.

While he was away, the people approached Aaron and had him make for them a golden calf which they proceeded to worship.

Acts 7:39-45; Israel's continued rebellion!

Stephen had been accused of speaking against the Temple and against the Law. But he now shows that it is the nation of Israel as represented by the Sanhedrin to whom he speaks who has been guilty of profaning the Temple and breaking the Law.

It was that same spirit of idolatry that would eventually lead to the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian Captivity. (verse 43;)

In the same way, it will be this same spirit of idolatry and the refusal to recognize God's Righteous One which will result in the destruction of the Second Temple at the hands of the Roman Empire.



Acts 7:46-50; The Temple!

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

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

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

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? Was it not my hand which made all these things?”

Acts 7:46-50; The Temple!

God never demanded that a Temple be built. He ordained the Tabernacle, but the Temple was David's idea. He DID permit the Temple to be built in His honour. He gave permission for Solomon to build the Temple.

When it was completed, God sanctioned it by moving the Shekinah Cloud into the Temple. But even Solomon recognized that God cannot be confined to a house.

The Temple was not for God's benefit but for man's. God does not need men to build Him a house since it was God who built everything.

Acts 7:46-50; The Temple!

Why does Stephen mention this? Because back in Acts 6:13 he was accused by the Sanhedrin of "speaking against this holy place."

He shows that, even if the accusation had been true, it did not constitute blasphemy because the Temple was not synonymous with God because God doesn't live in a house built with hands.

God is Bigger than any Temple!

What about “the Place”

Promise to Abraham about his descendants (Acts 7:5-7)

(Nation to come)	Sojourn in Foreign Land	In Bondage (400 years)	Delivered & Nation Judged	Serve God in “this Place”
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Fulfillment of the Promise

Patriarchs born thru Isaac (v 8)	Joseph leads family to Egypt (v 9-16)	Oppression in Egypt (v 18,19)	Moses brought them out with Power (v 36); Gave the Law	Tabernacle brought into Land; Temple Built by Sol. (v 44-47)
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*God doesn't Dwell in Temples!
“The Place” is Lost by Disobedience!
God Wants Humble Obedience!
(Isaiah 66)*

God is Bigger than any Temple!



From Hubble

Acts 7:46-47; Israel's continued rebellion!

Perhaps Stephen's implication is that the time had come when **God would live in a new temple, in the hearts of peoples of all nations who obey and worship Him.**
(See also John 4:19-24;).

The old temple was a symbol of the new temple as Jerusalem and Mount Zion were symbols of the church on earth and in heaven. (Hebrews 12:22-24;)

Acts 7:51-53; Indictment upon the Leaders of Israel.!

**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.”**

**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;”**

**53 “you who received the law
as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”**

Acts 7:51; Question?



**What did it mean
To have uncircumcised
hearts and ears?**

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."

You see how Stephen piles evidence upon evidence to show that the NATION had, all along resisted God.

Therefore, when we come to v 51 we come to an ABRUPT CHANGE OF TONE in his speech.

"You stiffnecked."

We have been listening to this amazing sermon, but have not mentioned the growing irritation, which developed into blind rage, as Stephen exposed the unfaithfulness of their forefathers.

We must try to imagine the murmurs of anger, growing into a deafening roar as he speaks. It was probably this, which caused Stephen to change his theme so abruptly and dramatically.



Acts 7:52-53; Israel's continued rebellion!
Stephen charged them with resisting
the Holy Spirit as did their fathers. (vs 51)



Stephen charged **their fathers**
with persecuting the prophets
and with killing those who foretold
the coming of the Just One. (vs 52a)

Stephen charged **the Jews present with**
betraying and murdering the Just One. (vs 52b)

Acts 7:51-53; Indictment upon the Leaders of Israel!

**Stephen draws his sermon to a conclusion,
stating his indictment against
the leaders of Israel in no uncertain terms.**

**He charges them with acting in the same way
their forefathers acted.**

**They take great pride in their circumcision,
but there is a hardness around their heart
that has never been cut away.**

**They have taken great pride in having the Law,
but he charges them with not keeping the Law.**

**The Sanhedrin has sinned in the same way
as their ancestors - not merely putting to death
the prophets, but murdering the Messiah.**

Acts 7:51-53; Brave Words from a Brave Man!

Brave Words from a Brave Man!

**Stephen accuses them of acting as their kind
had through the ages to persecute
and kill the prophets and the Son of God.**

**They always resisted the Holy Spirit
and His message.**

**They had God's law
as it was delivered by angels
but they disobeyed it.**

What more can Stephen say?

Acts 7:51-53; CONTINUED REBELLION!

The Jews present with Stephen had rejected Jesus, just as their fathers had rejected those who had foretold the coming of Jesus.

**There are those today
who will reject the Word of God.**



**This is a KEY POINT in that
people CONTINUE
to REJECT the words of Jesus!**



Acts 7:54; “Those who heard Stephen were cut to the heart.” As a result, they turned on Stephen. **Some people will be strongly affected by God’s word. Perhaps even angry when we try to share it with them.**

In **Acts 2:37;** many people present were pricked in their heart and, as a result, they sought a solution to their sin. **Acts 2:38-41;**

Even today, different people will respond differently to God’s Word.

Acts 7:54; “When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.”

The people were cut to their heart by Stephen’s words.
The Sanhedrin lost all semblance of a court of law.
They begin to take on the appearance
of one who is demon-possessed.

**Stephen, on the other hand,
is seen to be full of the Holy Spirit.
Indeed, at this very moment
he has a heavenly vision.**

He sees **two things:-**

Acts 7:55; “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

The glory of God:- Do you remember how Stephen began his sermon?

**He began by referring to the "God of glory."
Now he SEES the glory of God.**



The prayer of Moses had been that he might see the glory of God. Moses had only been permitted to see God's "after-glow." Stephen got to see the rest of it.

Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

**Hebrews tells us that the Christ
"sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
(Hebrews 1:3;)**

56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

This is also taught in Mk 16:19, Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2;

We see Jesus standing. It is as though the King is giving His loyal witness a standing ovation. Or perhaps standing in concern and compassion.

Can you imagine it? Stephen is standing before the Sanhedrin as they are preparing to pass judgment upon him, but he isn't even looking at them.

Instead, his eyes are focused elsewhere. There is a look of blessed awe over his features.

He sees Jesus!



56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him,"

When they heard the words, "The Son of Man," knowing it meant Jesus, they could listen no more and put their hands over their ears rushed upon him.

**Just as Jesus had been crucified outside the city!
(Hebrews 13:12;)**

Stephen was driven outside the city to be stoned.

Acts 7:58; “dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”

It was the mandate of the law that the witnesses for the prosecution cast the first stones.

The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deuteronomy 17:7;).

It was the custom that the chief witness for the prosecution would be given the duty of pushing the offender to the ground where the stoning was to take place. The second witness would then cast the first stone and the rest of the crowd would join in until the offender was dead.



Acts 7:58; “dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. “

Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul, was probably one of the “Freedmen” of this synagogue.

Whose members were probably doing the stoning Saul was overseeing the process.

This may be what is meant by having the outer garments of the attackers laid at his feet.

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."

A brief mention is made of a young man whose name was SAUL, at whose feet the murderers laid their clothes.

He also agreed to the death of Stephen.

He also saw Stephen's face like the face of an angel; and he heard the words which remind us of the Lord himself, when on the cross.

Saul never forgot what he saw and probably never forgave himself for having had a part in this deed.

Stephen's Death!



Acts 7:58; “laid their clothes at the feet
of a young man named Saul. “

**Saul was later converted and became the
greatest propagator of the faith he once despised.**

One **poet** wrote these words,
which he places in the mouth of Paul.

"Friends, did I say,
with their dear remembered faces?
Dear saints of God,
whom I sought after and slew?"

**“Ah! when we meet again in heavenly places
How I shall weep to Stephen and to you!”**

Acts 7:59 “While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”



Acts 7:59 “While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Jesus had prayed for His spirit to be given into the hands of His heavenly Father.

Stephen directs his prayer to Jesus.

He has seen the glory of God and he is ready to be received into the presence of that glory.

Is it okay to pray to Jesus?



Acts 7:60; “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.”

This is also a prayer which Jesus prayed. He died in order that our sins might not be held against us. Stephen prays the same prayer.

Perhaps part of that prayer will be ultimately answered in the life of one who was there - **Saul of Tarsus.**

“Fell Asleep”



Acts 7:60; “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.**”

“Fell asleep” is what we might call a euphemism for death.

The word “cemetery” means a place of sleep.”

We say “He passed away.”

We speak of funeral parlours or homes and sometimes call our burial grounds “Lawns.”

When it comes to the body, in death it becomes totally inactive but is raised at the resurrection (Romans 8:23). So it is probable that it is the body that is referred to as “sleeps,” not the soul.

Aftermath of Stephen's Defence!

The assembly lost Stephen...

God replaced him...

God set down the truth about tradition...

Mark 7:8; **“Neglecting the commandment of God,
you hold to the tradition of men.”**

Mark 7:9; **“He was also saying to them,
You nicely set aside the commandment
of God in order to keep your tradition.”**

Conclusion!

Not until later does an Apostle fall prey to the vicious hatred of these Jewish rulers
Stephen has the distinction of being the first disciple to “be faithful to the point of death” and to die for his faith.

We call such men and women “martyrs.”
We will all die.

The important thing is how we die.
Stephen was magnificent in death.

I’m sure his death had a great influence on all who saw it or heard about it.



Conclusion!

**All the things mentioned in Mark 16:17-20;
were fulfilled in the book of Acts
except the drinking of poison.**

**The following verses show the fulfillment
of this prophecy:-**

Driving out demons:- Acts 16:16-18;

Speak in new tongues:- Acts 2:4-10;

Pick up snakes and not be harmed:- Acts 28:3-5;

Drink deadly poison:- ?

Make sick well:- Acts 28:8;

Heroes of Faith! By Ellis Jones.



Heroes of Faith! By Ellis Jones.

**They were looking for a city
And a country God prepared.
Faith and perseverance
Were two qualities they shared.**

**God tested them as He tests us
To see of what we're made.
The over comer's pleased Him,
Though sometimes they were afraid.**





**The miseries they suffered
Were nothing to compare
With the glory and eternal joy
That with them God will share.**

**I love to read their stories
For they give me firmer hope.
And they show that there is nothing
With which we cannot cope.**





**I trust God and His promises
And look to Him for aid.
He gives strength for each moment
If His will I have obeyed.**

**I respect those heroes
Who have led and shown the way.
I personally will thank them
When I see them on That Day.**



Acts 7:30 to 60; Preaching of Stephen! And Death of Stephen!

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**Next in the series:- 8:1;
Persecution.**

The End.

