

# Who Was Israel's God?

*The Sermon of Stephen and the Story of the First Martyr*

Acts 7:1 And the high priest said, “Are these things so?”

<sup>2</sup> And Stephen said:

“Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

<sup>3</sup> and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’

<sup>4</sup> Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.

<sup>5</sup> Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child.

<sup>6</sup> And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years.

<sup>7</sup> ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’

<sup>8</sup> And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

<sup>9</sup> “And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him

<sup>10</sup> and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.

<sup>11</sup> Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food.

<sup>12</sup> But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. <sup>13</sup> And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh.

<sup>14</sup> And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, **seventy-five persons in all**. <sup>15</sup> And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, <sup>16</sup> and they were carried back **to Shechem** and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

<sup>17</sup> "But as the time of the promise drew near, which **God had granted to Abraham**, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt

<sup>18</sup> until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph.

<sup>19</sup> He dealt shrewdly with **our race** and forced **our fathers** to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive.

<sup>20</sup> At this time **Moses** was born; and **he was beautiful in God's sight**. And he was brought up for **three months** in his father's house,

<sup>21</sup> and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.

<sup>22</sup> And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was **mighty in his words and deeds**.

<sup>23</sup> "When he was **forty years old**, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel.

<sup>24</sup> And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian.

<sup>25</sup> **He supposed that** his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.

<sup>26</sup> And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?'

<sup>27</sup> But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?'

<sup>28</sup> Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'

<sup>29</sup> At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the **father of two sons**.

<sup>30</sup> "Now when **forty years had passed**, **an angel** appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.

<sup>31</sup> When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came **the voice of the Lord**:

<sup>32</sup> ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and did not dare to look.

<sup>33</sup> Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’

<sup>34</sup> I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.’

<sup>35</sup> “This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’—this man God sent as both **ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel** who appeared to him in the bush. <sup>36</sup> This man led them out, **performing wonders and signs in Egypt** and at **the Red Sea** and in the wilderness for **forty years**.

<sup>37</sup> This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.’

<sup>38</sup> **This is the one** who was in **the congregation** in the wilderness with **the angel** who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received **living oracles** to give to us.

<sup>39</sup> **Our fathers** refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, <sup>40</sup> saying to **Aaron**, ‘Make for us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’

<sup>41</sup> And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

<sup>42</sup> But God turned away and **gave them over to worship the host of heaven**, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

“ ‘Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

<sup>43</sup> You took up **the tent of Moloch** and the star of **your god Rephan**, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’

<sup>44</sup> “Our fathers had **the tent of witness** in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen.

<sup>45</sup> Our fathers in turn brought it in with **Joshua** when they **dispossessed the nations** that God drove out before **our fathers**. So it was until the days of **David**,

<sup>46</sup> who found **favor in the sight of God** and asked to find **a dwelling place** for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup> But it was **Solomon** who **built a house** for him.

<sup>48</sup> Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

<sup>49</sup> “ ‘Heaven is my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool.  
What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,  
or what is the place of my rest?

<sup>50</sup> Did not my hand make all these things?’

<sup>51</sup> “**You stiff-necked people**, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. <sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets did your fathers not **persecute**? And they **killed** those who announced beforehand **the coming of the Righteous One**, whom **you have now betrayed and murdered**, <sup>53</sup> you who received **the law as delivered by angels** and did not keep it.”

## **The Stoning of Stephen**

<sup>54</sup> Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and [NAMELY] Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” <sup>57</sup> But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. <sup>58</sup> Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named **Saul**. <sup>59</sup> And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

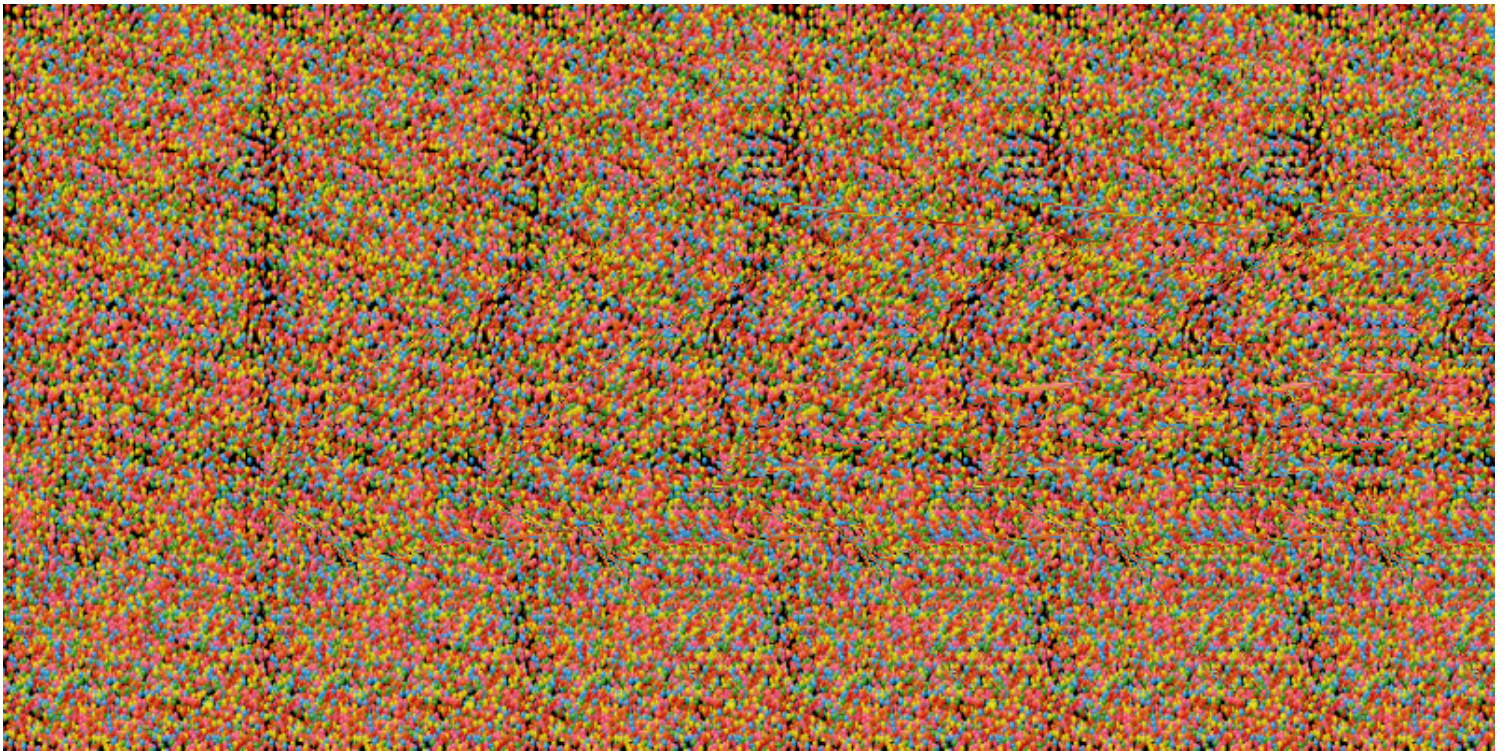
### **Acts 6:1-15**

## What Am I Looking At?

To understand what you are looking at, you have to understand what you are looking at. How's that for a nice **tautology** at the beginning of a sermon? I remember walking through the mall (remember those?) back in the late 90s and seeing whole books filled with these multicolored pictures of seemingly totally random dots. Whole books of this nonsense? I had to know more. As, apparently, did everyone else in those days.

Turns out that they weren't random dots at all. They were computer generated 3-D pictures placed on 2-D paper called **autostereograms**. But there was a trick to it all. You had to slightly blur your eyes and then have one of them turn lazy, as you tried to focus both eyes in such a way that your double vision would overlap perfectly in the same space, thus allowing you to see the 3-D effect. If you were a **pirate** and only had one eye, it wouldn't work. You had to have two eyes. Unfortunately, for most people, this was a trick that was **very difficult to learn**, which probably explains why the fad didn't last that long. And for those who did learn it, even then it could take several minutes before

you were finally able to make sense of the image. But the *only* way you could even possibly begin to try was to know what you were actually looking at—not random dots on paper that created nothing, but an imbedded 3-D image that could be just about anything you could imagine.



A Shark. “[Autostereogram](#),” *Wikipedia*.

## Acts 7: Context and Purpose

Today’s passage is a kind of autostereogram for people who don’t realize what they are reading. It is a **very long**

chapter—the longest in Acts. It consists 60 verses, most of which are Stephen’s great sermon that lead to his being the first Christian martyr. I remember reading it years ago, knowing the outcome, but having not yet actually read what he was saying, much less truly understanding the point and thinking to myself, Luke’s sense of humor is rising to the surface in one of the saddest points of the book. Because the whole sermon feels like he is just droning on and on and on trying to avoid the inevitable. Maybe if he can keep preaching long enough, all the hearers will be like Eutychus (Acts 20:9) and fall asleep, thus allowing for another miraculous escape from the hands of evil men.

Of course, that’s not what happened, and such humor here would be badly misplaced, even though I still think that’s kind of a funny first thought. But the point is, I really didn’t understand what I was looking at. Stephen’s speech was, to me, a kind of autostereogram. I needed better eyes to see it. Sadly, so do many others, as what we are about to discuss is rarely (though sometimes), discussed in the literature.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I speak here of both the covenant lawsuit and the divine council behind it. On the idea that Stephen is giving a covenant lawsuit, see Brian Peterson, “Stephen’s Speech as a Modified Prophetic RĪB Formula,” *JETS* 57.2 (2014): 351-69. On the divine council aspects see Michael S.

To begin to understand it, we need to remember that **Ch. 6 introduced us** to Stephen and six other disciples who were called by the churches in Jerusalem to oversee the distribution of the moneys to free up the Apostle's to pray and preach. This is the first half of that chapter (**Acts 6:1-7**). But the second half (**8-15**) focuses in directly on Stephen and leads naturally to our chapter today. We need to **recall two things** from that chapter in order to begin to make sense of his sermon.

**First**, remember that, like the Apostles before him in previous chapters, Stephen is called in by the leaders of Israel on trumped up charges that were half-truths. These very much resembled the same charges they had previously arrested Jesus with. They said he **speaks blasphemous words against Moses and God (11)**. Jesus was charged with **blasphemy (Matt 26:65; Mark 14:64; cf. Luke 22:71)**. This is not just a throw-away line. It will be important for deciphering our chapter. Second, **“This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law” (Acts 6:13)**. Along with it a third charge, **“We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change**

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**Heiser**, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 162ff.



the customs that Moses delivered to us” (14). These focus on the temple and remind us of Jesus saying that if someone destroys the temple, Jesus would raise it up in three days (John 2:19; Cf. Matt 26:60-61), or of Jesus talking about the destruction of the Temple in days to come (Matt 24:2; Luke 19:44). Of course, they didn’t understand in the former case that he was talking about his own body, and in the latter that Israel was going to be judged for what they did to Jesus in destroying him—though he would rise from the dead. All of this is vital to understanding Stephen’s sermon.

The second thing to understand in the last verse, “And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). Notice two things. First, he is in a “council.” The word is *synedrion* and you can hear how it sounds like Sanhedrin. But it can also mean, more generally, a council—which is what the Sanhedrin was when it met in its assembly of 70 to deliberate over the affairs of Israel. Second, he has a face like the face of an angel. Literally, this is *eidon to prosōpon autou hōsei prosōpon angelou*. I’ll come back to this translation at the end of the sermon. For now, what we need to understand is that it is foreshad-

owing what will become the great question of Stephen's sermon, for he mentions either an angel or many angels four times, all of which are in the context of councils and judgments in the OT.

The structure of the chapter is interesting. There are likely a number of small chiasms which help us break down the speech into its main historical markers: Abraham (Acts 7:2-8), Jacob and Joseph in Egypt (9-17), Moses (20-35), and the later history focusing on the temple.<sup>2</sup> This is followed by the last section, where Stephen is killed which is also loosely chiastic.<sup>3</sup> I'll only mention the one with Moses later as it is helpful for what I want to look at today.

It is possible, also, to see Acts 6:8-7:56 as all interlinked chiastically.<sup>4</sup> This is interesting because it causes us to look for signs of words and ideas in ch 6 that return in ch. 7. But I would say we need to look all the way to the end of the chapter in order to fully realize the connections we've already brought up in ch. 6. When you know to look for

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<sup>2</sup> On these see "[Acts 7:2-19](#)," "[Acts 7:20-35](#)," "[Acts 7:41-50](#)," all at the *Biblical Chiasm Exchange*.

<sup>3</sup> "[Acts 7:51-8:1](#)," *ibid*. For a possible deeper study on the chiastic nature of this chapter and the whole book see Delbert Wiens, *Stephen's Sermon and the Structure of Luke-Acts* (1998). Leithart has some comments on the book [here](#). As of now, it is only available in book form, so I couldn't get my hands on it in time.

<sup>4</sup> Christine Miller, "[Acts 7](#)," *A Little Perspective* (May 13, 2016).

these, then you will start to be able to put this 3-D picture into much better focus.

Next, it is important to realize that **the genre** of the sermon is most-likely an OT **covenant lawsuit** called a **rîb** in the Hebrew. Covenant Lawsuits are a staple of the OT and vital to understand. They appear in **Moses** (cf. **Deut 32:1-25**), the **Psalms** (cf. **Ps 50**), and most of all, in the **prophets** (cf. **Isa 1:2-20; 3:13-15; Jer 2:2-37; Mic 6:1-8; Amos 3:1-4:13**; etc.<sup>5</sup> Covenant Lawsuits followed a fairly traditional formula:

- I. Description of the scene of judgment
- II. The speech of the plaintiff
  - A. Heaven and earth are appointed judges
  - B. Summons to the defendant (or judges)
  - C. Address in the second person to the defendant
    1. Accusation in question form to the defendant
    2. Refutation of the defendant's possible arguments
    3. Specific indictment<sup>6</sup>

In fact, perhaps **the main job of a prophet** was to bring a covenant lawsuit against Israel for violating his covenant, his

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<sup>5</sup> See Peterson, 351ff.

<sup>6</sup> Peterson, 356-57. He has another version of the formula that is not as close as Acts 7 is to this one.

law, and for bringing down judgment from on high in the heavenly divine council. Remember, we have just seen this word in **Acts 6:15**. That's no accident.

Jeremiah makes this overtly clear. “For who among them [false prophets] has stood in the council of the Lord to see and to hear his word ... But if they (false prophets) had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed by words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds” (**Jer 23:18, 22**). Notice “seeing” the Word. Virtually every prophetic book of the OT begins with the prophet seeing the Word of God, and this will become a main idea in Stephen's sermon.

Sadly, the divine council is one of those motifs that is often totally glossed over in this passage, but to truly understand what you are seeing, you must know about it and believe that it is a real thing, and not the fanciful imaginations of the myths. Essentially, **the divine council is the place from which the heavenly begins administer the affairs of the cosmos**. They are overseen by the Most High, the Creator of heaven and earth. When it comes to the nations, it is the watchers (**Dan 4**), the sons of God or “gods” (**Ps 82**) who are

supposed to bring the judgment—with God as the final arbiter (see esp. [1Kg 22:19-23](#)). But in Israel, it is their God, the Angel of the LORD, who covenants with them and judges them. Of course, the Angel of the LORD is the LORD himself—albeit the Second Person of the Trinity. And this becomes the absolutely vital piece to understanding our story, as we will see as we get into it.

One last point before moving on. This story comes at the end of the first main section of Acts—the part that takes place in Jerusalem. It is right after this that things will begin to move out. Therefore, Stephen’s sermon in some way is transitioning us to this more outward missionary portions of the book. How? I’ll telegraph it here. We need to be looking at the words used for Israel’s deity by Stephen, and this mysterious “angel” that he keeps bringing up in the context of a council and judgment and covenant lawsuits.

## Acts 7:1 Stephen “Invited” to Defend Himself

The chapter opens with the high priest, Caiaphas, the same man who oversaw the death of Jesus months (we don’t

know how many, perhaps as many as a couple of years) earlier, asking Stephen, “**Are these things so?**” (**Acts 7:1**; cf. **6:7, 12**). This is the description of **the judgment scene**, just like we find in OT covenant lawsuits. But what things? The charges that have been brought against him: **blaspheming Moses and God**, **sedition**, and **insurrection**. So Stephen has been invited to defend himself, just as the others have. That’s how courts are supposed to work. You have the right to a defense. So how will Stephen proceed? Will he try to get himself off the hook? Will he go after their false charges one by one? Actually, **he is going to flip the script**, just like the prophets do. He is move quickly from the role of defendant into that of the plaintiff.<sup>7</sup> Stephen is the prophet par-excellence.

## **Acts 7:2-8a Stephen’s Defense Begins—God Appears to Abraham**

Most of the rest of the chapter is filled with **Stephen’s sermon**. He begins, “**Brothers and fathers, hear me**” (**Acts**

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<sup>7</sup> Peterson, 359.

7:2a). He addresses the council as brothers, for they are fellow Jews, and fathers, for they are the elders who lead Israel.

He quickly gets to the major point of the sermon. “The God of glory *appeared* to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran” (2b). There is a lot to notice about this verse. First, he calls the deity “God” (*Theos*). This is the equivalent of Elohim in the OT. But the strange thing is, throughout the Abraham story, the Deity is usually called YHWH, which would be the equivalent in the NT of Kurios (Lord). But he calls the Deity the more generic “God.” Keep this in mind as we continue.

Second, it calls him the God “of glory” (cf. Ps 29:3). The “glory of god” *appears* in vs. 55 as a parallel and it will be super informative when we come to that. But we can already get a feel for what that might say when we notice the vital word, “appeared.” Third, the God of glory appeared to Abraham—*our* father (Stephen uses the first person plural pronoun, identifying himself and the council as descendants of Abraham).

Then there’s when it happened. The first actual mention in Genesis of God coming Abram is in Genesis 12. But Heiser writes about a couple of things to notice,

If you compare the last two verses of the genealogical backdrop, Genesis 11:31-32, with Acts 7:2-4, you'll discover that Genesis 12 was *not* the first time that God had appeared to Abram. Genesis 11:31-32 tells us that before the Genesis 12 encounter, Abram and his family, led by Abram's father Terah, had already left Mesopotamia and settled in a place called Haran ... Since there is no specific account of a divine appearance to Abram in Mesopotamia in the Old Testament, we pretty much have to presume that Stephen was thinking of Genesis 11:31-32 when he said this. This is important in that it established an important fact: that Abram's first encounter *in Mesopotamia* involved a *visible appearance* of Yahweh.<sup>8</sup>

Philo of Alexandria concurs that there was a visible manifestation of the Lord while Abram was still in Mesopotamia, and he puts it into a very interesting context of the star-gods of the nations,

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<sup>8</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Myth That Is True: Rediscovering the Cosmic Narrative of the Bible* (unpublished: 2006-07), 102. Heiser has virtually the same thing in *The Unseen Realm* (p. 128), which is what this unpublished book became, but his line about presuming that Stephen is thinking of Genesis 11:31-32 was taken out, hence I use this quote. We can probably infer this from Genesis 15:7 (“And he said to him, ‘I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.’”) and Neh 9:7 (“You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham.”). See F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 134.



For the Chaldaeans were, above all nations, addicted to the study of astronomy, and attributed all events to the motions of the stars, by which they fancied that all the things in the world were regulated ... The man [Abram] who had been bred up in this doctrine, and who for a long time had studied the philosophy of the Chaldaeans, as if suddenly awakening from a deep slumber ... *saw* what he had never *seen* before, a certain governor and director of the world standing above it.

(Philo, *On Abraham* 69-70)<sup>9</sup>

It is fascinating enough that God appeared to Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, but that he did it in a visible manifestation is a mind-blower to most Christians. And they have little to no way to process this, usually chocking such language off to anthropomorphism (“The attribution of human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal, or object.”). But this actually becomes the main point of Stephen’s sermon, and few have truly grasped it in our day. Make no mistake, the Jews understand perfectly well what he was driving at. Let’s continue.

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Duke Yonge with Philo of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 417. See also Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.154.

God said to Abram, “Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you” ([Acts 7:3](#)). This is a virtual quote from [Gen 12:1](#), and let me point out that if Abraham saw God, then he certainly *heard* these words just as clearly as you hear me say them to you.

Obedying ([Acts 7:4](#)), Abraham went from the land of the Chaldeans (*be'ur kasdim*; see [Gen 11:28, 31](#)). Most scholars place this in southern Iraq near Nashiriyah, famous for its ancient Ziggurat of Ur.<sup>10</sup> He then goes to Haran, a city certainly located in the fertile crescent some 360 nautical miles northeast of Jerusalem. Haran is the name of Abram’s brother ([Gen 11:26](#)), and was home to the moon god Sin (or Suen or Nanna). In fact, Joshua tells us that Abram’s father worshiped other gods ([Josh 24:2](#)). Terah had come with Abram as he left and Stephen concludes that “God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living” once he died ([Acts 7:4b](#)).

He left there and went to Canaan, but God “Gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him,

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Judd Burton has the interesting idea that it may have been much farther north at either Urkesh, in far north eastern Syria, about 95 miles east of Haran, or even in Şanlıurfa (Urfa), only 20 miles north of Haran and only 6 miles from the oldest archeological site in the world at Göbekli Tepe, all in Turkey.

though he had no child” (5). This “seed” language will refer in the immediate context to Isaac, though it must be remembered that **Galatians 3:16** says that the seed is Christ.

Stephen tells them to remember that God said this so that Abram would understand that **his offspring would be sojourners** in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years<sup>11</sup> (**Acts 7:6**). This was a further test of Abraham’s faith, because not only would he not receive any personal inheritance, but his family line would become slaves in a land not this one.

But, God promises, “**I will judge the nation that they serve ... and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place**” (7). And he gave him **the covenant of circumcision** to seal all this covenantal promise language in a blood oath. This serves to ground the remainder of the sermon in a covenant context, which makes sense, if this is going to be a covenant lawsuit that he is bringing. To sum up, what

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<sup>11</sup> **On 400 Years:** “The figure of 400 years for the oppression of the Israelites is taken from Gen. 15:13. According to Ex. 12:40 (MT) their sojourning in Egypt lasted 430 years, for which 400 might be taken as a round number. But rabbinical exegesis reckoned the 400 years as running from the birth of Isaac to the Exodus. Cf. Paul in Gal. 3:17, where the giving of the law (in the third month after the Exodus) is dated 430 years after the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3, 7; 13:15, etc.). This accords with the Samaritan and LXX expansion of Ex. 12:40, which includes in the 430 years the Israelites’ sojourning in Canaan as well as in Egypt. The period spent in Egypt would then be considerably shorter; cf. Gen. 15:16, “in the fourth generation they shall come back here.” (Bruce, 135).

we've seen is God appearing to Abraham visibly in a foreign land, a movement to Canaan, but a promise that the people would be slaves in another land.

## Acts 7:8b-16 God With Israel in Egypt

The second phase of the sermon begins in the second half of vs. 8. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, thus obeying the covenant. Isaac becomes the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs (8b). But a problem occurs which will fulfill God's promise. "The Patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him" (9). Notice now, we are back out of Canaan, in Egypt. Yet, God is here, just like he was in Mesopotamia.

How was God with him? He "rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household" (10). But, a famine came throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food (11). But Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, so he sent out our fathers on their first visit (12).

They came down again a second time and “Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh” (13). This then becomes how all of Israel ends up in Egypt. And we read that Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all (14).

“Seventy-five” is the number as it is found in the LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls, while the Masoretic has “seventy,” and number that was clearly condensed in order to match them with the seventy nations.<sup>12</sup> The change comes, I believe, because these same men who would soon murder Stephen for this very speech, needed to find a way to lessen the blunt trauma of the fact that Israel’s number did not match the seventy nations without taking away five, for this number is related to the divine council and the sons of God (see Deut 32:8). But that’s another story.

“And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem” (15-16). Amazingly,

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<sup>12</sup> So Jubilees 44:33-34, “And all of the persons of Jacob who entered Egypt were seventy persons. Therefore all these sons and grandsons of his were seventy, but five died in Egypt before Joseph, and they had no children... And they were set among the seventy nations.”

the place where they are buried is **still there** to this day, though no one has seen the actual tombs for many centuries, because the Muslims have the only access to the cave system below the present day church in Hebron.

## Acts 7:17- God Appears to Moses

Stephen is moving quickly through history. **The time of the promise** drew near (17). This refers to Israel coming back into the land, as part of the “**grant to Abraham**,” keeping the covenant at the forefront of our minds. The people increased and multiplied in Egypt (17b). And a new king arose in Egypt who did not know Joseph (18). Stephen reminds them, “**He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive**” (19), an interesting choice of history, given that Herod had done the **same thing to the infants in Jesus’ infancy**.

But Stephen’s purpose here is more on the infant of *those* days—**Moses**. “**At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God’s sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father’s house**” (20). But the word quickly got

out and he was “**exposed**,” to “Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son” (21). And thus, “**Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds**” (22). Unlike most of the sermon thus far, this entire verse is rooted in **tradition** (see chart at end of sermon).

Stephen will now use Rabbinic tradition and divide Moses’ life into **three periods of “forty.”** “**When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel**” (23). Moses knew who he was. As he was about, he saw “**one of them being wronged**” and “**defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian**” (24). “**He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand**” (25). This is Stephen’s own addition, and it is important to know why he is doing it. I. Howard Marshall explains, “**What is emerging at this point is a comparison between Moses as an offerer of salvation and Jesus as a savior (cf. Acts 4:12; 5:31) and between the incomprehension of the people toward Moses and toward Jesus (cf. Luke 2:50; 8:10; 18:34; Acts 28:26–27).**”<sup>13</sup> Remember,

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<sup>13</sup> I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 561.

Stephen has been charged with blaspheming Moses. But instead of defend himself, he turns the tables and begins to subtly say that **he isn't the one who gets Moses wrong**. Rather, it is they, like their ancestors, who can't comprehend.

Stephen now backs this up with the text. “**And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?’**” (**Acts 7:26**). But, remembering the story, “**The man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?’**” (**27**). The language here is absolutely fascinating.

“**Wronging his neighbor**” recalls **the law**, “**Love your neighbor as yourself**” (**Lev 19:18**). Stephen has also been charged with speaking words against the law. But no, he's not the one doing that. “**Ruler and judge**” recalls the very place Stephen is now—the lawcourt of the Sanhedrin, the human version of the divine council—rulers and judges. Stephen is saying the man should have understood Moses' authority, but he did not recognize it and turned on his very deliverer! “**Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?**” (**Acts 7:28**). Slaying the Egyptian is seen as



a threat, not the means of his own rescue.<sup>14</sup> This poor Israelite interpreted the entire circumstance surrounding Moses and his own deliverance exactly backwards!

So, Moses flees. He becomes an exile in the land of Midian, to the east of Egypt and he became the father of two sons, in yet another foreign country (29). Now we come to the central part of this section, and I would argue, the central point of the sermon. Stephen recalls the Exodus 3 event.

“Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush” (Acts 7:30). Remember that Stephen’s face was like that of an angel. Now, “angel” makes its first of four appearances in his sermon. Exodus 3:2 actually says, “And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush.” But Stephen is more subtle, because this is really the whole point of his sermon. Who is this angel? Well, they knew full well who he was, but it doesn’t mean they believed what they read.

“When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord” (31). This and vs. 33 are the only times that Stephen will call God

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<sup>14</sup> Marshall, 562.

“Lord,” the normal word used to translate YHWH. Why? Because that’s how he makes his most important point. The Angel *is the Lord*. “‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and did not dare to look” (32). Who is the God of his fathers? The Angel is. This is just what Jacob himself had said, “*The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys*” (Gen 48:15-16).

I believe this is the reason why Stephen is using “God” throughout his sermon, except for here. When he uses the term “God,” he is echoing the OT language of the **divine council** and the gods of the nations. We’ll see more of that in a moment, but remember, that’s his entire context: Mesopotamia, Egypt, now Midian. As Jubilees puts it, “**They were set among the seventy nations**” (Jub 44:34).

To understand this, you have to understand **Deuteronomy 32:7-9**. The Most High divided the nations according to the number of the “**sons of God**” (vs. 8). But Israel was *the LORD’s* inheritance (9). Since **sons inherit**, this means that the LORD here is the Son of God—the Angel of the

LORD. *His* inheritance is Israel, whom he actually created himself out of nothing by coming to Abram in Mesopotamia. The Son is the Angel of the LORD. He is Israel's counterpart to the gods of the nations (as the sons of God are called in **Psalm 82:1, 6**). We can see more of the relevance of this even in the next verse.

“Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground’” (**Acts 7:33**). This is the second and last time Stephen uses “Lord” except when giving a verbatim quote from Isaiah later. The language will be repeated in **Joshua 5:15**, when **the Commander of the Armies of the LORD**, i.e. the Angels' military title, tells Joshua to do the same thing, worshiping the entity, which he would not do if he was not God.

God continues, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt” (**Acts 7:34**). You see? Moses did have God's authority and the Israelites did not recognize it. Now, they will soon all recognize it. And so let's see the next verse. “This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’” ... (**35**). Remember, we've just seen this

language. This is a chiasm working its way out. “This man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush” (35b).

There is a line of authority. God—the Angel—Moses. Stephen, like all the other Christians, has learned how to read his OT, just as Jesus taught. God the Father, sent the Angel—God the Son—who now sends Moses to redeem Israel—for the Son is Moses’ covenant God. And to prove it, “This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years” (36).

Stephen will conclude the Moses cycle of the sermon with some more pointed innuendos. “This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers’” (37). They know full well who Stephen is talking about, because Peter had confronted them on this very point, telling them that the predicted prophet was Jesus (Acts 3:22-23).

“This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us” (7:38). “Congregation” is *ekklesia*—“church,” and

should be rendered that here so that you will see **the typological correspondence** of the NT church and the OT *ekklesia* (cf. **Deut 18:16 LXX**) at the very moment Moses predicted the prophet (**Deut 18:15**), and gave the law.<sup>15</sup> His interpretation of “living oracles” in this context again shows that Stephen isn’t the one speaking against the law or Moses.

Look what he says next. He again, turns the tables, from defendant to plaintiff. He is in the middle of a great covenant lawsuit against these very men, but he still hasn’t made it totally explicit. “**Our fathers**” (continuing to keep it on the level of the past), “**refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make for us gods [plural] who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him’**” (**Acts 7:39-40**). He recalls the **golden calf story**. While Moses was up on the mountain receiving the law, the people were below playing the harlot with the gods of the nations. That’s Stephen’s language. That’s Exodus 32’s language.

Let’s let Stephen tell us more about **these “gods,”** for **they are related to the council and the point of the sermon.**

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<sup>15</sup> On this, see Marshall, 563-64. See also references in chart on Acts 7:38.

“And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands” (41). So far, it sounds like they don’t actually believe in real gods, but are only worshiping their own creativity—a very typical way of viewing the First Commandment—by actually fusing it into the Second, as if “gods” and “idols” are identical. They aren’t.

“But God turned away and gave them over to worship *the host of heaven*” (42a). Listen to the language of allotment of the host of heaven and what they actually are. “Beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, *all the host of heaven*, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, those that the Lord your God *has allotted* to all the peoples under the whole heaven” (Deut 4:19). This sounds very much like the allotment of the sons of God to the nations in Deut 43:8. Indeed, Israel ends up serving “*other gods* and worshiping them, the sun or the moon or any of *the host of heaven*, which he has forbidden” (Deut 17:3). Yes, the gods are the gods of the nations, exactly what the nations say they are—powerful, created, beings that were allotted to the nations.

But Stephen doesn't go to Deuteronomy. Instead, he goes to Amos and gives us a quotation. "... as it is written in the book of the prophets: 'Did you bring me to slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon'" (Acts 7:42-43). Molech (from the same root as "king" *mlk*), was a detestable god who often wanted human child sacrifice. He is linked to Baal-Satan and to the Rephaim giants.<sup>16</sup> And make no mistake, his worship is alive and well in our day, not only through the death cult sacrifice of abortion, but the 800,000 missing children in America alone who are unaccounted for.

Rephan comes from a word meaning "to light, to set on fire, or to burn."<sup>17</sup> He is a god of pestilence (Deut 32:24; Ps 78:48) and is perhaps related to the Seventh Plague of Egypt. He too has links to Baal, but they are probably different deities. The point is, they are entities, not houses—gods, not

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<sup>16</sup> G. C. Heider, "Molech," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 581-85.

<sup>17</sup> P. Xella, "Resheph," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 701.

idols. Idols are the houses for the gods. And they are associated with the gods of the nations that were divided among mankind in **Deut 32:8**. But now think about this. The God of Stephen's sermon is going to their territories to help his own people. These other gods don't do that.

## Acts 7:44-50 God Goes Wherever He Wants

Just here, Stephen moves to his **final segment of the sermon**. He now starts to talk formally about **the place of worship**. Up to this point, God has been mostly outside of Israel, appearing to the sight of the saints of old. “**Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen**” (**Acts 7:44**). This reminds us of Hebrews, and in fact there are many connections in this sermon to Hebrews, but we don't have time for that. Stephen uses this simply ground yet **another place not in Israel** where God is present—the **wilderness**. Then he moves on.

“**Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers**” (**45a**). This refers to the conquest of Canaan, and the



giants of those lands, which relates us back to the fallen angelic beings. “So it was until the days of David, who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob” (45b-46). Now David enters the picture, and the focus is finally on a dwelling place for God. This will be the temple, located in Jerusalem. The permanent home of God’s glory. Thus, “But it was Solomon who built a house for him” (47). Does this sound subversive of the temple as he was being accused of? Of course not.

But, yet again, Stephen turns the tables. He isn’t interested in defending himself. He’s interested in explaining how these rulers have totally misunderstood their own Scriptures. So he adds a quote from Isaiah 66:1-2. “Yet the Most high does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophets says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things’” (Acts 7:48-50). The point remains what it has been since the beginning. Our God comes and goes wherever he pleases. He doesn’t need a temple, much less is he confined to one. He can appear in Mesopotamia,

Egypt, Midian, the wilderness, anywhere, because he made heaven and earth. And who is he?

## Acts 7:44-Stephen's Lawsuit Concluded

So far, we have seen the speech of the plaintiff, that is the prophet of God who has a case to bring against the people. It is at **vs. 51** that **he brings the charges specifically**. “**You stiff-necked people,**” using the same language God uses to Moses of the people who made the calf (**Ex 32:9; 33:3**; etc.). He also now **changes the pronoun** from the first person plural to the second person plural. That is, he no longer includes himself.

Stiff-necked with “**uncircumcised hearts and ears,**” also reflecting the language of Moses and the prophets (**Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4**; etc.). “**You always resist the Holy Spirit,**” language taken from Isaiah 63, a passage that also mentions the Angel. “**The Angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them ... But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit**” (**Isa 63:9-10**). “**As your fathers did, so do you**” (**Acts 7:51**).

He then piles it on. “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?” he asks (52), reminding us of Jesus saying the same thing “from Abel to Zechariah” (Matt 23:35). And that’s appropriate, because now comes the climax. “And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it” (Acts 7:53). All the prophets did was tell the people of old about Jesus, and they were all persecuted and murdered for it. That’s astonishing. And now, like Peter and the others before him, Stephen accuses these men of having killed the one whom they all spoke about.

He adds this idea of angels coming with the delivering of the law, I believe, because it seals that this is a covenant lawsuit. In this case, they are angels (plural). It was a tradition spoken about by Josephus (*Antiquities* 15:36), and seems to derive from places like Deut 33:2 and Ps 68:17 where God came to Sinai with myriads of angels. That’s precisely what you would expect in a divine council scene, which often included giving the law and bringing covenant lawsuits from the court of heaven.

## Acts 7:54-60 Stephen Put to Death like the Prophets before Him

So **how did the Sanhedrin react** to all of this? If you've understood the sermon, you will know the answer. “**Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him**” (Acts 7:54). But now, the way Luke tells us the story, we return to ideas we started with. These really began with **the angels** and the **law**, for Stephen was accused of speaking against the Law, yet he had the face of an angel.

“**But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God**” (55). Remember, Stephen was chosen in part because he was **full of the Holy Spirit**. In fact, Luke told us this **three times** in ch. 6 (Acts 6:3; 5, 10). We've also seen the “**glory of God**.” The God of glory appeared to Abraham (7:2). That's how the whole speech began. Now, Stephen sees the God of glory with his own eyes too.

Just here, the ESV and nearly all translations miss it in my opinion. They say things like “**he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing**.” This makes a distinction between the God

of glory and Jesus, as if somehow perhaps Stephen is seeing the Spirit and Jesus or the Father and Jesus. But that's not what we've learned throughout Stephen's sermon that "appeared" to so many eyes in the OT. This means, the translators have failed to grasp Stephen's message.

While the translation is perfectly acceptable, grammatically, it has **failed on a theological level**. It is much better to see a rarer kind of translation called **epexegetical**. This is a rhetorical device used in Greek (and English for that matter) where the words that come after explain the preceding words. The way you would translate this would be, "**he saw the glory of God, that is Jesus standing...**"<sup>18</sup> **The glory of God is Jesus.**

Stephen then tells everyone exactly this. "**And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'**" This echoes what Jesus told these very people, "**But from now on the son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God**" (**Luke 22:69**), a reference to **Daniel 7:13**—a divine council scene. But here, Jesus is **standing** rather than being seated. Why?

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. **Ralph P. Martin**, "**A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11**," in *Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 111 n. 3; **Samuel Cooper Franklin Smith**, "**Stephen and Moses Parallels**" (Liberty University, 2009), 48 n. 101; **David Allen**, *Hebrews*, NAC (B&H Publishing, 2010), 119.

He has received his power and glory. And now, in the court of heaven, Jesus is about to judge these evil rebellious men. One scholar writes that the last prophetic element of the covenant lawsuit is the “*statement of recognition of the sovereign who has oversight of the court proceedings.*”<sup>19</sup> Here are a couple examples. **Deut 32:3**, “For I will proclaim the Name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God!” Curiously, **the Name of the Lord is the Angel!** Again, **Amos 4:13**, “For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought ... the LORD, the God of hosts, is his Name.” Again, **the Name**, but now with the Lord of Hosts—the Angel. All the prophets are seeing Jesus when they bring covenant lawsuits against the people. Kevin DeYoung explains, “*He has stood to receive Stephen’s testimony and to be his advocate. He has stood that he might come forward to be the judge of those who will trample upon God’s prophet. Jesus is rising from his throne to come to Stephen’s defense and to judge his persecutors.*”<sup>20</sup>

Thus Luke tells us, “**They cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him**” (**Acts**

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<sup>19</sup> Peterson, 366-67.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin DeYoung, “[When Jesus Stands](#),” TGC (April 10, 2013).

7:57). Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him (58), exactly what the law says you are to do *to blasphemers* (Num 15:35; Deut 17:5). But *they* are the blasphemers, not Stephen! They have refused to call God God! And then in a piece of foreshadowing, “And they witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul” (58). This is also a look backwards, reminding us that the church laid *everything at the apostle’s feet* so that they might distribute to any who had need (Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2). It’s an act of submission to the presiding authority. Obviously, this was Saul.

But the last words are the most amazing of all. “And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit’” (Acts 7:59). These words echo those of his Savior on the cross: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” (Luke 23:46), but now Jesus has taken the place of the Father. For Jesus is standing at the right hand of the Father in heaven—as king of the council.

Then the last verse, “And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against him.’ And when he had said this he fell asleep” (Acts 7:50). Again, this reminds us of Jesus. “And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive

them, for they know now what they do” (Luke 23:34). Again, Father is replaced by Jesus, because Jesus now has been given all judgment from the Father (see John 5:22, 27; etc.). And what do you suppose all this echoing of Jesus means about that face of the angel that we saw previously?

Remember? “And gazing as him, all who sat in council saw that his face was like the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). Now, we are able to see clearly. It was not the face of an ordinary angel. It was as the face of the Angel of the LORD himself. In fact, in Greek, you do not need the definite article to translate it with “the.”<sup>21</sup> That which was cryptic is now certain. Stephen is reflecting the very glory of his Savior, like Moses’ face shone after meeting with him on the Mountain. For this is the mystical union of believers with their Lord: the bride to the Groom, the body to the Head, the branches to the Vine. We are in union with Christ, living mystical union. And as He behaves, so also must we. And that is the ultimate point of Stephen’s sermon.

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<sup>21</sup> “It is essential to remember that in Greek, as in Latin (which has no article), a noun may be definite *without the article* ... When a definite noun lacks the article, stress is being placed on the qualitative aspect of the noun rather than on its identity or particularity.” David Alan Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 76–77.



But because the Jews failed this one last time, God was finished. The Gospel would move out to the very nations of the gods that Jesus was conquering, for he must inherit the whole world. For he is not just the covenantal Lord of Israel, but the God of all creation. This is our Jesus.

Beloved, this magnificent sermon teaches you so many things of your Savior. But you **have to know what you are looking at**. As always, **he is the key to unlocking our autostereogram**. Can you see him? In Christ, the veil is taken off of our eyes.

He is the one who has always been able to meet with people wherever he wants. He doesn't need a temple. He is the one who covenanted with Israel. He is also the God who has brought judgment time and again on his people for rejecting him. **The lawsuit is certain**. It has been delivered by the court of heaven itself through the repeated messages of God's prophets—the last of whom we've seen today, was Stephen.

Yet, that **judgment is now forestalled** until that Great and Terrible Day in the future. It will come. But now just yet. Today is the day of forgiveness, no matter what you have done or how often you have rejected him. **The greatest**

sin of all has always been **not seeing him and believing him and his servants**. You need not do that, for Jesus has been proclaimed clearly to you this day. Yet, how easily people still miss him, even in Stephen's sermon. So hear Calvin when he says, **"Therefore, let us, first of all, set down this for a surety, that there was never since the beginning any communication between God and men, save only by Christ; for we have nothing to do with God, unless the Mediator be present to purchase his favour for us. Therefore, this place doth plentifully prove the divinity of Christ, and teacheth that he is of the same essence with the Father."**<sup>22</sup>

From the beginning, those **faithless stiff-necked rebels** have sought to kill those who dare to mention his name. This is because he forces humility and thwarts plans and stops enemies in their tracks. They can get away with it, but only for so long. The judgment has come, make no mistake. Do not be as those throwing their garments at the feet of one presiding over murder, though know that Christ would subdue this man to his pleasure later, for he is Sovereign and will lose none of those given to him by the Father.<sup>23</sup> Instead,

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<sup>22</sup> **John Calvin** and Henry Beveridge, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 276.

<sup>23</sup> Spence writes that the depiction of Stephen with the face of an angel may have come from Saul-Paul himself and given to Luke, the very vision of the Christ in Stephen's soul. **H. D. M.**

see the angelic face of his servant and the glories that await those who know forgiveness of their enemies because they know the King who subdues them. He is standing in heaven, waiting for you dear child. Look up and see him clearly through his word.

**APPENDIX:**

**Quotes and Allusions to the OT in Stephen's Sermon (Acts 7:2-51)**

7:2—"God of Glory"	Ps 29:3
7:2—Appeared in Mesopotamia	Gen 11:31-32; cf. Gen 15:7; Neh 9:7
7:3—Go out from your land...	Gen 12:1
7:4—Go to Haran	Gen 11:31
7:4—Go to Canaan	Gen 12:4-5
7:5—Promised as a possession to seed	Gen 12:7
7:6-7—Sojourners in a foreign land	Gen 15:13-14
7:8—Covenant of circumcision	Gen 17:9-14
7:8—Circumcises Isaac	Gen 21:4
7:9—Brothers jealous	Gen 37:11
7:9—Joseph sold into Egypt	Gen 37:28
7:10—God (the LORD) with Joseph	Gen 39:2
7:10—Gave favor and wisdom to Joseph	Gen 39:21; 41:39
7:10—Joseph made ruler	Gen 41:41-43; 45:8
7:11—Famine	Gen 41:54-57; 42:5
7:12-13—Brothers to Egypt	Gen 42:1-2; Gen 43-45;
7:13—Joseph reveals himself	Gen 45:1-16
7:14—"Seventy-five"	Gen 46:27 LXX; Ex 1:5 LXX, DSS
7:15-16—Jacob dies and is buried	Gen 46:1-7
7:15—They all die	Ex 1:6
7:17—The people increase	Ex 1:7
7:18—A new Pharaoh	Ex 1:8
7:19—Kills infants	Ex 1:15-22
7:20—Moses beautiful, three months	Ex 2:2
7:21—Moses adopted by Pharaoh's daughter	Ex 2:5, 10
7:22—Moses' wisdom and learning	Philo: Moses 1.21-24; 1Kg 4:30; Sir 45:3
7:23-24—His own people oppressed by and Egyptian	Ex 2:11

Spence-Jones, ed., *Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 213-14.

7:24—Moses kills the Egyptian	Ex 2:12
7:26—Moses tries to reconcile brothers	Ex 2:13
7:27—Israelites denies Moses' authority	Ex 2:14
7:28—Do you want to kill me?	Ex 2:14
7:29—Moses flees	Ex 2:15
7:29—Moses in exile in Midian	Ex 2:15
7:29—Moses marries and has two sons	Ex 2:16-22
7:30—Moses and Angel and the Bush	Ex 3:1-2
7:31—Moses amazed	Ex 3:3
7:31—The voice of the Lord in the bush	Ex 3:4
7:32—I am the God of your fathers; Moses won't look	Ex 3:6
7:33—Take off your sandals	Ex 3:5
7:34—Seen affliction of my people, send Moses	Ex 3:7, 10
7:36—Led them out	Ex 3:12 and many of the next chapters through ch. 15
7:37—A prophet from your brothers	Deut 18:15
7:38—Ekklesia	Deut 18:16
7:38—Moses with the congregation and Angel giving law	Deut 18 w/ Ex 20:21-22—SamPent, 4Q175; 4Q158; Mek. Ex. 20:19
7:39—Refused to obey	Num 14:1-3
7:40—Golden calf	Ex 32
7:41— Brought sacrifices to the idols and rejoicing	Ex 32:6
7:42—Worship the host of heaven	Cf. Deut 4:
7:42-43—Moloch and Rephan	Amos 5:25-27
7:44—The pattern of the tent	Ex 25:9
7:45—Joshua's conquest	Joshua
7:46—David wants to build God a temple	Ps 132:5
7:47—Solomon builds the temple	1Kg 6:2
7:49-50—Heaven is my throne	Isa 66:1-2a
7:51—Stiff-necked	Ex 32:9; etc.
7:51—uncircumcised hearts and ears	Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; etc.

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