

Acts 6.8-7.60

No Fear of the Big 'C'

NEVER want to HEAR 'C' Word SPOKEN by DOCTOR - FEAR CANCER

Big "C" Word SOME FEAR ALMOST AS MUCH - **CHANGE!!**

Creatures OF HABIT- LIKE THINGS TO STAY SAME - COMFORTABLE
WORLD of Change - EVERYTHING round US Changes, We're CHANGING

ALL OF LIFE IS CHANGING – We Struggle to keep up with it

By the Time your COMPLEXION CLEARS UP, HAIR FALLS OUT, TEETH
FURNITURE DISEASE – Chest is falling into my Drawers

CHANGING People IN CHANGING WORLD creates CHANGING CHURCH
Place CHANGE Most THREATENING > Church - REFUGE / SANCTUARY

1. Critics of Change

Jews (All Jerusalem) Knew of CRISIS of FOOD DISTRIBUTION to Widows

Apostles EMPOWERED HELLENISTIC (Greek Language, Culture) JEWS

Stephen & Philip PREACHERS / EVANGELISTS – Other 5 NEVER Mentioned
NEVER KNOW how GOD will Use Person who is CONSECRATED to His Work

7 SERVANTS Chosen ALL GREEK Speaking, HELLENISTIC JEWS

MOVED Followers of Nazarene FURTHER from TRADITIONAL Jews

a. Argument 1st Jesus > NOW Stephen - CONSIDERED FALSE TEACHER

6.9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen...

These men began to *argue with Stephen*

“Freedmen” – Roman prisoners, who Purchased Freedom

EAGER TO KEEP IDEAL TRADITIONS THEY WORKED HARD FOR

RELIGION BOUND FORMER SLAVES TOGETHER – Source of HOPE

CHANGE in their RELIGION WOULD BE A GREAT THREAT TO THEM

STEPHEN > FOE TO THEIR STABILITY - SAME TRUE TODAY

For any congregation that is at all settled, change is one of the hardest things to face. And yet it is a prime necessity. Had not those Hellenists been open to change there would be little or no missionary activity. We owe them an enormous debt. They have blazed for us a trail we may be unwilling to follow but follow we must...The only thing that does not change is a cemetery. Every living thing changes, and so will a living church. Michael Green

b. Allegation COULD NOT WIN BY FAIR DEBATE > Use FALSEHOOD

Seen in Most POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS - FALSEHOOD & SLANDER

6.11-14 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God." So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

**NO WORSE Violation > Against Moses and God > Temple, Torah, Traditions
BUILDING - RULES - POWER STRUCTURE // 3 Most Impt. Things Church!**

STEPHEN'S ACCUSERS ALLEGE HE WANTS TO CHANGE ALL 3!!

TYPICAL OF THE DEVIL'S ATTACK - mixes Half Truth in his Lies

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"Matt 26.59-61

SERIOUS ALLEGATION - NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT TO JEWS

TEMPLE and the TORAH / WORSHIP and the WORD

GOD'S MEETING PLACE and GOD'S MESSAGE

As he stood tall before the Council, he brought the theology of Christ down hard on the three great pillars of popular Judaism: the land, the law, and the temple – three false bases for confidence before God. R. Kent Hughes

c. Annihilation - COULD NOT STOP THE MESSAGE / KILL MESSENGER

7.57-58 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

GROUND TEETH – THREW STONES – BUT NEVER OPENED BIBLES

Stephen's Interpretation was Faultless and Irrefutable

NOT SURPRISING JESUS APPEARED TO STEPHEN - HE KNEW PAIN

HE HAD BEEN OBJECT OF SAME THREEFOLD VICIOUS TACTIC

Jesus: They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. John 16.2,3

BE AWARE THAT THESE ARE THE WORLD'S TACTICS

BE CAREFUL WE NEVER USE THEM OURSELVES

2. Creator of Changes

CHANGE comes FROM GOD > He always does NEW THINGS

MOST UNUSUAL Sermon recorded in Book of ACTS

1. Longest 2. No Jesus 3. No Resurrection 4. No Invitation to Believe

Focus on Four Epochs of Israel's History / Four Great OT Heroes

1. Abraham and the Patriarchs
2. Joseph and the Egyptian Exile
3. Moses and the Exodus Wanderings
4. David & Solomon – and the Temple

IF U think these are FOUR ROCK BANDS > Need to READ MORE O.T.

a. God Works Everywhere Jews convinced God ONLY IN THEIR TEMPLE

7.2 The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia,

ABRAHAM WAS FATHER OF ISRAEL – Remained LANDLESS

7.5 He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground.

7.9 Joseph...sold...as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him

EGYPT, EGYPT, EGYPT – Mentioned SIX TIMES by Stephen

EGYPT mentioned more than 600 X's in Bible – MOSTLY BAD

7.17 As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased.

God would FULFILL promise to Abraham – even in Egypt

GOD'S LAWGIVER WAS A PRINCE OF EGYPT

7.22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians

7.30 An angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai.

7.33 The Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground.

PLACE WHERE YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND

Where? Downtown Jerusalem? Wilderness of Sinai!!

HOLY GROUND – OUTSIDE HOLY LAND – Wherever GOD IS – IS HOLY

There is not a word of temple here, not a word of sacrifices. This holy ground is far more wonderful than the 'Holy of Holies' for God is nowhere said to have appeared in the inner sanctuary in Jerusalem as he did in the burning bush... God is everywhere present...the holy place is wherever God may be Chrysostrom

FIRST MENTION OF A RELIGIOUS BUILDING

7.44 Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert

Solomon KNEW REAL TRUTH > STEPHEN'S CRITICS DID NOT

7.48 the Most High does not live in houses made by men.

HEAVEN IS GOD'S THRONE / EARTH IS HIS FOOTSTOOL

GOD COULD NOT BE CAPTURED INSIDE THEIR BOX

STEPHEN SEES LONG AWAITED MESSIAH OF ISRAEL

“oh good, he is coming for us right – the House of Israel, people of faith”

BIGGEST SHOCK 7.56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

YOU GUYS MISSED HIM – Messiah WAS HERE YOU Murdered HIM

MAY SEEM LIKE A CONFUSING SERMON TO YOU – NOT to Them

WOUND OF ITS IMPACT WAS UNBEARABLE – Stephen must die

THEME OF SERMON – God of Israel, on the Move / NOT BOUND

No Building can CONFINE HIM or CONTROL HIS ACTIVITY

b. God Works through Anyone - SACRED HEROES ARE MORTAL MEN

Abraham – Idol worshipper – WHY left Mesopotamia

Joseph– Young Man thrown away into Egyptian prison

David – YOUNGEST, SMALLEST son of Jesse – Shepherd Boy

Moses – Old Man tending sheep in the desert wilderness

LONGEST SECTION on MOSES – HONORED Law Giver of Israel

FOCUS CRITICS COMPLAINT – Stephen MORE LIKE Moses than They

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that *his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.*
Exodus 34.29-30

6.15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

EVEN BEFORE he OPENED his MOUTH– TRUTH of GOD on FACE

Was it not God's deliberate purpose to give the same radiant face to Stephen when he was accused of opposing the law as he had given to Moses when he received the law? In this way God was showing that both Moses' ministry of the law and Stephen's interpretation of it had his approval. John Stott

1) Disobeyed Moses Revelation

7.20 Moses...was no ordinary child.

7.22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

7.37,38 This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people.' He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and *he received living words to pass on to us.*

STEPHEN HONORS MOSES – SHOWS HIM NO DISRESPECT

UNDERSTANDS Moses POINTS TO JESUS > Great, Final Prophet of God

Jesus to Jewish Leaders: Do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. *If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.* But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say? John 5.45-47

2) Denied Moses Redemption

7.25 Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.

7.35 This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was *sent to be their ruler and deliverer* by God himself

7.39 Our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt.

PAY LIP SERVICE TO MOSES & LAW – They are WORST OFFENDERS

Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 2 Corinthians 3.15,16

3 NAILS IN Stephen's COFFIN // like Israel ignored Law and Prophets of God

7.51 You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

7.52 Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him > **STEPHEN'S Only Ref to JESUS**

7.53,54 You who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.

Stephen's Deadly Sin – God NOT CONFINED – Temples, Texts, Traditions
SHOULD NOT seek UNNECESSARY CHANGE FOR CHANGE SAKE
BUT WHEN UNAVOIDABLE CHANGE COMES- Should NOT FEAR

GOD HAS SEEN END FROM THE BEGINNING

GOD IS IMMUTABLE – UNCHANGEABLE – ETERNAL

I the LORD do not change. Malachi 3.6

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Hebrews 13.8

3. Christ the Change-Agent

a. Replaced Temple – MEETING PLACE – God & Man

TEMPLE ITSELF – pointed to SOMEONE Greater

7.49 Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord.

ENEMIES MISUNDERSTOOD THIS STATEMENT OF JESUS

Jesus: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."...the temple he had spoken of was his body."
John 2.19-21

HIS BODY - TRUE TEMPLE OF GOD - WAS CRUCIFIED

NOW AS RISEN LORD INVITES WORSHIPERS FROM EVERYWHERE

MEETING WITH GOD NOW ONLY THROUGH JESUS

Jesus: I tell you that one greater than the Temple is here Matthew 12.6

Meeting with GOD No Longer BOUND by BUILDINGS and SERVICES

Jesus: For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

Matthew 18.20

STEPHEN entered HOLY TEMPLE thru HORRIBLE TRAGEDY

7.55-56 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. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Stephen has been confessing Christ before men, and now he sees Christ confessing his servant before God.
F.F. Bruce

JESUS NOT IMPASSIVELY SITTING DOWN SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY

STANDING - REACHING OUT - WITH US IN ALL OUR STRUGGLES

Yuri GAGARIN – 1st Man in Space - KOSMONAUT in Soviet Spacecraft

Came back to EARTH and DECLARED > "THERE is No God UP There"

Presence of JESUS is NOT DISTANT GALAXIES – NEAR, Another Realm

FATHER HAD STORE IN SHOPPING MALL – PET SHOP

POODLES HAIRCUT AND MADE BEAUTIFUL

Friends & I used to sit with DOG WHISTLES – Watching and Blowing

DOG WHISTLE – Sound BEYOND RANGE of Human Ear

Piercingly Clear to more Sensitive Ears of a Dog / IMPOSSIBLE TO GROOM

Sound in Another Realm / Sights of Another Realm / JESUS IN GLORY

b. Fulfilled Law - Jesus is New Moses – Law of Kingdom of God

REGARDING THE LAW OF MOSES - JESUS TAUGHT

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Matthew 5.17

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Romans 10.4

TEMPLE & LAW >> GOD GIVEN GIFTS

BOTH FIND THEIR GOD-INTENDED FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Philip: "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth" John 1.45

JESUS WAS CHANGING BOTH THE TEMPLE AND THE LAW

CONSTRUCTIVE NOT DESTRUCTIVE / POSITIVE NOT NEGATIVE

BOTH MAGNIFY THEIR IMPORTANCE WHEN POINT TO CHRIST

No harm can be done to the temple and the law, when Christ is openly established as the end and truth of both of them John Calvin

4. Christians and Change

a. Power SPIRIT OF GOD INITIATES CHANGE

WHEN THE APOSTLES TOLD THEM TO SELECT SERVANTS

6.3 choose seven men...who are known to be full of the Spirit

6.5 They chose Stephen, a man full of...the Holy Spirit

EVEN at END of STRONG WORDS 7.55 Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit

SPIRIT of GOD Hovered over WATERS AT CREATION Bringing ORDER

Religious CHAOS and KILLING Shows ABSENCE of God's SPIRIT

7.51 "You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

TODAY > Spirit-filled = SUCCESS, HEALTH, PROSPERITY, HAPPINESS

3 MEN in NT > FULL of Holy Spirit – 2 MURDERED, 1 Gave Property Away

Jesus, Stephen, Barnabas >> FULL of Spirit >> Selfless, Sacrificial GIVERS

6.5 Stephen, a man full of faith >> A MAN FULL OF JESUS

PREACHED About JESUS > SAW Jesus > DIED LIKE JESUS

FORGIVENESS for his MURDERERS on his LIPS

7.59-60 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

// Jesus on Cross Prayed to Father >> Now Prayer to Lord Jesus = Jesus is God

“FELL ASLEEP” Peaceful Description of Brutal Death > FULL OF CHRIST

CRIED OUT – NOT for HIMSELF or his PAIN – for Attackers to be SAVED

You wonder what kind of world we live in when good and godly men like Stephen can be murdered by religious bigots! But we have similar problems in our ‘enlightened’ age today: taking hostages, bombings that kill and maim innocent people, assassinations, and all in the name of politics or religion. The heart of man has not changed, nor can it be changed apart from the grace of God. Warren Wiersbe

Grace of God EMPOWERED TO BRING GOD HONORING CHANGE

6.8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

Grace and power: sweetness and strength...merged in one personality

G. Campbell Morgan

b. Perspective

6.3 ...seven men...known to be full of the Spirit *and wisdom*

WISDOM INTERPRETS CHANGE / NOT ALL CHANGE GOOD

LESSON from IRAQ > EASIER to BREAK THINGS than to BUILD THEM

Wisdom DEMONSTRATED IN HIS BOLD AND POWERFUL PREACHING
6.10 they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke

Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me.
Psalm 119.98

NOT a SERMON he had TIME to STUDY For / WORD Filled Heart & MIND
WHEN FULL OF GOD - HIS WORD - HIS SPIRIT - HIS GRACE & POWER

Jesus: I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able
to resist or contradict Luke 21.15

I seek not a long life, but a full one, like You, Lord Jesus...I must not think it
strange if God takes in youth those whom I would have kept on earth till they were
older. God is peopling Eternity, and I must not restrict him to old men and
women... Jim Elliot, on January 8, 1956 Elliot peopled Eternity

c. Promises

How to COPE w/ CHANGE? > FULL OF GOD - PERSON of His WORD
TWO UNCHANGING TRUTHS RUN THROUGH STEPHEN'S MESSAGE

1) God will Bless His Word

Stephen DECLARED a PROMISE-KEEPING GOD

7.5 God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the
land, even though at that time Abraham had no child.

Like Abraham > Stephen HELD ON to PROMISES by FAITH Not by SIGHT

7.17 ...the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham
LONG AFTER Abraham had LEFT THIS EARTH

7.42 This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets...

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Numbers 23.19

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Matthew 24.35

Change is painful to us all...we should not seek change merely for the sake of change. Yet true Christian radicalism is open to change. It knows that God has bound Himself to His church (promising that He will never leave it) and to His word (promising it will never pass away). But God's church means people not buildings, and God's word means Scripture not traditions. So as long as the essentials are preserved, the buildings and traditions if necessary can go. We must not let them imprison the living God or impede His mission in the world.

John Stott

2) God is With His People

7.2 The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham...

7.9 Joseph...sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him

7.30,32 ...an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush... 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'

7.55 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.

Jesus: I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28.20

CHURCH WAS SHOCKED BY MARTYRDOM – GOD USED IT

Like the CROSS – this TRAGEDY becomes TRIUMPH for the KINGDOM

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria...Those who had been scattered *preached the word wherever they went.* Acts 8.1,4

DEATH OF STEPHEN > HINGE IN BOOK OF ACTS > Jerusalem to Nations

For Stephen DEATH was CORONATION

For Israel DEATH was CONDEMNATION – Gospel now to Gentiles

7.58 ...the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
SAUL the Persecutor >> SOON to become APOSTLE to the GENTILES

Paul and Barnabas in SYNAGOGUE at PISIDIAN ANTIOCH

When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, *we now turn to the Gentiles.*" Acts 13.45-47

GOD WAS WITH HIS MISSIONARY CHURCH

Just as He was with Abraham, Joseph and Moses, and Stephen

CHURCH of JESUS Never BE BROUGHT TO GLOBAL EXTINCTION

MOST CONCENTRATED efforts to STOP Jesus and Church > CHINA

Late 1940's > All MISSIONARIES Expelled > Chinese Church 4 Million

AFTER DECADES OF SUFFERING > 50 to 100 million Believers in China

MANY Thousands Joined Stephen in MARTYRDOM > People Eternity

WORLD TODAY > Great Suffering, Terrorism, Famine, Senseless Slaughters

God of Stephen > LIVING GOD > PURPOSE > Not Always KNOWN to US

EMBRACE God > ENDURE CHANGES > Filled with Spirit, Wisdom, Word

Acts 6:8-7:60

8 Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. 9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)-Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, 10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. 11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God." 12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. 13 They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. 14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." 15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Acts 7 1 Then the high priest asked him, "Are these charges true?" 2 To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 3 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.' 4 "So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. 5 He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. 6 God spoke to him in this way: 'Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 7 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,' God said, 'and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.' 8 Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs. 9 "Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him 10 and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace. 11 "Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our fathers could not find food. 12 When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit. 13 On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. 14 After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. 15 Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. 16 Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money. 17 "As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. 18 Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. 19 He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die. 20 "At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. 21 When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. 22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. 23 "When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. 24 He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. 25 Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. 26 The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?' 27 "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons. 30 "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. 31 When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. 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.' 35 "This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler

and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert. 37 "This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people.' 38 He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us. 39 "But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. 40 They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt-we don't know what has happened to him!' 41 That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made. 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? 43 You have lifted up the shrine of Molech and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile' beyond Babylon. 44 "Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. 45 Having received the tabernacle, our fathers under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, 46 who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. 47 But it was Solomon who built the house for him. 48 "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: 49 "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? 50 Has not my hand made all these things?' 51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him- 53 you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." 54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 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. 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, 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. 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.