



God's Faithfulness and Israel's Rejection

September 20, 2026

Acts 7

Introduction:

Despite Israel's repeated rejection and wanderings from God, he remains faithful to keep his promises (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Before the Council - Acts 7:1

And the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

(Note - He's referring to the false accusations of "speaking against this holy place" and saying "that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place" in 6:13-14)

- Just like Peter and the apostles', Stephen is brought before the 71 member ruling council (which likely included Paul) and questioned because of Jesus.
- Stephen's response is a remarkable, spontaneous, Spirit inspired message detailing the history of the Lord God's relational dealings with Israel.

Stephen's Response (v3-5)

"Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.'"

The Patriarchs (v1-19)

- Stephen's response begins with God's call of Abram (Abraham) and discusses the promise to give them the promised land as their home, but not before God tells them that they will spend 400 years in captivity and slavery in Egypt.
- The patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - are those through whom God uses to lay the foundation for the nation of Israel, and through whom God has demonstrated his faithfulness.

Moses (v20-43)

- The varied locations where God encounters the patriarchs and Moses emphasizes a point Stephen will later make more explicitly.
- Moses is rejected by the people (v35).



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The Tabernacle and the Temple (v44-50)

- Stephen moves from Moses to Joshua to David in a few short verses, ultimately moving from the tabernacle to the temple.
- The point Stephen is leading up: **God does not dwell in houses made by hands** (Isaiah 66:1-2)
- The tabernacle and temple seem to be given by God as a concession because of Israel's tendency to wander into idolatry and away from the living God.

Historical Recall to Ouright Accusation(v51-53)

- The primary charge Stephen has been moving towards is in verse 51-52
- God has taken the initiative, moving towards people.
- Despite the signs and wonders, and God's moving towards them, the Israelite people continue to resist God.

Sanhedrin's Response (v55,57)

- Instead of repentance they continued to walk in resistance, becoming *enraged*.
- *Rejection has been a primary characteristic of Israel's relationship with the Lord*
 - Consider reading and looking up the following passages: Numbers 14:11, 2 Chronicles 24:19, Nehemiah 9:29 and Isaiah 63:10)
- Despite all the signs Jesus, and the apostles didfd, most of the religious leaders continued to resist and reject God's initiative.

Stephen's Vision and Martyrdom (v58-62)

- The council displays a shocking capacity of the human heart to be resistant and hardened (Hebrews 3:12-13)
- See Mark 12:1-12 - The Parable of the Tenant

Despite Rejection..... God is Faithful

- Hebrews 3 warns against how sin hardens our hearts over time.
- In Romans 11:25 Paul says, "a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in".
- Israel rebelled but God remains faithful to the covenant of His steadfast love (Hesed) (2 Timothy 2:13, Romans 8:31-32)

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