

THE BOOK OF ACTS

ACTS 7:1-53 | LESSON SUMMARY

Start at the Beginning

ACTS 7:2, "And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia..." (ESV)

- Mesopotamia
 - The original call out of culture
 - Meant to be "unlike other nations"
 - "Babylonian Genesis": parallels to biblical account, but with key differences (not about politics)
 - Starting in Middle-Bronze age history with the Father of the Hebrew nation
 - God's glory preceded the Promised Land or the Temple
- It's not about a place on earth
 - Stephen is asked to defend his teachings ("Are these things so?" 7:1), but he is not interested in defending himself
 - Stephen makes it clear that the gift is God's presence—it's not a right or a place, or anything physical or tangible
 - "Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length" (7:5)



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ACTS 7:35, "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." (ESV)

- Striking a nerve
 - Stephen is pointing out a pattern of rejection; failure to recognize God's anointed leader
 - He has now referenced Abraham, Moses, and is about to take it a step further...

ACTS 7:48, "Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands..." (ESV)

- Stephen's goal was never to blaspheme God, Moses, or the temple
Even so, he doesn't provide a "defense" for himself, but instead elaborates more fully
 - "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..." (7:52)
 - Remember: Stephen is talking to his own people
 - Scripture makes clear that he is not intending to condemn anyone
 - This pronouncement is the tipping point

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Luke Strelan, *Strange Acts; Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles*, Randall Price, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archeology*, *The Holman Bible Atlas*

