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### Rice Memorial MBC

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### **Remembering God's Faithfulness**

Definitions in **bold letters** are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance  
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or Roget's Thesaurus - **September 27, 2015**

## **Acts 7:2-4, 8-10, 17, 33-34, 45-47, 52-53, 55**

**Introduction:** This great chapter is taken up entirely by the account of **Stephen's** so-called defense before the **Sanhedrin** and **his martyrdom** which climaxed it. Actually, Stephen's address was not so much a defense of himself as it was an epic survey of Jewish history as related to their **rejection** of the **promised Messiah**; and, while it is true a complete refutation of the charges against himself is apparent in this master oration, it is the glorious **figure** of the **risen Lord** which dominates every word of it.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=43&ch=7>)

**Acts 6:9-10**, Then there arose **certain** of the **synagogue**, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, **disputing** (reason or argue in opposition; to debate) with **Stephen**. And they were NOT able to RESIST the **WISDOM** and the **spirit** by which he spake.

**NOTE: To resist.** That is, they were not able to *answer* his arguments. *The wisdom.* This properly refers to his **knowledge** of the **Scriptures**; **his SKILL** in what *the Jews* esteemed to be wisdom--acquaintance with their sacred writings, opinions, etc.

(Source: Barnes' Notes on the New Testament [studylight.org/com/bnn/](http://www.studylight.org/com/bnn/))

**Acts 6:11-15**, Then **they suborned** (procure a person to take such a FALSE oath as constitutes perjury) men, which said, We have heard him speak **blasphemous words** against **Moses**, and against **God**. And they **stirred up** the **people**, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the COUNCIL...  
...And all that sat in the COUNCIL, looking stedfastly on him, **saw his face** as it had been the **face** of an **angel**.

**Proverbs 17:27**, He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of **understanding** is of an **excellent (COOL)** spirit.

**Acts 7:1-4**, Then said the **high priest**, Are these things so? And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory **appeared unto** our father **Abraham**, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his **father** was **dead**, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

**NOTE: Men, brethren, and fathers** - These were the usual titles by which the **Sanhedrin** was addressed. In all this Stephen was perfectly respectful, and showed that he was disposed to render **due honor** to the institutions of the nation.

**The God of glory** - This is a Hebrew form of expression denoting **“the glorious God.”** It properly denotes His “majesty, or splendor, or magnificence”; and the word “glory” is often applied to the splendid appearances in which God has manifested Himself to people, Deut. 5:24; Ex. 33:18; Ex. 16:7, Ex. 16:10; Leviticus 9:23; Numbers 14:10.

**When he was in Mesopotamia** - In Genesis 11:31, it is said that Abraham dwelt “in Ur of the Chaldees.” The word “Mesopotamia” properly denotes the region between the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. See notes on Acts 2:9. The name is Greek, and the region had also other names before the Greek name was given to it. In Genesis 11:31; Genesis 15:7, it is called Ur of the Chaldees. Mesopotamia and Chaldea might not exactly coincide; but it is evident that Stephen meant to say that **“Ur”** was in the **country afterward** called **Mesopotamia**. Its precise situation is unknown.

**Before he dwelt in Charran** - From Genesis 11:31, it would seem that **Terah** took his son The word **“Charran”** is the Greek form of the Hebrew **“Haran,”** Gen. 11:31.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**NOTE: Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans,....** The same with Mesopotamia; so Pliny says<sup>F2</sup>De Urbibus, l. 6. c. 26. , that "because of Babylon the head of the Chaldean nation--- the other part of Mesopotamia and Assyria is called Babylonia."

And he places Babylon in Mesopotamia; it was out of Ur, in the land of the Chaldeans particularly, that Abraham came, upon his first call:

**and dwelt in Charan:** according to the Jewish writers, Seder Olam Rabba, c. 1. p. 2.

Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 5. 2. , he dwelt here **FIVE YEARS:**

**from thence, when his father was dead;** who **died in Haran,** as is said in Gen. 11:32 and that it was **AFTER** the death of Terah his father, that Abraham went from thence, is manifest from Genesis 11:31...

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**Acts 7:8-10,** *And he gave him the **COVENANT** of **circumcision:** and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, **moved with envy,** sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And **delivered him out of ALL his afflictions,** and gave him **favour** and **wisdom** in the **SIGHT** of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him **governor** over Egypt and all his house.*

**NOTE:** He gave him the covenant of circumcision, that is, the covenant of which circumcision was the seal; and accordingly, when Abraham had a son born, he circumcised him the eighth day (v. 8), by which he was both **bound** by the **divine law** and interested in the **divine promise;** for circumcision had reference to both, being a seal of the covenant both on GOD’S PART—I will be to thee a God all-sufficient, and on MAN’S PART—Walk before me, and be thou perfect. And then when effectual care was thus taken for the securing of Abraham’s seed, to be a seed to serve the Lord, they began to multiply: Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs, or roots of the respective tribes. Secondly, Joseph, the darling and blessing of his father’s house, was abused by his brethren; they **envied him** because of **his dreams,** and **sold him** into Egypt. Thus early did the children of Israel begin to grudge those among them that were eminent and outshone others, of which their enmity (hostility) to Christ, who, like Joseph, was a **Nazarite** (Jew who professed extraordinary purity of life and devotion) among his brethren, was a great instance. Thirdly, God owned Joseph in his troubles, and was with him (Gen. 39:2, Gen. 39:21 ), by the influence of his Spirit, both on his **MIND,** giving him comfort, and on the minds of those he was concerned with, giving him **favour** in **their eyes.** And thus at length he delivered him out of his afflictions, and Pharaoh made him the **second man** in the kingdom, Ps. 105:20-22. (Source: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/acts/7.html>)

**Genesis 17:10-14,** This is **my covenant,** which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every MAN child among you shall be circumcised. And ye

shall **circumcise** (**destroy** [get rid of]) the **FLESH** of your **foreskin**; and it shall be a **token** of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is **eight** days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be **circumcised**: and my **covenant** shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the **uncircumcised man child** whose **flesh** of his **foreskin** is **not circumcised**, that soul shall be CUT OFF from his people; he hath BROKEN my covenant.

**Romans 2:29**, But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and **circumcision** is that of the heart, IN the **SPIRIT**, and **not** in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

**Acts 7:17-22**, *But when the time of the **Promise** drew nigh, which God had **sworn** to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and **evil entreated** our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time **Moses was born**, and was **exceeding fair**, and **nourished up** in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and **nourished him** for her own son. And Moses was **learned** in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.*

**NOTE:** Just as the Patriarchs had **rejected** Joseph the **great deliverer** who had saved the nation from starvation, Stephen would now show that the chosen people had also **rejected** Moses, notwithstanding the fact that Moses was exceedingly well qualified to be God's instrument of deliverance from bondage.

On the whole, Stephen's eulogy of Moses fell far short of the extravagant claims usually made by the Jews with regard to the great lawgiver, some even claiming that he was the author of Egyptian civilization. The points here stressed are: **(1)** that Moses had been **providentially** (by means of God's providence [act of providing or preparing for future use]) incorporated into the royal family of Egypt, **(2)** that he was "exceeding fair," and **(3)** that he had been provided with the very best education possible.

**Exceeding fair ...** "This phrase is intensive, rather than a mere equivalent for the superlative, and means "fair unto God." Coupled with the statement later that he was mighty "in words and works," these expressions reveal Moses to have been a man of the most **extraordinary power** and **ability**. Even in his early childhood, Moses possessed remarkable ability and beauty. **Josephus** wrote: It happened frequently, that those who met him as he was carried along the road, were obliged to turn again upon seeing the child; they left what they were about and stood a great while to look at him; for the **beauty** of the child was so remarkable and natural that it detained the spectators, and made them stay longer to look upon him.<sup>[12]</sup>

Although not specifically stated by Stephen in his address, it is manifest that he was here presenting Moses as a **type** (figure of something to come) of Jesus our Lord, a principal factor of which was **his rejection** by the chosen people, next related.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**Acts 7:33-34**, *Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is **holy ground**. I have seen, I have **SEEN** the **affliction** of **my people** which is in **Egypt**, and I have heard their **groaning**, and am come down to **DELIVER THEM**. And now come, I will **SEND thee** into Egypt.*

**NOTE:** To comment upon all of the references in this speech to incidents recorded in the Old Testament would be to write a commentary upon the history of Israel. It is amazing that **Stephen** should have been so completely filled with the **knowledge** of the Old Testament Scriptures. Outstanding in this passage is the reference to the "prophet like unto me" (Deuteronomy 18:15f). This was proof of the **typical** (figurative) **nature** of Moses and of his **pointing forward** to **the Christ**, with the admonition that Israel should

"hear him" or suffer the penalty of being CUT OFF from being God's people. By this identification of his loyalty to Christ as being also loyalty to Moses and what Moses commanded, Stephen devastated any charge that he had blasphemed Moses. On the contrary, it was the **Sanhedrin** who were "blaspheming Moses" by **their REFUSAL to honor the words of Moses** commanding men to RECEIVE and OBEY Christ.  
(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**Acts 7:44-47**, Our fathers had the **tabernacle of witness** in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the **fashion** that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with **Jesus (Jehoshua [JOSHUA])** into the possession of the **Gentiles**, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of **David**; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a **tabernacle** for the God of Jacob. But **Solomon built him an house (temple)**.

**NOTE:** According to the figure that he had seen ... This is additional inspired testimony regarding the "PATTERN," here called "a FIGURE," that Moses had received from God and according to which he was commanded to "make all things" (Hebrews 8:5). The immense importance of **understanding that God has given a pattern** which MEN **must follow** if they would please their Creator is fully disclosed under the heading, "All Things According to the Pattern," in my Commentary on Hebrews, under Hebrews 8:5.

**But Solomon built him a house ...** When David's conscience was aroused because of the luxury of his cedar-paneled PALACE contrasted with the TENT-SHRINE that housed the **ark of the covenant**, the prophet Nathan made it clear to David that God did not want any temple built by him, but promised that a "son of David would arise and build a house for God" (2 Samuel 7). Stephen's short reference to the **temple of Solomon** shows dramatically that the very temple itself was only a substitute for the greater temple of Christ himself, **typical** of the latter to be sure, and like the monarchy itself, allowed indeed of God; but still only a substitute for the real temple, which is Christ. This was the great message of the Christ that "One greater than the temple is here" (Matthew 12:6). (See John 2:20-22.) Stephen's argument, then, is simply that **Christ is the true temple**, that **"in Christ,"** not in some building, men are called to worship God. This was a categorical refutation of the notion that he had blasphemed God (i.e., the temple) by **repeating the prophecy of Jesus** that the Solomonic-Herodian temple would be destroyed. They, the Sanhedrinists, were blaspheming God by **rejecting God's true temple**, Jesus of Nazareth! (Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**1 Peter 2:2-5**, As newborn **babes**, desire the **sincere** milk of the **WORD**, that ye may GROW thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a **LIVING stone**, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively (LIVING) **stones**, are built up a **spiritual house (temple)**...

**Acts 7:51**, Ye **stiffnecked** and **uncircumcised in heart** and ears, ye do always **resist** the Holy Ghost: as your fathers DID, so DO YE.

**NOTE:** This pronouncement was not an outburst of temper on the part of Stephen, but the announcement of God's **judgment** upon evil men whose day of grace had at last expired; and it served as a fitting epitaph of the Jewish temple and its evil incumbents. The stroke of **divine punishment** was already poised and ready and the city which were so inseparably linked to the rejection and murder of the Son of God. There was utterly no way that God would permit their institution to thwart, in any permanent sense, the world-wide proclamation of the truth. In about thirty-five years after Stephen's speech, the armies of Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, putting to **death** more than a **million people**, and severing from Jewish control the last effective device by which they might have hoped to **destroy** Christianity.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**Thought 1.** Today, the average minister of God, would have quenched the Spirit and not have spoken in such a FIRM manner. They would've done so out of fear of offending the council. But, be understood the need to stay HUMBLE and walk in God's wisdom.

**Acts 7:52-53**, Which of the **prophets** have not your fathers **persecuted?** and they have **slain** them which shewed before of the COMING of the **Just One**; of whom ye have been now the **betrayers** and **murderers**: Who have received the LAW by the disposition of angels, and have NOT KEPT it.

**NOTE: Which of the prophets ...** - The interrogative form here is a strong mode of saying that they had persecuted "ALL" the prophets. It was "the characteristic of the nation" to **persecute** the **messengers** of God. This is not to be taken as literally and universally true; but it was a general truth; it was the national characteristic. See the notes on Matthew 21:33-40; Matthew 23:29-35.

**And they have slain them ...** - That is, they have slain the prophets, whose main message was that the Messiah was to come. It was a great aggravation of their offence that they put to death the messengers which foretold the greatest blessing that the nation could receive.

**The Just One** - The Messiah. See the notes on Acts 3:14.

**Of whom ye ...** - You thus show that you resemble those who rejected and put to death the prophets. You have even gone beyond them in guilt, because you have **put the Messiah** himself to **death**.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**John 15:20-21**, Remember the **word** that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. **IF (forasmuch as [SINCE])** they have persecuted me, **they WILL** also PERSECUTE you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will **they DO** unto you for my **name's sake**, because they **KNOW not** him that SENT me.

PERSECUTE, (1. to pursue in a manner to injure, VEX or afflict; to harass with unjust punishment or penalties for supposed offenses). 2. to afflict, harass, or destroy (kill) for adherence to a particular creed (BELIEF) or system of religious principles, or to a mode of worship).

**Acts 7:54-56**, When they **heard** these things, they were **CUT** to the **heart**, and they **gnashed** on him with their **teeth**. But he, **being FULL** of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and SAW the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man **standing** on the **right hand (right side)** of God.

**NOTE: Gnashed on him with their teeth ...** does not mean that they bit or chewed upon Stephen's flesh but that they were so infuriated that they **ground** their **teeth together** in a **RAGE**. **Saw the glory of God ...** It was fitting indeed that God should have given to the first Christian martyr such a glorious VISION of eternal realities.

**Jesus standing on the right hand of God ...** As Hervey said: Sitting at the right hand of God is the usual attitude ascribed to our Lord in token of his victorious rest, and waiting for the day of judgment; but here he is seen **standing**, as rising to welcome his faithful martyr, and to place on his head the crown (prize in the public games; REWARD) of life. (Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=7#1>)

**Acts 7:57-60**, Then they **cried out** with a **loud voice**, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with **one accord**, And cast him out of the city, and **stoned him**: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a **young man's feet**, whose name was **Saul**. And they **stoned Stephen**, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.