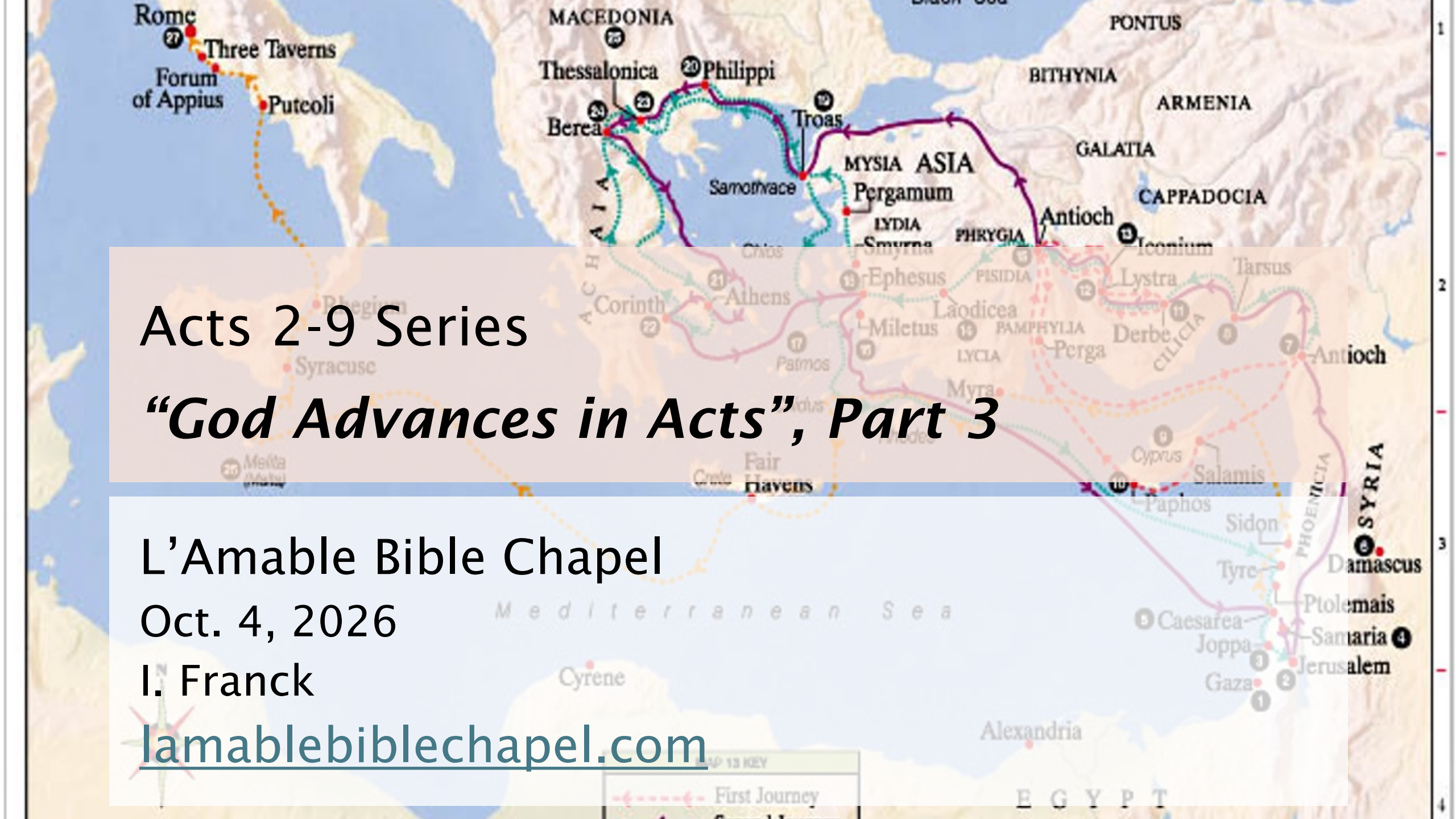





# Acts 2-9 Series

## *"God Advances in Acts", Part 3*

L'Amable Bible Chapel

Oct. 4, 2026

I. Franck

lamablebiblechapel.com

# Introduction



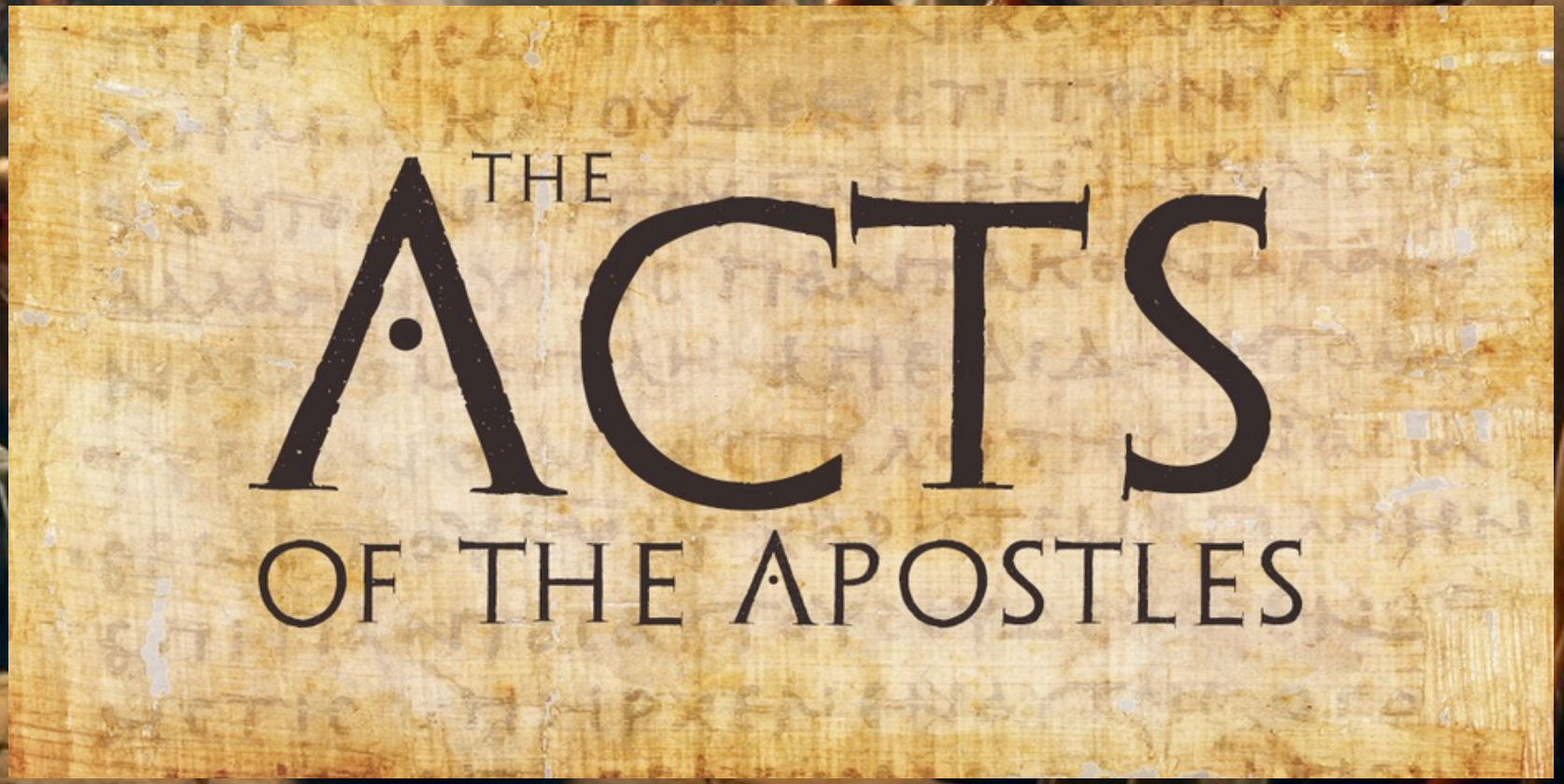

8 "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"

**God is advancing…**

*Power…Proclamation…*

*God advances in Acts, and people respond in spite of Peril and Persecution. The outcome is the Progress of the Kingdom*





# Last week… *some key questions…*

**5** *41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*

- What is our view of sovereignty… and responsibility?
- Two examples re. possessions. What does it mean today?
- What is our outlook about serving?

**We are reminded…**

***Acts shows God advancing***

Jesus once told his disciples:

*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* (Matthew 5:11-12)

**Today this will be highlighted**

# 1. Growing *Pains* & Growing *Personnel*

- Growing Numbers
- Cultural Challenges
- Together forming the body of Jesus Christ
- Resolving Issues
- Growing Leadership

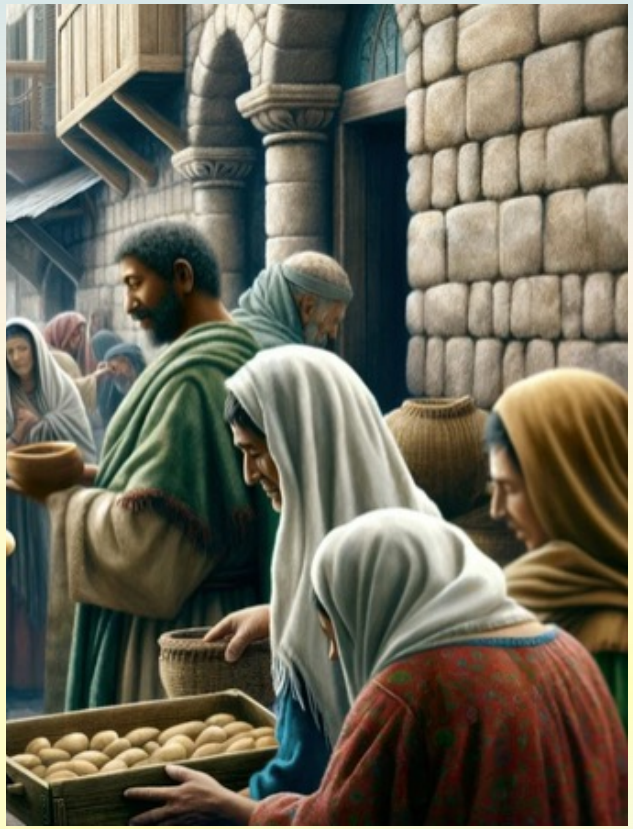
***Acts reveals people responding***

**Today: Acts 6-7**

*Acts 6:* [1]In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.



2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples
together and said, “It would not be right for
us to neglect the ministry of the word of
God in order to wait on tables.” 3 Brothers
and sisters, choose seven men from
among you who are known to be full of the
Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this
responsibility over to them 4 and will give
our attention to prayer and the ministry of
the word.”
5 This proposal pleased the whole group.



They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. [6] They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.



[7] So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.



## ***Some Growing Pains…***

- A Factor of Growth
- Hellenistic & Hebrew issue
- Organized Distribution
- Cultural Preference?



## *…& Growing Leadership…*

- Apostles' Proposal
- Filled with Holy Spirit & Wisdom
- Delegation – Two Kinds
- Hellenistic Names
- Apostle's Blessing
- A New Office
- Priests Converted!



*The harmonious solving of this problem brings more growth*

# 2. Growing *Persecution* Acts 7

8 Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power,
performed great wonders and 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—who began to argue with Stephen.
10 But they could not stand up against the wisdom the
Spirit gave him as he spoke.

# What is the Issue?

- Stephen… full of God's grace and power
- Opposition from certain groups – Jews from Rome, Cyrene, and Alexandria (to the west)
- Also from the East
- Stephen is likely a convert from Rome, Simon of Cyrene (who carried Jesus' cross), a convert from Cyrene (noted as Christians in Mark 15:21)

- A Malicious Attack

[11] Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words 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.



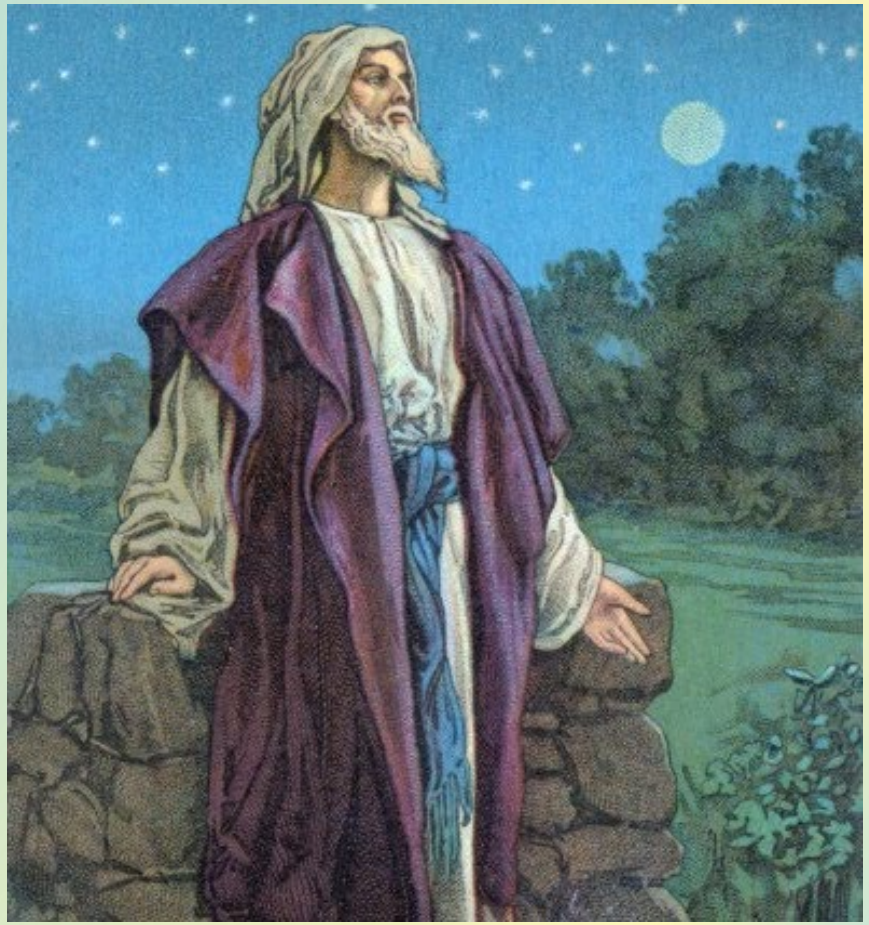
Stephen will highlight key figures meeting God in Israel’s story…



7 [1]Then the high priest asked
Stephen, “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 Harran. [3] ‘Leave your
country and your people,’ God said,
‘and go to the land I will show you.’[b]
[4] “So he left the land of the Chaldeans
and settled in Harran.

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 enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child.

...





17 “As the time drew near for God to
fulfill his promise to Abraham, the
number of our people in Egypt had
greatly increased. 18 Then ‘a new king,
to whom **Joseph** meant nothing,
came to power in Egypt.’ 19 He dealt
treacherously with our people and
oppressed our ancestors 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 by his family. 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.

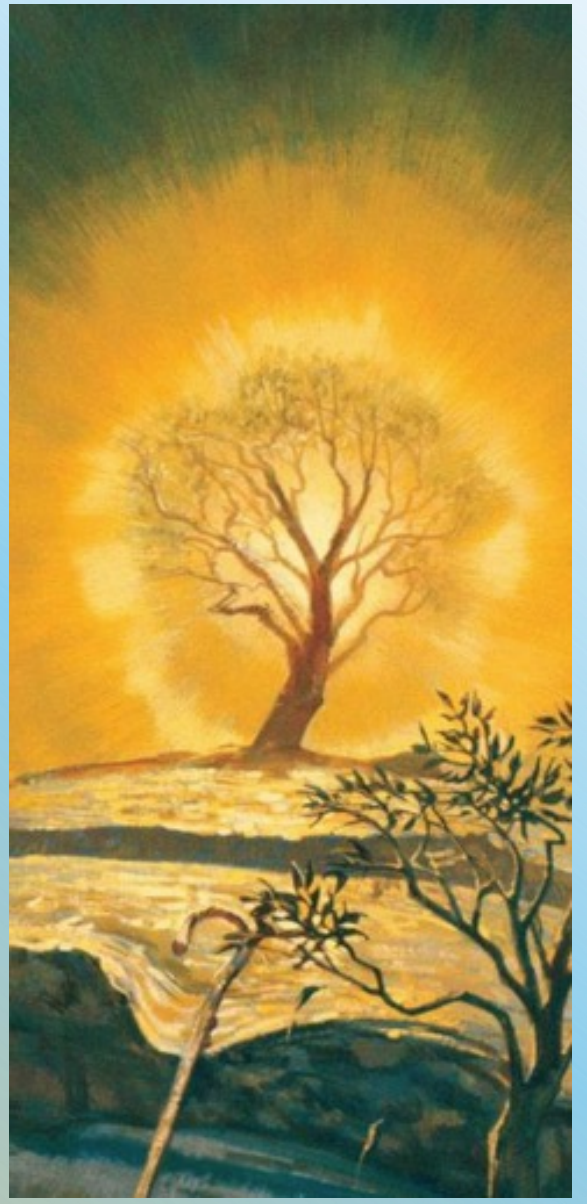
…





[Moses] 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 get a closer
look, he heard the Lord say: 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, for 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 they had
rejected with the words, ‘Who made
you ruler and judge?’





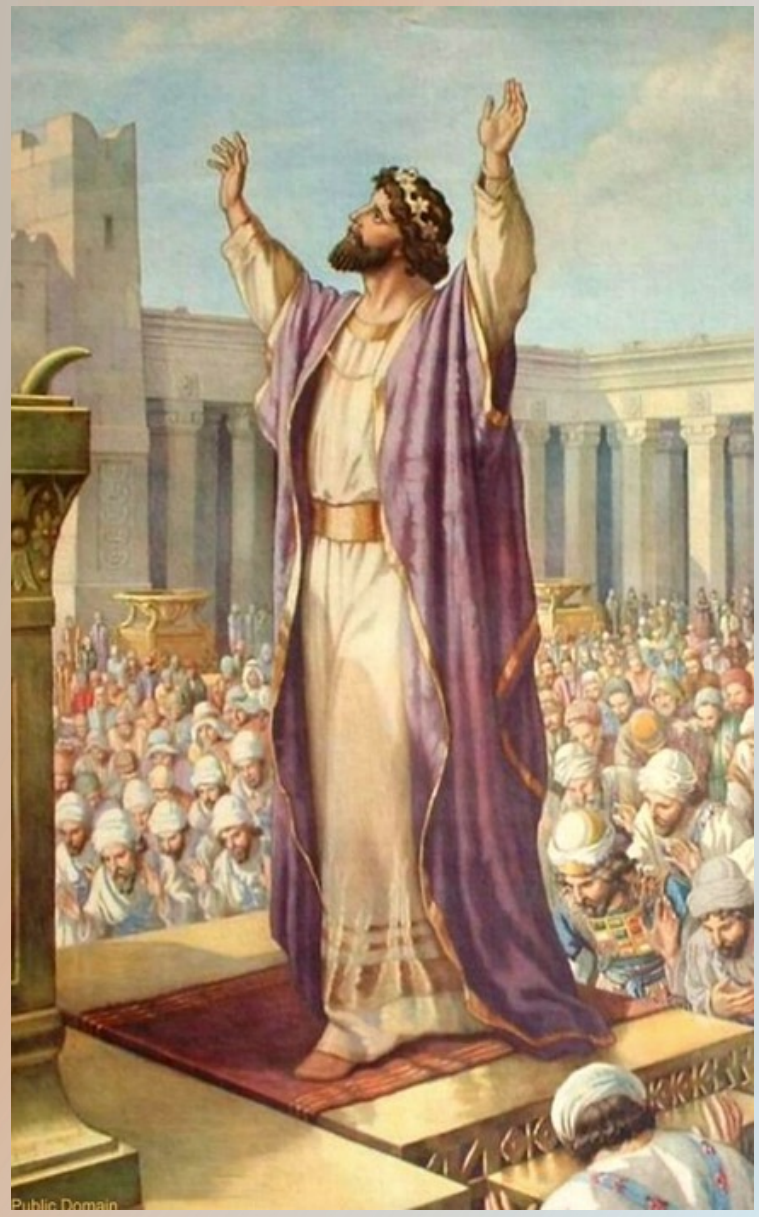
He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.
37 “This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.’

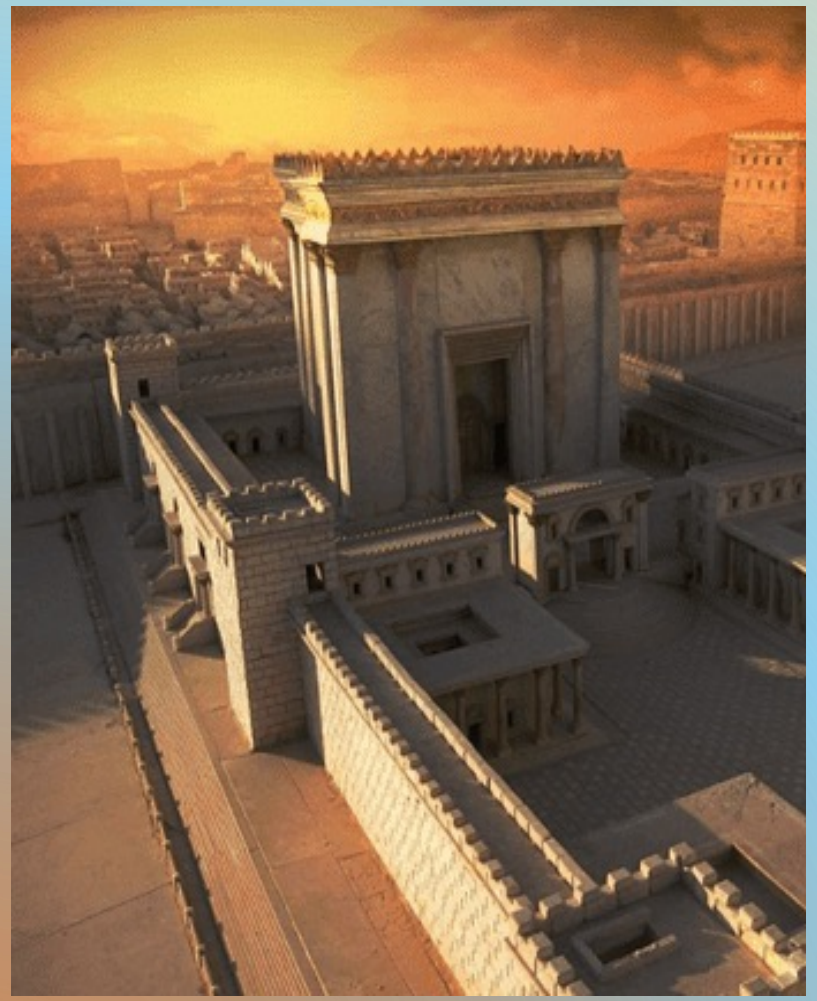
38 He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us.
39 “But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt.

…

44 “Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen.
45 After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors 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 a
house for him.
[48] "However, the Most High does not
live in houses made by human hands.
As the prophet says:
[49] *"'Heaven is my throne,*
*and the earth is my footstool.*





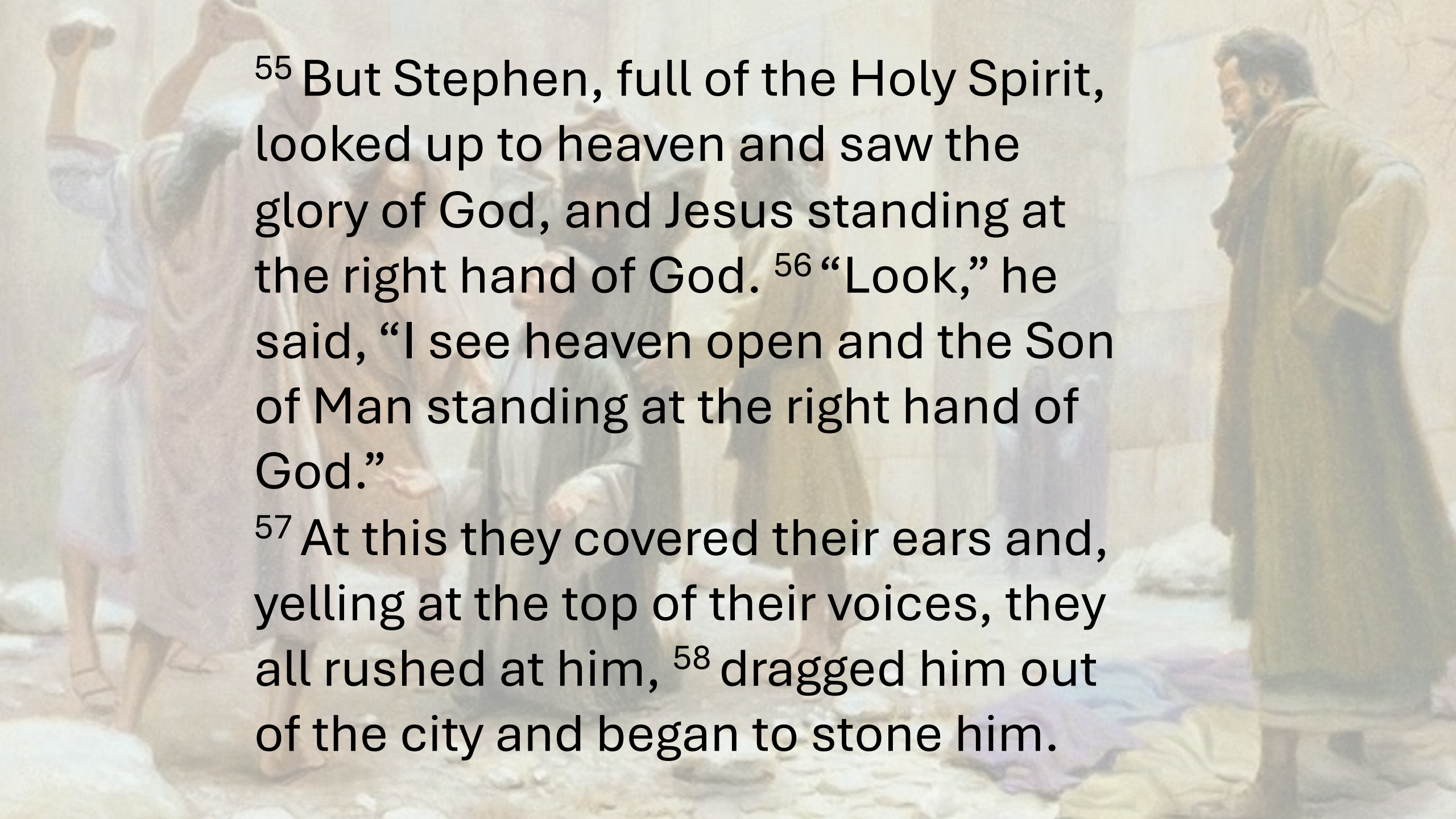
*What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord.*
*Or where will my resting place be?*
[50] *Has not my hand made all these things?’*
[51] “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! [52] Was there ever a **prophet** your ancestors 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 given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

**The Stoning of Stephen**

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.



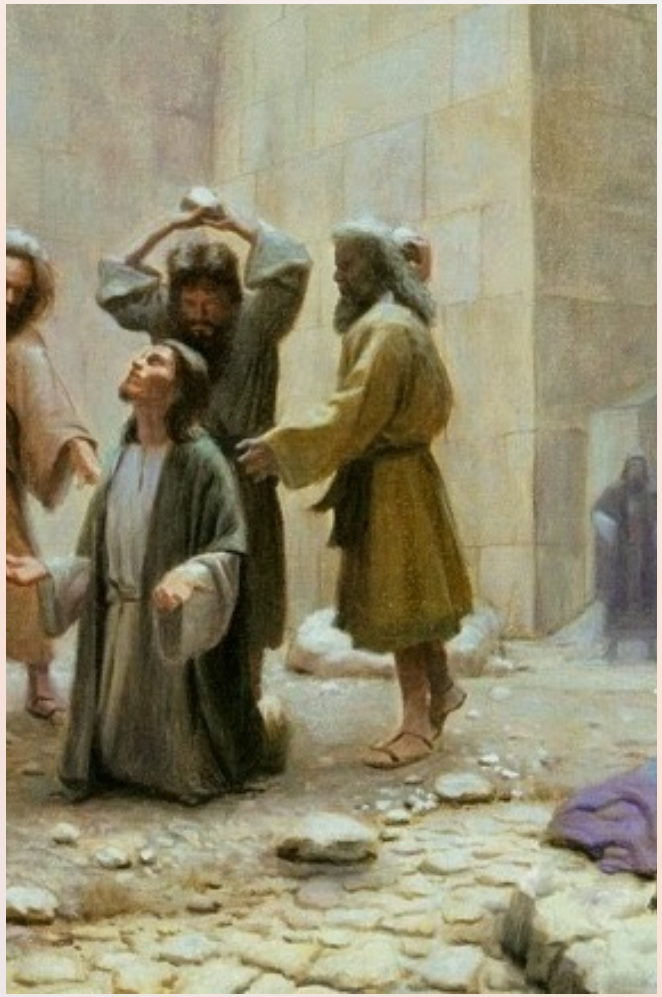


55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit,
looked up to heaven and saw the
glory of God, and Jesus standing at
the right hand of God. 56 “Look,” he
said, “I see heaven open and the Son
of Man standing at the right hand of
God.”
57 At this they covered their ears and,
yelling at the top of their voices, they
all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out
of the city and began to stone him.

Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

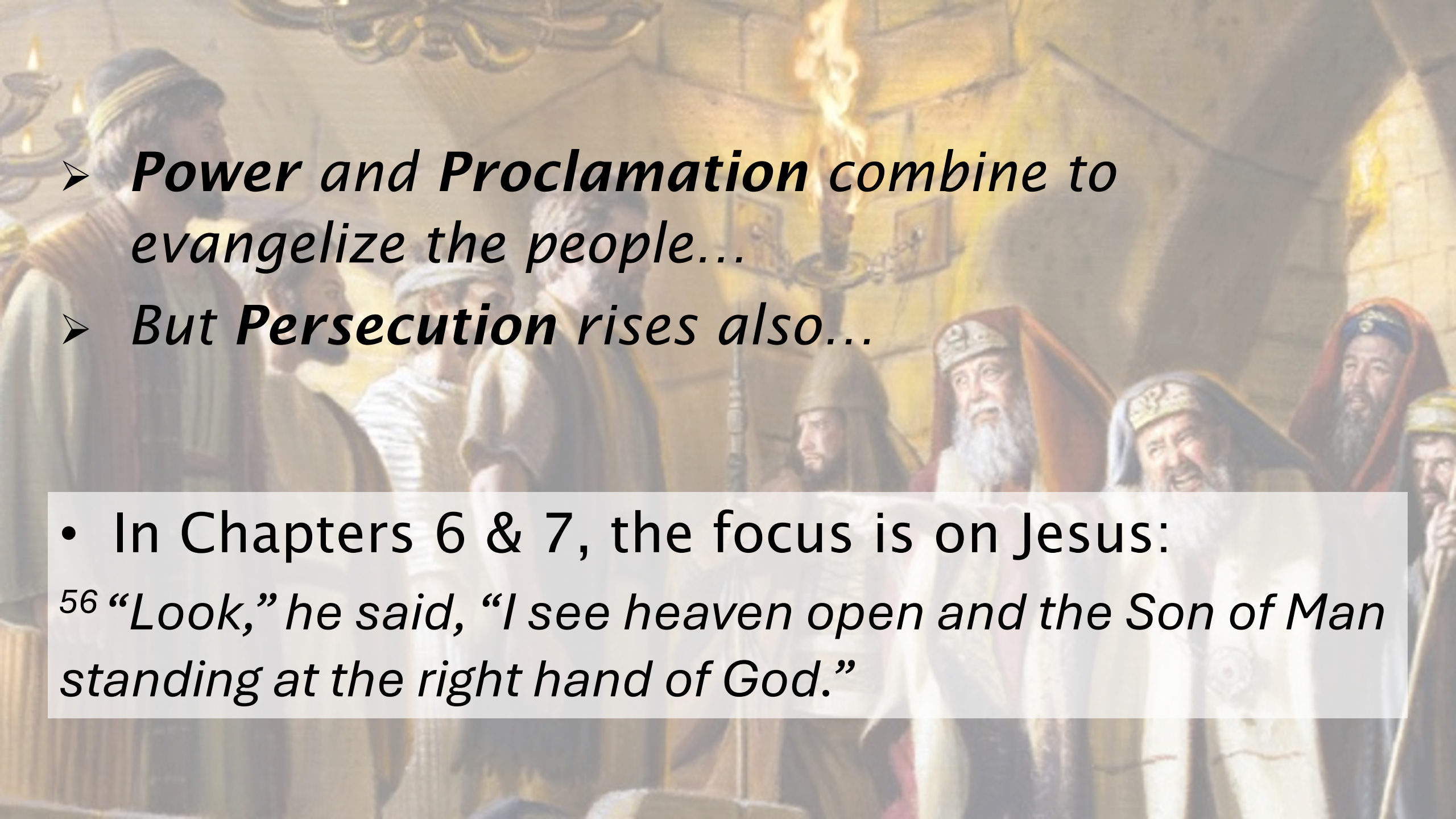
59 While they were stoning him,
Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive
my spirit.” 60 Then he fell on his knees
and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this
sin against them.” When he had said
this, he fell asleep.

8 1 And Saul approved of their killing
him.



# What is Stephen's Message?

- God called people… Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Prophets…
- God lifted and blessed…
- Others *resisted* God
- Temple and tradition are not the key
- Obeying God is the key
- *This enrages those holding to power & tradition*



- ***Power** and **Proclamation** combine to evangelize the people…*
- *But **Persecution** rises also…*

- In Chapters 6 & 7, the focus is on Jesus:

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



*Acts shows God advancing*

*Acts reveals people responding*

*Acts also reveals human resistance*

- Chapter 8 has more persecution and proclamation!
- In Chapter 9, the chief persecutor meets Jesus



Question: ***What does it mean for us today?***

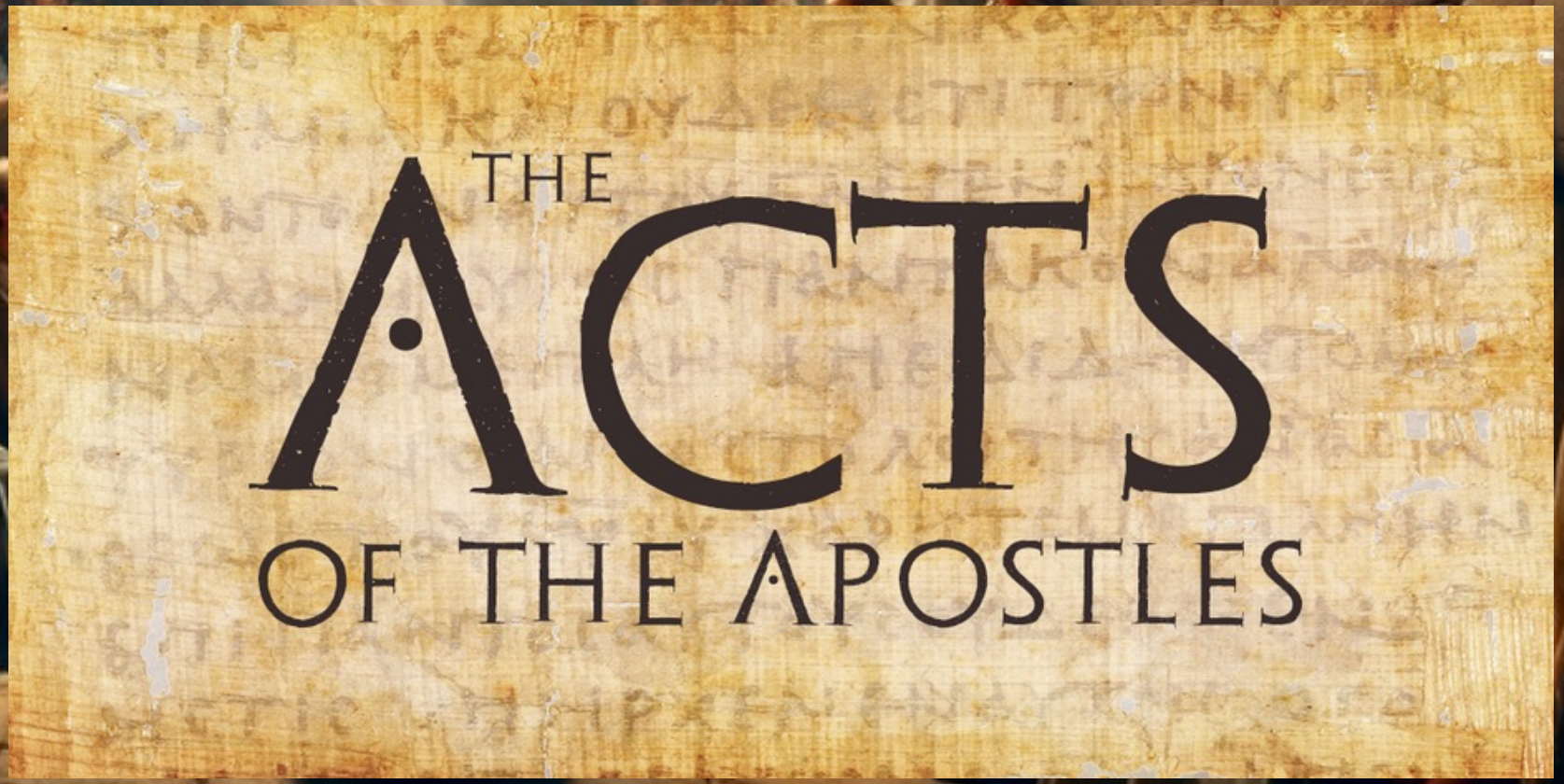
# *God Moves in the Midst of Humanity*

- Some cultural prejudice…who is <u>our</u> group? *But…*
- They sorted it out! New groups of leaders: "Deacons"
- Stephen dies – highlighting stubborn hearts, *but his blood brings more evangelism*
- Can a hardened soul be converted? We'll find out…

*Power…Proclamation…*

*God advances in Acts, and people respond in spite of Peril and Persecution. The outcome is the Progress of the Kingdom*





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Design and content: Ivan Franck
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October, 2026

