

Thinking Well of God (Acts 6:8-8:3)

Stephen is opposed by argument and false accusations: (1) blasphemy against the God (i.e. the temple cf. 6:13b, 6:14a) (2) blasphemy against <u>Moses</u> (i.e. the Law cf. 6:13 c, 6:14b)					
Abram (6.5 verses) <u>Change</u> - Moved from Ur to Haran to Promised Land - God appeared to him in Ur - Abrahamic Covenant & circumcision	Joseph (7.5 verses) Opposed <u>Change</u> - Unlikely leadership of Joseph - God with him in Egypt - People of Israel moved from the Promised land to Egypt	<u>Moses</u> (26 verses) Opposed <u>Change</u> - Unlikely leadership of Moses - God appeared to Moses in the desert - signs and wonders - a prophet like him would arise - Law given	Joshua (0.5 verses) <u>Change</u> Brought the tabernacle from the desert to the Promised Land	David (1.5 verses) <u>Change</u> Desired and prepared to build a temple for God	Solomon (2 verses) <u>Change</u> Built the temple but said it couldn't contain God (a truth the prophets confirmed cf. 7:49-50)
Stephen is opposed by force and killed (7:54-58)					

Three Principles

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Stephen	Stephen's Speech (Acts 7)
Stephen, a man full of the Spirit (6:5; 7:55)	
A man full of faith (6:5)	Abraham a man of faith (implied vv.4-6)
A man full of God's grace and power who did signs and wonders among the people (6:8)	Moses did signs and wonders (v.36)
Wise and powerful in speech (6:10)	Joseph full of wisdom (v.10) Moses wise (v.22) Moses powerful in speech (v.22, 38)
Accused of blasphemy against Moses & God Victim of false witnesses - Stephen is against "this holy place" (Jesus will destroy it) against "the law" (Jesus will change customs) (6:11-14)	Israelites guilty of idolatry (vv.40-43); current Israelites guilty of resisting the Spirit (v.51 cf. Ex 33:3, 5; Isa. 63:10), killing the Messiah (v.52, disobeying the law (v.53)
Stephen mistreated, rejected by the Israelites (6:11-14; 7:54-60)	Israel mistreated by Egyptians (vv.6, 19, 24, 34); Joseph mistreated by brothers (v.9); Israelites mistreating one another (v.27); Israelites rejected Moses (vv. 27-28, 35, 39); Israelites persecuted prophets (v.52); Israelites killed Jesus (v.52)
Face like that of an angel (6:15 cf. Moses Ex 34:29)	
Stephen saw the glory of God (7:55-56)	Abraham saw the glory of God (7:2) Moses encountered God at the burning bush (30-34)
Stephen interceded for Israel (7:60 cf. Moses Ex 32:30-32)	
<p>Conclusions:</p> <p>(1) Stephen is a prophet of God like Moses (and a long list of others), rejected by his own people because he speaks for God.</p> <p>(2) The Israelites while making false accusations against Stephen of blasphemy against God and the temple are actually guilty themselves of misunderstanding (and therefore resisting) God and making an idol out of the temple.</p> <p>(3) The Israelites are following a well established tradition of persecuting God's prophets.</p> <p>(4) In light of Israel's rejection the Gospel will now move into other (non-Jewish) areas (cf. chs. 8ff)</p>	

"Stephen follows the pattern of Jesus in facing death. All three of the last words of the martyr recall statements by Jesus in Luke's passion story." (Tannehill, p. 99)

Similarity	Jesus	Stephen
Son of man at the right hand of mighty God	22:69	7:56
Prayer of forgiveness for persecutors	23:34	7:60
Own spirit entrusted to God	23:46	7:59
Final prayer shouted	23:46	7:60

"These similar responses in a similar situation show that Stephen is a true follower of Jesus...the martyr bears witness to the exalted Lord, ruling with heavenly power, whom the opponents cannot see. The martyr trusts in a divine care reaching beyond death and shows no animosity toward the killers, instead interceding for them." (pp. 99-100).