

## Acts 7 j

The previous chapter ended with Stephen before the Sanhedrin council facing accusations that he spoke blasphemy against the temple and the Law.

Now Stephen defends himself against these charges with the longest speech in the book of Acts.

V 2-8

He begins by reviewing the call of Abraham and God's promise to him and the nation of Israel.

He describes how God used Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage and led them for forty years through the wilderness.

Yet Israel rebelled against Moses, through whom God gave the Law.

Not only in the incident involving the golden calf, but throughout their wilderness wanderings Israel continued to worship false gods.

Turning to the matter of God's dwelling place, Stephen acknowledges the role of the tabernacle of Moses and the

temple of Solomon, but contends that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. He concludes by charging the council of resisting the Holy Spirit just like their ancestors, for as their fathers persecuted and killed the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ, so they became His betrayers and murderers.

In fact, they were the ones who have not kept the Law **(1-53)**.

Cut to the heart, those in the council gnashed at Stephen with their teeth. Full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God with Jesus standing at His right hand. Upon telling the council what he saw, in rage they cast him out of city and began stoning him.

The witnesses who brought the false charges laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul (later known as Paul, the apostle). As

Stephen was stoned, he called upon Jesus to receive his spirit, and to not charge his murderers with his death. In this way Stephen became the first martyr for Christ (**54-60**).