



Stephen's Sermon (part 1) - The Patriarchs

Acts 7:1-16

1. Abraham (verses 2-7)
2. Patriarchs (verses 8-16)

I invite you to open in your Bibles to Acts, chapter 7. This morning, we are going to be looking at the longest sermon in the book of Acts. It's the sermon that Stephen preached to the council just after he was accused of speaking against the temple and speaking against the customs of Moses, both of which the Jews of his day held very dear. They loved the temple area! They loved the laws of Moses!

But Stephen was preaching Jesus, that the worship of God isn't about worship in a place, it's about worship of a person. Further, worship isn't about the sacrifices of the priests, it's about the sacrifice of Jesus. Anyway, to these accusations, the high priest said, "Are these things so?" (Acts 7:1). Then, Stephen gave his response. Here is what Stephen said.

Acts 7:2-60

"Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

"And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

"But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph. He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive. At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house, and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

"When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand. And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

"Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

"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. This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.' This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who

will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

"Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices,
during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?
You took up the tent of Moloch
and the star of your god Rephan,
the images that you made to worship;
and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.'

"Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

"Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?
Did not my hand make all these things?'

"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 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, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

This sermon wasn't good for Stephen, as he died a painful death. Nor was this sermon particularly good for the church, either. The church lost one of its budding leaders. Also, the persecution of the church was stepped up. We see this in the next verse, "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). Yet, it was ultimately good for Stephen, as he remained faithful to the Lord complete until the end of his life. As a result, he was received into heaven by Jesus, who stood up to receive him, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Throughout eternity, he will receive the honor of being the first Christian martyr! Oh, there would be more martyrs, but Stephen was the first.

Further, it was ultimately good for the church. This event, the stoning of Stephen, was the catalyst for the church continuing on in the mission that Jesus gave to the apostles. In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the apostles, "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Up until this point, it seemed like the church was settled and happy to remain in Jerusalem. But the stoning of Stephen was the divine push to get them out to Judea and Samaria, which eventually brought them to "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

So, what may have appeared bad at first, actually ended well, as do so many things in life. In the moment, when the trial comes or the disaster strikes, we may think that they are bad, indeed, they may be bad. But our hope is that they will end well. That's why James tells us when we meet trials of various kinds, we should rejoice! (James 1:2), not because the trials are so good, but because of what they produce. The testing of your faith produces steadfastness in your life (James 1:3). The promise of James 1:4 is that steadfastness will eventually have its full effect of making you perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. That's why we can rejoice in the hardships in our lives, because of the good that they will bring.

In fact, God's design in all of our lives is for our good. This is Romans 8:28, a promise for all who know and love God, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). William Cowper wrote about this. He wrote about the strange ways of God.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

...

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.[\[1\]](#)

This sermon of Stephen was a frowning providence, for sure. The death of a godly man. The increased persecution that came up on the church. Yet, I'm sure that today, Stephen has no regrets of his shortened life. And the church only grew as a result of the persecution.

Now, as we begin to dig into his sermon, the first thing that you notice is that Stephen's sermon seems like a history lesson. Stephen overviews the history of Israel. He begins with Abraham. He carries on through all the patriarchs: Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. He addresses Moses and the Exodus from slavery. He mentions Joshua, David, and Solomon. This is a broad history of the people of Israel, from the time of Abraham until the time of Solomon's building of the temple.

However, Stephen's sermon was more than mere history. It was history with a particular perspective. In reality, all history comes with a perspective, because you can never tell the whole story of history. So, you can only tell the stories that fit your own narrative. Now, that's not to say that it's all deceitful or wrong. It's simply to say that history is way too big to tell everything.

For instance, when John wrote his gospel, he acknowledged that there was no way for him to tell everything about Jesus. In fact, he said this in the very last verse of the gospel of John. "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). You could never tell the whole story of Jesus. So, you need to tell it from your perspective. That's what John did. When he wrote his gospel, he was selective regarding what he included and what he didn't include. Listen to what he said. "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). In other words, when John selected stories of Jesus to include in his gospel, he had a design in mind. He wanted to show people Jesus, that they might believe in him, that they might have life in him!

Indeed, this is why we exist as a church, that you might believe in Jesus! We preach so that you might believe that he died in your place for your sins, that you might have life in his name! So believe in him!

OK, so getting back to Stephen. He wasn't writing a gospel about Jesus. He was telling the story of God's dealing with Israel. And his perspective was one of defense. He had to defend himself against the accusations that came upon him. That's what we see in verse 1, when the high priest said to him, "Are these things so?"

And so, you say, "What things?" Glad you asked, because, that's what we looked at last week. Last week, we looked at "The Accusation of Stephen." The core of the accusations comes in chapter 6 and verses 13 and 14. These verses are key to understanding all of chapter 7.

Acts 6:13-14

and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us."

There are fundamentally two accusations that come against Stephen. He speaks against the temple! He speaks against the law! He says that the temple will be destroyed. He says that the law of Moses will be changed. Both of these things (the temple and the law) were near and dear to the heart of any Jew. The temple was the central place of worship! Everything revolved around the temple! It's where God dwelt! It's where the people met with God!

The temple came to be central in everything for a Jew. When we take solemn oaths today, we raise our right hand and place our left hand upon the Bible. The Jews of Bible times felt so strongly about the temple, that they would even swear by the temple! They would swear by the altar in the temple! They would swear by the gold of the temple! (Matthew 23:16-22). As a result, any mention threatening the sacredness of the temple was an attack upon the religious leaders in those days.

So, likewise the law! The law was the entire foundation of their society! The law gave them guidance for living! Jews of Stephen's day were meticulous about keeping every detail about the law, even down to matters of tithing their tiny spices (Matthew 23:23). As a result, any word spoken against the law of Moses was akin to blasphemy! That's why they were so against Stephen's message. Because he preached what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman by the well, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ... The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:21, 23-24).

The Jews were so focused upon the law and the temple, that they missed the heart of worship. Further, they missed the fact that God worked throughout their history, away from Jerusalem, away from the holy place. This was what Stephen addressed his hearers.

So, with that as a long introduction, let's dig into the text of Stephen's sermon. My message this morning is entitled, "Stephen's Sermon (part 1)." It is "part 1," because, we are never going to be able to get through all 50 verses of his sermon. This morning I plan to get through verse 16. Verses 1-16 speak about the Patriarchs. Here is Stephen's point: God moved in the lives of the Patriarchs when they weren't even in the promised land! God doesn't only work in our lives through the temple.

Picture the scene. Stephen is standing before the counsel. This is the same counsel that tried Jesus. This is the same counsel that tried Peter and James (Acts 4) and all of the apostles (Acts 5). Stephen begins by answering the question of the high priest.

Acts 7:1

"Are these things so?"

Let's begin where Stephen begins. With ...

1. Abraham (verses 2-7)

Abraham is Stephen's first topic in his message, which he brings up after the briefest of introduction:

Acts 7:2

"Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,"

Now, for many of us, we are geographically challenged, especially as it relates to the geography of the Bible. So, I have some maps for you today to help you a bit. Here's a map of the ancient world. [\[2\]](#) First of all notice where Mesopotamia is. It is modern day Iraq. That's where Abraham was living his life before God called him. Particularly, he was in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans. Then, notice where Jerusalem is. That's where the holy place is. It's a long way away. It may not look like such a long distance, but you can't travel straight from Ur to Jerusalem. The Arabian desert lies between the cities. It was impossible to cross in those days without water and fast transportation. In order to get from Ur to Jerusalem, you need to head northwest, along the great rivers: the Tigris and Euphrates. And then, as some point, you are able to turn south to travel down to Jerusalem.

Here's the point that Stephen was making: when God called Abraham, he wasn't in Jerusalem. He wasn't in the holy place. He was far away in Mesopotamia! By travel distance, he was nearly a thousand miles from Jerusalem! God began his redemption work 1,000 miles from the holy place in Jerusalem. In effect, Stephen was saying, "You Jews place a huge emphasis upon this holy place. But do you realize that when God called our founding father, Abraham, he wasn't anywhere near this place. Don't you think that God can be worshiped anywhere? Why do you hold such a strong allegiance to this place? as if coming to God was simply a matter of geography? Even when Abraham was called, he made no mention of where exactly he was going!"

Acts 7:3

and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.'

This is almost a direct quote from Genesis 12:1. Note that God didn't tell Abraham where he was going. He simply said "Go out." I'll show you the land where you are going later. For now, you simply need to go. Abraham simply had to trust! That's what made Abraham so great! It's that he trusted the Lord. And the Lord counted his faith as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). And that's what's so great for us! Is that when we trust God, when we trust in the sacrifice of Jesus as sufficient for our sins, and he then considers our faith to be righteousness! This is the gospel! Our faith toward God is considered as righteousness from God. And so, we can stand holy and blameless before God, not because we are so holy (because, in fact, we are sinners), but because God takes our faith and considers it to be righteousness.

At any rate, Abraham believed the Lord and went out. You see that in verse 4.

Acts 7:4

Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.

We don't know exactly how long he was in Haran. But he stayed there long enough to settle, enough to gather their possessions before they traveled on (Gen. 12:5). Then, Abraham and his family came into the land! But they didn't settle in Jerusalem. If you read in Genesis 12, you find out that they came to places like Shechem and Bethel and Ai. Here was the father of the faithful, coming into the land of promise, but never dwelling in the holy place! That's Stephen's point! This place that is held so dear to the Jews was unknown to Abraham!

In fact, even in all the promised land, Abraham, received no inheritance in it at all! Look at verse 5, ...

Acts 7:5

Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child.

In other words, Abraham lived in apartments his entire life! God didn't give him anything in the land. In fact, the only portion of the land that Abraham owned was a burial plot for his wife, Sarah. See, Sarah died in the land of Canaan. He needed a place to bury her. He bought a some land with 400 shekels of silver, so that he could bury his wife. But God "gave him no inheritance" in the land. He only promised that his "offspring" would receive the inheritance. Now, this was when Abraham was old, and had no son.

Yet, God promised to Abraham to give the land as a possession to his offspring. By "offspring," God didn't mean, his son or his grandsons or even any of his great grandsons. God didn't mean, Isaac or Jacob or Jacob's 12 children. He meant his great, great, great, great, great, great grandchildren, who would come to possess the land some 400 years after Abraham! This is the point of verse 6, ...

Acts 7:6

And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years.

This was prophesying of the years that Abraham's descendants would spend as slaves in Egypt, which they did. It was only after the 400 years of slavery that any of Abraham's offspring would come and possess the land.

Acts 7:7

'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.'

It was only after 400 years in slavery in Egypt, that God freed the people from bondage through Moses. God did so only after punishing the Egyptians with 10 nasty plagues that came upon them. But that's far in the future. But the point is this: The father of our faith, Abraham, received no inheritance in the land. You Jews, hold this land and this holy place so sacred. But God worked in the life of Abraham, far from the land of promise, without receiving any land of promise. All he had was the promise and it was enough for him.

We see the promise in verse 8, which begins our next section in Stephen's sermon. Stephen addressed Abraham in verses 2-7. And now, he

comes to the ...

2. Patriarchs (verses 8-16)

The story of the patriarchs is much the same as Abraham. The patriarchs received a promise of an inheritance in the land, but they didn't see any of it at all. Further, when God was moving in the lives of the Patriarchs, it wasn't in the promised land. It was in Egypt where God was working. The implication is that God isn't bound to the holy place in Jerusalem.

At any rate, the patriarchs are named in verse 8: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are mentioned along with the covenant of circumcision, this was a sign of God's promise to the descendants of God's people.

Acts 7:8

And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

And these patriarchs weren't such righteous people. In fact, the sons of Jacob betrayed their brother, Joseph. This comes in verse 9, ...

Acts 7:9

"And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him

God was with Joseph in Egypt! That is, God was with Joseph, when far away from the holy place, far away from Jerusalem, and far away from the promised land. Look at what God did for Joseph, ...

Acts 7:10

and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.

Now, if you know the story of Joseph, you know the many afflictions that he experienced in Egypt. He was a faithful servant of Potiphar, until Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of sexual immorality. He was sent to prison. But God was working in his life. While in prison, he was blessed as others observed him to be a faithful man. He was raised up to be a sort of leader in prison. Yet, he was forgotten by those he helped, the cup bearer and baker. He was neglected in prison for many years. We are talking a dozen years (or so) in prison!

Eventually, God brought Joseph out of the prison and into the palace. He was brought into second in command, under only Pharaoh, himself. God's blessing in his life came about, only because God gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams. He interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, that famine was coming upon the land. After seven years of plenty, there would be seven years of famine. So, Egypt, under the leadership of Joseph, began to store away grain for the future. When the famine hit, Egypt held the grain, which proved to be the salvation of the Patriarchs. We read about this in verses 11-13, ...

Acts 7:11-13

Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh.

This was God's saving plan for the Patriarchs! Joseph led the way, as God sent him into Egypt and gave him the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph was appointed as a commander in Egypt, so that Egypt would have a surplus, so that the world would come to them for food, including Jacob and his family. (It's all a great story, that we don't have time to tell).

God's saving plan brought Jacob's family to Egypt, just as God had foretold to Abraham (Acts 7:6-7). We read about God's rescue in verse 14.

Acts 7:14

And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all.

If you read the story in Genesis, you can read about the names of those who came, all of them.^[3] You had this huge family, all descendants from Abraham, living, not in the promised land, where the temple is, but far away in Egypt.

Here's the point: God was working in the lives of the Patriarchs. And they weren't in the promised land. They were in Egypt. But when they died, they were brought back to the promised lands, that is, their bones were brought back.

Acts 7:15-16

And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

They never received the inheritance, but at least they were buried in the land!^[4]

Now, let us not miss Stephen's point to those who hold dear the holy place in Jerusalem. Neither Abraham, nor the patriarchs received any inheritance in the land. They never knew about the temple to be built in Jerusalem in this "holy place." All they received was burial in the land.

This all is good news for us who live half-way around the world. We don't have to worship in Jerusalem, on the temple mount to be accepted by God! The holy place in Jerusalem is a good place to visit to understand history and to understand the Bible. But travel to Jerusalem is not

needed to come to God.

We come to God through Jesus Christ! We come to God through believing in Jesus, that he lived a perfect life, that he died for our sins, that he raised from the dead, and that we too, might rise from the dead someday to be with him in glory. That's the gospel. That's what we believe. That's what you must believe to be saved!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 21, 2021 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] William Cowper, "God Moves in a Mysterious Ways." See all about this hymn here:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_Moves_in_a_Mysterious_Way.

[2] During my message, I showed a few maps on the overhead screen. Here is the source of my maps:
<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney2/23-the-journeys-of-adam-enoch-noah-abraham/abrams-journey-to-canaan/>.

[3] I feel obliged to recognize the apparent discrepancies in the number of people who came to Egypt. Acts 7:14 says that there were "seventy-five" persons in all, but Exodus 1:5 mentions that there were "seventy." Furthermore, in Genesis 46:8-27, we are given the actual names (and numbers) of everyone who came with Jacob. They total "sixty-six." This total comes to "seventy" when you count the four people not numbered in the count: Jacob, Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim (Genesis 46:27).

Among the many explanations to explain, perhaps the best is that Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and their sons make up the difference (see 1 Chronicles 7:14-29). Between them, they had many sons. Perhaps there were only five sons at the time when Jacob came, thus making up the "seventy-five" descendants of Jacob at the time of his travel to Egypt.

[4] Again, I feel obliged to recognize another discrepancy. In Genesis 23, we read the story of Abraham purchasing a field in Machpelah from the Hittites in Hebron to bury Sarah. Abraham would later be buried in this place, along with Jacob (Genesis 25:9-10; 50:12-13). There was a second burial place bought by the patriarchs. Jacob bought a plot of land "for a hundred pieces of money ... from the sons of Hamor" in Shechem (Genesis 33:19). This is where Joseph was buried (Joshua 24:32). Stephen appears to conflate these two stories together, claiming that Abraham purchased the tomb in Shechem, where the patriarchs were buried, when in fact, they were buried in both of these places.

Perhaps the best explanation for this discrepancy is how both the purchase of the tombs and burials in the tombs are united into one event. Every member of the counsel listening to Stephen (as well as Stephen, himself) knew that there were two plots of land purchased for burial. Further, they all knew that not all of the patriarchs were buried in the same tomb. For this matter, so also did Luke (the author of Acts) know this as well. So, when Stephen conflates both the purchase and the burial of the two stories into one concise story, all present understood his point: the patriarchs were buried in the land of promise. The conflict of the stories comes in our minds as a problem, but not in theirs.