



## Acts 7:1-8

### *Jesus In: The Promise to Abraham*

#### Intro:

Over the next few weeks, we will be diving into Stephen's powerful response to the religious leaders. At first glance, it might look like a simple recap of Israel's history, but Stephen is doing something far deeper. To understand his message, we have to understand the concept of **biblical typology**—*the study of how God used real people, events, and institutions throughout scripture to establish patterns that found their fulfillment in Christ*. This is crucial because it helps us understand that Scripture is one unified story with one divine Author, the Holy Spirit, and one main character, Jesus Christ. Although Jesus isn't introduced by name until the New Testament, His imprints are stamped across every page of the Old Testament. We see Him in the promises and prophecies. We see Him foreshadowed in the lives of real historical figures. We see Him in historical events like the Exodus and in institutions like marriage.

Stephen is opening our eyes to this reality, just as Peter did at Pentecost. By walking through Israel's history—from the promise made to Abraham, to figures like Joseph and Moses—Stephen shows that everything has always been about Jesus. Preaching Jesus wasn't blasphemy against God or Moses; it was the ultimate fulfillment of what God had been doing all along. Today, in Acts 7:1–8, Stephen shows us where Israel's story begins, not with the Law, and not with the Temple, but with a *promise*. And that promise was about far more than just a physical piece of land. The true fulfillment of the promise is Christ Himself. When we see this, it changes where we place our hope—moving our eyes off the temporal gifts God provides, and fixing them on Jesus, who is the ultimate Promise and our true inheritance.

#### V.1-8

"And the high priest said, "Are these things so?" And Stephen said: "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."

#### 1. God Gives The Promise

The religious leaders prided themselves on being sons of Abraham, which in their minds was tied to their bloodline, their inheritance in the land, and their customs, such as circumcision. Yet Stephen begins his defense by taking them back to a time when Abraham had **none of those things**. When God called Abraham, he had no promised land, there was no special Israelite bloodline, and he didn't even have a child through whom that bloodline could continue. Yet **"the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham"** and called him out of Mesopotamia. God chose Abraham. God called Abraham. And God **gave** Abraham the promise. The promise was not dependent upon anything Abraham was, possessed, or had accomplished. *It was a gift from God that rested entirely upon the faithfulness of the One who made it.* (Read: Romans 4:1-5, Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 3:18)

#### 2. God Preserves The Promise

Stephen clearly highlights that God had already told Abraham that his descendants would live as sojourners in a land that was not their own, where they would eventually be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years. They would have no land of their own. They would become slaves. They would suffer under a foreign nation. Generations would pass. Yet **God's sovereign hand would preserve His people and His**

## BOOK OF ACTS

**promise through it all.** God would judge the nation that enslaved them, bring His people out, and bring them into the place where they would worship Him.

This is important: *Abraham could not preserve the promise. His descendants could not preserve the promise. Israel could not preserve the promise. God preserved His own promise because God had bound Himself to fulfill it. (Read: Hebrews 6:13-18)*

### 3. **Jesus is the Fulfillment of The Promise**

The religious leaders looked at their history and took great pride in being Abraham's descendants. They had the bloodline, they had the land, and they had the covenant sign of circumcision. But all of these things were pointing toward something greater. Paul tells us plainly in Galatians 3:16 that the promised offspring **"is Christ."** The promise didn't end with Isaac, Jacob, or Israel; it was moving toward Jesus. And Galatians 3:29 says, *"If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."* Their confidence was in being physically connected to Abraham, **but the true inheritance belongs to those who are united to Christ.** Even circumcision pointed beyond itself. These men were physically circumcised, yet Stephen eventually calls them **"uncircumcised in heart and ears"** (Acts 7:51). They had the outward sign but rejected the One who could give them the inward reality to which that sign pointed: **the circumcision of the heart.** Colossians 2:11 tells us that in Christ we have received a *"circumcision made without hands."* **Read: Colossians 2:11-15**

The same was true of the land. Canaan was a real gift and a real fulfillment of God's promise, **but it was not the final inheritance.** Hebrews 11 tells us that Abraham lived in the promised land as a **sojourner**, looking forward to *"a better country"* and *"the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God"* (Hebrews 11:10, 16). The ultimate inheritance of God's people is the new heavens and new earth, where we will dwell **WITH GOD FOREVER.** *They had the bloodline but rejected the promised Offspring. They had circumcision but remained uncircumcised in heart. They had the earthly land but were rejecting the King of the eternal kingdom. They became so focused on the gifts of the promise that they missed the promise itself, JESUS.*

### **Conclusion:**

So what does Jesus in the promise to Abraham mean for us? The same God who **gave** the promise is the God who **preserves** His people, and Jesus is the One in whom the promise is ultimately **fulfilled.** We did not earn our salvation, and we do not preserve ourselves by our own strength; **from beginning to end, our hope rests in the faithfulness of God and His work in Christ.** That should produce humble, grateful people who obey and serve God not to earn His favor, but because we know everything we have has been given to us by grace.

And just like Israel, we must be careful not to become more attached to **God's gifts than to the One to whom they point.** God generously gives us families, homes, careers, health, friendships, possessions, and many other good things. Enjoy them. Thank God for them. Steward them well. **But don't make temporary gifts your ultimate hope.** If our joy disappears the moment one of those things is taken from us, we may have begun treating the gift like the promise itself. We are sojourners just like Abraham. Our greatest inheritance is not what we can build or possess here; **our greatest treasure is Christ, and our true inheritance is still to come.** One day our King will return, He will make all things new, and we will dwell with Him forever in the new heavens and new earth. So follow the promise all the way to Jesus. Receive God's gifts with gratitude, trust Him to preserve you through every season, and fix your hope on Christ and the kingdom that is coming.

