

# **The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0**

**Number 43**

**“Acts 6 and 7”**

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**With**

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## Acts 6-7

Acts 6-7 are familiar to most Bible students as being about the selection of deacons and Stephen's martyrdom. For sure those items are important, but there are other items of interest in these chapters that are frequently overlooked. Some of these connect back to the divine council worldview and provide hints as to how the early believers understood the kingdom of God was not only about the future but had already begun.

Here is the paper referenced in the show:

[Abraham and the Merchants of Ura](#)

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 43, Acts 6-7. I'm your residential layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

**MSH:** Very good Trey. Another two chapters today.

**TS:** Another two, well I like this. Let's get into this if you're ready.

**MSH:** Yup. Acts 6-7 today. A lot of this is familiar to people, which will work in our favor because I'm not going to read through the entirety of both chapters. But, typically, Acts 6, when people come to this or when they hear it in church, they're thinking about the selection of deacons and what not, and more or less, that becomes the exclusive focus on it. But there are two things in here in the early part chapter 6 that I'm going to read and comment about briefly, and then go off into the whole issue with Stephen and his sermon. So beginning in Acts 6:1 we read,

6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. **[MSH: Now, of course, the daily distribution, we'll stop here for a moment, is this sharing of wealth, having all things in common, that we've already encountered two places earlier. So, there's apparently some inequity going on there]** <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables." <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup> And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

**MSH:** So I'm going to stop there. Again, there's some inequity going on, the reference to the Hellenists, they're basically Hellenized Jewish converts as opposed to this other Hebrews that would've been either from a different sect, in other words, not, Jesus' day, of course, in the day's early church, there were different sects of Judaism and some were more Hellenistic, and others were not. And those who were not would view the Hellenized Jews as being just a little bit pagan or little but worldly or little bit influenced by the gentile culture and the political system and whatnot. So there is different groups and, of course, we have here a situation where one group says, hey, you know, our widows are being neglected in the daily distribution so they have to settle this problem.

Now the two things I want to actually focus on, though, are this comment about at the last, in the string of names, Nikolay is a proselyte of Antioch and then this whole thing about laying their hands on them. I want to say a little bit about those things. Now there, I don't know

how other translations handle this. ESV has proselyte and that Bible, for instance, has gentile convert to Judaism. You have to think about where we're at in the book of Acts. Everybody that we're talking about that's hearing the Word and embracing the Messiah, embracing story of Jesus, is Jewish. They identify themselves as Jewish. Now in this case, we have people who weren't ethnically Jewish but they had converted to Judaism. Again, that is a good cultural contextual explanation or understanding of proselyte. And I think it's important because we have Stephen, of course, *Stéfanos* is a Greek name, so it's another indication where you have people who maybe not are ethnically Jewish, the descendants of Abraham, but yet they converted to worship the God of Israel.

And now they're hearing the gospel through the apostles and others, other disciples the message of Jesus, and they are shifting their allegiance or, I think it would be fair to say continuing their allegiance to the God of Israel through Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus as Messiah. What's interesting to me is the reference to Antioch. This is another one of those things, we saw one last time and we're going to see this happen again in Acts 8 and 9, it's a reference to a place and specifically a city, sort of a region or associated with it, that does not show up necessarily in Acts 2. And so what with the messaging is here that Luke is conveying to us is, look, not only do ethnic Jews, were ethnic Jews living out among the nations, again, we're back to this Deuteronomy 32 worldview that is inherited by the New Testament era where the nations have to be reclaimed, of course, there were ethnic Jews in those places. They had come to Pentecost. They had heard the message of Peter, and they had embraced Jesus as Messiah. Well, not only are ethnic Jews living out in the nations doing this and then taking the Gospel to others where they live, but even converts to Judaism are doing the same thing. They're in these locations. Of course, God knows that.

It's part of the providential plan to have these people hear the gospel message, believe it, and then transmit it. But we're still in the context of this Jewish framework that's going to shift when we get, especially with Paul, again, the apostle to the Gentiles, but the program initially begins with those who are committed to the God of Israel, we'll just call those Jews or Judaism, living out scattered among the nations and they believe and start spreading the kingdom of God in those places outside of Jerusalem. And, of course, there's a significant element within Jerusalem where all these events happened and, of course, where the apostles are. So the reference to Antioch picks up another one of these places, another one of these regions, to let us know that this process is continuing. It's not just that the nations mentioned in Acts 2, as clear is that was in reference to reversing the disinherited to the nations way back at the Babel event. If that thought is new to you, you need to watch the video on the Deuteronomy 32 worldview on the podcast website.

But it isn't just those mentioned in Acts 2. It is happening all over the place. It's happening everywhere. So the grocery list wasn't complete back in Acts 2. So we're going to get indications in the chapters to come in the near future the same sort of idea. Why is this place mentioned? Well it's mentioned to link it back to Acts chapter 2 in the reclaiming of the nations. The other thing here that I wanted to mention was the laying of hands. Now in this context, we don't have any association with this laying their hands on them with any sort of spiritual gift. So it's more or less an identification, again, the apostles identify with these people who are selected. They are in agreement with their selection. They're endorsing, this is kind of an endorsement of these particular men. Eventually, especially with Paul, you're going to see this phrase used as a means of, for lack of a better term, transmitting the power of the Holy Spirit and some of the

gifts of the Holy Spirit. We're going to see this later in the book of Acts where Paul or somebody else will lay their hands on someone and they'll speak in tongues, or they'll be supernaturally enabled to do this or that. So the concept morphs a little bit as we keep going. It is an endorsement. It is a selection.

It is a choosing, but it's also this imparting of the power that was received in Acts chapter 2 for the specific purpose, since it's linked back to the Spirit, which is linked back to Acts chapter 2, it has a specific context and a specific purpose. It's not so you could give sort of run up and down the aisles of your church and that kind of thing and some of the things we associate with the modern charismatic movement. The specific context was enablement to articulate the gospel and to spread this new thing, this new thing of Jesus of Nazareth. This guy that actually came was God incarnate and this is what he did. He died and he rose again. This is why it was done, to carve out the people of God from all nations. There was a specific context to this that once we get into gentile territory and, specifically, with Paul, as he leaves the immediate Jewish geographical context, when he starts going out into the gentile nations and doing his ministry, this sort of thing connects him back to what's going on or what had gone on in Acts chapter 2. So there's deliberate messaging here.

Again, the Bible is full of this kind of thing. Things happen to make you think of other things. Things are written to make you think of other things. There are these hooks, theological hooks, in what you're reading that link back, hook back, into something else. It's about theological messaging and sort of coherence and consistency. So we'll hit that again so I don't want to belabor it here. But I wanted to mention those two things specifically. After this point in Acts 6, we get the situation where Stephen is arrested. Again, this is a familiar story so I'm not going to read through the whole thing. He's arrested in the second half of chapter 6. And then Chapter 7 is his speech, his testimony, his sermon before the high priest and those who are assembled to deal with him. And let's just begin in Acts 7, the high priest said,

And the high priest said, "Are these things so?" **[MSH: Stephen had just been accused at the end of chapter 6 about speaking against the temple, against the law, speaking about Jesus of Nazareth, that Jesus would destroy the temple, change the customs that Moses had given them, and all that. So the High priest says, are these things so? And Stephen's answer was this sermon]** <sup>2</sup> 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,

**MSH:** Now, I want to stop there real briefly. For those of you who are familiar with my blog, you'll know that I have a bit of a different view on Abraham's Ur, the Mesopotamian context for Abraham. I do not believe it was in Babylonia in the south. I believe it was a place in the north that is fairly close to Haran, which is where Abraham goes to after he's called by God. They settle in Haran and that becomes the place of really where their ancestry, the ancestry of the people of God is sort of rooted. This is why later on in the stories of the patriarchs after Abraham when Abraham needs a wife for Isaac, this Eliezer goes back to this region, to Haran. He doesn't go to Babylon or something like that.

He goes to this region. If you're interested in that subject, there will be a link on this episode of the podcast back to an article that I think is really quite telling and quite interesting on that. So I just wanted to pass that along. For those of you who know it, there's a reminder. Those of you that that whole idea is new to you, well, there you have a link and you can go back and read that. So Stephen continues with his sermon and it's basically a rehearsal of some very familiar things in Old Testament history. You get down to around verse 30 and he says that when 40 years had passed, an angel appeared to him, appeared to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire. So this is consistent with what we read in Exodus chapter 3. I spent a lot of time in my divine counsel stuff on Exodus 3, the fact that it's not just God in the bushes. There's the angel of the Lord there. So you have at least two personalities in this event that is so fundamental to the life of Moses, the Exodus, and all that sort of thing. So what Stephen says very consistent with that. He knows his Old Testament well, and he keeps rehearsing what happened at the Exodus, what happened with Pharaoh, and so on so forth. And then we get to around, let's go to verse 42. Let's go back to verse 40 where he's still talking about Moses and Aaron at Sinai, In verse 40, Stephen says, he's talking to Aaron,

<sup>40</sup> 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.' [MSH: **This is when Moses had gone up into the mountain. He'd been missing for forty days**]

<sup>41</sup> And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. <sup>42</sup> But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven,

**MSH:** Now that's an important phrase, gave them over to worship the host of heaven. This is a direct link into the Deuteronomy 32 worldview. To make it real short, Deuteronomy 32:8-9 is the passage that says,

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.

**MSH:** And from that comes this theology, that at the Babel event, God disinherits the nations, and he assigns their governance to sons of God, other divine beings. And if you go back to Deuteronomy 4, Deuteronomy 4:19, you sort of get the other side of that coin where the text of Deuteronomy 4:19 says basically the same thing but with a little twist. Moses is warning the people. He says,

And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

**MSH:** So initially, you take Deuteronomy 4:19 and 20 and then Deuteronomy 32:8, you get this notion that God at the Babel event, which was well before Moses, way back then, had disinherited the nations, disinherited the people of the world because they're still in rebellion even after the flood, and he assigns them to sons of God, to other divine beings. And He essentially assigns that the worship of those beings to these unfortunate humans. God cuts himself off from humanity. That's why verse 9 in Deuteronomy 32:8 right after he divides up the nations and assigns them to the sons of God, the next verse says, 'But Israel is Yahweh's portion, Jacob is his allotted inheritance'. And right after Babel, this is a reference to the call of Abraham, immediately after Babel, God says, ok, I'm done with humanity. I'm going to start over. I'm going to start with this one guy here in Mesopotamia. And I'm going to create my own people through him, and, of course, his wife Sarah, and we know the rest the story. So that's where the rest of the Old Testament is Israel against the nations and God against the other gods, things become adversarial.

What's really interesting is, if you continue on in Deuteronomy 17:3, get to chapter 29:23-25, the Israelites themselves, the people of Yahweh, who were specially created after the disinheritance of the nations, God's own people begin to gravitate toward the worship of these other sons of God, these other gods of the nations. Deuteronomy 32 alludes to this. They worshiped demons and not God, gods they had not known, gods that had not been allotted to them. And this is the thought that we see here in Acts 7. So Stephen knew his divine council theology pretty well. He says God turned away and gave them, that is, the Israelites, over the worship of the host of heaven. In other words, this is directly going back in Deuteronomy 32:17, where your Moses and his long sermon in Deuteronomy 32 rehearsing all this is, look, these other gods were supposed to be a punishment against the other nations, God cutting himself off from them. It was supposed to be through you guys, through you Israelites, that those nations would once again someday come to know the true God. This is why you're kingdom of priests but instead, you went after these other gods.

You were seduced and God said forget it. God gave you up. I like to use the language of the Romans 1 event of the Old Testament is what happened at Babel. This is sort of an echo of that. God sort of throws up his hands and says whatever. There you go. You're just prone to wander, again. And so Stephen, again, rehearsing the fact that they had turned away from God and worshiped other gods and now he's going to quote the Old Testament specifically in defense of that. Because what he's going to angle for, what Stephen is angling for in his speech is the fact that Israel herself cut herself off from God. Just made these decisions, God said fine. God gives them up to their own desires. Anybody who's read any of the prophets at all knows the story, that God sees what's going on. God says if that's what you want to do, I'm going to send you into exile. I'm going to punish you. But we know from the whole story of Israel that God doesn't just end this story there. His promises to Abraham, his promises to David, to have a land and to have a king and the new covenant that we spent a lot of time talking about 10 episodes earlier in the podcast, that all come to fruition through the death and resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

All those things God keeps alive, even after he sends the people into exile. And so Stephen knows all this. He knows the Scripture really well. He knows what happened with Jesus. He understands it completely, and he's setting them up. He's basically going to say, look, this is the situation that you put yourselves in. And if you don't turn around now and embrace Yahweh come in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, this guy that you just crucified, if you don't

repent now, if you don't turn from what you're believing now, and align yourselves with him, you're in the same place. You're disinherited because this now, this thing you're seeing around you with the apostles, these people know what happened at Pentecost. All these miracles you see, this is the formation a new of the people of God via lack the remnant. This is it. And if you alienate yourself from this, you could be on the outside looking in. And there is no more additional plan. This is the plan. This is the plan to bring Yahweh's people out of the nations. It's the plan of redemption for everyone, whether you're descended from Abraham or not. So if you turn your back on this, you're just in a heap of big trouble. So he's setting them up for this conclusion. But I want to draw some attention to this passage. He quotes, again, it's kind of interesting how the Old Testament gets utilized here. So verse 42, to go back he says,

<sup>42</sup> But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: **[MSH: Now what he's actually going to quote here is a passage from Amos, but here's his quotation. I'm going to read it here, then we'll go back and look at the Old Testament and see what that says, because as is the norm, what Stephen is quoting here, remember, *Stéfanos*, he's a Hellenistic. He has a Greek name. he's reading the Septuagint. This is the Septuagint translation here. And if you actually looked at the text, you'd find out that what I'm going to read in Act 7 is almost exactly what you'd find in the Septuagint in Amos 5]**

“Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? **[MSH: It's rhetoric. It's like, did you do all this sacrifice stuff during the forty years in Israel? Oh, wasn't that nice, because the next verse]**

<sup>43</sup> 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.’

**MSH:** So that was nice what you did in the wilderness for me. That was really good, wink wink. Again, it's a rhetorical flair. But the fact of the matter is, you are apostates. The fact of the matter is, when you got into the land after you got out of the wilderness, you turned from me. And so he quotes Amos 5:25-27, and here's what it says if you actually go back in your Old Testament. You're going to notice it's going to sound a little different. It says,

<sup>25</sup> “Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? **[MSH: That part's the same. Now listen to this]** <sup>26</sup> You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyun your star-god—your images that you made for yourselves, <sup>27</sup> and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

**MSH:** Now there are a number of differences here. And if you've ever noticed this, I want to just give you the quick version of how to parse the differences. The Old Testament, the Masoretic



text, says you shall take up Sikkuth, your king, and Kiyyun or Kaiwan, your star-god, and I'll send you beyond Damascus, exile beyond Damascus. The Septuagint, the New Testament with Stephen is saying here says, you took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god *Raephan*, and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon. So like how in the world do you get from one to the other? Let's just take them one at a time. This reference in the Old Testament to Sikkuth your king, what you have the Hebrew text here that the first Hebrew word is, I'll just use transliteration, SKT. That's where the Masoretic Text gets Sikkuth. And then we have MLK and then KM which is your King, the noun king and the suffix your. So that's easy but the issue is that SKP could be read as Sikkoth, which means tent or booth, like sukkot in Hebrew, the Hebrew festivals.

And so that's what the translator of the Septuagint was thinking. So he uses the Greek word for tent and then he has to decide, well, what's the tent of MLK, and, apparently, he either ignores the suffix or it wasn't in his text. And so he comes up with Moloch, the tent of Moloch. So that's where it comes from in the Septuagint. You can see where they got it. But it's quite a different take on what's going on. Now to try summarize this, the consonants can read booth or tent or could be the name of this deity. If you take it as the name of the deity Sikkuth, it's probably a reference to the Acadian god Sukkot. And so what the prophet Amos would be saying, now think about it. The Northern Kingdom, this is where Amos is preaching to, who does the northern kingdom get conquered by? The Assyrians. This is a reference to the fact that people in the northern kingdom were worshiping an Acadian god, a god above the Assyrians. So it makes sense in Amos's own day.

Amos is saying, look, you people, go ahead. You can take up Sikkuth or Sukkot, your King, so in other words, instead of Yahweh being your King, it's this is other dopey deity named Sukkuth. Have a good time with that. And then this other deity he mentioned I'll get to in a moment, this Kiyyun dude. Amos is saying, look, you can do that but you know what's going to happen. I'm going to send you into exile and, of course, in Amos, in the Masoretic Text, it's exile beyond Damascus. So you could read it either way. Either way, it's apostasy. So conceptually the two versions are similar, even though textually, they're really not. But you can see how the Septuagint translator got where he got, or how he went with tent and then he just made it Moloch, again, just a different deity but the idea is the same. Masoretic text I think has it better here. The second one is kind of interesting. This Kiyyun deity in the Hebrew text, you have {Hebrew spelling}, it would normally be pronounced in Hebrew- Kaiwan. And you say where does Kiyyun come from?

It comes from the fact that sometimes when Hebrew scribes encountered the name of a foreign hostile deity, they would remove the vowels and put in the vowels for the word *shikutz* which means shame or abomination. So that's why you'll actually run into some text that have this as Kiyyun. They take the two a vowels out and put in the I and the u and misspell the name to telegraph the fact that they have contempt for this deity. You'll see this in some biblical names, like *Mephibosheth*. *Mephibosheth* has different names in parallel passages in the Old Testament. It's missing the *bo'-sheth* part. That's because the scribes added *bo'-sheth*, changed the name because *bo'-sheth* means shame. Again, this was somebody who was not loyal or least because the family descended from Saul's line, was perceived as not loyal to the real line of David so they would change the name. They would do things like this to telegraph content, to telegraph an adversarial or hostile relationship, to say something negative sort of under the radar or as a subtext that readers back in their day would catch this. Because they would know

the other names and they would know some of these techniques. But who was, back to the subject, who was Kaiwan.

Well in Mesopotamia, Kaiwan was the deity associated with Saturn. Now that should matter because look at the context. This whole host of heaven, again, God giving them over to the host of heaven, Kaiwan was the god associate with Saturn. In Mesopotamia, curiously enough, Saturn is the only star not related to one of the major deities in the pantheon of the Akkadians and Babylonians. which kind of puts an interesting spin on this. Amos is saying, look, not only did you guys adopt Kaiwan, this star god from the Akkadians and the Assyrians, but you didn't even pick a big one. You were dumb enough to pick up sort of a lesser tiered divine being instead of Yahweh. So it's sort of an added insult of this particular one. He's not even an important member of the pantheon. Some scholars have suggested that we might have a connection here with the Kenites, which are, now I don't want your minds to run too far afield with this, but the Kenites were descendants of or related to Abraham through Ishmael in South Arabia. And they worshiped a deity that that has a similar name. You might, that's possible, but the reference given in Amos in the northern kingdom and they're going to get carried away by the Assyrians and that's where the problems are, I think it's better to go with the Assyrian option.

The Israelites are taking over worship of this Assyrian god and they're going to get paid for it big-time, because God is going to use the Assyrians to destroy them. And the Assyrians were awful, in terms of what they would do to captive people. These are going to be the 10 tribes. They're going to be dispersed everywhere. They're going to exchange the Israelite population. They're going to bring in people from other parts of their empire they've conquered and bring them into the land of Israel. This is where you get the Samaritans because you're going to have mixed blood. The 10 tribes are never clearly brought back. They are scattered to the wind in a very literal way. You don't have this continuity that you have with the two tribes that go into Babylon with Judah.

So this is a reference to this deity, what's going to happen and what did happen. And it's linked back to this host of heaven kind of language. So the very thing that an Israelite, this is like theology 101 for an Israelite. We are who we are. We're descended from Abraham, and why are we descended from Abraham? Well because God created us from Abraham. He called Abraham right after he disinherited all the other nations and a lot of them to the host of heaven and that was their punishment. So that is theology 101 for an Israelite, and it should hit them when Stephen says God gave you guys over to worship the host of heaven. He is putting them in the same slot, in the same situation, as being disinherited. If you do not come over to what we're preaching, to Jesus being Yahweh incarnate, come and died and rose again, all the stuff we've been preaching, if you do not make that decision, you are as well off or bad off as a disinherited Gentile. It could not have been clearer because of the terminology that's used because of the passage that's quoted from Amos.

You're as good as scattered. You guys are as good as gone if you do not listen to what we're saying. It's game over for you guys. The messaging could not have been clearer in what he's trying to communicate to his countrymen and try to get them to listen. Now the last thing I wanted to comment on in Stephen's sermon, really not anything in the sermon but after he's done, and of course, he's making them angry, verse 54 we get,

<sup>54</sup> Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> 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. <sup>56</sup> And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." <sup>57</sup> But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. <sup>58</sup> 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.

**MSH:** What I want you to see, there's this is sort of juxtaposition of phrases and verse 55 he sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God, the right hand, and verse 56, 'behold I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'. Now everybody knows if you're Jewish, the son of man, we know where that comes from. There is only one Son of Man in our Old Testament and it's the guy in Daniel 7 who comes to the Ancient of Days who receives everlasting dominion and authority over the nations, over every nation. So they're mind goes to Son of Man located at the right hand of God and then Jesus located the right hand of God. This verse, these two verses fuse Jesus with the Son of Man. It creates this identification. In Daniel 7, though, the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and it's this notion, now think, you're back in the book of Daniel. Again, this is Old Testament context. The Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and the receiving of the kingship, the everlasting dominion, is yet future because you got to go through all these nations that Daniel is prophesied about. Well here in Acts 7, where does Stephen have him?

He doesn't have him coming on the clouds to the Ancient of Days. He has the Son of Man, Jesus, standing in the position of authority. He has him at the right hand of God. So the messaging is clear. In Stephen's mind, Daniel 7, the kingship, the everlasting dominion, is fulfilled. It has begun and it began with this man Jesus of Nazareth. This is not something that's in the distant future. This is something that is going on right now. The hostile divine authorities over these nations, therefore, have gotten their butts kicked. Satan himself, let's bring him into the picture, has no legal claim over any believer. Remember Satan is the Lord of the dead. Every human being is owned by him until what? They're owned until they benefit from the resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of them that sleep. Christ is the firstborn from the dead. And so if you're in Christ, if you're united to Christ, Satan has no claim over you because you are no longer going to be in the realm of the dead forever. You will be with God. You'll be in the presence of God.

This is all theological messaging and Stephen is saying, look, this is not something we wait for indefinitely. This is something that is moving. It is happening. It's current right now and because of the way he has Jesus, the Son of Man, positioned at the seat of governing authority, he's already governing. This whole dispute over eschatology, and you know that in my case, I don't really like any of the systems because they typically pick either the amillennialistic, the church is the kingdom and there's nothing literal out in the future. You got the premillennialist that say everything is literal out in the future. There's no kingdom now. They're both wrong and they're both misguided because they pick one of two aspects that are both correct. And they're both simultaneously correct. Jesus is either reigning now or he isn't. This isn't the Princess bride going on here, where Jesus is mostly reigning or something like, he's either the King now or he's not the king. He's either at the right hand of God now or he isn't. If he is then he's reigning over

something. The kingdom, in some sense, is already here. And this is the messaging of Acts 7. Now look at some of these other verses you get in the New Testament. Ephesians 1, I'll just rabbit trail here a little bit, and then we'll wrap up. Ephesians 1:20 Paul writes that God

<sup>20</sup> ... worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. [MSH: so there's an already but not yet] <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**MSH:** Christ is reigning. We are reigning and will reign. It's already but not yet. Colossians 3:1 Paul says,

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

**MSH:** He's either reigning or he's not. And the Scripture says He is. Hebrews chapter 1:13,

And to which of the angels has he ever said,

“Sit at my right hand  
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

**MSH:** Hebrews 8:1

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

**MSH:** Well, He's not there twiddling his thumbs or just biding his time till he gets to reign. He is reigning. He is in a position of authority. And lastly, 1 Peter 3:22, this is the whole baptism, connecting baptism and Genesis 6 and all this kind of weird stuff. Peter does that for various reasons. If you read my blog, you know that. But he says here at the end that Jesus

... has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

**MSH:** That's Peter writing in the first century, and you know what? 1 Peter, a lot of the book is about suffering. It ain't going really well for the Christians. But the fact of the matter is that the hostile forces, the gods of the nations are beaten. This is going back to the gospels and who did Jesus say this to? Peter. The gates of hell will not be able to prevail against the Church. The whole idea is that even though things look a certain way, when it comes to really the ultimate reality, the people persecuting you, the people hurting you, killing you, who are not in Christ, they will die and they will die forever.

You, on the other hand, will not. You, on the other hand, are in Christ who is seated at the right hand of God, and wins. In the new earth described Revelations, you're the ones who will be set over the nations. You will displace the sons of God who are now over the nations. You are the sons of God, not them. You are, and in that day when we have a global Eden, we'll find out who is ruling and who isn't. All that is packed into these two verses, this little statement of Steven where he has Son of Man as Jesus already in the position of authority. It's very easy to gloss over. But to a Jewish audience who knew Daniel 7 and knew the scene, it's a really significant thing that he does with that idea.

**TS:** Touching on eschatology, you're talking about Jesus is already reigning, can you relate that to Revelation 20 with the 1000 year reign?

**MSH:** I personally think, again, I'm sort of, when it comes to the systems, people would look at me and say I'm sort of a hybrid. And mea culpa, I am a hybrid because they're both true. I see in Revelation 20 I see a recapitulation in the book of Revelation and that is, again, this is probably something we can unpack in Q&A but I'll give you the quick version here. There are two assumptions that are brought to the book of Revelation, the futurist school, the left behind rapture pre-millennial school, whatever, whether they believe in the rapture or not is a premillennialist, not all premillennialists do, assume that the books are to be read in chronological order, in a linear fashion. The other school of thought says no, there's recapitulation that certain scenes repeat. There are certain cycles of events that repeat in different places in the book.

They recapitulate. They repeat what has gone before so that you're not really supposed to read it in chronological order. Well, I think both happen, and if you take recapitulation in the book of Revelation, you can build a good argument that the Revelation 20, at least part of it, is a recapitulation for things that are happening on earth before, this is going to sound weird, but before the second coming. You say, well, how can that be? Because of the preceding chapter that's when Jesus comes on a white horse. That's correct but you have to realize that chapters can repeat certain thoughts in cycles. And if you look at it that way, there is no chronological order to it. So you can have Revelation 20 be the kingdom of God on earth before the second coming. So I think there's actually a good case to be made for that. I don't believe, on the other hand, though, that the data leads to amillennialism, that we don't have a literal kingdom out there in the future to wait for.

I certainly believe that we do, but my reasons are a lot different than your standard systems will give you. My reasoning is based on, for lack of a better way to put it, the Divine Council worldview in the Old Testament. The nations, the real nations, the literal nations, were disinherited and they are going to be reclaimed literally. This is why the book of Revelation ends with the global Eden where all the earth is God's, every nation. It is the earth. So my view is that the thing we think of as heaven, or the afterlife, is not somewhere in another dimension or in space or in some other planet or some nebulous cloud thing that's out there in the universe somewhere. I think "heaven" is the new earth. And I don't really prefer the term millennium because I think it's too short. It's not going to end in 1000 years. It will never end and I see both things happening in the book of Revelation. And I see a theological, Biblical theological, need for coherence to have the kingdom now and the kingdom then being a global Eden. So that's the long sort of roundabout way I will answer that question.

It is something that is familiar to people who are into eschatology and they usually get put in one basket or the other, and I'm saying throw away the baskets. Throw them away or sew them together. You don't need the baskets because both things are in operation simultaneously. And there is a chronology even though there is recapitulation as well. Both systems have made observations that are very exegetically defensible, and they look like they oppose each other. And so, one system has to "explain" away the problem passages of another system. And I'm saying, look, set the intention and think differently about them because they're both affirmed. And so, the issue comes, how do we do that? We don't do it by adopting one over the other. You do that by putting them together. That doesn't really have a name but I don't really care about the labels. That is what is presented to us.

**TS:** Well good deal. As long as God puts more hydrogen into the sun....we won't have a problem with Eden.

**MSH:** It'll be that's the way God wants to make it.