

## The charges against Stephen and his reply

These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "**We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.**" So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, "**This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.**" Acts 6:10-15



ACCUSED

# Resistance to change with the arrival of the Kingdom

Luke 5:36-39

*Jesus* told them this parable.. "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

**And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says,**

**`The old is better.`"**

The reason Stephen's opponents reacted against what he had said was because they were fiercely protective of their religion. God had blessed them with the land of Israel and the temple, the place of worship. However, they had made idols of both of them.

They thought they were defending God.

John 16:2 .. the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.



But believers should also note 1 John 5:21

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

## Acts chapter 7

Then the high priest asked him, "Are these charges true?"  
To this he replied.. "Brothers and fathers, listen to me!

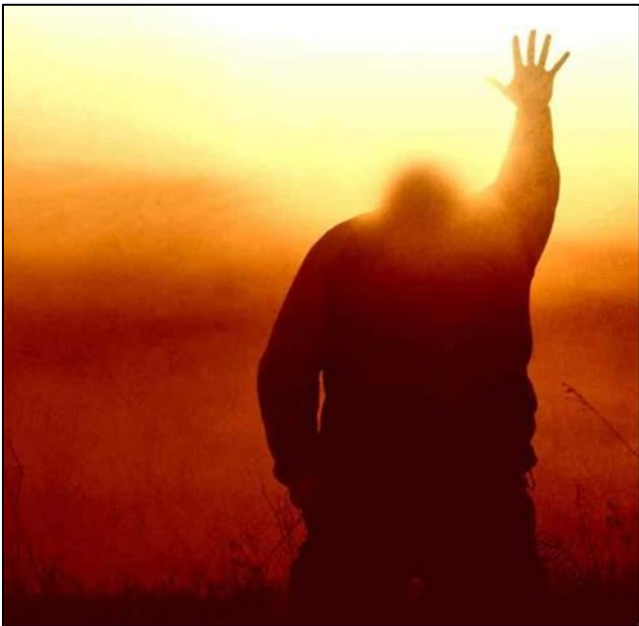


Stephen isn't going to simply recount the history of his people. He will select events that highlight the point he is making.

## Stephen answers these charges by making two main points

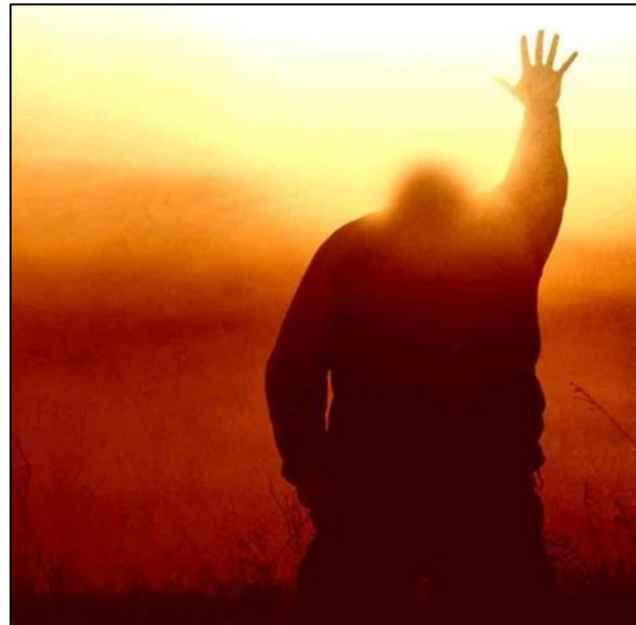
1, Where and how God can be worshipped

2, The people's sadly consistent rejection of God's servants and ultimately the Messiah – who is greater than all.



Chapter 7 is quite a long chapter – 60 verses  
– (and probably a summary of what he actually said!)  
We will look at Stephen's answers in two stages by selecting  
verses from his speech that deal with each point.

Firstly – Where and how God can be worshipped.



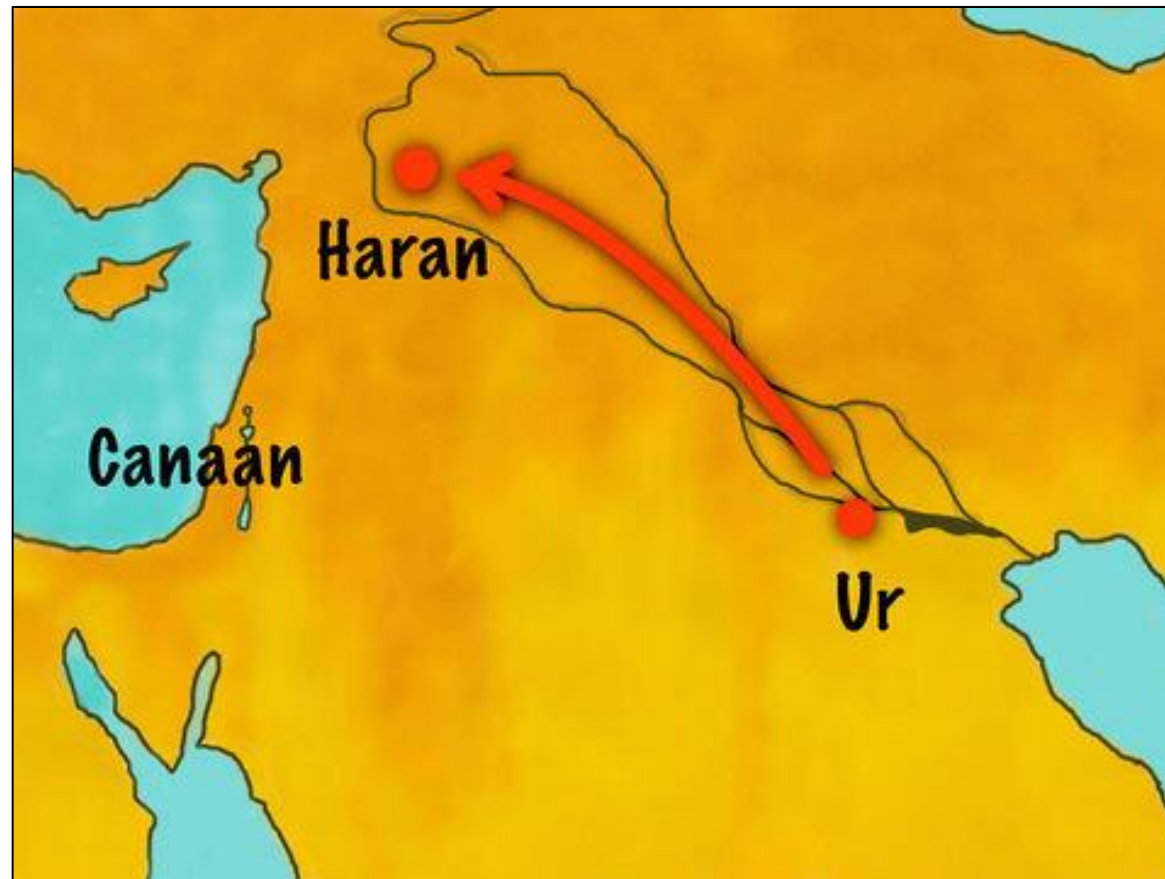
# When and where did God reveal Himself to people?

The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham v2



## Firstly in Mesopotamia, Ur of the Chaldees

The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. `Leave your country and your people,` God said, `and go to the land I will show you.` v3





After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. v4



He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground.

But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. v5

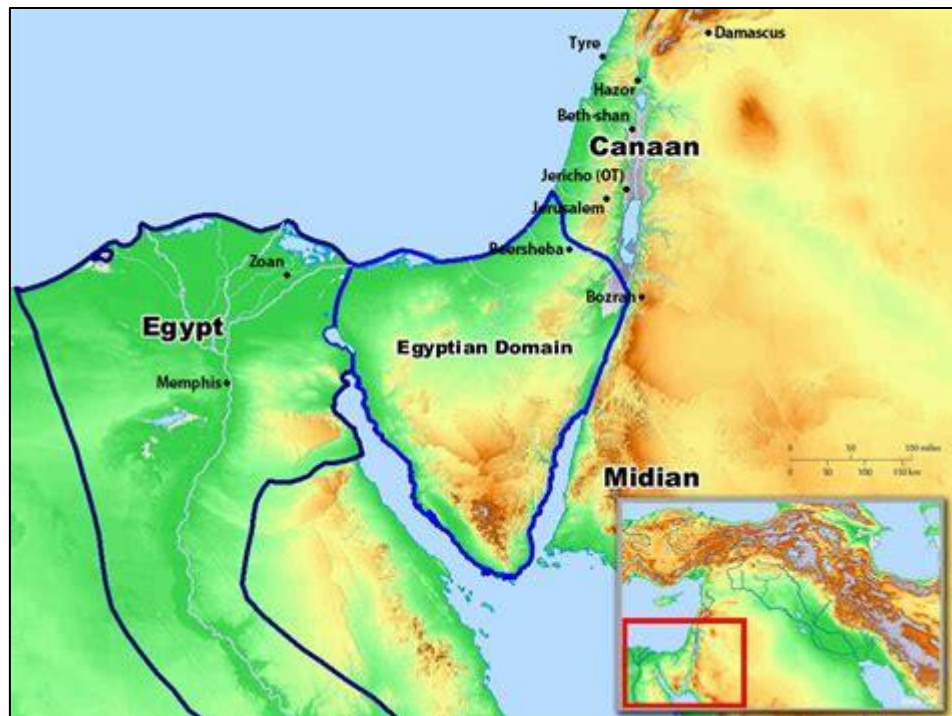


He only had his burial site in the promised land when he died

# The Patriarchs

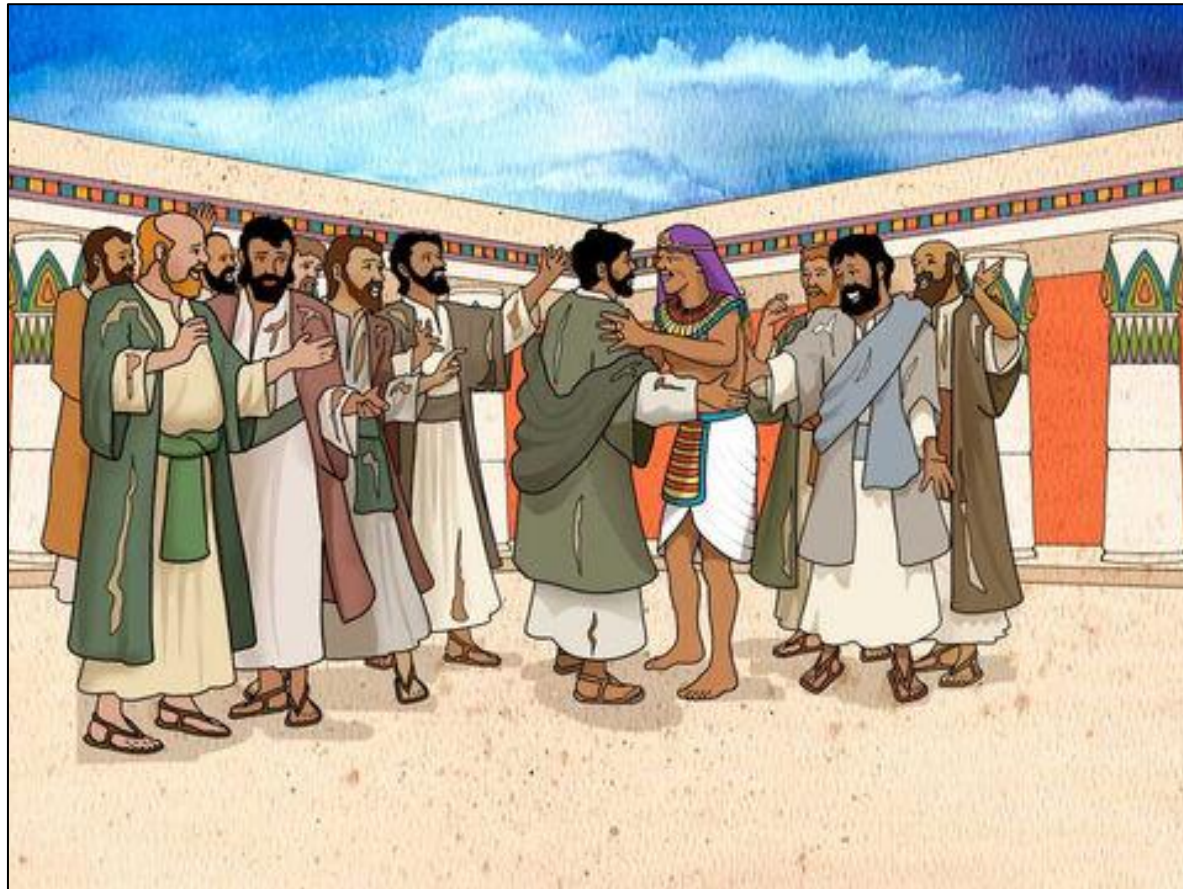
Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs. "Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. v9

God was with Joseph in Egypt and blessed him there



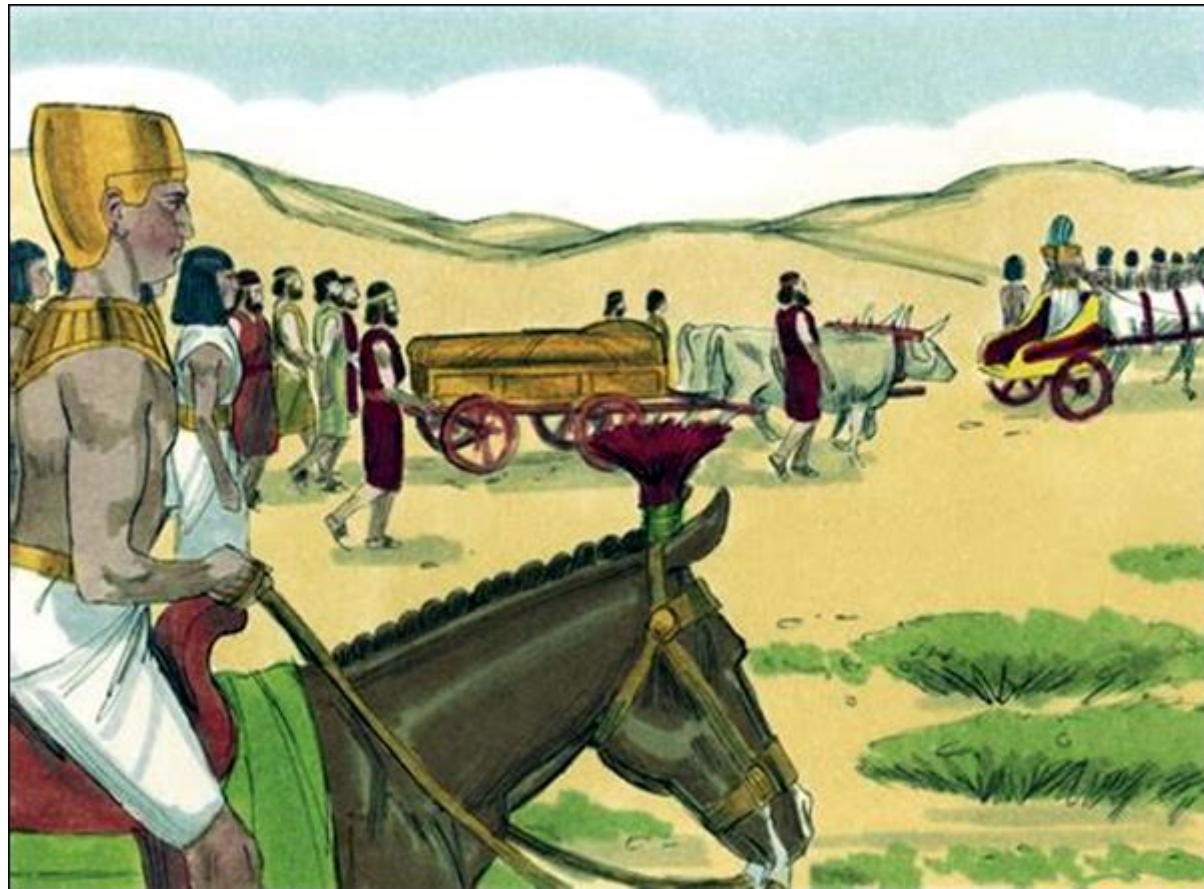
After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. v14

God was with your ancestors when they were in Egypt.



Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

The ancestral burial site was all they possessed of the land of Canaan



# Moses

.. Moses ... fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons. "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. v29-39

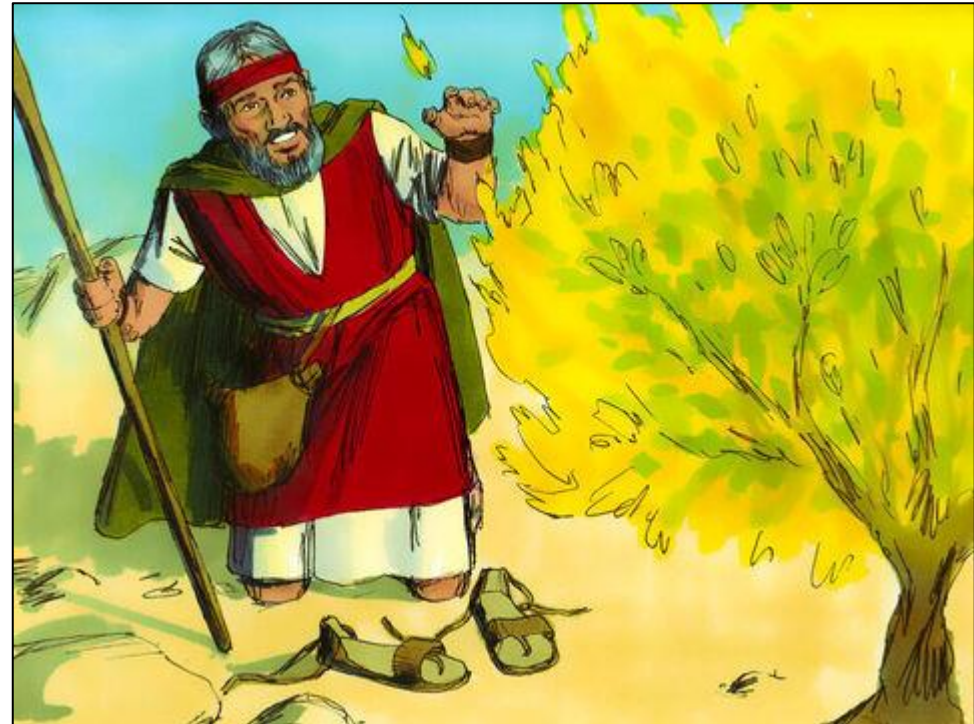
God appeared to  
Moses near Mt. Sinai  
in the land of Midian



As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice.. `I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.` Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. "Then the Lord said to him, `Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground.

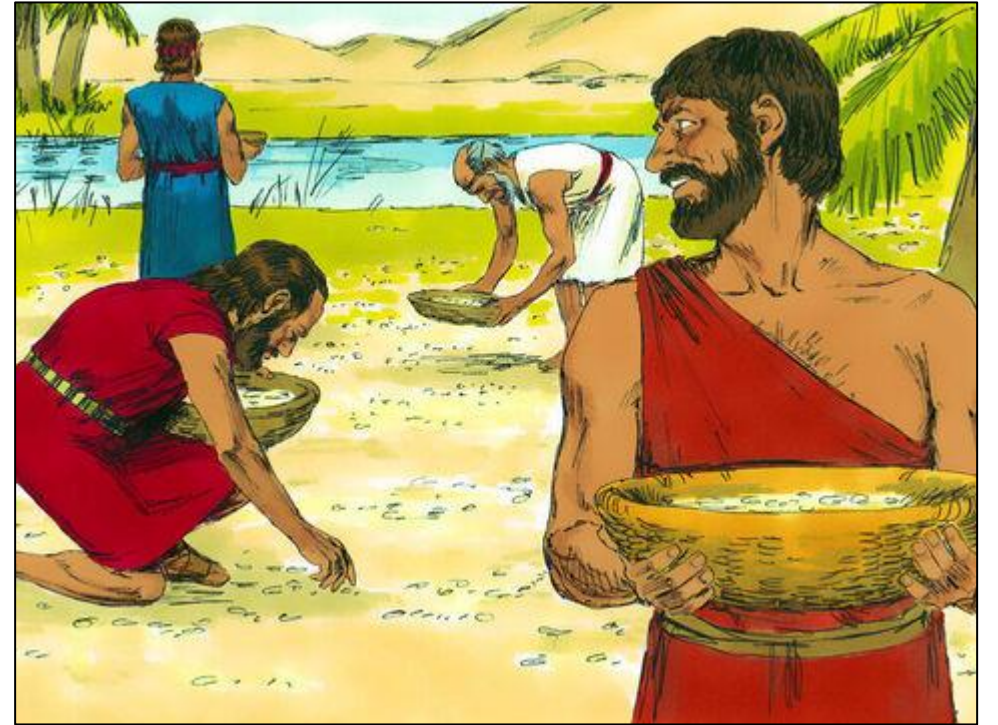
v31-33

There Moses worshipped God  
His Presence made the place holy.



*Moses led them out of Egypt performing wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert. v36*

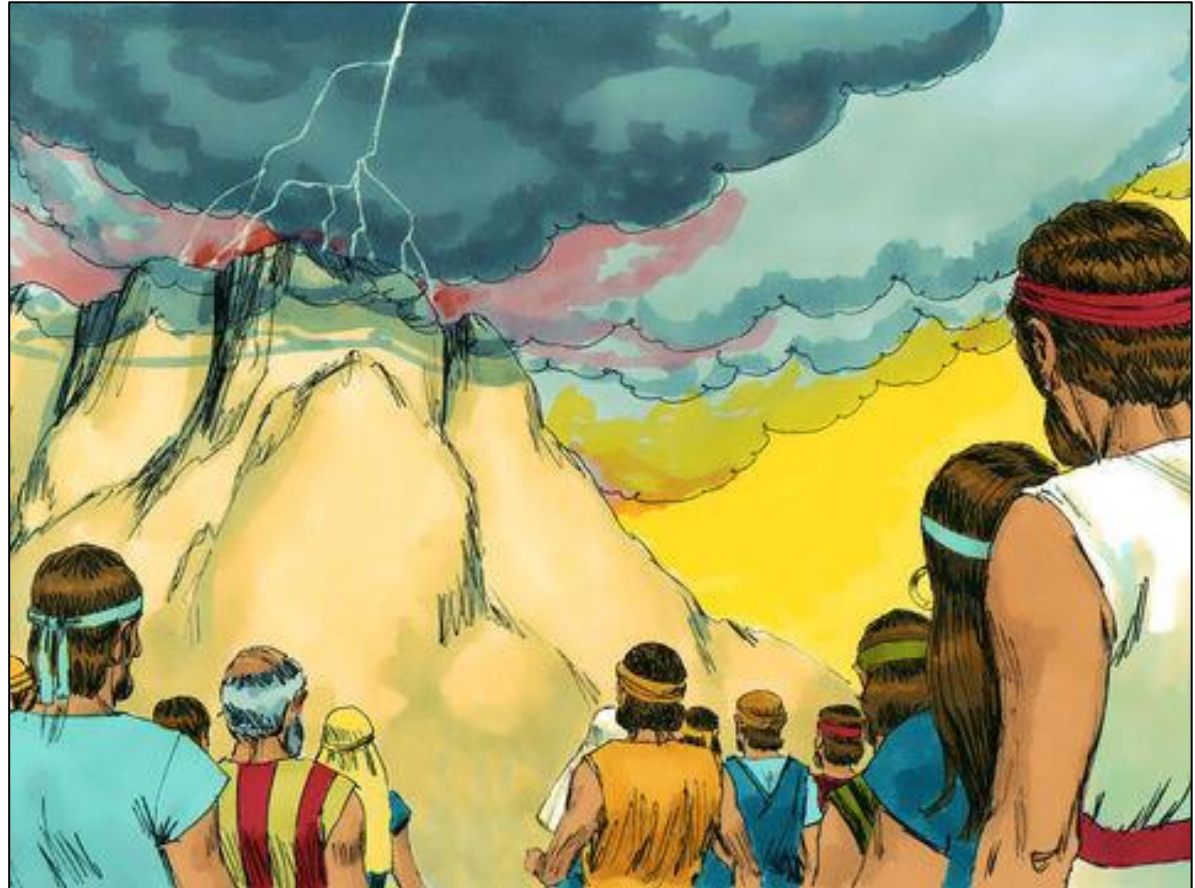
God was present as they left Egypt and remained in the desert.





He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us. v38

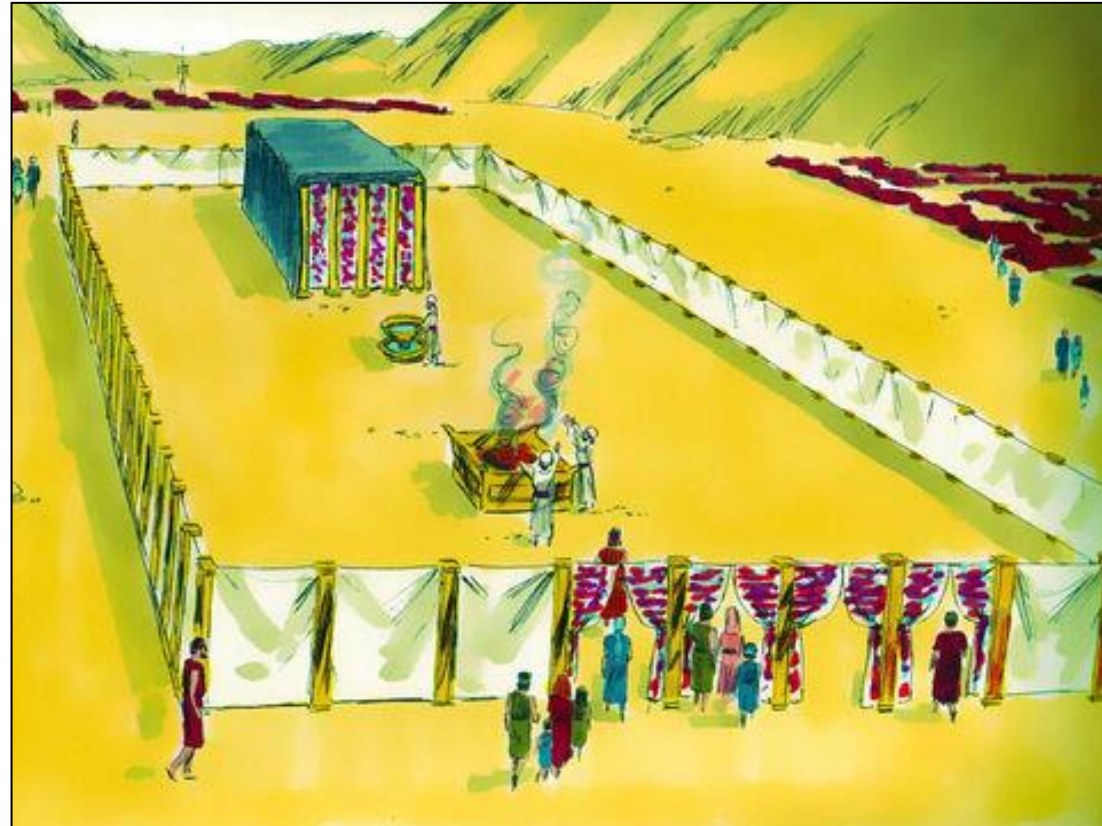
God met with the people and gave them the Torah at Mt. Sinai there in Midian.



# The Tabernacle

"Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. v44

They worshipped at the tabernacle – in the desert.

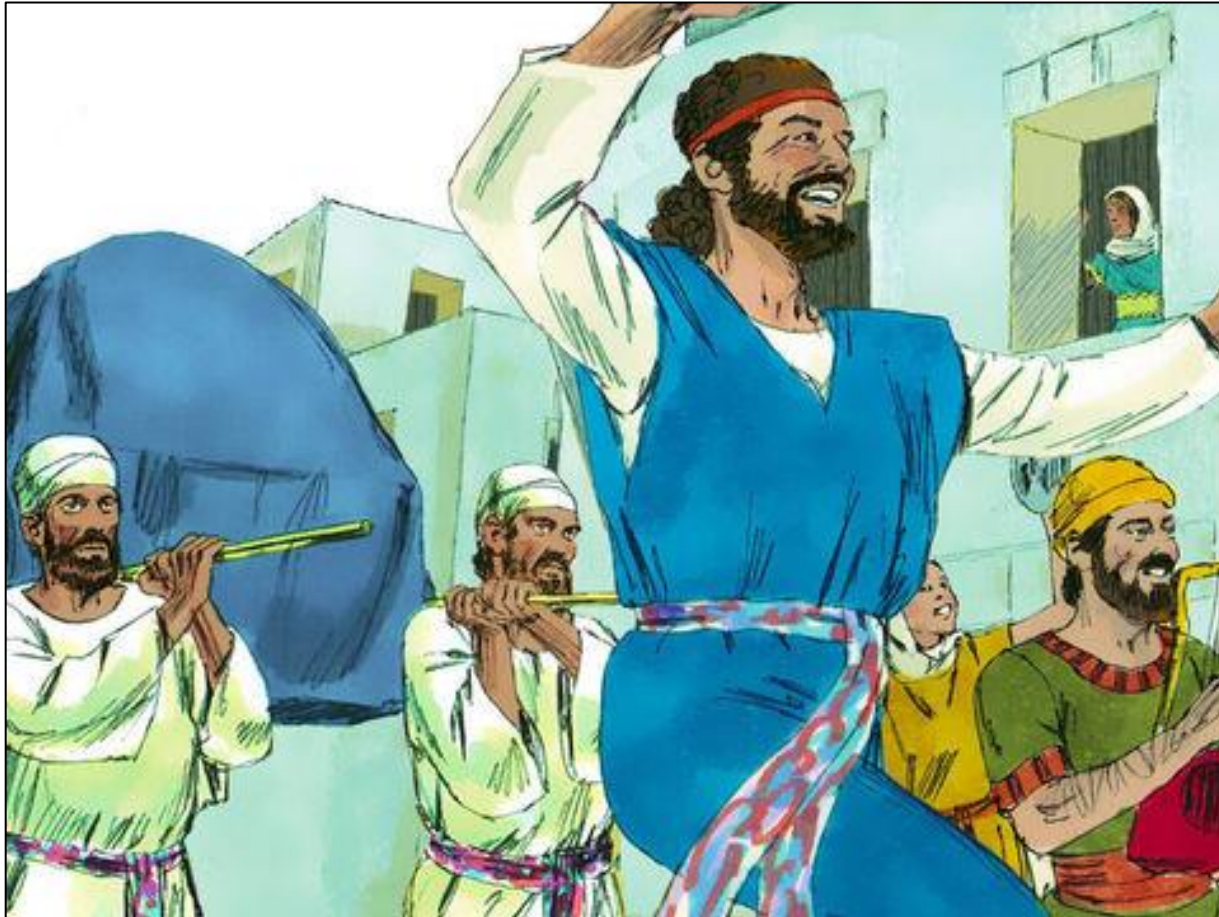


Having received the tabernacle, our fathers under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, v45



The Tabernacle for worship was set up at Shiloh

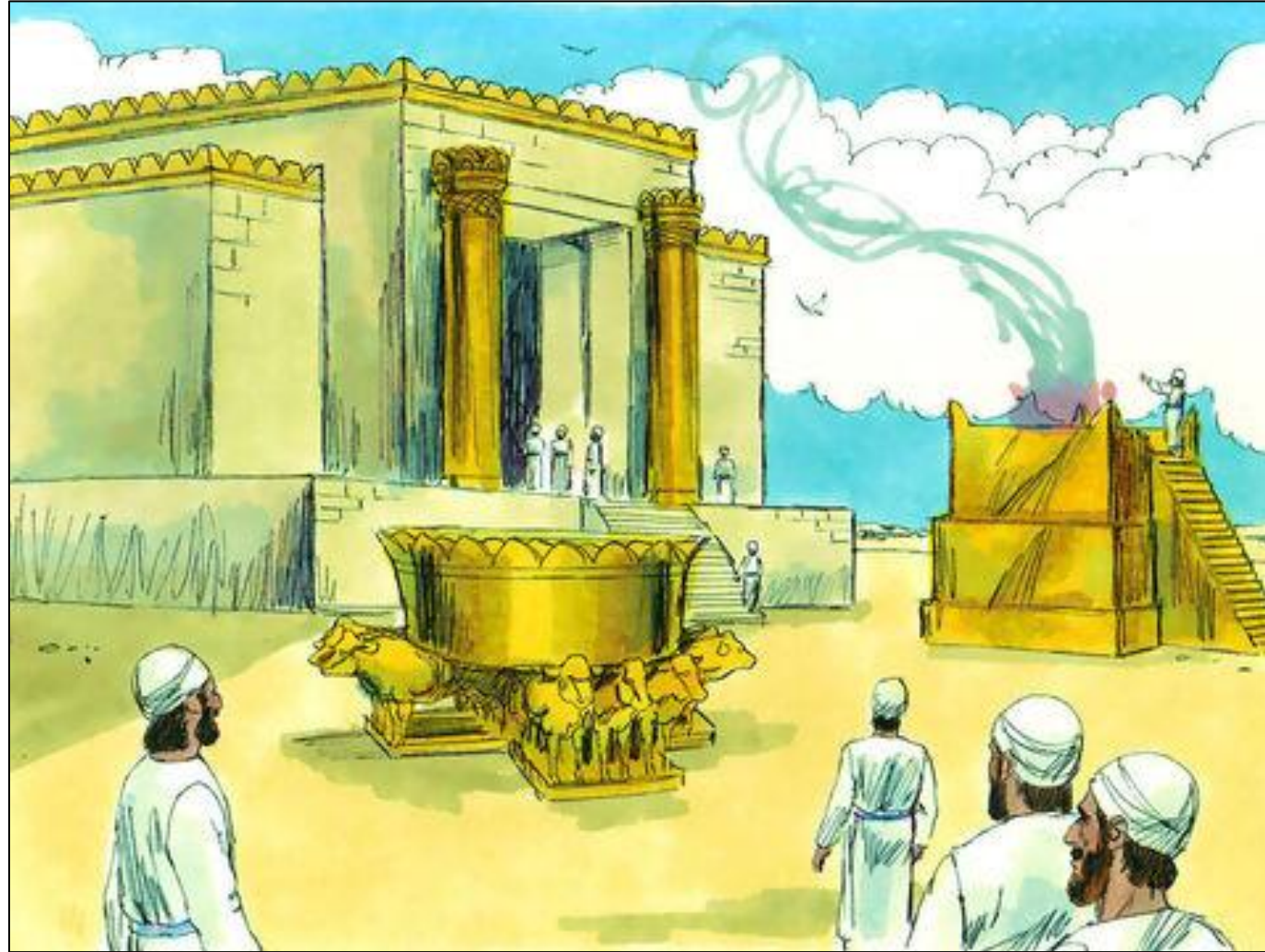
David enjoyed God's favour and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. v46



He brought the ark to Jerusalem and set up a tent for it.

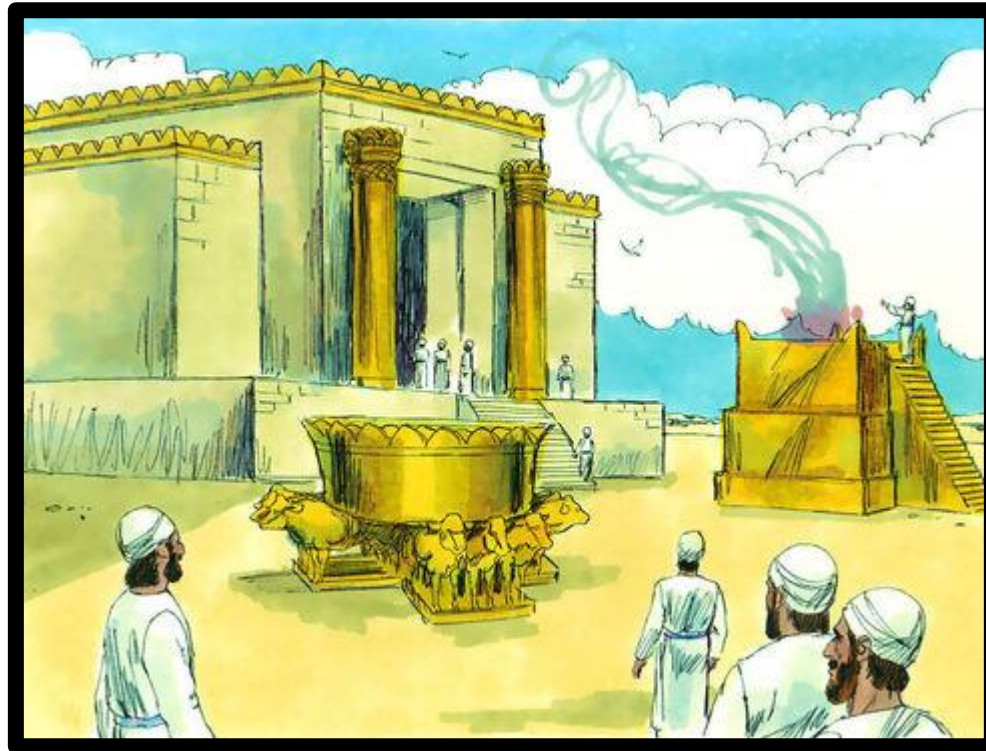
# The Temple

But it was Solomon who built the house for him. v47



However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. v48

The temple was the symbol of God's presence, not a limitation on Him.

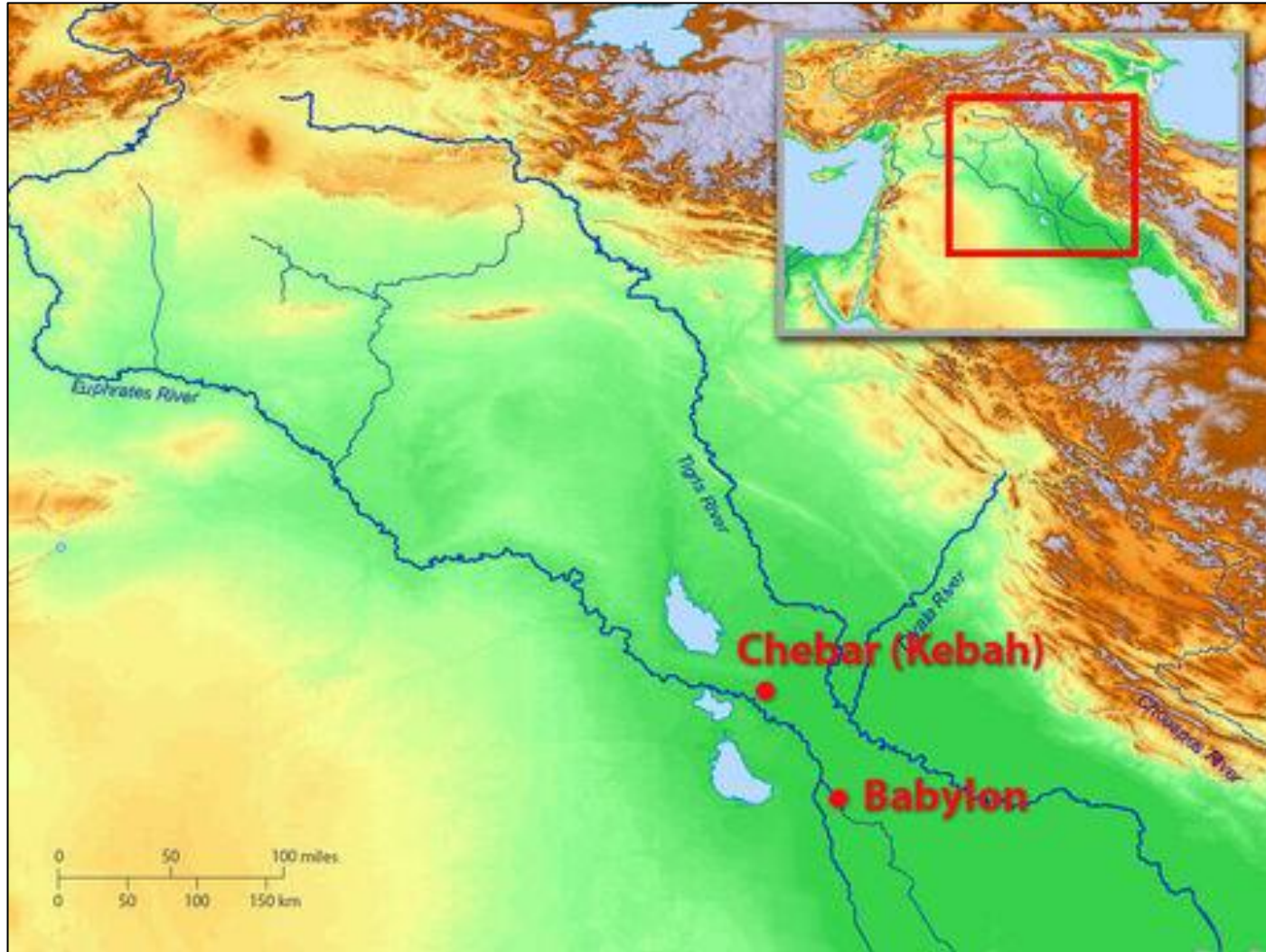


As the prophet says.. "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?"  
v49-50                      Quotation from Isaiah 66:1



Isaiah 66:2 ...this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Just to continue Stephen's point, consider Ezekiel's visions of God's glory -

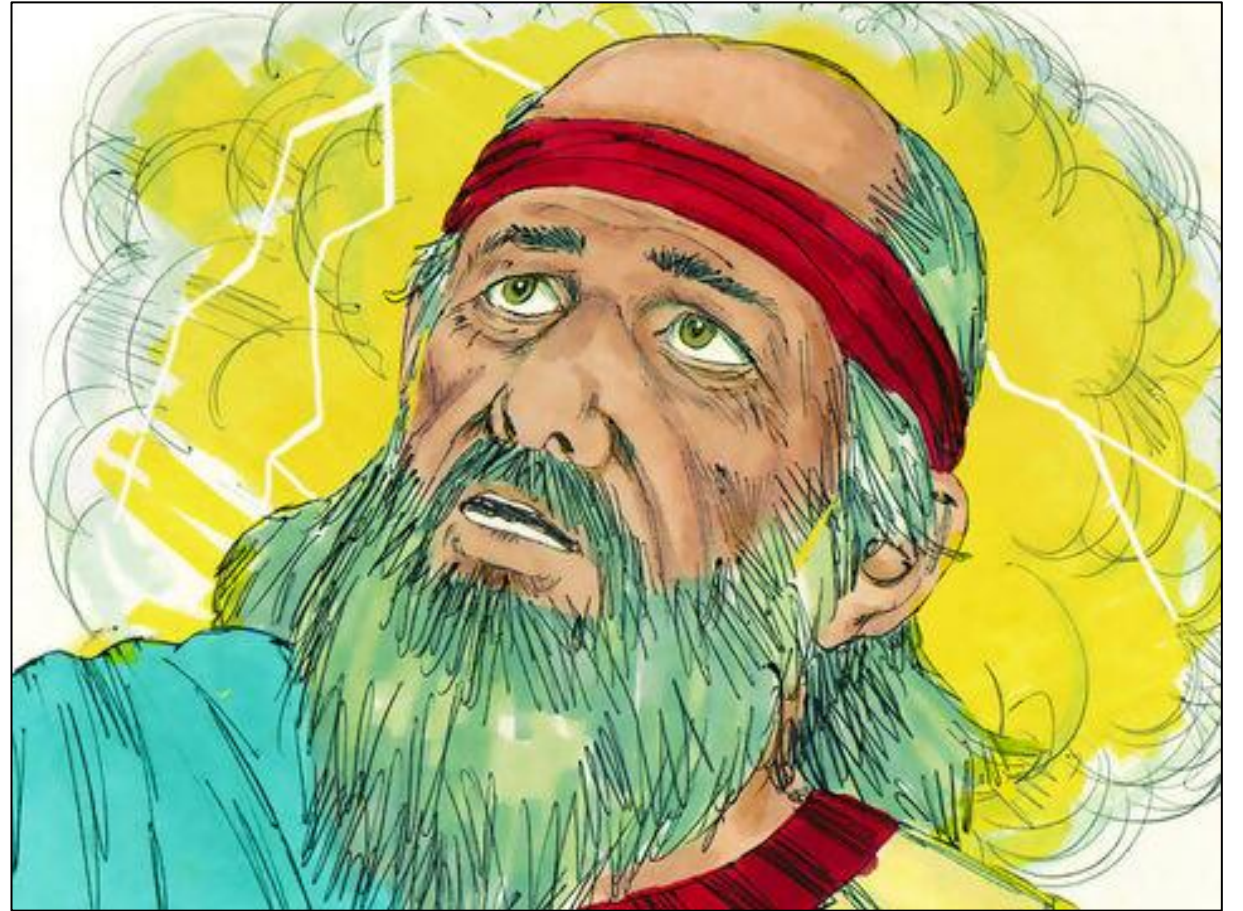


Ezekiel 1:1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.



## Ezekiel's visions of God

Ezekiel 1:28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.



The message was that God was with the exiles even in a foreign land

## Ezekiel's vision of the glory as it left the temple

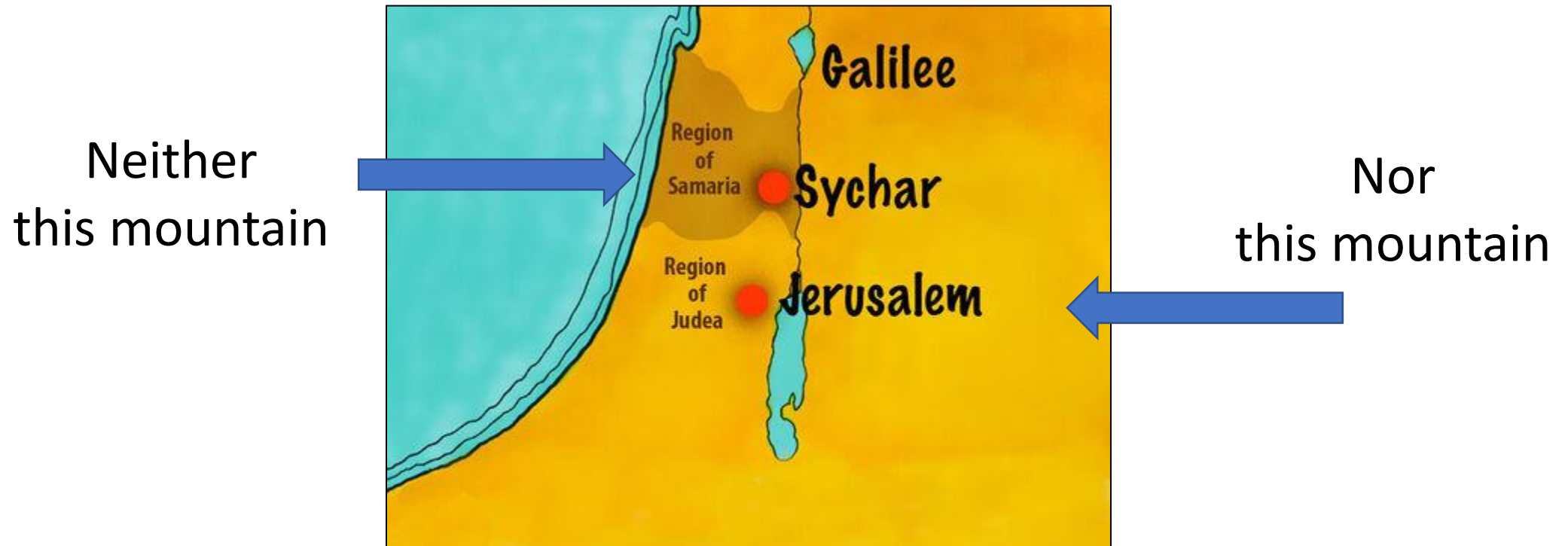
Ezekiel 10:18 Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house, ...



The people's sinful rebellion had driven God out!

## Consider also Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman...

John 4:21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.



**It's not about the location but the state of your heart.**



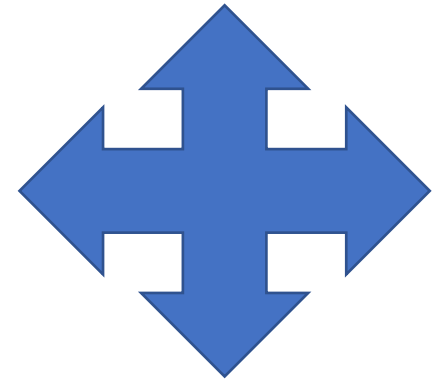
John 4:23-24 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

Stephen was making the point that Jesus had said, worshippers can meet God anywhere when they worship in Spirit and truth.



## I am with you

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**"



Since Jesus tells us – ‘I am with you’, that means believers can worship God anywhere on earth.

We are called first and foremost to be true worshippers.