

# Stephen's response - Acts chapter 7



Then the high priest asked him, "Are these charges true?"  
"To this he replied.. "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! v1.

# What was Stephen's objective?

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.



***Bringing the truth that God is seeking to save sinners.***

With the difficult but essential part of showing them their sinful nature.

1, Their view of God.

– is too small. God is bigger than their limited view of Him.

2, Their view of themselves.

Their condition is worse than they think – guilty of rejection and rebellion.

## A bad past record ..... Joseph was rejected

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.

Joseph was a type of messiah figure



# His whole family was saved

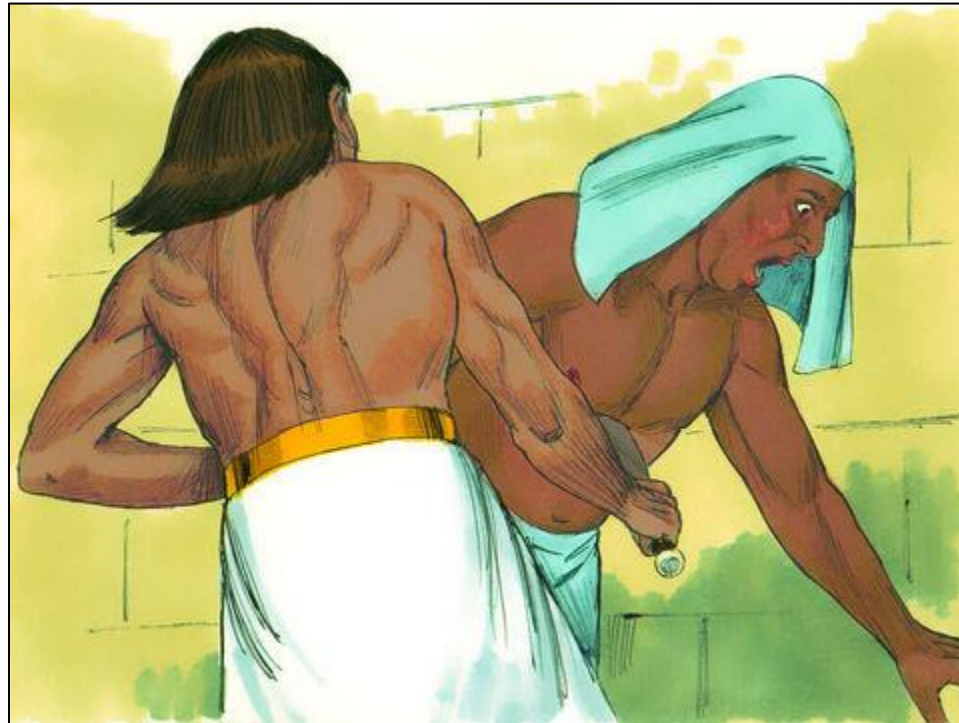
On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph`s family. After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. Then Jacob went down to Egypt. v13

God used the rejected Joseph to save his brothers and their families.



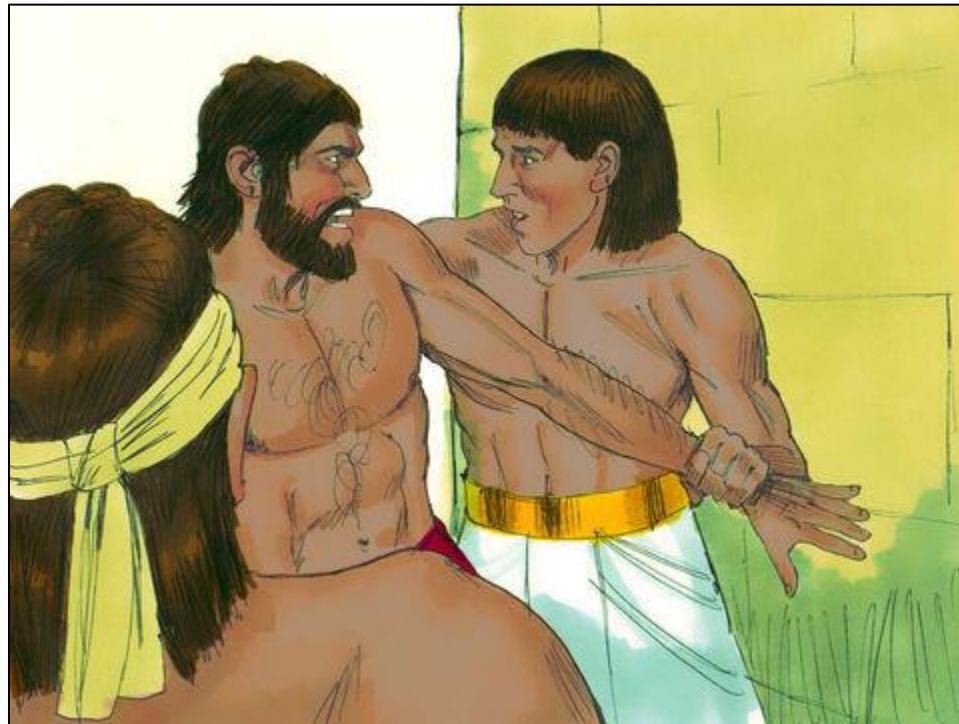
## Moses too was a type of messiah- a rejected saviour

Moses ..decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defence and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. v23-25



## Moses - Rejected by his people

The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, `Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?` "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, `Who made you ruler and judge over us? v27



## But raised up by God

This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. v35

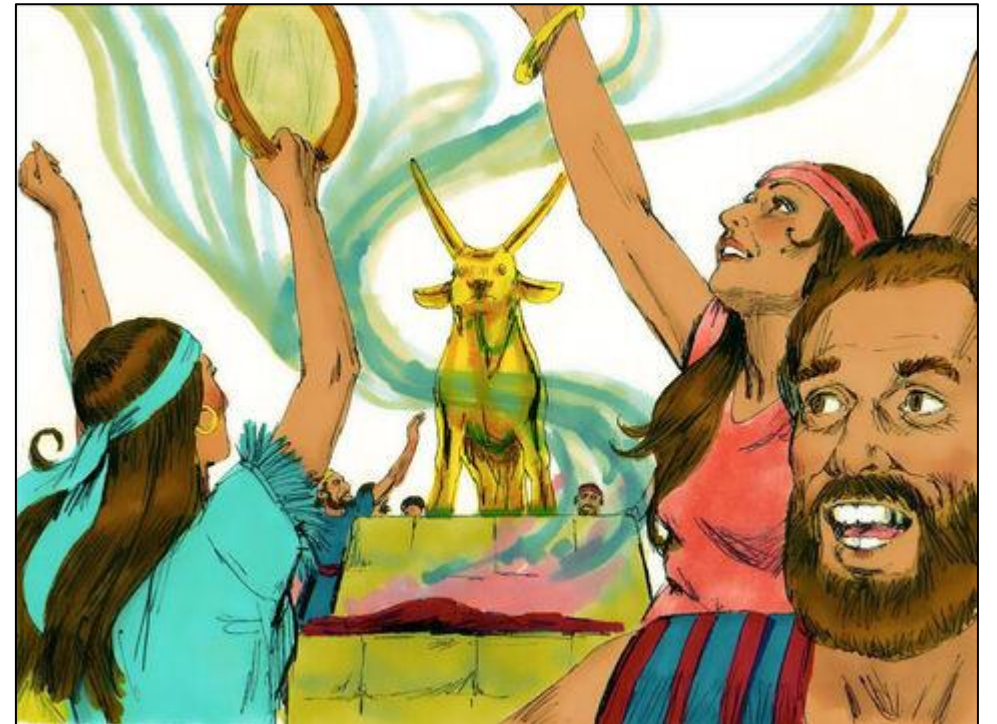


## Moses rejected again!

But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. They told Aaron, `Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt--we don't know what has happened to him!` v39-40

That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honour of what their hands had made. v41

God heard Moses' prayer and spared the people.





# The rebellion against God continued up to the exile

But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets..  
"Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the desert, O house of Israel? You have lifted up the shrine of Molech and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile` beyond Babylon. v42-43

The worship in the desert was only outward – not of the heart. They were still ‘in Egypt’.  
And still God was showing His mercy.



Did Stephen sense what sort of reaction they were having?

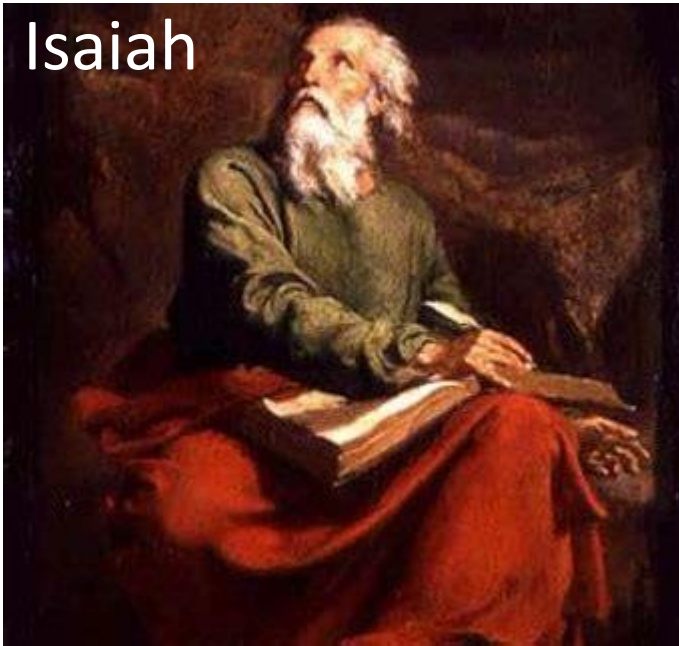


They weren't listening.  
It was a hostile audience.

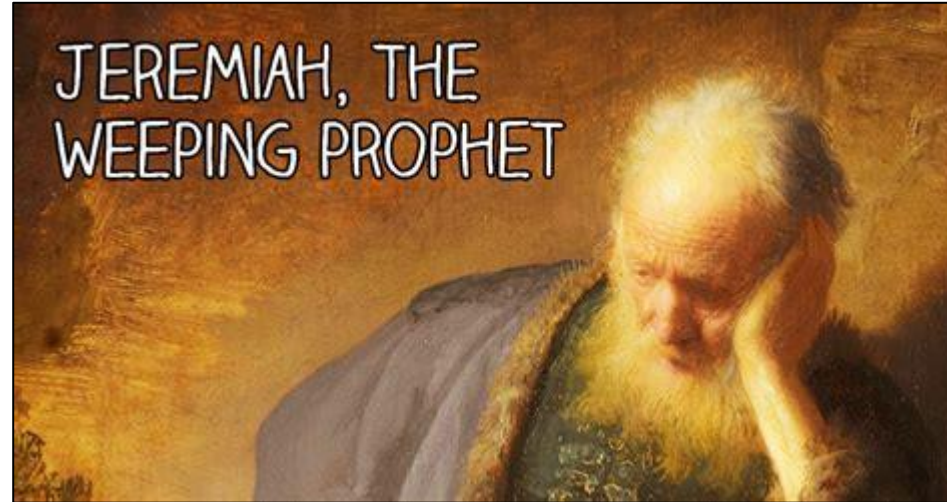
## So .... Tell it to them straight ...

You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers.. You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. v51-52

Isaiah



JEREMIAH, THE  
WEEPING PROPHET

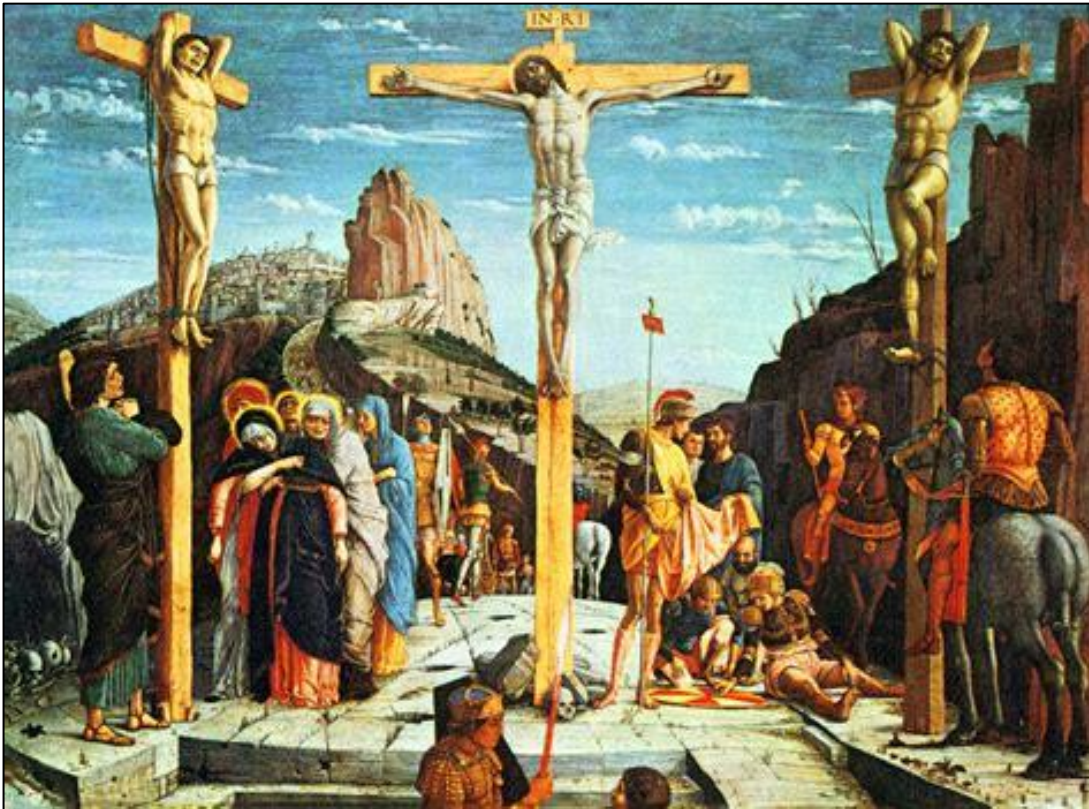


Ezekiel



## And finally ...

And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it. v52-53



## The truth hurts

When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. v54



In fact, they are repeating what he had warned them about

# Repentance or Rage

Contrast this with Acts 2 –Peter and Stephen had the same intension –

***Bringing sinners to repentance***

– but here we see a different reaction

Acts 2



Acts 7



## We also can see here the differing working of God



Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, ..., our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. v55



Why is Jesus standing?

He is ready to help him.

This vision into heaven would have strengthened Stephen.

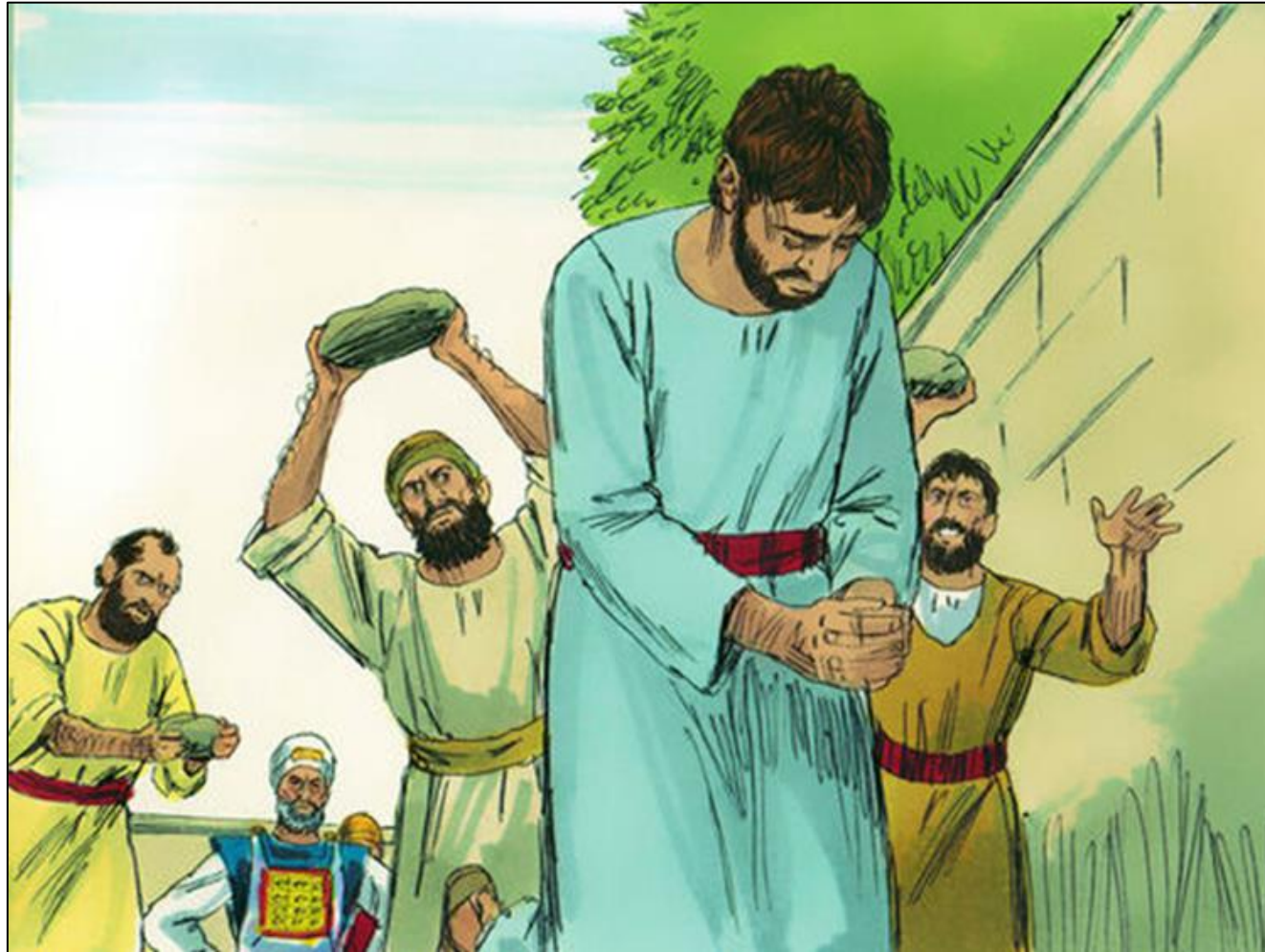


"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." v56



Would this make them  
change their minds?

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. v57-58



It was an angry mob.

It was also illegal!

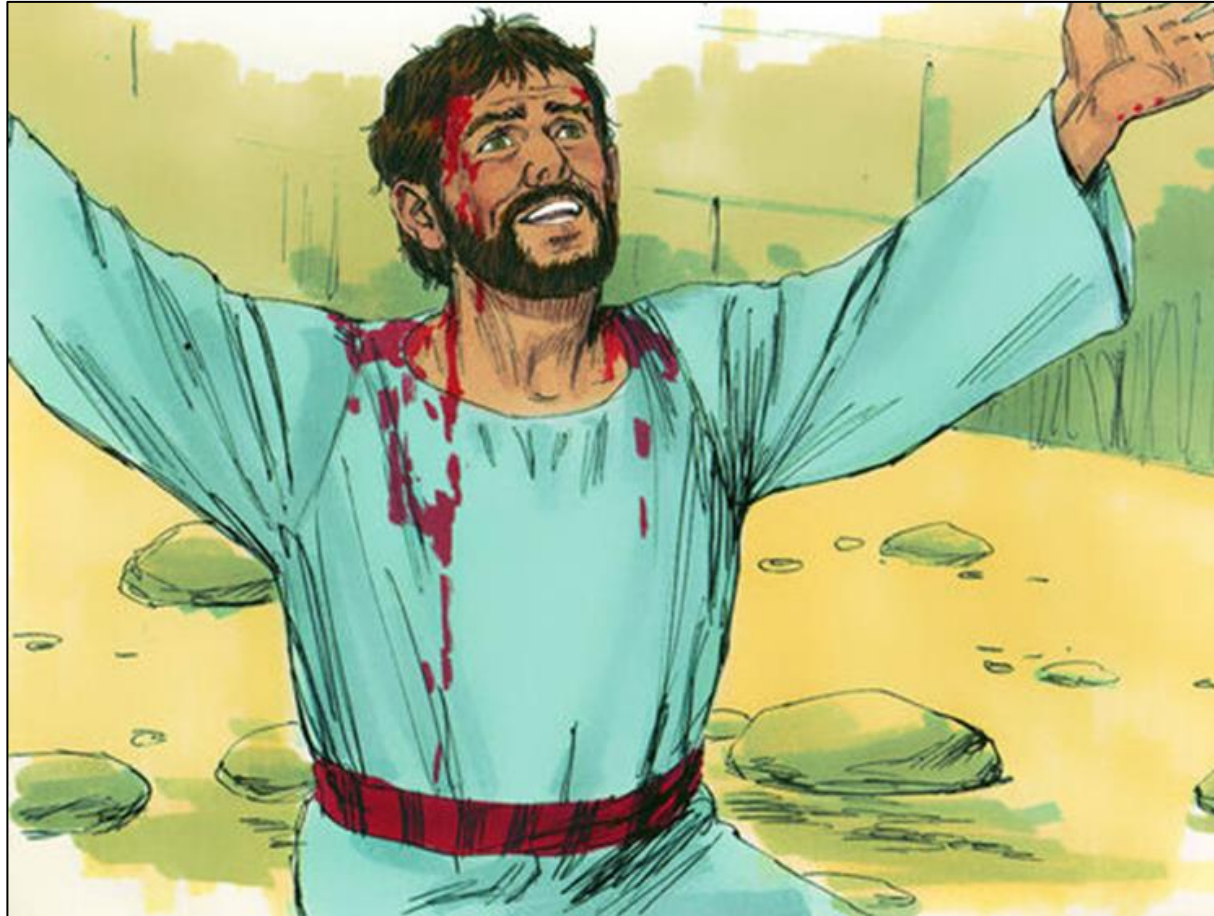
Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. v58



This is Luke introducing us to Saul (later known as the apostle Paul –the Greek version of his name)

At this point Saul is approving of Stephen's murder.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed,  
"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." v59



Trusting in Jesus, his Saviour

## Following the Master's example

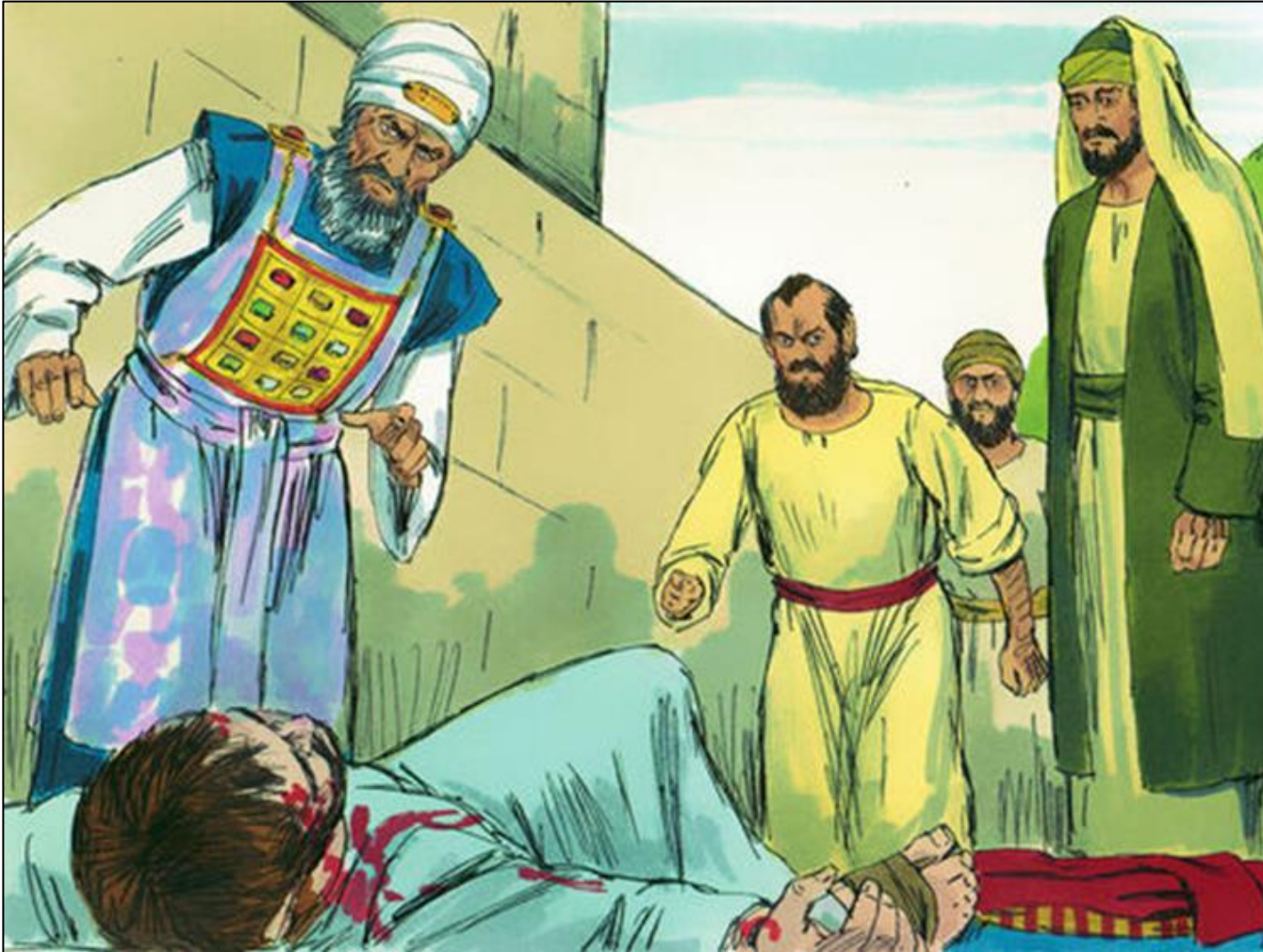
Then he fell on his knees and cried out,  
"Lord, do not hold this sin against them." v60



A prayer **of** forgiveness  
and **for** forgiveness  
that the Lord answered.

# Dead or asleep?

When he had said this, he fell asleep. v60



‘Asleep’ is the New Testament way of describing death for believers - we shall rise at the resurrection.

# There's a price to pay

witnessing to the truth may mean suffering for it as well



The Greek word for witness is “martyr” which because of what happened to Stephen has become its common meaning now

Not too young - the Roman arena

Not too old - Polycarp

## But it is worth it!

Stephen sees Jesus in heaven – and joins him

Luke 9:23-24 And Jesus said to all,  
“If anyone would come after me, let him  
deny himself and take up his cross daily  
and follow me. For whoever would save  
his life will lose it, **but whoever loses his  
life for my sake will save it.**

He also gave a powerful witness which God  
blessed and used to gather new disciples.

