

THE THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN'S SPEECH IN ACTS 7 AS A FULFILLMENT OF DANIEL 9:24-27

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1. Introduction

Echoes of the Jubilee can be observed in the historical, theological, and prophetic elements of Dan 9 and its Messianic fulfillment as expressed through the baptism and ministry of Jesus.¹ An earlier study demonstrated how 2 Chr 36:21 is linked with the 70-year punishment predicted in Jer 25:11 and the Sabbatical and Jubilee legislation in Lev 26:34-35, 43 and Lev 25:1-55. This foundational Jubilee is the basis of Dan 9 in both its numerical and theological components, and is linked to its prophetic fulfillment of the seven "sevens" and sixty-two "sevens" in the baptism and ministry of the Anointed One in Luke 3-4.

Luke shows the central importance of Christ's proclamation of the release "the oppressed" (Luke 4:18) on the Sabbath day in the synagogue in Nazareth. The key term ἀφεσις "release" forms a nexus with the Jubiliary material found in Lev 25:10; Isa 58:6, 61:1-2; and Luke 4:18-19. The jubiliary and messianic themes formed the prophetic basis in Dan 9, and are ultimately reflected in the fulfillment of those themes by the Anointed One at his baptism, and the subsequent announcement of his ministry of release in Luke 4:16-30.

An initial construction between the coming of the Anointed One at the beginning of the final "week" of the prophecy (Dan 9:24-27; Luke 4:16-30) and the end of the "week" marked by the culmination of the seventy

¹ James H. Park, "Overtones of the Jubilee in the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 14 (2011): 41-64.

“weeks” is an area that needs to be more fully explored.² Since Luke gives such focused attention to the beginning of the climatic final week of Dan 9:25-27 in the Nazareth pericope could it be that there is a corresponding narrative that marks its end?³

If we assume the baptism of Jesus and the subsequent Nazareth pericope occurred in AD 27, then it would be appropriate to seek for its fulfillment in AD 34.⁴ Some scholars have placed the martyrdom of Stephen as happening at this time and might provide a fitting culmination of the prophecy.⁵

Over the years, Stephen’s sermon⁶ in Acts⁷ has been lamented for both its lack⁸ and immensity⁹ of study. Although the pericope has been dis-

- 2 Little research has been done by Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) scholars about the terminus of the seventy weeks beyond the chronological reckoning. Although the beginning of the seventy weeks (and by extension the 2,300 evenings and mornings in Dan 8:14) has received great attention (see for instance the multi-volume works on Daniel and prophetic interpretation edited by Frank B. Holbrook and published by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, from about 1986-1992), the end of the seventy weeks in AD 34 by the death of Stephen has been hardly discussed. (See notes 5 and 10 below for the essence of the explanation about the fulfillment of Dan 9 in Acts 7 in the SDA Bible Commentary).
- 3 As will be seen, there are not only multiple parallels between Jesus and Stephen which link the two passages together, but also the unique and singular construction of two New Testament passages (cf. Luke 4:18-19; Acts 7:14-16) also indicate a possible correspondence.
- 4 Hengel states, “At all events the persecution of Stephen is to be put shortly before the conversion of Paul, which, if we begin from the year of the Passover at which Jesus was killed, AD 30, took place somewhere between 32-34.” Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 11.
- 5 The SDA Bible Commentary states, “This commentary accepts the view that the crucifixion took place in A.D. 31 (see Vol. V. pp. 251-265), ‘in the midst of the week.’ Therefore the last of the 70 prophetic weeks must end in A.D. 34.” Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 12 vols (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1957), 6:208. Jacques Doukan, another SDA Bible scholar states, “Further the event is confirmed in A.D. 34, precisely at the end of the 70 weeks by Stephen, who saw at that very moment ‘the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ (Acts 7:56), Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Mystery of Israel* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 2004), 36.
- 6 “Stephen’s speech is different from the other speeches in Acts. It is longer and more polemical; it is more apologetic than evangelistic. . . In the Acts speeches of Peter and Paul the OT is cited only by brief quotations or through allusions to events or predictions believed fulfilled by Jesus. In contrast most of Stephen’s speech comprises a survey of almost a millenium of OT history and used both quotations and

cussed from the historical, redactional and theological viewpoints, there has been almost no mention of its possible prophetic significance in connection with Dan 9:24-27.¹⁰ The current study then attempts to see how the prophecy of Dan 9 could be linked to Stephen's epochal sermon which is one of the most important and the longest in the Book of Acts.¹¹

2. Gabriel's Epiphanies

Perhaps an initial and very significant way to link the prophecy of Dan 9 with its fulfillment in Luke-Acts is through the angel Gabriel. This prophetic messenger is specifically mentioned by name only four times in the Bible: twice in Daniel (8:15ff; 9:21ff) and twice in Luke (1:11ff; 1:19ff). Just as Gabriel appears to Daniel at the time of the evening sacrifice in re-

descriptions of OT events, not merely to support his argument, but as his primary method for presenting it." J. Julius Scott, "Stephen's Defense and the World Mission of the People of God," *JETS* 21 (1978): 91.

- ⁷ "Stephen's speech in Acts 7 continues to attract substantial scholarly attention. It is part of a larger literary unit that chronicles the progress of the gospel message from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and beyond (6:1-9:30), which is one of the literary objectives of the Acts narrative. Imbedded in this larger literary unit is the longest and hence probably the most important of the 'speeches' of Acts." See James P. Sweeney, "Stephen's Speech (Acts 7:2-53): Is It as 'Anti-Temple' as is Frequently Alleged?," *TJ* 23 (2002): 185-210. Fitzmyer also posits that Stephen's speech is "one of the most important in the book" Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB 31 (London: Yale University Press, 1998), 355.
- ⁸ Earl Richard writes, "While both Luke and Acts have received considerable attention from scholars and have become the object of intense controversy, the chapters in Acts dealing with Stephen have not generated much interest. . . . It seems clear that scholars are still puzzled by this part of Acts regarding its historical character, the seeming irrelevance of the long speech, and the purpose it serves in the scheme of the author." See Earl Richard, "The Polemical Character of the Joseph Episode in Acts," *JBL* 98 (1979), 255.
- ⁹ Thirty years later, Richard Pervo reflects, "This speech, the longest in Acts, has generated immense discussion." Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 174.
- ¹⁰ For an example, see the SDA Bible Commentary which briefly notes the possible connection without specifying anything in the speech to substantiate the claim. "Stephen's experience bears a recognizable relationship to the prophecy of the 70 weeks (Dan 9:24-27), which began in 457 B.C., in the last week of which Messiah was to be cut off." Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:208.
- ¹¹ Stephen's speech constitutes "5% of the book," Pervo, *Acts*, 174.

sponse to his prayer concerning the restoration of the temple and people, in Luke, the same angel Gabriel stands on the right side of the altar of incense in the very temple which had been prophesized to be restored in Dan 9:25.

Raymond Brown in his epochal book, *The Birth of the Messiah*, states that, "there can be no doubt that in his description of Gabriel's appearance Luke intends to evoke the atmosphere of Daniel."¹² Brown, furthermore, discusses several points shared by the appearance of Gabriel in both Daniel and Luke. These include the appearance of Gabriel at the time of prayer (cf Dan 9:20-21, Luke 1:10-11) in order to answer the distressed prayers of both Daniel (9:4-19) and Zechariah (Luke 1:13).¹³ Without reservation Brown states, "The theme of the seventy weeks of years, as interpreted by Gabriel in Dan 9:24-27, serves Luke as the background for the annunciation by Gabriel to Zechariah."¹⁴

The presence of Gabriel in the Holy Place of the earthly temple in Jerusalem not only links to the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the restoration of the Temple (Dan 9:25) but also dramatically announces that the child will "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17), which is the fulfillment of the promised Anointed One prophesied in Dan 9:24-27.

The primary focus of the prophecy in Dan 9:24-27 was on God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people in the post-exilic era.¹⁵ Significantly, Zechariah, a possible representative of that age, is not able to speak because of his unbelief. For just as the prophetic voice has been silent since Malachi, it will not speak again until the birth of the Baptist, the bridge between the prophetic voice of the past and eschatological soon-to-be-born Messiah.

Zechariah is not only a representative of the muted prophetic voice of the post-exilic period but also parallels the experience of Abraham and Sarah. Both couples are described as righteous, well advanced in years

¹² Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 270.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 271. Critically, to both Daniel's prophecy and Luke's narrative, the prophetic event foretold and fulfilled has its focus on the Anointed One.

¹⁵ "There appears, almost from the pages of the OT, characters like Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, who are the final representatives of the piety of Israel" *Ibid.*, 242. In other words, one of the underlying purposes of Luke's narrative is to provide a picture of the faithful post-exilic Jewish people who give prophetic voice to the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the Anointed One.

and childless.¹⁶ The miracle birth needed by both will become the theological hallmark of the New Testament community and provides a dynamic link between the miracle birth of Isaac, the twin miracle birth narratives of John and Jesus in Luke 1, the theological new birth narratives in Acts 2, 8, 10, and the apostolic ministry of Paul.¹⁷

The appearance of the angel Gabriel "standing" at the right hand of the altar of incense to Zechariah in Luke 1:11 which marks the initial twilight of the final week of Dan 9:24-27, could be linked to the Son of Man "standing" at the right hand of God as revealed to Stephen in Acts 7:55-56 which marks the setting sun of the same prophecy.

Both passages (Luke 1:11 and Acts 7:56) use the same root word ἵστημι in the perfect active participle form. Gabriel also reveals to Zecharias that, "I 'stand' in the presence of God and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news" (Luke 1:19). The angelic messenger who stands in the presence of God at the beginning of Luke in the earthly Temple is transcended by the Son of Man who stands at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary at the climatic vision of Acts 7:55-56. This linkage between the two passages utilizes the common Lukan device of parallelism to emphasize the unity between his twin volumes.¹⁸

¹⁶ Brown mentions the parallelism between Zechariah and Elizabeth, Hannah and Elkahah, Abraham and Sarah. *Ibid.*, 268-269.

¹⁷ This emphasis on the miracle birth is one of the hallmarks of Lukan theology which was meant to counter balance the claims of the Judaizers that circumcision was the centerpiece of the Jewish faith beginning with Abraham.

¹⁸ For a good overview of the parallelism between Luke-Acts please see Fitzmyer who specifically sees that the work of the Spirit is reflected in the opening chapters of both Luke and Acts thus binding the books together. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 243. "Among the stories in Acts which parallel the Lukan story at Nazareth are the beginning of Paul's ministry at Damascus (Acts 9:19b-25); the start of the first missionary journey to Cyprus in the power of the Spirit (Acts 13:1-12) and Paul's first missionary speech in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14-52). The themes of Luke 4:16-30 are also reflected in the speeches of Peter at Pentecost (2:17-40); in the Temple (3:11-26) and at Cornelius' house (10:34-33). Finally, Luke seems to bind the beginning of the ministry of Jesus with the end of Acts." F. Neiryneck, "Luke 4:16-30 and the Unity of Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Verheden (Lueven: Lueven University Press), 357-395.

3. The Poor, the Lame and the Widows

Stephen is brought on the Lucan stage by being chosen to attend to the poor widows (Acts 6:1-6).¹⁹ Taken by itself, the introduction of Stephen to such a humble task as waiting on tables might seem to be incongruous to his long and enlightened speech before the highest Jewish authorities. However, since the introduction of the Jubiliary theme by the Anointed One in Luke 4:16-30, the manifestation of the kingdom of God usually emerges through the ministry to the poor, the lame and the widows.²⁰ Stephen's initial welfare ministry strongly links him to the Jubiliary theme first predicted in Dan 9:24 and pronounced by Jesus in Luke 4:16-20.

The nearest and most direct narrative that parallels Stephen's ministry to the widows is the healing of the lame man at the Temple gate by Peter and John in Acts 3:1-10.²¹ Peter's ensuing speech to the people and the subsequent arraignment before the High priest compares and contrasts well to the even more climatic and dramatic experience of Stephen.²²

¹⁹ "Widows in Acts 6 and elsewhere in Luke-Acts are consistently characterized as destitute, dependent women, vulnerable to neglect and abuse, and alienated from basic economic, practical, social, and emotional support systems. But in contrast to their lowly and lonely position in society, widows play an important role in relation to other characters in the Lucan story. By that, I mean that other characters are defined and judged by their treatment of widows. Some characters respond "flatly" to widows, either as absolute oppressors (the unjust judge, the temple leaders) or as supporters (Jesus, Tabitha), while others respond in more "dynamic" ways, both negative and positive, depending on the situation." F. Scott Spencer, "Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1-7." *CBQ* 56 (1994): 732.

²⁰ In the article, "The Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1-7," Spencer points out that Luke mentions widows in each of the major sections of Luke-Acts from the birth narrative (Anna, Luke 2:36-38) to the expansion of the church supported by the widows at Joppa (Acts 9:36-43). *Ibid.*, 718.

²¹ Tannehill states clearly that, "the healing of the lame man is symbolic because it represents a salvation that extends to many other persons and includes more than physical healing." Robert C. Tannehill, *The Shape of Luke's Story* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2005), 177. The healing of the lame man bridges Peter's invitation to repent and be saved in Acts 2:38-40 with the declaration that salvation only comes through One name (Acts 4:12).

²² To begin with, both Peter and John and Stephen minister to a marginalized person or people which directly leads to an arraignment and speech in the Temple before the authorities. Both Peter and Stephen mention the important prophecy of Moses that "God will send you a prophet like me from your own people" (Acts 3:32, 7:37). In contrast, Peter's speech to the people in Acts 3, like his sermon in Acts 2, comes about through a wondering of the people over a miraculous occurrence which then

Since the beginning of his two-volume work, Luke has emphasized that the kingdom is not brought in through grand human schemes but by the humblest of means.²³ In Mary's own song she sings, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Luke 1:52).²⁴ The story of the prodigal son shows that the grace of the spiritual kingdom is reserved for those who picture themselves as only worthy of the lowliest positions (Luke 15:19).

Just as Jesus begins his own ministry by healing the paralytic (Luke 5:17-26) in harmony with the Jubilee release of Luke 4, Peter's healing of the paralytic man at the entrance of the temple (Acts 3:1-10) signals a parallel Jubilee ministry now carried on by the anointed apostles. And just as the Anointed One is rejected by his kinfolk in Nazareth in Luke 4:16-30, the anointed preaching and ministry of Peter and John as well as Stephen are rejected by the Temple authorities. Stephen's ministry not only has its New Testament counterpart in the lives of Jesus and Peter, but is rooted in the Old Testament stories of Joseph and Moses who were both sent to minister to their emaciated and enslaved brethren.²⁵

4. The True and False Witnesses

"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 6:13-14). While there has been widespread recognition that Luke clearly parallels the deaths of Stephen and Jesus,²⁶ the congruence between the accusations of the false witnesses

leads to an impassioned appeal to be saved. In Stephen's ministry there is no miracle and the speech does not contain an appeal for salvation but a condemnation.

- ²³ The common Levite Zecharias is chosen over the High Priest and the lowly Mary is called to be the mother of the Son of God (Luke 1:11-20; 1:26-55).
- ²⁴ This putting down from the high "seats" and exalting the humble are brought out by Jesus himself in the parable of the seats at the banquet (Luke 14:7-11).
- ²⁵ Just as Joseph and Moses were rejected by their brethren, Paul stands in that prophetic line as his attempts to relieve the famine in Judea leads to his arrest in Jerusalem. This whole theme of the "Rejected Saviors" will be discussed further in section 5.
- ²⁶ "The martyrdom of Stephen has been shaped to conform to the passion of Jesus." Pervo, *Acts*, 195. There is a succinct but very good section where Pervo lists some of the parallels between the deaths of Jesus and Stephen, see pp. 195-196.

and Stephen's speech has been widely observed as being both disjointed²⁷ and "shrewd."²⁸

A short but interesting article postulates that the speech of Stephen enunciates all that Jesus could have said to his accusers during his trial. "Luke omits the false witnesses in the Gospel but introduces them in Acts, not simply to condemn Stephen for his own assertions, but to condemn him as quoting Jesus' declaration against the Temple and the Law. Surely, this is not accidental."²⁹ Haenchen in his commentary on Acts "implies that Luke has here transferred the charges of Jesus' trial (cf. Mark 15:58) to Stephen."³⁰ Although Jesus is the Lamb that did not open his mouth, could it be that Luke puts into the mouth of Stephen the answers against the charges of the false accusers?³¹

While "the precise relationship of the charges against Stephen here and those leveled against Jesus in the gospels is the subject of continuing

²⁷ For an overview of the differing views between the charges and the speech see Duane Aslett, "The Polemical Nature of Stephen's Speech in Acts 7" (MA Thesis, South Africa Theological Seminary, 2010). He states, "there is a wide spectrum of views on the nature of the relationship between the speech and the accusations brought against Stephen," (p. 7). "The wide spectrum of approaches to the falseness of the charges discussed above makes it clear that determining the falseness of the charges against Stephen is not an easy task," (p. 47). For a discussion concerning the false witnesses see his section from pp. 49-61.

²⁸ Pervo comments, "The relationship between the speech and the charges of 6:11-14 is Lukan and shrewd. Although the charges are false, Stephen does attend to each in due course." See Pervo, *Acts*, 179. Could it be that although the false witnesses have a very immediate apologetic in view, Luke through Stephen wants to address the whole history of the Jewish people as now affected by their rejection of the Anointed One and the subsequent judgment upon the Jewish authorities as evidenced in Dan 9:24? In other words, Stephen has bigger fish to fry and addresses the idolatrous past of the Jewish people in contrast to the faithful patriarchs and prophets who were loyal to the Anointed One.

²⁹ "The whole 'frame up' against Stephen is highly suggestive. Why is it in the Gospel story (Lk. xxii. 66ff.) no mention is made by Luke of the testimony of false witnesses, although their presence is implied rather inconsequentially in v. 71? Both Matthew and Mark make much of them at the trial (Mt. xxvi. 59 ff. Mk. Xiv. 56 ff.)." P. A. Blair, "The Death of Stephen," *TynBul* 2 (1957): 2-3.

³⁰ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 272. As quoted in Sweeney, "Stephen's Speech (Acts 7:2-53)," 33. Sweeney gives a brief overview of the different opinions from the major commentators regarding this point.

³¹ "The death of Stephen, and Stephen's words contrast unfavorably with the dignified silence of the Christ before the High Priest." F J. Foakes-Jackson, "Stephen's Speech in Acts." *JBL* 49 (1930): 286.

debate,"³² the identity of the "true" witnesses in Luke-Acts is clear. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). In a previous article I attempted to trace the Old Testament Scriptures Jesus might have used outlining his life and sufferings with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.³³

It was found that there are twenty-two Old Testament references in Luke which Jesus could have had in mind when He said to the disciples, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: 'Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms'" (Luke 24:44). The witness of the Old Testament in Luke is supplemented by the voice of the Father at the baptism (3:22) and transfiguration (9:35) where Moses and Elijah appear at the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem.³⁴

The Book of Acts contains twenty-seven Old Testament references concerning Jesus and also provides a further illumination on the prophetic Scriptures concerning the life, ministry, death and mediatorial work of the Anointed One.³⁵ Within the context of the present article, the speech of Stephen is of special interest because it contains nine Old Testament texts (and many allusions), more than any other pericope in Acts. The Scripture-filled narrative of Stephen then must be counted as one of the most significant "true" witnesses of the Anointed One in Luke-Acts, especially when coupled with the climatic heavenly vision which puts the Divine seal on the dying witness.³⁶

Luke is clearly more focused on providing an Old Testament foundation for the ministry of the Anointed One and his servants rather than casting light on future eschatological events as brought out by Acts 1:6-8. Thus Acts 6-7 has a critical role in Luke's historical theology because through the life and message of Stephen, he skillfully combines Jesus'

³² Sweeney, "Stephen's Speech (Acts 7:2-53)," 33.

³³ James H. Park, "Overcoming Barriers: Suffering, Rejection and Barriers in Luke-Acts." *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 13 (2010): 113-126.

³⁴ For a list of all the Old Testament Scriptures used in Luke see *Ibid.*, 115.

³⁵ For a list of all the Old Testament Scriptures used in Luke see *Ibid.*, 123-124.

³⁶ Just as Moses and Elijah stand with Jesus at the beginning of the travel narrative to Jerusalem, the Father and the Son of Man are pictured standing with Stephen at the end of the Messiah's special ministry to the covenant people. The voice of heaven which affirmed the Sonship of Jesus at the transfiguration is now echoed by the words of the faithful Stephen who focuses the eyes of all away from a holy mount on earth to the Holy Place of heaven.

anointed ministry of release, the accusation by false witnesses, the answering of those charges by the recounting of Old Testament Scriptures and the re-enactment of Christ's death through the martyrdom of Stephen.

5. The Universal God of Glory

It has been widely noted that Stephen's speech gives many examples where God appeared and was with the patriarchs quite apart from the land of Promise. The "God of glory"³⁷ first appears to Abraham in Mesopotamia³⁸ in an even more radical geographical distance³⁹ than the Genesis account of Haran.⁴⁰ In addition, God was "with" Joseph in Egypt and appeared to Moses at the burning bush in Midian. Thus by inference it is portrayed that God is not constricted to merely one place, namely the Temple at Jerusalem.⁴¹

³⁷ "The speech is 'framed with glory,' beginning with the glory of God appearing to Abraham (v. 2) and concluding with a vision of the glory of God and the Son of Man in heaven (v. 56) (Witherington 1998:264)." Aslett, "The Polemical Nature of Stephen's Speech in Acts 7," 76.

³⁸ "Abraham does not allow his love for his nation and location to hinder his obedience and worship of God even though the destination and arrival time is unsure (Calvin 1844:252). This stands in direct contrast to Stephen's audience, whose love of their nation and location (the Temple) is more important to them than obedience and worship of God (this theme is developed throughout the speech)." *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁹ "O seed of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth" (cf. Acts 1:8). John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 69

⁴⁰ Rex A. Koivisto, "Stephen's Speech, A Theology of Errors?" *GTJ* 8 (1987): 101-114. Yet the fact that this foundational revelation took place in Mesopotamia, "the land of the Chaldeans" (7:4), appears to have theological significance for Stephen. To him, it is not simply at Haran, the second stage of the patriarchal sojourn, where the divine oracle overtook Abraham. Rather, it was in the very seedbed of idolatry, the farthest point from the land, and at the very dawn of redemptive history that the divine oracle reached him. Page 110.

⁴¹ "The speech demonstrates that God's promise to Abraham was not primary territorial. In fact the patriarchs actually had '... no inheritance... not even a foot's length...' (vs. 5) in Canaan and were forced to buy burial space in 'the Promised Land' (cf. vs. 16). Those specific geographical locations which are mentioned document that on significant occasions God revealed himself outside the boundaries of Canaan—to Abraham in Mesopotamia (vss. 2ff.); to Joseph in Egypt (vss. 9ff.); to Moses in the wilderness (vss. 30ff.); that it was in Egypt Israel grew and experienced God's deliverance (vss. 17ff., 35ff.); that even the Law was given, not in Canaan, but at Mt. Sinai

More than this, the universality of God's presence in both time and place throughout Stephen's historical narrative not only points to God's past concern for the nations but also sheds light on the imminent spread of the gospel to "Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, 8:5ff). This universality of the mission and presence of God had already been alluded to in the birth narratives ("a light for revelation to the Gentiles," Luke 2:32), the preaching of John the Baptist ("and all mankind will see God's salvation," Luke 3:6) and the Nazareth pericope (the miracle of the widow of Sidon and the healing of Namaan the Syrian, Luke 4:25-27).

This activity of God in places outside of the promised land and Temple comes to a fitting crescendo at the end of the speech when the same God of "glory" that first appeared to Abraham is again seen in heaven (Acts 7:55). The epiphany of Gabriel to Zechariah in the earthly Temple is now reflected in the experience of Stephen who sees the glory of God in the heavenly sanctuary.⁴² Between these two revelations stands the Mount of Transfiguration where Moses communes with the "prophet like me" surrounded by the glory of heaven and the voice of the Almighty.

Thus Luke artfully portrays the revelation of God's glory from the time of Abraham in Mesopotamia, to Joseph in Egypt, to Moses in Midian, in the revelation to Zechariah, to the three apostles on the Mount and now through Stephen from the heavenly Temple (Acts 7:55). And it is from this heavenly Temple, above all time and space, that God has directed and will continue to guide his universal mission to save all nations.

6. Rejected Saviors

Another widely recognized motif in Stephen's speech is the rejected saviors theme which runs throughout the gospel of Luke and finds its highest

(vs. 38). Thus the speaker implies that any place God chooses to reveal himself is 'holy ground' (cf. vs. 33)." J. Julius Scott, "Stephen's Speech: A Possible Model for Luke's Historical Method?," *JETS* 17 (1974): 93.

⁴² It is most fitting that at the terminus of the seventy "sevens" prophecy of Dan 9:24-27 which had predicted both the restoration of the earthly Temple and probation of the Jewish nation, that the dramatic shift from the earthly to the heavenly Temple be underlined by the dying words of Stephen. When the Anointed One was slain at Calvary it fulfilled the prophecy that, "in the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering" (Dan 9:27). It could perhaps be said that the theological and historical shift from the earthly to the heavenly Temple which was begun by the preaching and ministry of Peter in Acts 2-5 is testified to by Stephen in Acts 7 and then confirmed with the destruction of the earthly temple in AD 70.

historical and theological pinnacle in the speech of Stephen.⁴³ This theme of the rejected one who then becomes the savior is forcefully brought out in the twin stories of Joseph (7:9-16) and Moses (7:17-45a).⁴⁴

As Stephen states, although the brothers sold Joseph as a slave into Egypt, "God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace" (7:9-10). Luke skillfully brackets a very similar rejected by man but accepted by God theme in his gospel. Although Jesus is rejected by His own kinsmen in Nazareth (4:28-30), the Father affirms his sonship at the baptism (3:22) and transfiguration (9:35).

Jesus himself predicted that although the stone would be rejected by man through the death of the heir (Luke 20:9-16; cf. Psa 118:22), that same rock would become the cornerstone (Luke 20:17). The rescuing and elevation of Joseph is clearly paralleled by the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, who like Joseph, is pictured at the end of the defense as standing next to the highest authority in the kingdom (Acts 7:56). After the second visit of the brothers, Joseph saves them from starvation by bringing them to Egypt.⁴⁵

Just as Joseph was initially rejected, Moses is rejected and sent into the wilderness (Acts 7:27-29).⁴⁶ Stephen underlines the contrast between the

⁴³ See for instance: "Because Stephen follows the forensic convention of charging his accusers (cf. 7:51-53), he foreshadows his denunciation of their rejection of Jesus by emphasizing how often God's people had rejected his servants. To this end, he highlights the examples of the rejected deliverers Joseph and Moses (7:9, 27, 35, 39), both of whom had to marry foreigners." Craig Keener, "Interethnic Marriages in the New Testament (Matt 1:3-6, Acts 7:29, 16:1-3, cf. 1Cor. 7:14)," *Criswell Theological Review* 6.2 (2009): 31. "Joseph thus becomes the type of Jesus, the rejected one, in Stephen's argument . . . So Moses is 'thrust aside' and rejected by his own people; cf. vv 35, 39 . . . The rejected Moses is now to become God's chosen agent" Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 373, 377, 378. "Joseph's own people rejected him, but God reversed this misfortune and exalted Joseph as ruler, in which role he as a benefactor to those who rejected him" Pervo, *Acts*, 181.

⁴⁴ "Stephen's speech is dominated by Moses and the *Exodus*, i.e. vv 17-45 of vv 2-50 or ca. 60% of the speech." David P. Moessner, "'The Christ Must Suffer': New Light on the Jesus - Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke-Acts." *NovT* 28 (1986): 232.

⁴⁵ "Furthermore, the author does not fail to point out, as ultimate irony, that if the brothers do find food and an end to their misery (v 12, 13) it is at the hands of Joseph, God's chosen one, that this occurs." Richard, "The Polemical Character," 263.

⁴⁶ "Stephen understands Moses' flight as occasioned merely by the remark of his fellow Hebrew, not directly by Pharaoh, as in Exod. 2:15." Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 377.

self-generated human effort by Moses to deliver his people with the divinely commissioned one through the use of the Greek word for hand, "χειρὸς" in 7:25, 35. "For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand (διὰ χειρὸς αὐτοῦ) would deliver them: but they understood not" (Acts 7:25, KJV). In contrast to this, "the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel (σὺν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου) which appeared to him in the bush" (7:35, KJV).⁴⁷

Therefore both the entry into Egypt and its Exodus is bookended by the two rejected saviors of Joseph and Moses. Luke's point is clear. This same rejected savior motif would be repeated in the "prophet like me." (Acts 7:37).⁴⁸ At the transfiguration, Moses is pictured in Luke 9:31 with the "prophet like me" and they are discussing Jesus' own "exodus" (ἐξόδον αὐτοῦ) as He begins the journey to Jerusalem. There the heir will meet the ultimate rejection and death reflected again by the parable of the unjust tenants of the vineyard (Luke 20:9-16).

It was predicted that the Anointed One would be "cut off" (as predicted by Dan 9:26). This rejection is seen both at the beginning of the final "seven" of Daniel's prophecy in Luke 4:16-30 and at the end of the "seven" in Stephen's own martyrdom. Thus the martyrdom of Stephen not only takes on a mere local historical event but also a deeply Messianic and prophetic significance given the overall embrace of the theological and chronological elements of Dan 9.

7. The Shekinah and Shechem

One of the major accusations brought against both Jesus and Stephen, is that not only were they speaking words of blasphemy "against" Moses, God and the law but declared that the actual temple ("this holy place") would be "destroyed" (Acts 6:11-14). Stephen now answers this charge in the last section of his historical overview by linking the idolatrous wor-

⁴⁷ This same contrast will be made between the golden calf, "which was the work of their own hands" (7:41) and the heaven and earth which was made by the hand of the Almighty (7:50).

⁴⁸ In a former article on suffering in Luke-Acts it was articulated that the central text regarding this theme was found in Psalms 118:22: the stone which was rejected by men is accepted by God. For example: "The irony of the verse is clear: the stone which has been rejected by the 'builders' is ultimately been put in its rightful place by 'the Lord' (Ps 118:23). Instead of gaining ownership of the vineyard, the wicked tenants themselves are rejected and the land is given 'to others' (Luke 20:16)." James Park, "Overcoming Barriers: Suffering Rejection and Mission in Luke-Acts," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 13 (2010): 116.

ship of the golden calf to the subsequent history of Israel, including the present group of leaders he is addressing.⁴⁹

Stephen begins by saying that although Moses had “received” the “living words” from God, the rejection of Moses in Egypt forty years before (Acts 7:35), is now repeated: “But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt” (Acts 7:39). This rejection of Moses is speedily manifested in the worship of the golden calf which “their hands had made” (Acts 7:41).⁵⁰

Stephen then links the worship of the golden calf with Israel’s later idolatry as brought out by the quotation of Amos 5:25-27. Stephen would then extend this idolatry down to the current day, in a sense forming a continuity between the idolatry of the golden calf with the past and present idolatry of the people and temple.⁵¹

As part of the Moses narrative, Stephen carefully paints a picture of the Temple which was built after the “pattern” and “received” in the wilderness. The wilderness tabernacle was brought by Joshua into the promised land when the nations were driven out by God. After that David found favor and wanted to build a Temple. (Acts 7:44-46). At this point of the narrative there is both a weak and strong conjunction which apparent-

⁴⁹ Jacques Doukhan who is an SDA scholar and Jew by birth reflects, “He is *addressing specifically* the leaders who were present, the chief priests and the Pharisees who clearly understood that He had them in mind.” See Doukhan, *The Mystery of Israel*, 16. That is to say, the so-called “curse” of the Jews rested upon its leaders who rejected Jesus and the gospel messengers but not on the people as a whole as evidenced by Paul: “The fact that Paul, a Jew, had received Christ in His life was clear evidence that God had not rejected His people, the Jewish people” *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁰ In the Old Testament there is a clear distinction between what is made by God’s and man’s hands, especially as it pertains to obedience and true worship. In the Song of Moses the people sing, “You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance — the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established” (Exod 15:17). In direct contrast to this is the shaping of the golden calf by Aaron (Exod 32:4), and later Isaiah laments that the land is “full of idols” (Isa 2:8) the “Asherah poles and the incense altars” (Isa 17:8) which their “sinful hands have made” (Isa 31:7).

⁵¹ In Stephen’s sermon he changes the place of exile from “Damascus” to “Babylon.” Amos, who addressed the original prophecy to the Northern kingdom, only envisions the exile into Syria. Since Stephen is speaking to the post-exilic leaders after the Babylonian captivity, he changes the place of exile to reflect that history. For an excellent technical exegesis of the Amos passage in Acts 7, especially as it relates to Stephen’s creative use of the LXX version of the Amos text; see Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 381-382.

ly points to the beginning of Stephen's strong denunciation of the current temple's standing before God.

Whereas David asked to build the temple, "but" (δέ) Solomon built the house, "but" (ἀλλά), the Temple is not made "with human hands" (NRSV, cf. χειροποιήτου).⁵² In the LXX this term is directly linked to the strong prohibition against idols (Lev 26:1, 30), along with the making (Isa 31:7, 46:6) and worshipping (Dan 5:4, 23) of idols.

In the New Testament Jesus declares during his trial that "I will destroy this man-made (χειροποιήτων) temple and in three days will build another, not made by man" (Mark 14:58). Paul also characterizes "the circumcision" party as "that done in the body by the hands of men" (Eph 2:11). In Heb 9:11, 24 the writer to the Hebrews draws a very clear distinction between the tabernacle made by the hands of man and the "greater and more perfect" and "true" sanctuary which is "not a part of this creation." Thus Stephen clearly differentiates between what is made by human hands (cf Acts 7:41-43) and the hands of God (Acts 7:44-50). And just as the rejection on Moses led to the idolatrous worship of the golden calf, their rejection of the "prophet like me," "the Righteous One" (Acts 7:37, 52), has led to making the temple into an idol.

The final judgment of Jesus against the idolatrous temple built by man's hands, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Luke 13:35) is paralleled by Stephen, "which of the prophets did not *your* fathers kill" (Acts 7:52)? Thus in these two short phrases Luke has encapsulated the essence of the prophecy in Dan 9 which declared that the Anointed One would put an end to sacrifice and offering "in the middle of the seven" (Dan 9:27) and end God's specially focused mission to Israel at the end of the seventy sevens (Dan 9:24). These new realities predicted by Daniel are clearly seen and fulfilled by Stephen's vision of the Son of Man in heaven (Acts 7:55-56) and the subsequent mission to the Samaritans (Acts 8:4ff).

In Acts 7:14-16 Stephen inserts a parenthetical statement between the narratives of Joseph and Moses. Here he states that seventy-five people went down to Egypt and were brought up again and buried in the tomb that Abraham bought from the Shechemites "for a certain sum of money." It is commonly observed that Luke here has confused⁵³ or conflated⁵⁴ the

⁵² These two conjunctions are then further buttressed by the quotation from both the dedicatory prayer of Solomon 2 Chr 6:18 and Isa 66:1 which states that "heaven is My throne and earth My footstool and who can build Me a house?" For a discussion of this term which attempts to argue for a transcendence rather than a rejection thesis of the Temple see Sweeney, "Stephen's Speech (Acts 7:2-53)."

⁵³ "Stephen's speech confuses the land of Jacob's burial with the land bought by Jacob from the sons of Hamor at Shechem (Gen 33:19)" Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*,

only two purchases of Canaanite land by the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob.

Below is a table that summarizes the historical accounts of the purchases of the land by Abraham and Jacob with the bringing back of Joseph's bones at the time of the Exodus and the theological reflection of these events in the light of the Christ event.⁵⁴ Perhaps one of the most obvious indications that Luke wants to blend the two verses together emerges with the ambiguous phrase, "for a certain sum of money" (7:16).

The "400 shekels of silver" (Gen 23:16) paid by Abraham and the "100 pieces of silver" (Gen 33:19) given by Jacob are clear in the historical narrative. It could perhaps be said that Luke intentionally combines the two definite numbers into one ambiguous phrase so that his theological purpose might be accomplished through the carefully constructed narrative.

Genesis 23:16, 49:31	Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32	Acts 7:16
Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebecca, Jacob & Leah	Joseph brought back	70 + 5 brought back
At Hebron	to Shechem	to Shechem
Were placed in the tomb	Buried on the land	Placed in the tomb
That Abraham had brought	That Jacob had bought	That Abraham had brought
From Ephron the Hittite	From Hamor the Hivite	From the sons of Hamor
At Hebron	At Shechem	At Shechem
For 400 shekels of silver	For 100 pieces of silver	For a certain sum of money

Table 1. Land Purchases of Abraham and Jacob with Acts 7:16

374. "Luke has either confused or telescoped a number of traditions" Pervo, *Acts*, 183.

⁵⁴ See for instance, "The most difficult variation between Stephen's speech and the OT is its locating Abraham's burial place at Shechem instead of Hebron; this is the probable result of conflating the burial accounts of Abraham and Joseph." Scott, "Stephen's Speech," 95.

⁵⁵ "He showed a thorough knowledge of the Jewish economy and the spiritual interpretation of it now made manifest through Christ." Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 99.

While this last phrase of Acts 7:16 has not received much notice,⁵⁶ the initial number of 75 has been either discussed⁵⁷ or not treated.⁵⁸ The most widely held solution is to bring up a variant reading from the LXX from Gen 49:31 which mentions the number 75 and would include other members of Joseph's family being counted.⁵⁹ However, it is very clear from the Masoretic text in the Pentateuch that only 70 people came down to Egypt at the time of Joseph.⁶⁰

This solution from the LXX, although plausible, in my opinion is not sufficient to either outweigh the very detailed accounting of the seventy in Gen 46:8-27 (and the summary echoed in Exod 1:1-5) nor the high theological stakes being generated by the text in Acts 7. As Koivisto clearly points out:

Stephen asserts that Abraham bought a tomb, not at revered Hebron but at despised Shechem. Certainly this reference to what was Samaritan territory in Stephen's day, particularly in the context of the Temple and worship motifs in his speech, would have had significant theological overtones, especially since the Samaritans were for all practical purposes considered outside the land. It is thus not without significance that Luke follows this speech with a narrative of the evangelization of that same Samaritan territory (Acts 8:4-25). In view of the conscious theological selection of the term "Shechem" on Stephen's part and the significant Lucan use of this element in his narrative, one must

⁵⁶ For instance the phrase is not mentioned by Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 374; in his detailed commentary nor by Pervo, *Acts*, 183.

⁵⁷ See Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 374.

⁵⁸ "The numeric problem of 70/75 will not be treated under this heading as a theological alteration, since this issue has a textual problem at its base, nor will the patristic burial issue be treated in that it involves in its solution a textual-grammatical matter rather than a theological one." See Rex A. Koivisto, "Stephen's Speech and Inerrancy," 110. See also Koivisto, "Stephen's Speech, A Theology of Errors?," 101-114.

⁵⁹ See Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 374.

⁶⁰ The number seventy is very well attested in both the exact genealogical listing in Gen 49:8-27 and the summary number of seventy re-emphasized in Exod 1:5. Perhaps a stronger interpretation would be to consider the following. According to Jacob's own words, "Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah" (Gen 49:31). Jacob was subsequently buried also buried in Hebron by Joseph (Gen 50:13). That would make six people total buried in the cave. Since Jacob is already counted among the 70 that went down to Egypt, there would remain five in the tomb to be figuratively transferred at this time with the seventy which went down into Egypt thus generating the hybrid number 75 mentioned in Acts 7:16.

again conclude that the use of this "error" is a conscious one loaded with theological import.⁶¹

I believe that Acts 7:15-17 has both a prophetic and theological import. As has already been clearly shown, Luke's insertion of Isa 58:6 into the Jubilar text of Isa 61:1-2 pronounced by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth in Luke 4:18-19 inaugurates the fulfillment of the prophecy given in Dan 9:25.⁶² Could it be that another singular construction could mark the end of the final week prophecy?⁶³

Just as Stephen suddenly breaks off from his historical narrative of the patriarchs to insert the burial commentary in Acts 7:14-16, he just as quickly leaves his strong remarks about the Temple and idolatry to accuse the leaders of the Jews of their murderous past (Acts 7:51-53). The stoning of Stephen would mark the apparent end of the seventy "weeks" of Dan 9:24 and it is to this most important pericope we now turn.

8. Daniel 9:24 Perspectives

Having briefly investigated Stephen's ministry and speech it would be well to go back to Dan 9:24 and see what specific functions of that proph-

⁶¹ Koivisto, "Stephen's Speech, A Theology of Errors?," 113-114.

⁶² Park, "Overtones of the Jubilee," especially pages 57-60.

⁶³ It is of more than passing interest to note that just as Luke constructs a hybrid text at the beginning of the last "week" of Daniel's prophecy, he also conflates the two accounts discussed above at the end of the "week." While it is impossible to ascertain the exact purpose of Luke's singular construction of these two texts, it might be hypothesized that he clearly wanted to draw attention to the extremely important prophetic events and theological themes taking place at that very moment. Thus, these two texts, in my opinion, should not be either dismissed or overlooked but contain deeply hidden theological truths which shed great light on the twin sermons given by both Jesus and Stephen and their subsequent rejection.

Beyond the numerical and possible prophetic considerations, Stephen joins the two in order to make his main theological point concerning Shechem. Because of the continual idolatry and rebellion of the Jewish leaders which culminated in the slaying of Jesus and the rejection of his apostles, the sacred tombs are now figuratively empty and have been moved to all places Shechem!

Shechem was the first place where Abram built an altar when he entered the promised land. It was also where Joseph was sold by his brothers after journeying from Hebron and where he was buried after Israel took up his bones from Egypt (Josh 24:34). In the post-exilic period the Jews had a distinct hatred of the half-bred Samaritans and it is to this place that the persecuted members of the Church go immediately after the speech of Stephen (Acts 8:1-4).

ecy might have been fulfilled here.⁶⁴ Doukhan gives an excellent literary overview of the "prelude" to the prophecy by noting the parallel nature of the people and city which are the two main components of Daniel's prayer. A modified version of his table appears below which clearly shows both the two Hebrew words which describe the fate of the people and parallel three Hebrew words which outline the destiny of the city/temple.

Daniel 9:24 – Prelude	
Concerning Your People צֶלְעָמְךָ	Concerning Your Holy City וְעִיר־קֹדֶשְׁךָ
To finish the transgression לְכַלֵּא הַפִּשָׁע	To bring in everlasting righteousness וּלְהָבִיא צְדָקָה עֲלֵימִים
To seal sins וּלְהַחֵם הַחַטָּאוֹת	To seal both vision and prophet וּלְהַחֵם חִזְיוֹן וְנָבִיא
To atone for iniquity וּלְכַפֵּר עֲוֹן	To anoint holy of holies וּלְמַשֵּׁחַ קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים

Table 2. The Literary Structure of Daniel 9:24

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to give a detailed analysis of this very complex and densely packed text, a few very general and preliminary observations might be helpful. First of all it is of interest to note that when Gabriel in Dan 9:24 declares that the seventy sevens are determined upon "your people and your holy city" the angel has directly addressed the twin concerns of the closing plea of Daniel's prayer: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act and do not delay! For your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people bear your name (Dan 9:19, emphasis mine)!"

Despite the note of hope sounded by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, "many of the people of Israel will he bring back the Lord" (Luke 1:16), the ultimate fulfillment of the seventy weeks would culminate in "your" house being left desolate (Luke 13:35) and "your" fathers being separated from the Patriarchal lineage (Acts 7:52). Thus at the very opening words

⁶⁴ The difficulty of the passage is well brought out by Doukhan who states, "the density of the passage, the extreme singularity of the words and expressions, and the complexity of its syntax constitute rather serious obstacles." J. B. Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9: An Exegetical Study," *AUSS* 17 (1979): 1. While my first article dealt primarily with the distinct Jubiliary theology which flavored the coming of the Anointed One as predicted in Dan 9 and fulfilled by Luke 4:16ff, it did not deal with the essence of the prophecy encapsulated in the short phrases of Dan 9:24.

of the prophecy there is the positive note of answered prayer modified by a possible negative aspect of judgment to come.

Doukhan himself reflects that when he states that in the parallel structure of the verse “the first part [dealing with the people] has a negative connotation, the second [focusing on the holy city] has a positive connotation.”⁶⁵ The first couplet contrasts the finishing “transgression” with the bringing in of “everlasting righteousness.” The Hebrew word to “finish” (הִלֵּךְ) is a common verb associated with judgment “because of idolatry (pi., Josh 24:20), desecration of the sanctuary (q., Ezek 5:12; cf. 13; pi., 7:8), or other sins (e.g., q., Isa 1:28).”⁶⁶

The “finishing of transgression” is directly contrasted with the bringing in of “everlasting righteousness.” Dan 9:24 is bracketed in both the preceding and following verses by the “everlasting” dominion given to the eschatological Son of Man in the heavenly sanctuary (Dan 7:14, 27) and the “everlasting” life or contempt given to those who have been raised (Dan 12:2). Therefore it might be said that despite Israel’s failure to fulfill the covenant, Dan 9:24 brings to view the ultimate triumph of God’s purpose.⁶⁷ This dual aspect of judgment is well attested to in the book of Daniel.⁶⁸

The next couplet shares the common word “to seal” (סִתְּמוּ). This same Hebrew word is used in Dan 8:23 to denote a type of filling up transgression, “when rebels have become completely (סִתְּמוּ) wicked.” This might apply to the end of probation of the Jewish people at the end of the seventy sevens at the very time that Stephen speaks in Acts 7. The accumulated

⁶⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁶ Williams R. Domeris and Cornelis Van Dam, “הִלֵּךְ,” *NIDOTTE* 2:642. This of course would harmonize well with the historical overview of Israel’s unfaithfulness as outlined by Stephen in Acts 7.

⁶⁷ Dan 7-9 are the immediate context of Dan 9:24 and seem to provide a fruitful expansion of the compressed thoughts found in the prophecy. For instance, the word “righteousness” (קִדְּוָה) (Dan 9:24) also appears in the seminal verse in Dan 8:14 where it reveals that the sanctuary would be “restored.”

⁶⁸ For instance at the end of the vision in Dan 2 the same rock which ends the human kingdoms endures forever. “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (Dan 2:44). Dan 7:26-27 expresses the same thought: “But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.”

guilt which began with the rejection of Joseph and Moses and the worship of the golden calf has found its crescendo in the rejection of Jesus and the turning of the Temple itself into an idol.⁶⁹

The last infinitive phrase, "to anoint holy of holies" has perhaps generated the greatest diversity of opinion and discussion.⁷⁰ In his article, "Exploring the Dismal Swamp: The Identity of the Anointed One in Daniel 9:24-27," Tim Meadowcroft gives a detailed analysis of the various options. He begins by saying that having the verbal form (וּלְמַשְׁחָ) appear as the last of the six infinitive phrases, "enables it to be read as the coup de grace in this enumeration of the seventy "sevens."⁷¹ In addition, the twin appearance of the noun form (מְשִׁיחַ) in the two verses that follow, "is surely significant, and worth more exploration that is usually evident among the commentators."⁷²

If the position is taken that the "Anointed One" is Jesus Christ who comes with the Jubilee message and ministry after the 483 years,⁷³ whose crucifixion in the middle of that final week puts "an end to sacrifice and offering"⁷⁴ and appears at the end of the seventy week prophecy through the inspired testimony and vision of Stephen, then it would more than make sense to consider that the final phrase of Dan 24 somehow involved this Anointed One in the Holy Temple.

Doukhan states that it is "highly significant" that the three main words used in Dan 9:24: atonement, (וּלְכַפֵּר) anointing (וּלְמַשְׁחָ) and holy of holies (קִדְשֵׁי קִדְשִׁים), "is found in Exod 29:36-37, the *only* other biblical reference to

⁶⁹ The "sealing" or "completing" of sin which culminates the end of the seventy sevens on Dan 9:24 also confirms the longer "vision and prophecy" found in Dan 8. For an overview of how the word "understand" found in Dan 8:27, 9:2, 22, links the two chapters together; see Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9," 5.

⁷⁰ Many commentators bring up the perplexity inherent in the phrase because it lacks the definite article which is normally used to designate the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary. Doukhan notes that this phrase without the article appears 39 times always in reference to the whole Tabernacle or Temple (Cf. Exod 29:39; Eze 43:12); Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9," 11.

⁷¹ Tim Meadowcroft, "Exploring the Dismal Swamp: The Identity of the Anointed One in Daniel 9:24-27," *JBL* 120 (2001): 436.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 436. Although I do not share his conclusions that "the anointed one of Dan 9 as a community whose identity is derived from the sanctuary," (p. 448); his observation of the final phrase of Dan 9:24 and how it should be linked to the verses that follow is a valid and fruitful observation.

⁷³ Park, "Overtones of the Jubilee," cited in footnote one.

⁷⁴ A third article in this series will look at the meaning of this important phrase of atonement.

use these expressions." This passage in Exodus involved the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the high priesthood in a ceremony that lasted seven days.⁷⁵ It seems that the Lord was impressing the Israelites that the sanctuary was only as holy as the people who minister in it. This is brought out in this NASB translation: "And Aaron was set apart to sanctify him as most holy, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister to Him and to bless in His name forever" (1 Chr 23:13).

In Stephen's own narrative he relates the same principle when he recounts the story of Moses at the burning bush: "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground'" (Acts 7:33). The temple is only as holy as the ministers who serve in it and the presence of the Lord can make even a lowly bush, a temple. The Jews had lost this sense of God's holiness and had made the temple a golden-calf like idol in the process.

The seed which was planted in Dan 9:24 about the bringing in of everlasting righteousness and the anointing of the Holy One to serve in the holy place is reflected in Heb 9:11-12: "But when Christ [the Anointed One] appeared [as] a high priest of the good things to come, [He entered] through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:11-12). The first lesson about the new reality according to Hebrews of the Son of Man's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary came from Stephen who being, "full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'" (Acts 7:55-56).⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9," 11.

⁷⁶ Given this brief background, the six short infinitive phrases related to the fulfillment of the seventy sevens, along with the rest of the passage, might have conveyed this meaning. Gabriel says to Daniel: over a Jubilee-type period of seventy weeks, your people will "finish" and "fill up" their cup of iniquity. The Anointed One will come to "atone" for these sins and bring in "everlasting righteousness." This will then confirm the previous prophecy you were shown before about the heavenly sanctuary, which the Anointed One will sanctify by his own sacrifice and presence.

9. Conclusion

This paper examines any theological and historical elements in Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 that can be seen as a fulfillment of Dan 9:24-27. The first section dealt with the linkage between the prediction by the angel Gabriel in Dan 9 and the beginnings of the fulfillment of the prophecy in Luke 1. The fact that Gabriel appears in the very temple prophesied to be rebuilt to announce the forerunner of the Anointed One is a clear and strong linkage between the prophecy in Daniel and the Luke-Acts narrative. This linkage is strengthened by the fact that Luke 4:16-30 marks the beginning of the last week of this prophecy, and Acts 7 marks its termination.

The humble inauguration of the kingdom through the ministry of Jesus, Peter and Stephen to the sick, the lame and the widows carries on the Jubilary theme encapsulated in the theological and numeric significance of the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24 and announced by Jesus in the Nazareth pericope. The Anointed One and his followers have arrived to proclaim the message of release to the prisoners and give hope to the poor in spirit.

The section on the true and false witnesses furthermore offers a strong Biblical foundation as historical narrative in contrast to the rejection, idolatry, and false witness that marked Israel's apostasy since the time of Joseph. Luke offers a careful analysis of the narrative surrounding Israel's patriarchs. In doing so he clearly shows that the universal God of glory (outlined in section four) is not restricted to either the precincts of the Temple or to the Jewish people in particular. Despite the fact that Jesus and his disciples are accused of being false witnesses, the true witness of the prophetic scriptures from Israel's past clearly refutes such charges and places Jesus and his disciples in line as the faithful but rejected savior as shown in section five.

In section six a comparison is made so that just like Israel rejected Moses and turned to idol worship, the Jewish leaders rejected a Prophet like Moses in their idolatrous worship of the temple. The Shekinah was removed from the temple made by human hands in contrast to the true and more perfect Tabernacle in heaven above where the Son of Man ministers next to the Father. Stephen pictures the bones of the Patriarchs as figuratively moved from Hebron to Shechem, which signals the rejection of the covenant people and the universal mission of the universal God of glory.

The last section examines the six paired infinitives that appear in Dan 9:24, and then explains Dan 9:25-27 with other Scriptural passages. Although Dan 9:24 does not specifically state how Israel filled up its cup of iniquity, what is clear from Acts 7 is that the constant rejection of heaven sent leaders, especially the Anointed One himself, including their idolatrous golden-calf like worship, brought the special favor of heaven to both

the people and the holy city to bring an end to the seventy-week prophecy.

The world-wide mission to the Gentiles clearly signals the universal position of the heavenly temple as well as the Spirit-inspired mission that immediately started after the death of Stephen. Whereas the prophecy in Dan 9 marked the beginning of this dramatic shift (fulfilled by the fact that the Anointed One came), Luke-Acts describes the historical fulfillment of this divinely-given mission. Luke-Acts, more than any other book in the New Testament, is the direct outworking of the Messianic prophecy of Dan 9.