

Text: Acts 7:9-16, Title: The Power of A Life Well-Lived, Date/Place: The Road, 12/11/16, AM

A. [Opening illustration: Creation to Christ storying](#)

B. Background to passage: Stephen's message to the Jews about God's provision of the Messiah. He covers the history of Israel, linking the chains between Abraham and Jesus. Ultimately, he gets to Jesus and the truth about him and his hearers. Stephen only takes certain links to make his line to Jesus—Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, then Jesus. A second thing we will see today is the foreshadowing of Jesus' life that is pictured here, as well as other examples in Stephen's sermon.

C. Main thought: Joseph was the next link in the chain leading to Christ, and a foreshadowing of Him.

A. **The Thread of the Promise**

1. The story of Joseph makes up Genesis 37-50, but here Stephen only gives a brief overview. Joseph was the last of the 12 sons of Jacob, and the favorite. As a reminder and an affirmation that Stephen is orthodox, he speaks of Joseph's being sold into Egyptian slave traders, then right to being the number two in Egypt. Lots of details are left out in between, but his point was not details, but sovereignty. God was overseeing and ensuring that Joseph was spared and rose to power, so that Israel could be spared from the famine, delivered from death, moved to Egypt, grew to millions over 400 years (fulfilling prophecy). God's skillful hand and wisdom guided the continuation of Israel and the maintaining of the promise.
2. Rom 11:33-36, Daniel 6:25-27, Isa 46:8-11,
3. [Illustration: Read Piper's quote from Sex and the Supremacy of God, p. 38-41, MacArthur's book, The Will of God: Found,](#)
4. God keeps his promises. Always. He never has failed, and he will never fail. His sovereignty stretches over creation, over people, and everything. He is never a God who is wringing his hands wondering how things are going to turn out. He orchestrates a beautiful symphony of all the actions of men with a providential hand that brings about his purposes. The most glorious of plans was that of Christ's coming, death, and resurrection, and this was a piece in the puzzle. We can rest assured that the will of God will be done in our lives, even if we are not sure what it is beforehand. Side note: this is not fatalism as the Muslims practice, in which everything is planned out, and we are mere puppets, and we all may just stand around and be moved by a master puppeteer. This is an understanding that is compatible with prayer that moves mountains, with our will and choices that are real and have real effects, with evangelism that is necessarily by the hearing of the word by those with beautiful feet and the conviction of the Spirit upon the heart of a man and faith that must be applied. Our heritage is that of Israel, as those grafted into the vine of the true sons of Abraham, therefore we can trust in this awesome, supremely sovereign God who will accomplish all that he pleases so that things in our lives/world glorify Him. We can trust because he is a God that is the same yesterday, today, and forever; who has no shadow of turning or changing; who is not like a man, but is stable and eternally constant. A God who purposed before the foundation of the world to send and sacrifice his son to redeem a people for himself. Believe in God, believe also in Christ who bled for you! Forsake sin, and turn to him in repentance and faith, stop resisting the Spirit of God. Stephen's getting there for these Jews, I get there for you now.

B. **The Picture of Fulfillment**

1. Over 300 prophecies of the Messiah. Brothers in the flesh (Jews/Jewish leaders) jealousy and rejection—the Jews in this account are jealous, just as they were against Joseph, just as they were against Jesus. It brought about the death the latter two. Rescued from death from the pit and from the death of Herod's search. Joseph's afflictions led to deliverance Israel, salvation to God's people, just like Jesus' death brought deliverance to Israel and all that would believe. Stephen notes the revealing to his brothers on the second visit. God opened their eyes then. This even foreshadows the next example that he cites in Moses, how he was rejected initially by the children of Israel when he came, but later was revealed as the true deliverer that they had prayed for. Possible allusion to the second revealing of Jesus where the Jews (and everyone else) will see him and bow the knee. I think the final picture we need to see as a reflection of Jesus that Stephen paints is his own testimony. His statements about the sin against them, and the receive my Spirit are quotes from the oral communication within the church. He knew these were the words of Christ, and wanted to be a picture of Jesus right up till the end.
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration:** Josh McDowell (*New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*) says that the two major areas that absolutely secure in our minds the deity of Christ are the 1) OT prophecies in general, 2) and the fulfillments during the week of Christ's death and resurrection (over 30 in one day). I even made my kids watch my nerdy documentaries the other night about the pope's war or lack thereof against Hitler in WWII, and when the top Vatican spy, Josef Muller, was about to be hanged, they were threatening him with his impending demise while he was in an interrogation room, and he calmly and resolutely told them that if he goes to the gallows, he goes there with a clear conscience, being prepared to die willingly as Christ did. The German guards looked puzzled as if they didn't know what to say.
4. The application here for us is more personal in the sense of salvation. The scarlet thread of salvation runs throughout the scriptures, but at this point, and the point of the book of Acts and of the NT as a whole, the intricate stitching and embroidery of the fullness of Christ is displayed. Stephen draws the picture of the sovereign hand of God rescuing the Jews through Joseph for a coming messiah, a promise to be fulfilled. In this second picture that I think Stephen and Luke draw is a closer look at the coming, the life, and the death of Jesus. Luke has written a gospel telling of this life, and now reminds the reader of that life, its death, and its resurrection. He wants us to see the beauty of the life of Christ, even down to his last breath. We are to see that God was with Jesus throughout his time here on the earth, to see that Jesus is the bread of life and delivers from the famine of this world's empty pleasures, that satisfies the soul unlike the treasures of the life that is as a vapor. We are to see that God has revealed himself in the appearing of a man so that through his affliction we may be saved. We are meant to see that Christ himself asked for the release from culpability for those driving the nails, because they do not know what they are doing. So at this point the application is simple: have you seen the beauty that is Christ? Have you feasted upon the bread of life to the satisfaction of your soul? Have you relinquished the ugliness and emptiness of sin through repentance embracing the hope only provided in Jesus and his blood? Have you cast your lot of allegiance in with him as a follower, a pursuer, and a soldier? Have you taken up your cross, died to yourself, and with all that is within you followed in his steps clinging to him regardless of the cost? If not, pray that God would show you this glorious truth with piercing grace and love. Pray until you know that you have been adopted into the family of God as a co-heir with Christ. Pray and seek forgiveness because of the wretchedness of your sin, indifference, and disdain of the highest treasure in all the universe!

A. **Closing illustration:**