

ACTS

*THE GOSPEL
ON THE MOVE*



Study 7

The first Christian Martyr - Steven

Acts 6-7

SATAN'S ATTACK

ACTS 4:1-6:7

**External
persecution**
Acts 4:1-31

Arrest by authorities

**Internal
Corruption**

Ananias and Saphira

Distraction

Overwhelming
social issues

ACTS 6

Acts 6:1 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

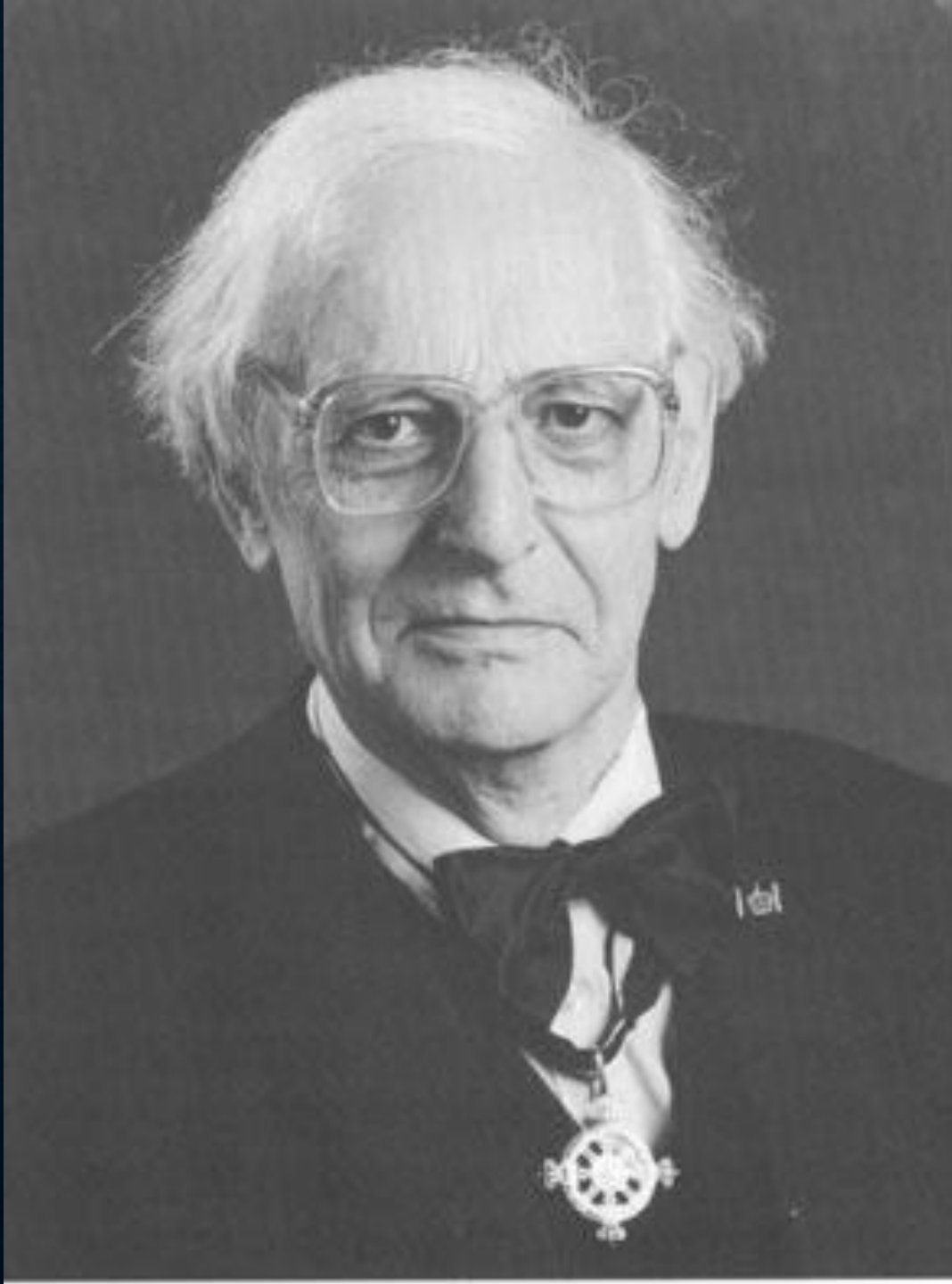
INTERNAL CONFLICT

Greek speaking
Jews widows

Hebrew
speaking
Jewish widows

Potential to derail early church





HENRY CHADWICK CAMBRIDGE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

The expansion of the church seemed an extraordinary chain of improbabilities. Nothing could have been less likely to succeed by any ordinary standard of expectation.

Charity was probably the most potent single cause of Christian success. The pagan comment “see how the Christians love one another” was not irony. Christian charity expressed itself in care for the poor, widows and orphans

DIVISIONS

Ethnic

Social

Cultural



TESTIMONY OF CONFLICT

English
speaking
Chinese

Tamils



DIVISIONS

Middle Class

Poor



DIVISIONS



English
Educated
Chinese

Chinese
Educated
Chinese

ONE DIMENSIONAL CARICATURES

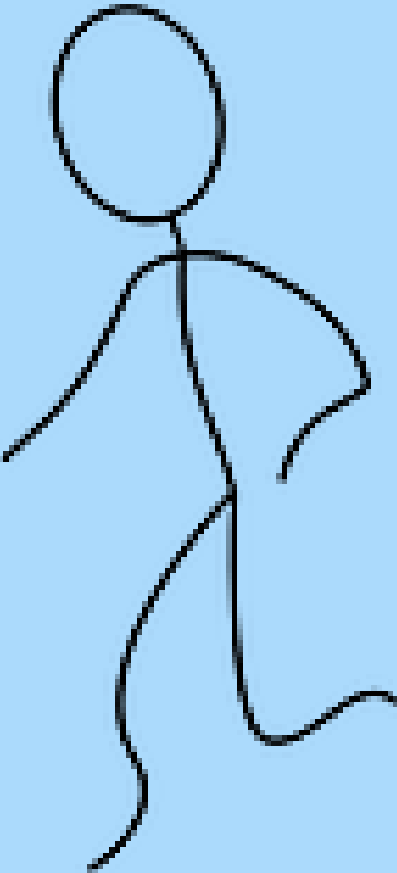
Proud



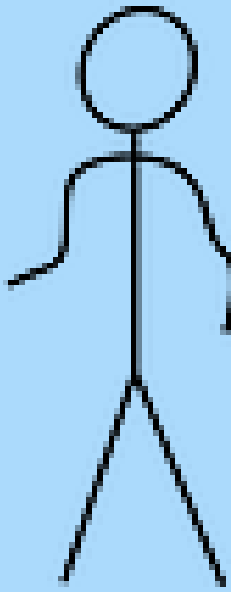
Rude



Selfish



Sneaky



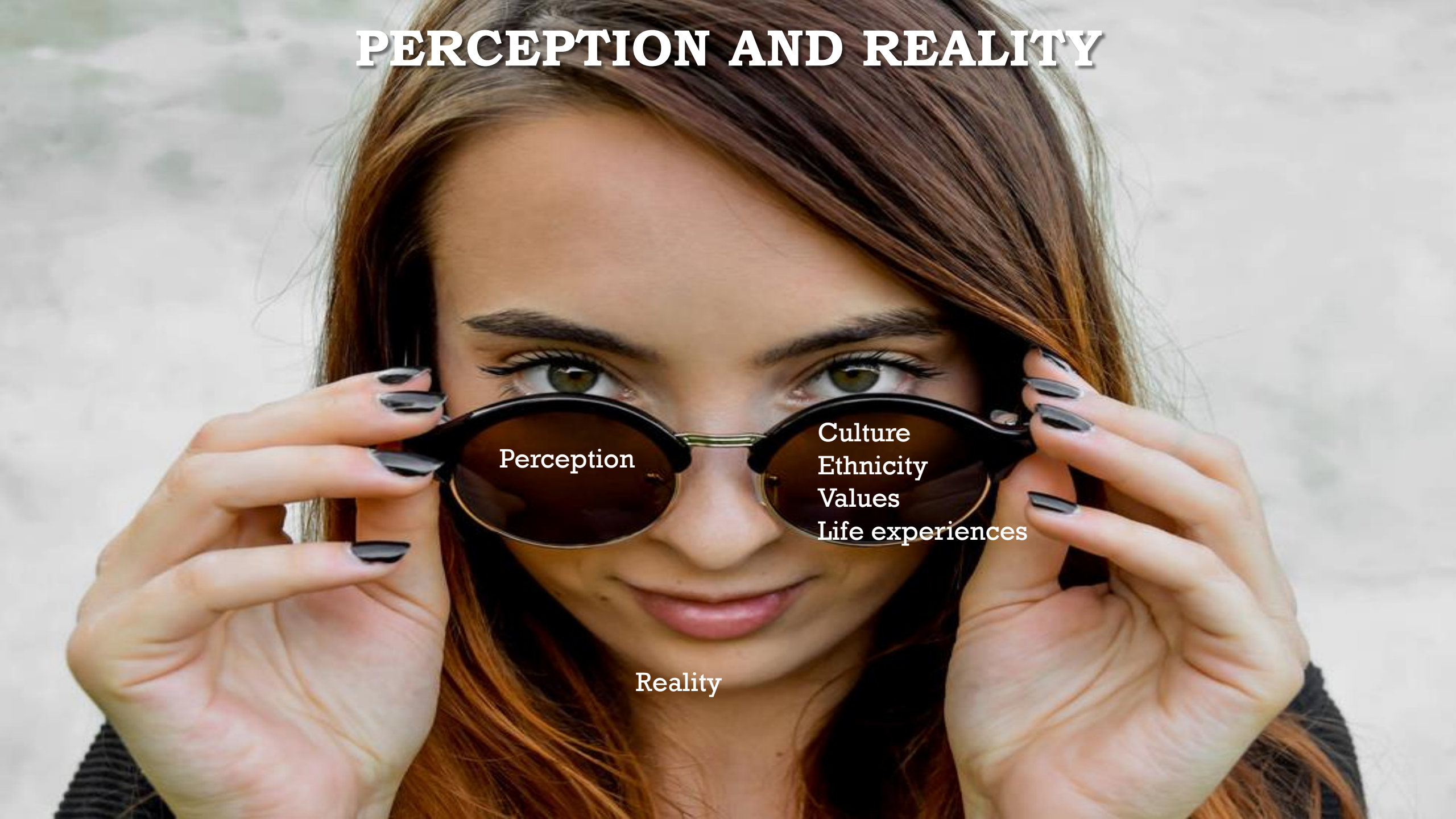


PERCEPTION AND REALITY

Perception

Culture
Ethnicity
Values
Life experiences

Reality



JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDES



PARADOX



RECOGNITION OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

.Acts 6:2 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. 3 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.

THE PROTO-DEACONS WERE GREEK SPEAKING !!!

Acts 6:5 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. 6
These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them

MINISTRY IS FOR EVERYONE

Ephesians 4:11-12 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

We serve because He came to serve us

RESULTS OF THE MANAGEMENT CHANGE

Acts 6:7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith

Priests usually look after the poor –They can see the difference



TROUBLE

Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking

(Acts 6:9-10 ESV)

Trouble with the teaching not the miracles

Greek speaking Jews from Dispersion wanted to get into good books with Sanhedrin..more Jew than Jews

THE INDICTMENT

Acts 6:13-14 “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.

STEVEN'S DEFENCE

1. We do not need a temple to experience God

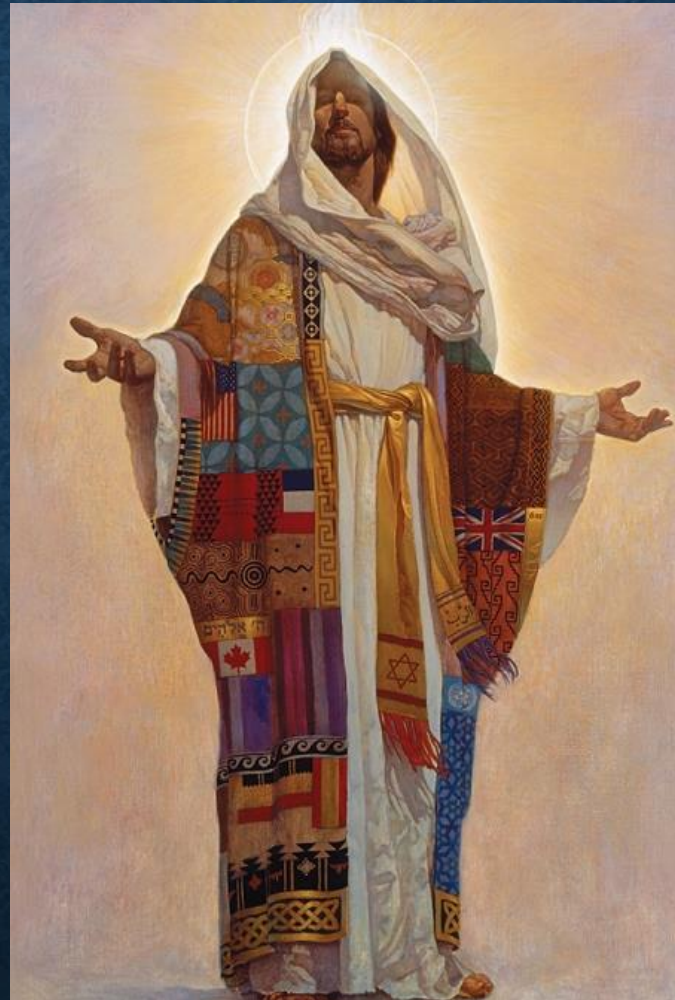
2. How can they condemn Steven for denigrating the law when history has shown Israel has rejected the very law they are defending

PATRIARCHS ENCOUNTERED GOD WITHOUT THE TEMPLE

Abraham



Joseph



Moses



HISTORY OF ISRAEL-PROVIDENTIAL CARE OF GOD

Abrahamic covenant
Enslavement in Egypt
Acts 7:1-8

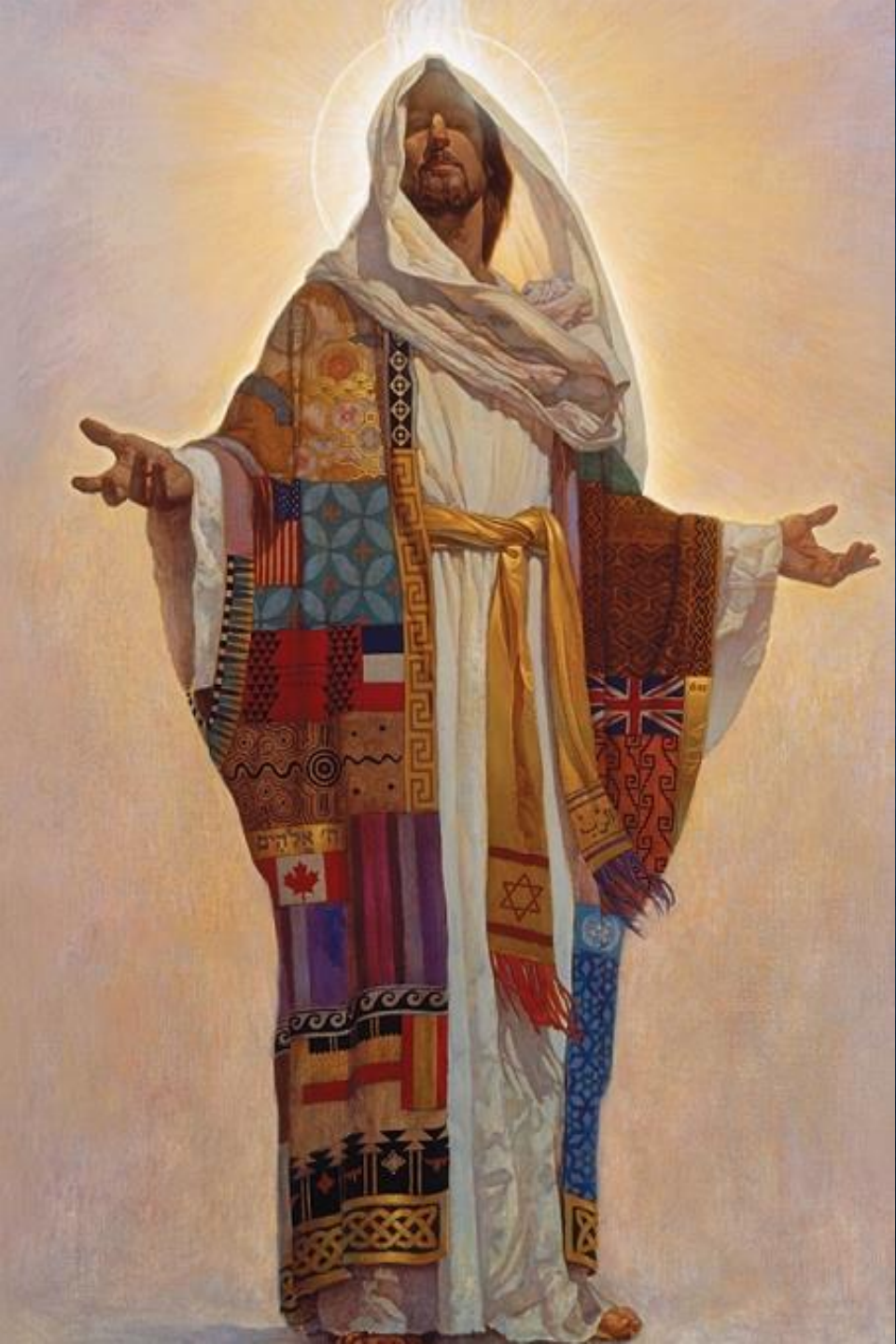
Saved by Joseph
Acts 7:9-17

Saved by Moses
Acts 7:18-34

PATRIARCHS-ABRAHAM ENCOUNTERS GOD NOT TEMPLE BASED



- God met him in Mesopotamia
- Acts 7:6 And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years



PATRIARCHS-JOSEPH ENCOUNTER WITH GOD IN EGYPT

Acts 7:9“ And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him



PATRIARCHS-MOSES

Acts 7:30-33““Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.



PATRIARCHS-MOSES

Acts 7:36 (ESV) This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years

EARLY ISRAELITES HAD NO TEMPLE TILL SOLOMON

“Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen Acts 7:44

47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him (Acts 7:47 ESV)



1446 BC

500 years



964BC

MOST OF THE TIME ISRAEL HAD NO TEMPLE!!!

Abraham



2091 BC

47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him
(Acts 7:47 ESV)

1127 years



964BC

Stephen concludes that “everything necessary for pure worship was available to the people in the wilderness, before they ever entered the Holy land.

MOST OF THE TIME ISRAEL HAD NO TEMPLE

**Total time without Temple
1196 years**

**Total time with Temple
926 years**

GOD DOES NOT LIVE IN TEMPLES

Acts 7:48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

49 ““Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? 50 Did not my hand make all these things

OT REFERENCE : ISAIAH

Isaiah 66:1-2 Thus says the Lord:

“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my
footstool;

what is the house that you would build for me, and
what is the place of my rest?

2 All these things my hand has made, and so all
these things came to be, declares the Lord

STEVEN'S IMPLICATION

The Charge

Acts 6:13-14 “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.

The Defence

“to announce the suppression or destruction of the temple was not to commit blasphemy or sacrilege against God, because God was independent of any temple”.

STEVEN'S DEFENCE

1. We do not need a temple to experience God

2. How can they condemn Steven for denigrating the law when history has shown Israel has rejected the very law they are defending

PATTERN OF REJECTION OF DELIVERER IN HISTORY OF ISRAEL

Joseph rejected

Acts 7:9-10“ And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him 10 and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt

PATTERN OF REJECTION OF MOSES

Acts 7: 35 This Moses whom they rejected, saying 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?' redeemer by the bush.

What Moses did with them vv36-38

Signs and wonders 10 plagues in Egypt, the

Rescued people Red Sea,

Led in wilderness 40yr,

Prophesied about Messiah ,

Received 10 commandments

39 Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt (Acts 7:37-41 ESV)

COUNTER INDICTMENT

Acts 7:51-53 “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the **Righteous One**, whom you have now **betrayed and murdered**, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it

You cannot keep the very law you are so proud of...what is solution?

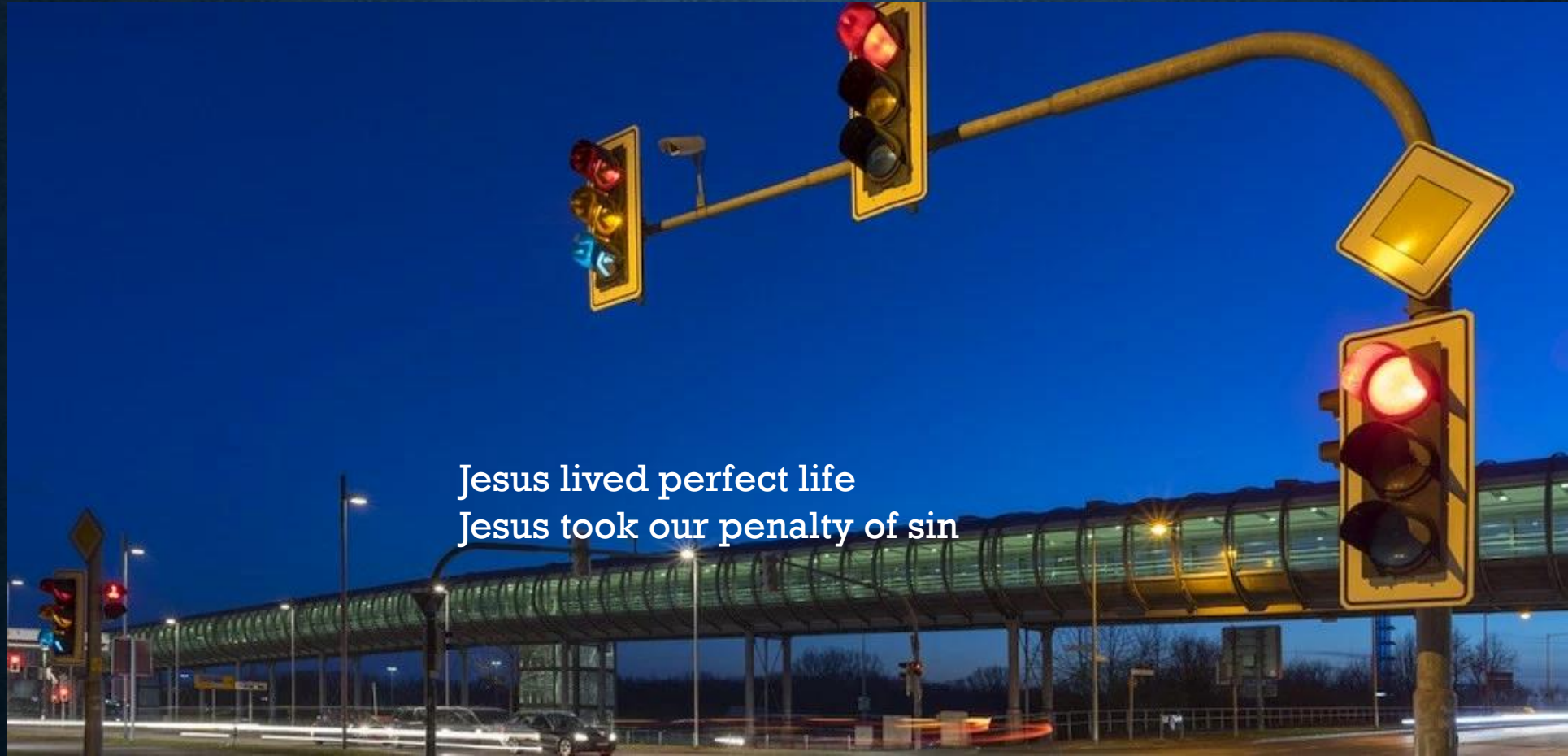
DEFENCE AGAINST CHARGE OF GOING AGAINST THE LAW

Resisted God
Killed the prophets
Killed Jesus the greatest prophet
Have the law but never keep it

COUNTER INDICTMENT

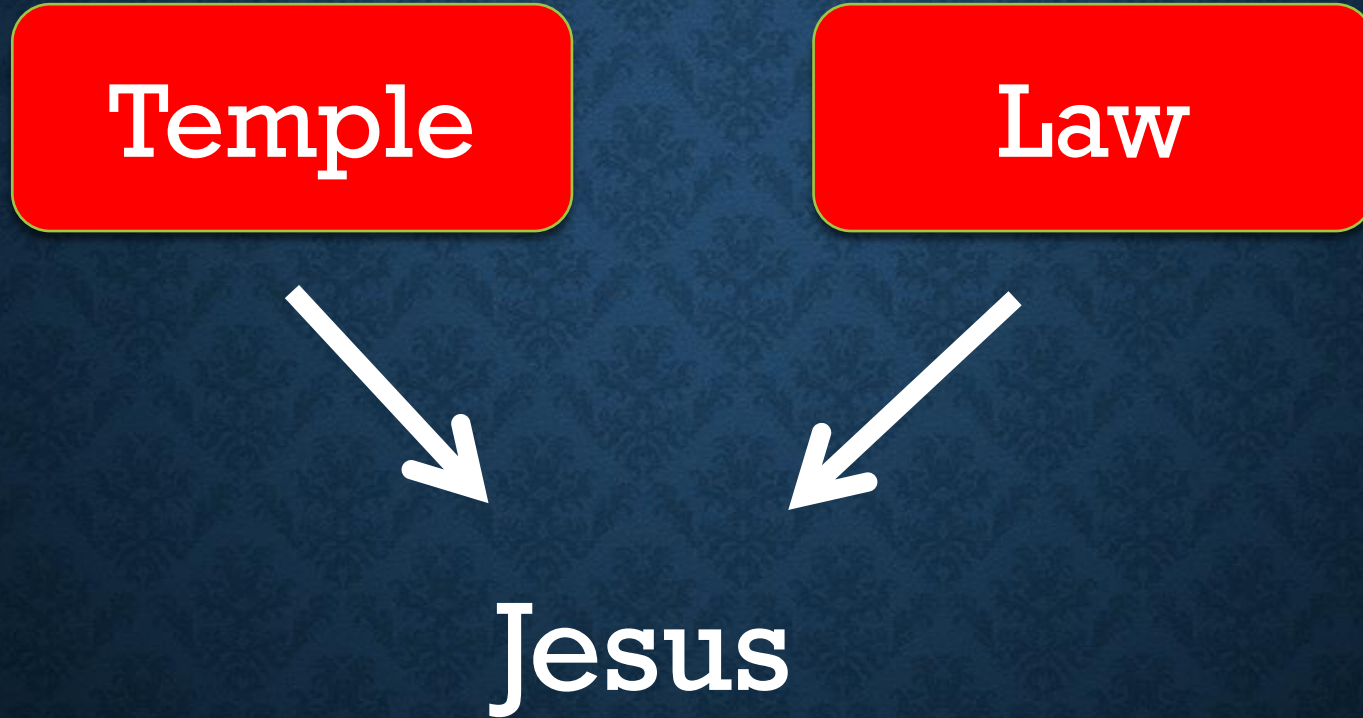
Its not Steven who has rejected the Law it is the nation of Israel repeatedly from the beginning with Moses down to all the prophets

LAW OF RED LIGHTS HOW TO FULFILL IT ?



Jesus lived perfect life
Jesus took our penalty of sin

JESUS IS FINAL TEMPLE
JESUS IS FINAL FULFILLER OF THE LAW



Acts 6:15 And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel

Acts 7:54-56 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 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. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God

WAS STEPHEN CONFUSED?

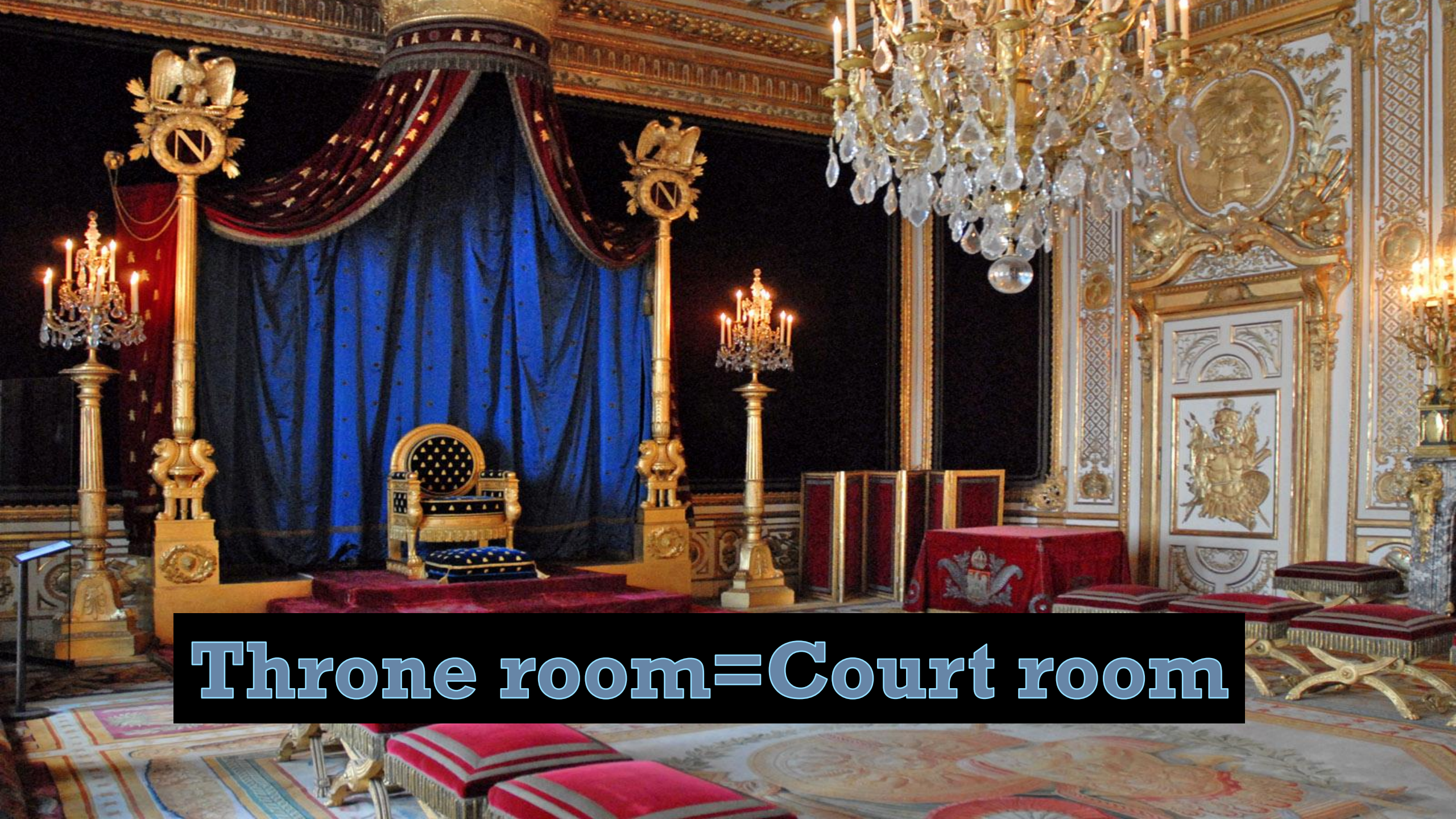
Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God

Heb 1:3b After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Most biblical accounts are Jesus seated as His work is fully done

HIS LOVE FOR THEM MUST HAVE IMPACTED PAUL

Acts 7:59-60 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep



Throne room=Court room



PASSIVISM--LOVE



ETHNIC VIOLENCE-VENGEANCE

Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that God refuses to take the sword

JESUS IS INTERCEDING

- He has already paid there is no double payment
- There is no more condemnation for those in Christ Jesus
- Whilst the earthly courtroom was condemning him, the only true courtroom that really mattered, Jesus was commending him
- Help of the HS

STEVEN'S DEATH AND SUFFERING LED TO EXPLOSION OF RESURRECTION LIFE..GROWTH OF GODS GLORY

Acts 8:1 And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles

Jesus death led to glory
Our suffering will lead to God's glory
If we look to heaven like Steven

Seek to see what Steven saw
and reoder your loves
We all have disordered loves

Acts 7:58 (ESV) Then they cast

Acts 9:15 (ESV) But the Lord

said to him, "Go, for he is a

chosen instrument of mine
OPENS THE DOOR TO

to call the Gentiles and kings and
WORLD MISSIONS

the Gentiles and kings and

the children of Israel.

house, he dragged off men and

women and committed them to

prison.



Paul

CHALLENGE

You meant it for evil
God meant it for good

We need to see what Steven saw

