



Portion:

SCRIPTURES

- Acts 6-7; John 21:1-6
- Matthew 26
- Mark 13:9-11
- Luke 9:23-24; 14:25-35

Title:

ALL USED UP FOR GOD

- Closed: Gone Fishing?
- False Indictments
- Stellar Defense
- The Price of Purpose

One moment you're being selected as one of the few men, hand-picked to serve. It's a complete honor and you humbly accept. Your reputation is without blemish and your commitment to God is obvious. The next moment God is working great miracles through you. A tick later, they are lying about you and you're being publicly accused of things that could never be true, but you are indicted anyway. Blink your eyes and you're standing at trial, the charges levied are beyond the pale, outside the limits of acceptable behavior or the judgment of any civilized person. These accusations are only possible because they are being corroborated by false testimony, lying witnesses who have no conscience, and obviously no fear of the Lord. How did you go from being picked for a grand purpose to standing accused before this council so quickly?

Maybe this nightmare will end. The man in charge inquires, "Are these things true?" Ah, finally! Someone wants to know the truth. Does he? At this point, you don't even need to speak on your own. God promised that when you get arrested and brought to trial because of Him, you need not worry beforehand about what to say; the Spirit will assemble your words. And it happens. For ten solid minutes you give the most lucid defense imaginable. You're testimony is exculpatory; it's clear that nothing they've said about you is true—you're acquittal is imminent. You've presented everything the man in charge needs to hear to exonerate you.

You could rest your defense in that instant, but you don't. Rather, you seize the opportunity; you look at your accusers, and all the members of the should-be-honorable court; and you tell them without hesitation, "You are the guilty ones. You have committed the crimes I've been accused of here, and worse. You murdered the Just One who the prophets said would come. You missed the Messiah because you resist the very Spirit that has inspired my defense today. You are all guilty."

That does not go over well. What started as a good day is about to end in tragedy. What began as a moment of honor is about to be terminated with an execution. You are dragged out of the court and you are executed in a brutal onslaught. You are smashed with stones until your skull is crushed, your bones are broken, and your blood has spattered over the surrounding dust. And even then, with your last dying words, you ask your dear Lord, the very Messiah these murderers rejected, to let it pass. "Don't hold this against them; they are just ignorant religious people." And then you breathe your last breath.

There are moments in life when you must come face-to-face with the purpose for which you were placed here on earth. You have an assignment and you can't go back to what you were doing before. It's true, even if in one moment you feel honored to have been selected for such a purpose, and in the next you are being stoned to death. You can't control

everything that happens between the bookends of your life, the dash on your gravestone, be it a few days or many years. But you can control this... Will you say yes!

PROPHETIC SEED:

“Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, **“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.** Therefore, brethren, **seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint** over this business; but **we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”** And the saying pleased the whole multitude. **And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit...**” Acts 6:2-5 NKJV

“Then they **secretly induced men** to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.”” Acts 6:11 NKJV

“**They also set up false witnesses** who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law;” Acts 6:13 NKJV

“Then the high priest said, **“Are these things so?”**” Acts 7:1 NKJV

“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! **You always resist the Holy Spirit;** as your fathers did, so do you.” Acts 7:51 NKJV

PROPHETIC FRUIT:

“Then they cried out with a loud voice, **stopped their ears,** and ran at him with one accord; and they **cast him out of the city and stoned him.** And **the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.** And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, **“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.”** And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:57-60 NKJV

CLOSED: GONE FISHING?

1. The Ministry Grows and Help is Needed

A. Purpose and Calling

(1) Open: Serving Tables?

(a) We have a problem. Fix it! But How?

1. “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because **their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.** Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, **“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.** Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, **full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom,** whom **we may appoint over this business;** but we **will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”** And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose **Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit,** and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had **prayed, they laid hands on them.** Then the word of God spread, and the number of

the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, **and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.**"

Acts 6:1-7 NKJV

(2) The church was growing rapidly and so was the generosity of God's people.

(a) As the people continued to sell their possessions and bring the proceeds to the apostles, they were tasked with the distribution of those resources to meet the needs of those less fortunate.

1. "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and **sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all**, as anyone had need." Acts 2:44-45 NKJV
2. "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, **but they had all things in common.**" Acts 4:32 NKJV
3. "Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and **brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet**; and they **distributed to each as anyone had need.**" Acts 4:34-35 NKJV

(b) Peter was called away from his old life as a fisherman...

1. **The Call:** "And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; **for they were fishermen.** Then He said to them, "**Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.**" **They immediately left their nets and followed Him.**" Matthew 4:18-20 NKJV
2. "Simon Peter said to them, "**I am going fishing.**" They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night **they caught nothing.**" John 21:3 NKJV
3. "But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then **Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?"** They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "**Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.**" So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the **multitude of fish.**" John 21:4-6 NKJV
4. (Matthew 16:13-20) "Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven; *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...*" **to...**
5. (Matthew 16:21-23) "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, *you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*" **because...**
6. (Matthew 16:24-28) "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*"

FALSE INDICTMENTS

2. Stephen becomes the Next Target of the Religious Elite

A. False Witnesses vs. Wisdom of the Spirit

(1) Oppositional Indictments

(a) Targeting the opposition is not a new strategy in the 21st century.

1. "And **Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.** Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from

Cilicia and Asia), **disputing with Stephen**. And they were **not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke**. Then they **secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."** And they **stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council**. They also **set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."** And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw **his face as the face of an angel.**" Acts 6:8-15 NKJV

2. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation;** but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'" John 16:33 NKJV

(b) Naturally this causes those who hear the claims to apprehend Stephen, indict him, and drag him before the council. This is something Y'shua told us was coming!

1. "**Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say.** Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, **but the Holy Spirit.**" Mark 13:11 NIV

2. **Remember:** "...they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit..." Acts 6:5

3. **And...** "they were not able to resist the wisdom **and the Spirit** by which he spoke." Acts 6:10

4. **Then...** "all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face **as the face of an angel.**" Acts 6:15

5. **When he was done his Spirit led defense...** "he, **being full of the Holy Spirit,** gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God," Acts 7:55

(c) False Witnesses

1. "And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, **if the witness is a false witness,** who has testified falsely against his brother, then **you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother;** so you shall put away the evil from among you." Deuteronomy 19:18-19 NKJV

2. "we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth **will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses** delivered to us.'" Acts 6:14 NKJV

3. "Now the chief priests, the elders, **and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.** But **at last two false witnesses came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.' "**" Matthew 26:59-61 NKJV

4. These same religious hypocrites wanted Barabbas, a convicted murderer and insurrectionist released, instead of Y'shua... "But **the chief priests and elders persuaded** the multitudes that **they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.**" Matthew 27:20 NKJV

5. "**Dishonest scales are an abomination** to the Lord, But a just weight is His delight." Proverbs 11:1 NKJV

6. "**Lying lips are an abomination** to the Lord, But those who deal truthfully are His delight." Proverbs 12:22 NKJV

7. "He who justifies the wicked, and **he who condemns the just,** Both of them alike **are an abomination** to the Lord." Proverbs 17:15 NKJV

3. Stephen's Brilliant Defense

A. Abraham's Legacy

(1) "Are these things so?"

(a) Stephen begins with the one whom the high priest would recognize as the patriarch of his faith.

1. **"Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"** And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. **But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.** But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them **four hundred years.** 'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.' **Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision;** and so Abraham begot Isaac and **circumcised him on the eighth day;** and Isaac begot **Jacob,** and Jacob begot the **twelve patriarchs.**" Acts 7:1-8 NKJV

(b) These accusations and his arrest shouldn't have come as a surprise, nor should his defense!

1. **"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues.** You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. **But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak.** But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, **but the Holy Spirit.**" Mark 13:9-11 NKJV
2. "Remember the word that I said to you, '**A servant is not greater than his master.**' **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.** If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you **for My name's sake,** because they do not know Him who sent Me." John 15:20-21 NKJV
3. *"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh [Ishmael] **then persecuted him** who was born according to the Spirit [Isaac], even so it is now."* Galatians 4:28-29 NKJV

B. The Patriarchs in Egypt and the Life of Joseph

(1) Stephen moves on in history to highlight Joseph.

(a) Those sons of Jacob are a jealous lot...

1. **"And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt.** But God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and **he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.** Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And the second time **Joseph was made known to his brothers,** and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all

his relatives to him, seventy-five people. So **Jacob went down to Egypt**; and he died, he and our fathers. And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem." Acts 7:9-16 NKJV

C. The Life of Moses

(1) The transition from Joseph to Moses: (Reminder: there are 64 years between Joseph's death and Moses' birth.)

(a) The time of the promise to Abraham drew near...

1. ""But when **the time of the promise drew near** which God had sworn to Abraham, **the people grew and multiplied in Egypt till another king arose who did not know Joseph**. This man dealt **treacherously** with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them **expose their babies, so that they might not live**. At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?' But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, '**Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?**' Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons. "And when forty years had passed, **an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush**, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, '**I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**' And Moses trembled and dared not look. 'Then the Lord said to him, "**Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground**. I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. **And now come, I will send you to Egypt.**" ' "**This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush**. He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years." Acts 7:17-36 NKJV

D. Stephen Continues by Recounting Israel's Rebellion

(1) The prophet like Moses—you better listen to him.

(a) Stephen shifts the atmosphere as he begins to show how Israel is a rebellious people. His intent is certainly to include the council he is addressing as also rebellious.

1. ""This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, '**The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.**' "This is he who was in the **congregation in the wilderness** with the **Angel** who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom **our fathers would not obey, but rejected**. And in their **hearts they**

turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'" Acts 7:37-43 NKJV

E. Stephen Continues with a Lesson about the True Tabernacle

(1) Time to connect the tabernacle the temple and you!

(a) It's all according to a pattern...

1. ""Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, **instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern** that he had seen, which our fathers, having received it in turn, also **brought with Joshua into the land** possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers **until the days of David**, who found favor before God and asked to **find a dwelling for the God of Jacob**. But **Solomon built Him a house**. "However, the **Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands**, as the prophet says: '**Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me?** says the Lord, **Or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?**'" Acts 7:44-50 NKJV

(2) Here is where his defense really begins to uncover the deep things they've missed.

(a) The prophetic purpose of such instructions is affirmed in the New Testament.

1. "who serve the **copy and shadow of the heavenly things**, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "**See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.**" Hebrews 8:5 NKJV
2. "Do you not know that **you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**" I Corinthians 3:16 NKJV

(b) Solomon built it with this in mind from Isaiah!

1. 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. **What house will you build for Me?** says the Lord, Or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things? (Isaiah 66:1-2)

(c) And we learned it from Paul this way...

1. "Or do you not know that **your body is the temple** of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and **you are not your own?** For you were **bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**" I Corinthians 6:19-20 NKJV

THE PRICE OF PURPOSE

4. The Moment He Can't Go Back

A. Stephen's Rebuke: Israel Resists the Holy Spirit

(1) The Holy Spirit is speaking through me...

(a) You, however, oppose the Holy Spirit!

1. **““You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have **received the law** by the direction of angels **and have not kept it.**””** Acts 7:51-53 NKJV

B. Stephen is Convicted and Executed

(1) The point of no return!

(a) *“Convict a soft heart and you get repentance; convict a hard heart and you get violence.”* DJH

1. **“When they heard these things **they were cut to the heart**, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But **he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God**, and **Jesus standing at the right hand of God**, and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and **the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!**” Then they cried out with a loud voice, **stopped their ears**, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. **And the [FALSE] witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul**. And they **stoned Stephen** as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, **“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.**”** Acts 7:54-60 NKJV

(b) They dragged him out of the court and stoned him to death.

1. **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake**, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake**. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for **great is your reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:10-12 NKJV
2. **“And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and **beaten them**, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.**”** Acts 5:40-41 NKJV

(c) And to keep the blood from spattering all over their clothes, they left their garments with Saul (Paul) who was overseeing the execution. Paul will himself face similar challenges after his conversion.

1. **At his conversion:** **“For I will show him how many things **he must suffer for My name’s sake.**”** Acts 9:16 NKJV
2. **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for **whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**”**Galatians 6:7 NKJV
3. **“And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, **if the witness is a false witness**, who has testified falsely against his brother, then **you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother**; so you shall put away the evil from among you.”**Deuteronomy 19:18-19 NKJV

(d) Stephen’s reaction to the stoning was itself Spirit-inspired.

1. **Y’shua:** **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”** Luke 23:34 NKJV
2. **Stephen:** **“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.”** Acts 7:60 NKJV

C. And... Paul was there every step if the way...

- (1) It seems that this council (Sanhedrin, religious court) has quickly forgotten the advice they received and heeded from Gamaliel.
- (a) And Gamaliel was Paul's teacher...
1. *"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city **at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law**, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."* Acts 22:3 NKJV
 2. *"and they cast him out of the city **and stoned him** [to death]. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named **Saul**."* (Acts 7:58)
 3. *"Now **Saul was consenting to his death**. At that time a **great persecution arose against the church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. **As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.**"* Acts 8:1-3 NKJV
- (2) You reap what you sow... *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for **whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**"*(Galatians 6:7)
- (a) Paul is eventually falsely accused of the same thing (throughout his entire ministry) for which Stephen is executed.
1. *"but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles **to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.** {28} crying out, "Men of Israel, help! **This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place;** and furthermore **he also brought Greeks into the temple** and has defiled this holy place.""* Acts 21:21, 28 NKJV

D. Final Thoughts

- (1) Be willing to forsake all...
- (a) The price of purpose!
1. *"Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily**, and follow Me. For whoever desires to **save** his life will **lose** it, but whoever **loses** his life **for My sake will save it.**"* Luke 9:23-24 NKJV
 2. *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, **and his own life** also, he cannot be My disciple."* Luke 14:26 NKJV
 3. *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and **count the cost**, whether he has enough to finish it—"* Luke 14:28 NKJV
 4. *"So likewise, whoever of you does not **forsake all** that he has cannot be My disciple."* Luke 14:33 NKJV
 5. *"Salt is good; but **if the salt has lost its flavor**, how shall it be seasoned? **It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill**, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* Luke 14:34-35 NKJV