

# “IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?”

## Facing Problems in Acts 7

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### INTRODUCTION

*How do we account for so many problems in the Bible? Problems in Stephen’s speech?*

- Did God call Abraham in Ur of Babylonia or in Haran?
- If Terah died at Haran and he was 205, and Abraham was born when Terah was 70, how did he die before Abraham left Haran at 75 years of age?
- How can Stephen say that the time Israel was in Egypt was 400 years when Exodus 12:40 says it was 430 years?
- Why does Stephen say that those who entered Egypt were 75 persons when Gen. 46:27 says there were 70?
- How can Stephen say that Joseph’s brothers were buried at Shechem when Jacob was buried at Hebron?
- Stephen says that Abraham purchased a tomb that Genesis says Jacob bought.

What are we to say here? 1) Are these **real mistakes** in the Bible? If so, are they merely those of Stephen that Luke reports accurately? Are they mistakes that Luke himself gives and attributes to Stephen? 2) Or are they **not mistakes at all** but accurate statements?

I want to use this passage as an example showing that all the so called mistakes in the original manuscripts of the Bible are merely misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

**There are no mistakes in the Word of God. The Word of God is inerrant!**

#### I. PROBLEMS IN STEPHEN’S SPEECH

A. Where Did God Call Abraham? (7:2—In Mesopotamia, before Haran; Gen. 12:1-2 shows that God called Abraham in Haran.)

- Note that Gen. 15:7 and Josh 24:2-3 agree with Stephen’s words—God brought him out from Ur, beyond the River Euphrates.
- Stephen here in verse 2 omits the words “from your father’s house” found in Gen 12:1-2, for his father went with him to Haran.

B. How could Terah have died before Abraham left Haran? (7:4)

- Genesis 11:26 seems to say that Terah was 70 when Abraham was born.
- Genesis 11:32 states that Terah died at 205.

- Genesis 12:4 shows that Abraham was 75 when he left Haran.
  - $70 + 75 = 145$ . What happened to the other 60 years of Terah's life?
  - The solution is that Abraham was not Terah's oldest son; Haran was, and he died in Ur, before moving to Haran. He was much older than Abraham.
  - Compare "Shem, Ham, and Japheth" in Gen 6:10; yet, we know from other information in Genesis that Japheth was the eldest.
- C. How could Stephen say that Israel was in Egypt only 400 years? (7:6)
- Exodus 12:40 gives the time in Egypt as 430 years.
  - But notice that in Gen. 15:13 the Lord says Israel will be in Egypt 400 years.
  - **The number 400 is a round number; 430 is an exact number.**
  - Abraham fathered Isaac when he was 100 years old; the Lord said that Israel would come out of Egypt in the fourth generation=400 years (Gen. 15:16).
- D. Why would Stephen say that 75 descendants of Jacob entered Egypt? (7:14)
- Gen. 46:27 & Ex. 1:5 give the number as 70.
  - The Septuagint has the number as 75.
  - The LXX also gives nine grand and great-grandsons; including several more from Joseph.
  - This kind of numbering is legitimate, and is used in other numerations of tribes of Israel—including some grandsons in lists.
  - The others were born in Egypt also, as were Joseph's sons.
- E. Where did Stephen get his information about the burial place of Joseph's brothers in Shechem? (7:16)
- The OT does not say where the 11 patriarchs were buried; Gen. 50:25 and Josh 24:32 show that Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem.
  - Tradition has consistently held that the brothers' bones were buried in Shechem also.
  - We have no good reason to doubt this tradition.
  - Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron (Gen. 50:13). It is likely that Stephen only refers to the "fathers" of v. 15 and not to Jacob.
- F. How can Stephen say that Abraham purchased a tomb from the sons of Hamor? (7:16)
- Gen. 33:19 clearly shows that Jacob, grandson of Abraham, bought this tomb.

- Gen. 23:16 shows that Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah (at Hebron).
- Genesis 12:6-7 shows that Abraham built an altar at Shechem—his first place of worship and settlement in the Promised Land.
- It is highly likely that he would need to purchase this land, and that later, after the ownership rights had become null, Jacob repurchased it.

## II. REASONS WHY WE KNOW THE BIBLE TO BE THE INERRANT WORD OF GOD

- A. The Testimony of \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. Mt. 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35).
- B. \_\_\_\_\_ Prophecies.
- C. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible.
- D. The \_\_\_\_\_ of its Teachings.
- E. The History of the Book (Continuous victory against \_\_\_\_\_).  
Attempts have been made to destroy it, its owners or readers, to change and distort it, to neglect it, to forbid its reading, etc. Yet, the Bible Stands!
- F. The \_\_\_\_\_ of those who accept its teachings—compared with those who reject it.
- G. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Book—transformed people, purified people, etc.
- H. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Book—one can never exhaust it.
- I. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Book:
  - Promises prove true.
  - What it describes works in real life.
  - True holiness results in its followers.
  - Genuine knowledge and wisdom comes through its study.
- J. The Direct Testimony of the Holy \_\_\_\_\_ to the individual believer. (John 7:17)

## CONCLUSION

What a Book we have!

So then:

- **Do you read it daily?**
- **Do you live by it?**
- **Have you been saved by it? (I Pet. 1:23—“Being born again by the Word of God which lives and abides forever.”)**