

# Acts 7:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

## Analysis

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**Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?**  
Stephen quotes Amos 5:25-27, showing divine judgment involves God withdrawing restraining grace and allowing sin's natural progression.

God turned expresses judicial abandonment—a terrifying theme in Scripture. When persistent rebellion meets divine patience's end, God gives people over to their chosen path (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). This isn't active punishment but removal of common grace that restrains evil. The phrase gave them up indicates permissive judgment—God allows what He could prevent.

Worship the host of heaven refers to astral deities—sun, moon, stars—common in ancient paganism. Israel's golden calf opened doors to deeper idolatry. Sin progression follows a pattern: initial compromise leads to greater corruption. Rejecting true worship doesn't produce neutrality but slavery to false worship.

The rhetorical question from Amos—have ye offered to me...sacrifices?—implies their wilderness sacrifices were tainted by divided hearts. External ritual performed while harboring secret idolatry doesn't constitute true worship.

Reformed theology emphasizes covenant faithfulness requires undivided heart allegiance, not mere external compliance.

## Historical Context

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Amos prophesied around 760 BCE, addressing northern Israel's prosperity-accompanied-by-apostasy. His question challenges the assumption that wilderness-era Israel remained faithful—even then, hearts were divided between Yahweh and pagan deities.

Host of heaven worship infiltrated Israel repeatedly (2 Kings 17:16, 21:3). Deuteronomy 4:19 explicitly warned against this. The Babylonian exile (597-538 BCE) served as ultimate judgment for persistent idolatry. Stephen's quotation warns his audience: you're following the same trajectory that led to exile.

By 34-35 CE, when Stephen speaks, the temple still stands. Yet he prophesies (like Jesus) its coming destruction. Rejecting Messiah repeats the pattern that brought earlier judgments. God's patience has limits; persistent covenant unfaithfulness meets divine judgment.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. What does it mean that God 'gives people up' to their chosen sins, and how is this itself a form of judgment?
2. How does initial compromise with sin open doors to deeper spiritual corruption?
3. In what ways might external religious observance mask internal idolatry?
4. What warnings does Israel's history provide about presuming on covenant privileges while harboring secret sins?

5. How should the reality of divine judgment shape our view of persistent unbelief and apostasy?

## Interlinear Text

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|              |                 |       |                       |              |            |            |                |
|--------------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| ἔστρεψεν     | δὲ              | ό     | θεὸς                  | καὶ          | παρέδωκεν  | αὐτοὺς     | λατρεύειν      |
| turned       | Then            | G3588 | God                   | and          | gave       | them       | to worship     |
| G4762        | G1161           |       | G2316                 | G2532        | G3860      | G846       | G3000          |
| τῇ           | στρατιᾷ         | τοῦ   | οὐρανοῦ               | καθὼς        | γέγραπται  | ἐν         | βίβλῳ          |
| G3588        | the host        | G3588 | of heaven             | as it        | is written | in         | the book       |
|              | G4756           |       | G3772                 | G2531        | G1125      | G1722      | G976           |
| τῶν          | προφητῶν        |       | Μὴ                    | σφάγια       | καὶ        | θυσίας     |                |
| G3588        | of the prophets |       | have ye offered       | slain beasts | and        | sacrifices |                |
|              | G4396           |       | G3361                 | G4968        | G2532      | G2378      |                |
| προσηνέγκατέ | μοι             | ἔτη   | τεσσαράκοντα          |              | ἐν         | τῇ         | ἐρήμῳ          |
| G4374        | to me           | years | by the space of forty |              | in         | G3588      | the wilderness |
|              | G3427           | G2094 | G5062                 |              | G1722      |            | G2048          |
| οἶκος        | Ἰσραὴل          |       |                       |              |            |            |                |
| O ye house   | of Israel       |       |                       |              |            |            |                |
| G3624        | G2474           |       |                       |              |            |            |                |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ezekiel 20:39** (References God): As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

**Jeremiah 19:13** (Sacrifice): And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods.

**Deuteronomy 4:19** (Worship): And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven,

shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

**Isaiah 63:10** (Parallel theme): But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

**Isaiah 66:4** (Parallel theme): I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

**Acts 7:36** (Parallel theme): He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

**Ezekiel 8:16** (Worship): And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

**Joshua 24:20** (References God): If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

**Hosea 4:17** (Parallel theme): Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

**2 Kings 17:16** (Worship): And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.