

# Acts 7:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

## Analysis

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**Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.** Stephen transitions from Israel's idolatry to God's proper provision—the tabernacle, constructed according to divine specifications.

Tabernacle of witness (Greek: skēnē tou martyriou) refers to the dwelling place containing the Ark with the tablets of the covenant—physical testimony to God's presence and Law. Unlike idols made from human imagination, the tabernacle followed the fashion that he had seen—divine blueprint revealed to Moses on the mountain (Exodus 25:9, 40).

The contrast is deliberate: false worship springs from human invention; true worship follows divine revelation. Reformed theology emphasizes the regulative principle—worship must be governed by Scripture, not human creativity. God prescribes how He is to be approached; humans don't decide.

As he had appointed underscores divine initiative and authority. Every detail of tabernacle construction carried theological significance, pointing forward to Christ as ultimate meeting place between God and humanity. The tabernacle's temporary, portable nature foreshadows the incarnation—God dwelling among His people.

## Historical Context

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Exodus 25-40 details the tabernacle's construction, occupying significant Old Testament narrative space. Built around 1446 BCE (or 1290 BCE depending on Exodus dating), it served as Israel's worship center until Solomon's temple (around 960 BCE).

The tabernacle represented God's condescension—the infinite, transcendent Creator dwelling among finite, sinful people. Yet it remained a shadow, pointing to Christ's incarnation (John 1:14—'tabernacled among us'). Stephen's audience venerated the temple (successor to the tabernacle) but missed that both pointed beyond themselves to Jesus.

By emphasizing the tabernacle's divine origin versus human-made idols, Stephen distinguishes God's prescribed worship from human religious innovation. His speech occurs around 34-35 CE, as early Christians recognized temple worship's obsolescence in light of Christ's completed work.

## Related Passages

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

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. How does the tabernacle's divine design illustrate the principle that worship must follow God's revelation, not human preference?
2. In what ways did the tabernacle foreshadow Christ as the ultimate meeting place between God and humanity?
3. What dangers exist when churches innovate worship practices beyond biblical prescription?

4. How should the tabernacle's temporary nature inform our understanding of old covenant institutions?
5. What does God dwelling in a tent teach about divine condescension and accessibility?

## Interlinear Text

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Ἡ	σκηνὴ	τοῦ	μαρτυρίου	ἦν	ἐν	τοῖς	πατράσιν
G3588	<b>the tabernacle</b>	G3588	<b>of witness</b>	<b>had</b>	<b>in</b>	G3588	<b>fathers</b>
	G4633		G3142	G2258	G1722		G3962
ἡμῶν	ἐν	τῇ	ἐρήμῳ	καθὼς	διετάξατο	ὁ	λαλῶν
<b>Our</b>	<b>in</b>	G3588	<b>the wilderness</b>	<b>as</b>	<b>he had appointed</b>	G3588	<b>speaking</b>
G2257	G1722		G2048	G2531	G1299		G2980
τῷ	Μωσῇ,	ποιῆσαι	αὐτήν	κατὰ	τὸν	τύπον	
G3588	<b>unto Moses</b>	<b>that he should make</b>	<b>it</b>	<b>according</b>	G3588	<b>to the fashion</b>	
	G3475	G4160	G846	G2596		G5179	
ὃν	ἐώρακει·						
<b>that</b>	<b>he had seen</b>						
G3739	G3708						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 25:40** (Parallel theme): And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.

**Exodus 38:21** (Temple): This is the sum of the tabernacle, even of the tabernacle of testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son to Aaron the priest.