

Acts 7:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Solomon built him an house.

Analysis

But Solomon built him an house. This brief statement carries profound theological weight—Solomon fulfilled David's desire by constructing the temple, yet Stephen's argument suggests limitations even in this magnificent achievement.

The word but introduces contrast—David desired, but Solomon built. This highlights generational continuity in God's work while acknowledging individual limitations. Solomon's wisdom and peace (his name means peace) suited temple-building, unlike David's warrior background.

Built him an house creates deliberate ambiguity. Does house refer to physical temple or to the dynasty God promised David? The Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7) promised an eternal house/dynasty, fulfilled ultimately in Christ. Solomon's temple, though glorious, was temporary—destroyed in 586 BCE, rebuilt, destroyed again in 70 CE.

Stephen's rhetorical strategy becomes clear in following verses—the temple, though divinely authorized, was never meant to contain God. Reformed theology emphasizes that Old Testament institutions, including the temple, were shadows pointing to Christ (Colossians 2:17, Hebrews 10:1). The physical temple served its purpose but became obsolete when the reality—Jesus—arrived.

Historical Context

Solomon built the temple around 960 BCE (1 Kings 6), a magnificent structure that took seven years to complete. Hiram of Tyre supplied materials and craftsmen. The temple dedication (1 Kings 8) featured Solomon's prayer acknowledging that even heaven cannot contain God—how much less a physical building?

This first temple stood until 586 BCE when Babylonians destroyed it. The second temple, built after exile (516 BCE) and later expanded by Herod (beginning 20 BCE), stood in Stephen's day. Yet within 40 years of this speech (70 CE), Romans would destroy it. Stephen's martyrdom occurs around 34-35 CE, his speech presciently challenging temple-centered Judaism just decades before the temple's end.

Jesus predicted the temple's destruction (Matthew 24:2), claiming He would rebuild it in three days—referring to His resurrection (John 2:19-21). Stephen continues this theme: focusing on physical temple while rejecting Messiah repeats the error that brought earlier judgments.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Solomon's temple both fulfill and fall short of God's ultimate dwelling place among His people?
2. What does the temple's temporary nature teach about old covenant institutions?
3. In what ways does Christ fulfill what Solomon's temple represented?

4. How can religious communities avoid making physical structures or traditions into ultimate values?
5. What does God's willingness to allow His temple's destruction teach about His priorities?

Interlinear Text

Σολομῶν δὲ ὁκοδόμησεν αὐτῷ οἶκον
Solomon But built him an house
G4672 G1161 G3618 G846 G3624

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 8:20 (Parallel theme): And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

2 Samuel 7:13 (Parallel theme): He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

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