

Hello everyone

The bible is collection of different types of books. Four different pictures of the gospels by Mark, Matthew, Luke and John are followed by a second book by Luke called the acts of the apostles which presents the spread of the early church out from Jerusalem to the rest of the world in the way Luke's tidy mind sees it.

Today we continue thinking about how churches spread. Because we all do, not just the early church but the church of today as we start to come out of lockdown.

At the start of Acts the followers receive the holy spirit and become witnesses in Jerusalem to Jesus, the son of God. The disciples pool their resources at the start, live communally, meeting in houses and in the temple, but as their numbers get larger, they begin to feel stretched. It's more difficult to cover all the aspects of ministry they need to appoint more helpers and one of these is Stephen. Together the followers of Jesus are helping Jesus, the son of God to build God's kingdom and the story of Stephen plays a pivotal role in how this small band of Jesus followers began to build the church which became what we know today.

They preached boldly, they met opposition and often like Jesus they used signs and wonders to push their points home.

Stephen today has to defend himself against the authorities and he uses an image from the book of Isaiah to show what the new heaven and earth that Jesus and God speak of actually looks like.

It's simple Stephen says. Isaiah told us think of heaven and earth linked by a picture of God resting in his chair in heaven and simultaneously resting on his footstool on earth.

There you go. The kingdom of heaven is like that.

Isaiah said

Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

What is the house you would build for me and what is my resting place?

All these things my hand has made

And so, all these things are mine

Says the Lord.

Let us worship God.