



# Bethany Bible Study & Discussion:

## ACTS 6 & 7

### Stephen ... first **Martyr** for Christ

Wednesdays  
7.30-8.30PM

*Some questions to guide your thoughts as you meditate on Acts 6&7 (6:8-15, 7:51-60)*

- 1. Stephen @ the Council (6:8-15, 7:51-53):** a. How would you introduce Stephen? b. Where did the opposition to Stephen's ministry arise from and why? c. What did Sanhedrin accuse him of? d. How powerful is the role of witnesses? e. In his closing response to council, did Stephen defend or prosecute; how?
- 2. Stephen Martyred for Christ (7:54-60):** a. How did the council react? How was Stephen killed? b. What sustained Stephen at his time of crisis? c. What is different about the position of Jesus? d. In what ways is Stephen's final moments similar to Jesus? **E. Are we ready to die for Christ?** ... How can we have the spirit of a martyr?

Chapter 6/7  
June 24, 2020



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### Stephen ... first Martyr for Christ

*Some questions to guide your thoughts as you meditate on Acts 6&7 (6:8-15, 7:51-60)*

#### 1. Stephen @ the Council (6:8-15, 7:51-53):

- a. What were some great qualities of Stephen?
- b. Where did the opposition to Stephen's ministry arise from and why?
- c. What did Sanhedrin accuse him of?
- d. How powerful is the role of witnesses?
- e. In his closing response to council, did Stephen defend or prosecute; how?

How will we Introduce Stephen?

# Stephen ...

1. Good testimony, full of holy ghost, and wise (v.3, v.10)
2. Worker (took care of widows)
3. Full of faith & power (v.8)
4. Did great wonders and miracles (v.8)
5. Effective speaker (v.10)
6. At peace (v.15)
7. Well learned in Scriptures, history of Israel (7:1-53)
8. Humble (widows ministry, despite being a gifted speaker)
9. Passionate ... lived and **died for Christ** (7:59)

**Bonus:**

How did John Introduce Jesus?

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)

b. Where did the opposition to Stephen's ministry arise from and why?

c. What did Sanhedrin accuse him of?

## Oppositions and Accusations

- We see growing opposition to the Lord's work ... opinion of the masses are changing (*contrast*: in Acts 2:47, 5:26, crowds were in favor of disciples)
- **Opposition**: from the Synagogues, teachings and growing conversions seen as a threat to the existing institution
- **(falsely) Accused of**:
  - Blasphemy against the holy Place (v.14)
  - Blasphemy against law of God (v.14)
  - Blasphemy against Moses (v.11)
  - Blasphemy against God (v.11)

**Acts 7:11,14** ... "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us

# Role of Witnesses in a Trial

- Powerful (Deuteronomy 19:15-19)
  - False witnesses (Matthew 26:59-61)
  - Lord hates false witness (Proverbs 6:16-19)
- 
- **Deuteronomy 19:15** One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established
  - **Mathew 26:59-61** Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

# What does the Lord hate? Proverbs 6:16-19

These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him:

A proud look,  
a lying tongue,  
hands that shed innocent blood,  
An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,  
feet that be swift in running to mischief,  
A false witness *that speaketh lies*,  
and he that soweth discord among brethren.

In his closing response to council,  
did Stephen defend or prosecute?;  
how?

# Stephen's response to the council (counter attack)

- Stephen's powerful closing statement (51-53) ...

## Stephen prosecutes his accusers!

- Stiffnecked
- uncircumcised in heart and ears
- Resistors of Holy Spirit
- Rejecting prophets
- Not keeping the law
- Killing Jesus
- For full response read Acts 7:1-53

**Jeremiah 9:26** For all *these* nations *are* uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart.

**Exodus 32:9** And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:

**Deuteronomy 10:16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked



## Stephen Martyred for Christ (7:54-60):

- a. How did the council react? How was Stephen killed?
- b. What sustained Stephen at his time of crisis?
- c. What is different about the position of Jesus?
- d. In what ways is Stephen's final moments similar to Jesus?
- e. **Are we ready to die for Christ?** ... How can we have the spirit of a martyr?

How did the council react?

How was Stephen killed?

# How did the council react? How was Stephen killed?

- Angry .... Cut to heart, gnashing of teeth (54)
- Uncontrollable anger leads to murder
  - Ran upon him, cast him out of the city, **stoned him** (57-59)

- Warned by Jesus (John 16:2)

**John 16: 2** They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

- consequence of hardening our hearts and resisting the Spirit (v.51),  
...loss in our lives! .... *Instead of resisting, receive the spirit!*

# What sustained Stephen in his time of trial?

- Focus on Christ/Right Perspective/Presence of Jesus

## Paul's experience: II Timothy 4:16-17

**II Timothy 4: 16** At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. **17** But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength,

# Blessed Position of Jesus Christ

Jesus “**standing**” to receive Stephen

**Acts 7:55** ... and saw the glory of God, and Jesus **standing** on the right hand of God

Stephen honored by the Lord

**Colossians 3:1** .... where Christ is, **sitting** at the right hand of God.

In what ways is Stephen's final moments similar to Jesus?

# Final moments of Stephen and Jesus

- Receive my Spirit (59)
- Forgive the Killers (60)

**Luke 23:46** And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ” Having said this, He breathed His last

**Luke 23:34** Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

Blissful ending (sleep, v.60)

Are we ready to die for Christ?  
How can we have the spirit of a martyr?

**Discussion verses:** Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20

# Are we ready to die for Christ? ...

## How can we have the spirit of a martyr?

- Passionate love for God (heart, mind, soul, and strength)
- Commitment to great commission
- Glorious Vision of Heaven
- Right Perspective of life on earth (pilgrims, all \$\$ will be left behind!)

**Philippians 1:21** For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain

**Hebrews 11:10** for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God

**II Corinthians 4:18** While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.