

Stephen

Acts 6-7



The Story - Acts 6-7

There were many Christians in the church at Jerusalem. When the Christians brought their money to the apostles to share with the needy, some of the needy were passed by. The apostles needed help so that they could continue to pray and to preach the word of God to the people.

The apostles asked the Christians to choose seven good men who were wise and had the Spirit of God. These men should take care of the needy people in the church. Stephen was the name of one of these men. Another man chosen was Philip. These seven men were brought before the apostles. The apostles prayed and laid their hands on the men to set them apart for the work of caring for the needy.

The word of God spread, and the number of believers in Jerusalem grew greatly. Stephen looked after the needy Christians and also preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to many people, also the Gentiles. Stephen preached with such power and did such wonders that people felt he was preaching the truth.

Some Jews who thought Gentiles should not hear about God spoke against Stephen. These Jews could tell that Stephen had great wisdom. They could tell that the words Stephen spoke through the Holy Spirit were the truth.

These Jews hired men to be false witnesses and tell lies about Stephen. They made the people and the rulers of the people excited and angry with Stephen. The people seized Stephen and brought him before the Jewish council.

The false witnesses said, "This man speaks evil words against the Temple and God's Law. We heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses gave us."

When Stephen stood up to answer the high priest and the council, everyone looked at him. They saw Stephen's face shine like the face of an angel.

Then the high priest asked, "Are these things so?"

Stephen began to speak of the great things God had done for the people of Israel. He reminded them that God called Abraham to leave his home and go into a new land. God had promised Abraham that He would give Abraham's descendants that land. Abraham's descendants were called the people of Israel. Stephen now reminded these Jews and the Jewish council how God had given the Israelites great men like Joseph and Moses and the prophets.

These men had told the people of Israel to believe in the promised Savior. Stephen showed the council how the Israelites had not been

faithful to God, even after God blessed them. They had not listened to the prophets and had even killed many prophets.

Stephen said, "You are like your fathers. You shut your ears to the Holy Spirit. Your fathers killed many of the prophets. When God sent His Son Jesus, the promised Savior, you killed Him!"

These words of Stephen made the Jews very angry. They were so angry that they ground their teeth together. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked toward heaven and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" The evil Jews could not see Stephen's vision of heaven.

Stephen's enemies were so angry that they shouted at him. They plugged their ears and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and threw stones at him until he was

dead. Even as they threw stones at him, Stephen knelt down and prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

When he had said this, Stephen fell asleep in death, believing in Jesus his Savior. He was the first one to be killed for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Stephen's friends carried his body away and buried it. Many Christians were very sad.

One of the enemies of Stephen was a young man whose name was Saul. When the false witnesses took off their loose outer garments so they could throw stones at Stephen, Saul held their garments. This young man had heard Stephen's speech and saw his shining face, but he thought it was good to put Stephen to death. He became an enemy of the Christians and began to put many of them into prison for their faith in Jesus. The Christian church seemed ready to end, but God had His plan.

Activity One - Read each sentence. Circle the correct answers.

1. The name given to people who believed in Jesus Christ.

Jews Gentiles Christians Hebrews

2. The number of men chosen to help the apostles.

Three Five Seven Nine

3. The names of two of the men chosen to help.

Philip Stephen James Andrew

4. Some Jews said Stephen was doing this.

Lying Stealing Worshiping Idols Speaking evil words

5. Stephen was filled with this.

Lies Holy Spirit Jealousy Anger

6. The Israelites killed many of these.

Children Angels Prophets Altars

7. God tells us to listen to this to help our faith get stronger.

Music Radio Tapes His Word

8. If we believe in Jesus as our Savior when we die, we will go here.

Heaven Hell Ground Air

9. People who are not Jews are called this.

Hebrews Gentiles Christians Arabs

10. The man who held garments for the people stoning Stephen was ...

Judas John James Saul

Review

How did Stephen die?

Why did Stephen die?

A descendant of Abraham received a vision of heaven from God in a dream. Who was he? How was his vision of heaven different from Stephen's vision?

Draw a picture of Stephen's vision of heaven.

Passages

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” 1 Timothy 6:12a

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not hurt nor harm our neighbor’s body, but we should help and be a friend to him in every bodily need.

Hymn

Hymn 445 v. 1, 4

Am I a soldier of the Cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause
Or blush to speak His name?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage Lord!
I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

Prayer

Dear Father in heaven,
Thank you for giving us a good example of Stephen, a child of yours who did not deny You. He was willing to suffer and die because of his love for You and also his enemies. Help us when we have troubles to take them to You. Make us strong Christians so that we would be willing to die, if need be, rather than give up our faith. Help us to be loving Christians for Jesus’ sake. Amen.