

The Week in the Word

Acts Worksheet #12: The Church's First Martyr

Passage: Acts 6:8-8:1

Sermon Dates: March 22,23

Study Period: March 17-22

Link Group Meetings: March 24-28

At this point in our story, the event of Pentecost is probably 5 or 6 years in the past, and as far as we can tell, the Gospel still hasn't been preached outside of Jerusalem.

The story of how the Gospel got beyond the walls of Jerusalem starts with the story of Stephen. Though his death is a tragic injustice, he is a key player in God's plan to take the gospel out to the world, because his ministry caused the opponents to intensify their persecution. That persecution is what forced the Christians to scatter into the world, taking the Gospel with them.

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1. Read Acts 6:3-15. From Acts 6:3-8, describe Stephen.
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2. Why couldn't the opposition stand up against Stephen's arguments? (6:10)
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3. What accusations are made against Stephen? (6:11-14) Compare these with the accusation made against Jesus in Mark 14:55-58. What similarities do you see?
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4. What did the people see when they looked at Stephen? (6:15). Describe what you think he might have looked like.
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5. Read through Stephen's message (7:1-53). What are the main highlights of his message?

6. What is similar about the way Joseph and Moses were treated by their fellow Israelites? (Compare v.9 with v.27,35,39)

7. What is similar about the way God used Moses and Joseph in their fellow Israelites' lives? (Compare v.11-15 with v.25,34-36)

8. What accusations does Stephen make against his accusers? (v.51,52,53)

9. What did Stephen see as the men gnashed their teeth at him? (7:54-56)

10. Why did Stephen's enemies cover their ears and yell at the top of their voices? (7:57)

11. When your conscience is pricked, how do you tend to react? What defense mechanisms do you use? How **should** you react?

12. What were Stephen's last words? What was his concern? (7:59-60)

13. What character qualities do you see in Stephen that you would like to see developed or increased in your own life? How would you go about working on them?