

Introduction:

Today we're going to begin looking at *Stephen's Arrest and Trial*.

Things we will look at in this lesson:

Stephen's Ministry and the Charges Against Him (Part One)

Stephen's Ministry and the Charges Against Him (Part One):

01. What did Stephen's name signify?

02. What was Stephen killed for?

03. Where did Stephen minister?

04. What was the result of Stephen's preaching in the Synagogue?

05. On what charge was Stephen brought before the Sanhedrin?

06. Why are sacrifices no longer necessary?

07. How do you know you have lost the contest?

08. In all of the trial speeches in the book of Acts, what were the defendants trying to do?

09. What did Stephen take great pains to show?

10. What did Stephen's preaching demand?

Article 1) Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7):

(1) Stephen's message is a defense of the message and faith as preached by Christ, his first disciples and the early church leaders.

(2) Stephen is a forefather and an example of all who defend true Biblical faith against those who oppose or try to change its teaching. He is also recognized as the first to die for that reason.

(3) Jesus confirms Stephen's actions and proves that this faithful servant was right by standing before his Father in heaven (Acts 7:55). The Bible normally speaks of Jesus as seated at the right hand of God (i.e., the place of highest honor and authority in heaven, Acts 2:34; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Colossians 3:1). But here Jesus stood in order to welcome his first martyr (i.e., one who dies for his or her cause or beliefs) into heaven. Stephen had boldly confessed Christ and defended the faith to people. Now it seems that Christ, stood to welcome him as he prepared to join Christ in heaven.

(4) Stephen's love of the truth and his willingness to give his life to guard and defend that truth stands in sharp contrast to those who do not want to contend for the faith (Jude 3). Spiritually weak and misguided individuals might defend their actions in the name of love, peace and tolerance; but in reality they feel no need to oppose false teachers who twist the truth for which Christ died (Galatians 1:9).

(5) Stephen's message gives a short, but very detailed, history of the Jewish people, from their forefather, Abraham, to Moses to Kings David and Solomon. He highlights God's call to Abraham and the family history of Israel's original ancestors. He recounts how the people of Israel ended up in Egypt, but also how God miraculously rescued them from slavery in his own time. He speaks of the tabernacle (i.e., the portable sanctuary and worship center) God's people used in the desert and of the temple later built by Solomon.

(6) Stephen highlights Israel's rebellion and their refusal to recognize what God was doing through them. They frequently went so far as to kill God's true prophets. Stephen reminds the leaders they have done the same thing in killing God's Son. They refused to see that God's plan all along was not only to live with his people, but also to live within them by his Spirit. But like so many before them, the religious leaders missed God's purpose because their hearts were hard and resistant toward him and his message.