

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does God permit trials to come into the lives of His faithful?
2. In what form do these trials appear today?
3. Stephen spoke plainly to the Pharisees of their guilt. Is our speech as plain to sinners today?
4. Why was Stephen able to see such a beautiful heavenly vision?

SUMMARY:

Stephen began to work great miracles. When men disputed with him, he spoke with a God-given wisdom. Because of this, he was falsely accused and arrested. In this dark hour he spoke with great boldness and fearlessness that brought conviction into the hearts of the council. But, instead of repenting, their hearts became more hardened so that they stoned Stephen. His triumph came in three ways: an effectual ministry convicting men's hearts; a glorious heavenly vision seeing the glory of God and the Lord Jesus; and finally, that blessed sleep in Jesus reserved only for the faithful.

NOTES:

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Bible Lesson #1

January 5, 2003

First Quarter

THE FIRST MARTYR

LESSON TEXT: *Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-60*

LESSON SETTING: Among the first church of Jerusalem before the Jewish leaders in the synagogue.

TIME: Approximately 33 AD during the period of the organization of the church.

I. STEPHEN'S TRIAL. Acts 6:8-15

- A. Opposition (vs.9) Isaiah 30:9-10; Jeremiah 11:21
- B. Persecution (vs. 12) Acts 5:40; Hebrews 11:36
- C. Accusation (vs. 13) Acts 24:5; 1 Peter 3:16

II. STEPHEN'S TESTIMONY. Acts 7:1-53

- A. Recounting History of Israel (vs. 1-50)
- B. Plain Speech (vs. 51-53) Matthew 23:33; Galatians 4:16

III. STEPHEN'S TRIUMPH. Acts 7:54-60

- A. Effectual Ministry (vs. 54) Matthew 21:45-46; Acts 5:33
- B. A Heavenly Vision (vs. 55-56) Acts 1:10; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 22:4
- C. Asleep in Jesus (vs. 60) 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

GOLDEN TEXT: *BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.*

Revelation 2:10

NEXT SUNDAY'S LESSON: Acts 8:1-25

SUPPLEMENTAL REFERENCES: Isaiah 60:1-9; John 4:1-42

QUARTERLY THEME: The First Church Officers

TOPIC: THE OUTREACH OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

After Stephen had been slain as the first Church martyr, a period of great persecution set in for the church. The many who had been converted had to flee for their lives. Despite the persecution, they did not become silent, but went everywhere preaching the Word.

Our lesson deals with one witness, his place of witness, and the effect his witness had. Verse six says, "the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake."

Our opportunity to witness for the Lord is continually present, but how do we use the opportunities the Lord provides? Perhaps the reason for our inability to recognize the opportunities is that we do not live as close to the Lord as we ought. Perhaps our lives are too filled with cares and with our concern to make a living providing homes and a future income, when we should be trusting more in the Lord. We know that if we serve Him, He will take care of us according to His perfect will.

Let us yield ourselves more to Him and seek out His preparation for our service for Him. ". . . and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" (1 Peter 3:15)

CENTRAL TRUTH: God often uses opposition to fulfill the mission of His church.

GOLDEN TEXT: *THEY THAT WERE SCATTERED ABROAD WENT EVERYWHERE PREACHING THE WORD.* Acts 8:4

Scattered by persecution! Yet how wondrously this work of Satan turned to spreading of God's Word rather than stopping it. Those who were content until this time to group together in the close bonds of love and fellowship were now scattered by persecution. Everywhere they went they proclaimed the love of God and the coming of the Messiah. They gave witness of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives that transformed them. As men saw these changed men and as they witnessed miracles wrought by God through His witnesses, many repented and believed and were baptized.

The Church today is comparatively free of persecution. With this freedom we are often content to remain in passive groups, enjoying our fellowship. Perhaps the Church today needs more persecution to awaken us to our need to go out and testify of what the Lord has done for us.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF January 6 - 12

- M. Jesus' Request. John 4:1-8
- T. The Woman's Response. John 4:9-18
- W. Jesus' Teaching. John 4:19-26
- T. The Samaritan Harvest. John 4:27-42
- F. *Revival in Samaria. Acts 8:1-8
- S. *The Holy Spirit Comes. Acts 8:9-17
- S. *Peter Rebukes Simon. Acts 8:18-25