

Daily Bible Readings

Our Read-Ahead for: 16 October 2022

Stephen's Martyrdom

Monday: Equipped to Speak Boldly (Ephesians 6:13–20)

Tuesday: The Promised Fulfillment Draws Near (Acts 7:17–22)

Wednesday: I Have Come to Rescue Them (Acts 7:30–34)

Thursday: The Rejection of Moses (Acts 7:35–39)

Friday: The Rejection of God (Acts 7:39–43)

Saturday: The Inadequacy of the Temple (Acts 7:44–50)

Sunday: You Are the Ones (Acts 7:51–8:1a)

Stephen's Arrest and Speech
Bible Background; **Acts 7:1–8:1A**
Printed Text: **Acts 7:51–8:1A**
Devotional Reading: **Ephesians 6:13–20**

Keep in Mind: “*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*” (**Acts 7:59, KJV**)

Aim for Change

*By the end of the lesson, we will: **IDENTIFY** the reasons for Stephen's martyrdom, **REFLECT** on our reactions when our beliefs are challenged, and **WITNESS** peacefully and candidly for Christ regardless of the cost.*

In Focus

Sometimes, even a life full of goodness and a very wise witness will not convince people. Are we ready to speak up for our Savior, no matter what the consequences will be in our lives?

Focal Verses

Acts 7:51-60-8:1a

51 Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he knelt, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

8:1a And Saul was consenting unto his death.;

The Lesson

I. The People, Places and Times

Blasphemy: The Greek word for “*blasphemy*” means “to slander” or “to speak lightly of the divine.” In the New Testament, blasphemy is defined as a hostile attitude toward God. It is worth noting that both Jesus and Stephen were condemned to death under the false charge of blasphemy. This occurred because Jesus claimed to be the unique Son of God. As a result, the Jewish leaders manipulated the situation (trial & crucifixion) which killed Him because in "calling God his own Father, [Jesus was] making himself equal with God"; and Stephen accused the unbelieving Jews of murdering the long-awaited Messiah. In Romans, Paul quotes Isaiah who stated God’s name was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the Jews (Romans 2:24, Isaiah 52:5). This confirms the importance of believers living in ways that bring praise to God rather than contempt for Him.

Background: Jesus knew that the Gospel of the Kingdom would be preached to all nations. He knew that truth, armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, would prevail in the battle with evil and that the bloodstained banner would one day wave triumphantly over His followers.

As Christ’s earthly ministry closed, He knew He would soon leave His disciples to carry on the work without His supervision. He sought to encourage them and to prepare them for the future. He did not deceive them with false hopes. He knew He was about to be separated from them—to leave them as sheep among wolves. He knew they would suffer persecution, be cast out of the synagogues, and be thrown into prison for proclaiming

Him as the Messiah. In speaking of their future, Jesus said some of them would be killed. He knew that in their coming trials they would remember His words and be strengthened to believe in Him as the Redeemer.

At this time, Christians were converted Jews, and attended synagogues. The Christian Jews were a tiny minority among the other Jews. Stephen attended the Synagogue of the Freedmen, and performed miracles in the name of Jesus. Other Jewish members who did not follow Christ opposed him. They debated Stephen, but their arguments could not stand for two reasons. First, the Holy Spirit was enabling him to use great wisdom. Secondly, the things that Stephen said concerning Jesus Christ were true.

II. In Depth

1. The Conclusion of Stephen's Defense (**Acts 7:51–53**)
2. The Death of Stephen (**Acts 7: 53–8:1a**)

III. Take Aways

IV. Closing Prayer