

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for April 1, 2012

Stephen's Death By The Council
Acts 7:54-60

Acts 7:54-60 records the murder of Stephen, who was falsely charged with blasphemy of God, the Law, and the temple.

1. Stephen spurned by the Jews (7:54)

The response of the Jewish Council was intense anger, as seen earlier in their response to the apostles (Acts 5:33).

2. Stephen sees Jesus (7:55-56)

Psalm 110:1 speaks of the Messiah at the right hand of God.

The title "Son of Man" (Daniel 7:13-14) is Messianic and is used exclusively by Jesus in the Gospels to speak of Himself. Jesus used this term before this same council when He foretold His exalted position in heaven (Luke 22:69).

In addition to supporting the resurrection of Christ, Stephen's words opposed the Sadducees' denial of an afterlife.

3. Stephen stoned by the Jews (7:57-58)

a. The rush

The loud cry and covering of the ears indicates their belief that blasphemy had just taken place. Those with uncircumcised ears (7:51) refused to listen.

The phrase "one impulse" testifies to the spontaneous nature of the reaction of the council. This was not an official execution due to the verdict of the trial but rather an illegal attack by a united mob.

b. The removal

Leviticus 24:14-16 prescribed stoning for the sin of blasphemy and instructed that it be done at a distant location.

Witnesses had a key role in an execution in Jewish custom (Deuteronomy 17:7). Those resisting the Holy Spirit would have considered themselves witnesses to Stephen's blasphemy upon hearing Stephen speak of Jesus at the right hand of God.

c. The robes

In keeping with Luke's pattern, Saul is introduced in a minor role prior to his place of later prominence as Paul.

The laying down of robes simply made the stoning easier and was provided by Luke to show the involvement of Paul.

4. Stephen sleeps (7:59-60)

There is a similarity between the death of Stephen and the death of Jesus. They were both killed after an unfair trial before the Jewish council. They both committed their spirit to God (cf. Luke 23:46). They both asked for God's forgiveness (cf. Luke 23:34). However, the key difference is that Stephen's appeal was to Jesus. Jesus is clearly seen as our One Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

Stephen is shown as following in the ministry of Christ at a pivotal moment in the history of the church, propelling the gospel from being localized in Jerusalem to moving to Samaria (Acts 8-12) and to the world (Acts 13-28).

May we face adversity with the courage of Stephen, with faith that God will further His purposes regardless of the outcome for