

K.E.Y. Bible Study

Description: K.E.Y. Bible Study introduces the essential biblical narratives, concepts, and themes, and teaches the student how to apply the message of the Bible to daily living. Each teaching session is self-contained, which allows participants to join in the study at any time during the five years.

Purpose: To teach the most significant events, passages, and doctrines of the Bible in a manner and using methods which encourages and empowers the student to:

- Keep the faith that we have received
- Be Equipped to serve the Body of Christ
- Become Yoked, or connect, with others for the purpose of ministry

A Death That Changed the Direction of the Church

October 14, 2015
Acts 6:8-8:3

General Background

These chapters in Acts focus on the ministry and martyrdom of Stephen, a Spirit-filled believer who was faithful in life and in death. He was elected by the believers in Jerusalem to serve as a deacon of the church (Acts 6:5). He faithfully fulfilled that duty, but also was one of the first beyond the apostles to perform miracles. As a result of the preaching of the gospel even some of the priests of the Temple were coming to Christ. Hellenistic Jews residing in the city heard the preaching of Stephen and saw the miraculous works done and began to challenge Stephen. Since they could not refute him, they determined to destroy him. False witnesses were procured and a trial ensued. However, Stephen turned the tables. It was not he that was on trial, but the faithless people of Israel who through the generations had been disobedient to the promise and call of God upon the nation. Stephen preached a powerful sermon to the Sanhedrin. This was the climactic sermon preached to the Jews. Stephen was faithful unto death and was the first martyr for the Christian faith. From this point forward in the book of Acts, we will see the gospel preached also to the Gentiles as the church begins to spread out beyond Jerusalem.

What Happened

Three accusations were brought against Stephen – Acts 6:13-14:

- (1) blasphemy against the temple
- (2) blasphemy against the law
- (3) preaching the destruction of the temple and Jewish customs.

Stephens defense was fourfold – Acts 7:2-53:

1. God's grace was made known through Abraham and disobedience was displayed through the patriarchs. Acts 7:2-16
2. God's grace was made known through Moses and disobedience was displayed by Israel. Acts 7:17-43
3. God's grace was made known through David and Solomon with an emphasis on the true temple. Acts 7:44-50
4. The present disobedience. Acts 7:51-53

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- ⁵³ you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

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Stephen is stoned to death - Acts 7:54-8:1a

⁵⁴ When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

¹ And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

The Church Persecuted and Scattered – Acts 8:1b-3

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

What Does It Mean and How Can I Apply It?

1. Recognize the difference in being offended and being persecuted
2. Pray for persecuted believers worldwide