

STEPHEN, THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR, HIS ACCUSATION

Acts 6:8-15

Introduction:

- A. Baptist people are people of blood
 - 1) We believe in the blood of Jesus
 - 2) We believe it is proper to shed one's own blood in defense of one's faith
- B. As far as divine revelation goes, Stephen is the first man to die as a martyr.
 - 1) John the Baptist was removed by the providence of God so that Jesus "must increase"
 - 2) Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice
 - 3) The Apostles had suffered

I. Stephen, the Man and His Work Vs. 8

- A. "And Stephen full of faith and power"
 - 1) "faith" = charis = "a kind, affectionate, pleasing nature, personal gracefulness, pleasing work"
 - 2) "power" = dunamis = "capability, inherent power"
- B. "did great wonders and miracles among the people"
 - 1) "wonders" = teras = "a supernatural occurrence, with an emphasis on surprise and excitement"
 - 2) "miracles" = semeion = "a sign", "a signal", "that which would authenticate his message"

II. Stephen's Adversaries Vs. 9

A. Lib^{er}-tinas [freedmen].

A section of the Jewish community who had a synagogue at Jerusalem, and were among the foes of the first martyr, Stephen (Acts vi. 9). They were probably Jews, who, having been taken prisoners in battle by Pompey and other Roman generals, had been bondsmen at Rome, but were afterwards restored to liberty.

Davis Dictionary of the Bible

B. "disputing with Stephen"

- 1) "disputing" = suzeteo = "to seek or examine with, at the same time or together;" "to seek jointly"
- 2) They attempted to debate Stephen

C. They were unsuccessful Vs. 10

- 1) "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake"
- 2) "resist" = anthistemi = "to stand against", "to set one's self against", "to withstand"
- 3) Two things were in his favor
 - a. "wisdom" = sophia
 - b. "spirit" = pneuma = "character", "feelings and desires", here, perhaps attitude.

III. When You Can't Refute the Truth

- A. They suborned men Vs. 11
 - 1) upoballw = "to cast or throw under", "thrust under", "put forward by collusion"
 - 2) He blasphemed God and Moses!
- B. They stirred up the people Vs. 12
 - 1) "stirred" = sukkinéo = "to move with", "excite together or at the same time"
 - 2) They seized him with violence
- C. They set up false witnesses Vs. 13-14
 - 1) He spoke against the Temple and the law.
 - 2) Jesus would destroy Jerusalem and the rites and rituals of Moses.

IV. The Beginning of His Defense Vs. 15

- A. "And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him"
 - 1) "steadfastly" = atenizo = "strain and stretch the eyes to be able to see", "fix the eyes intently upon"
 - 2) They all stared at him
- B. "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel"
 - 1) This must have been the look of honesty, sincerity, integrity.
 - 2) God let him look honest because he was honest!
- C. "Then said the High Priest, are these things so?"
 - 1) "Are these charges true?"
 - 2) "Are these statements true?"

V. Stephen was where Jesus had said His witnesses would be

- A. Before councils
 - 1) He had foreseen this circumstance
 - 2) He had warned them to be ready
- B. In peril of life
 - 1) Stephen's life was on the line!
 - 2) He was aware of the penalty.