

I. The religious leaders were filled with anger

A. They resented their sin being exposed

“This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 13:49-50)

II. Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit

A. Stephen focused his attention on God

B. Stephen saw the glory of God

“If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” (1 Peter 4:14)

C. Stephen saw Jesus alive in heaven

“But I say to all of you: in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matthew 26:64)

D. Stephen saw Jesus standing to welcome him

“Therefore, my brothers, be all more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:10-11)

III. The religious leaders responded with great hatred

“All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 10:22)

A. They were deaf to the truth of God

B. They tried to silence the message of God

C. They become a murderous mob

IV. Stephen responded with faith and grace

A. Stephen trusted himself to Jesus

“Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father into your hands I commit my spirit’. “ (Luke 23:46)

B. Stephen showed his killers grace

“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)

C. Stephen experienced dying grace

V. The church encountered great persecution

- A. The persecution spread to all believers

“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.’” (John 15:20)

- B. Many believers left Jerusalem

- C. The persecution of the church was led by Saul

“And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.” (Acts 22:20)

- VI. The church continued to prosper

- A. The proclamation of the gospel greatly increased

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

- B. Philip will proclaim Christ in Samaria

- C. The church continued to grow