

Worth Dying For. Acts: Part 11 Noah Largent 3/16/14

Just as Jesus said: Acts 1:8 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."

At every turn and under all circumstances, the Church is growing!
-Acts 1:15; 2:41&47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7.

The Church is growing and maturing!

We should be growing and maturing too!

The Charge: (Acts 6:8-15) ⁸ Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Opposition arose, however, (they) began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. ¹¹ Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." ¹² So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. ¹³ They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. ¹⁴ For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

Stephen's answers to the charges against him:

1. He was not blaspheming God, but confirming what the religious leaders had missed, **that Jesus was** the promised Messiah.
2. God has spoken outside of and apart from the Temple.
3. The Jewish people have had a long history of rejecting God's message & His Prophets.
4. *Note:* Stephen is charged by the same group with similar blasphemes as Jesus was. As he was being killed Stephen said several things which mimic Jesus' words and actions on the cross. -Dr. Bob Utley Acts Commentary, Ch.7 "Contextual Insights".

The Defense: (Acts 7:2-53) ² ...our father Abraham... ⁹ Joseph...²⁰ Moses...⁴⁴the tabernacle...⁴⁸ prophet...⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your ancestors 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 given through angels but have not obeyed it."

The Reaction: (Acts 7:54-8:1) ⁵⁴ When the members of the Sanhedrin 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 coats 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. ¹And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem.

Contending for the Kingdom:

1. Remember you're always earning a reputation.

-Jn. 13:34-34; Acts 6:5-7 & Colossians 3:17

2. When asked, be prepared to give a reason why you follow Jesus. -1Peter 3:15

3. Be prepared to suffer for it. Acts 7:57&58; 1Peter 5:10

Notes:
