

Sticks and Stones

Session Five

“In the next six chapters of Acts, Luke explains how the foundations of the Gentile mission were laid by two remarkable men (_____ the martyr and _____ the evangelist) and two remarkable conversions (_____ the Pharisee and _____ the centurion)” (p. 125).

Acts 6:8-15

“Stephen, you’re full of it!” Biblically speaking, what is “it”? (6:5,8)

What is Stephen accused of? Why is it so serious of a charge?

“For nothing was more sacred to the Jews, and nothing more precious, than their _____ and their _____” (p. 128).

“What Jesus taught, then, was that the Temple and the law would be superseded, meaning not that they had never been divine gifts in the first place, but that they would find their God-intended fulfillment in him, the Messiah” (p. 129).

Note the rapid degeneration in discourse—from theological debate to slander/lies and finally to violence. Why does truth sometimes evoke this response?

Does Stephen’s face “like that of an angel” remind you of anyone? “Was it not God’s deliberate purpose to give the same radiant face to Stephen when he was accused of opposing the law as he had given to _____ when he received the law?” (p. 129)

Acts 7:1-19

Stephen chooses Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David and Solomon to tell Israel’s history.

“The God of the _____ Testament was the living God, a God on the move and on the march, who was always calling his people out to fresh adventures and always accompanying them and directing them as they went” (p. 131). Do you find Stott’s description of God surprising and/or appealing?

Stephen mentions _____ 7 times in 6 verses to emphasize God is not confined to one place.

Acts 7:20-36

Stephen divides Moses' life into three 40 year sections. What happened shortly after his birth, age 40, age 80 and age 120?

Acts 7:37-53

"It is not difficult, then, to grasp Stephen's thesis. A single thread runs right through the first part of his defense. It is that the God of Israel is a pilgrim God, who is not restricted to any one place" (p. 139).

"No harm can be done to the temple and to the law, when Christ is openly established as the end and truth of them both" (p. 141).

Acts 7:54-8:1a

Why do the members of the Sanhedrin cover their ears? Why do they yell? (v. 57)

Why is Christ *standing*?

T / F Stephen is the first Christian martyr.

Stephen

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

"Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

Jesus

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"In both cases _____ witnesses were produced and the charge was one of blasphemy" (p. 142).

"Change is painful to us all, especially when it affects our cherished buildings and customs, and we should not seek change merely for the sake of change. Yet true Christian radicalism is open to change. It knows that God has bound himself to this church (promising he will never leave it) and to his word (promising that it will never pass away). But God's church means people, not buildings, and God's word means Scripture, not traditions. So long as these essentials are preserved, the buildings and traditions can, if necessary, go. We must not allow them to imprison [us in our understanding of] the living God or to impede [our participation in] mission to the world" (p. 143).

Other thoughts, questions, comments...