

LESSON #94 – STEPHEN STONED – THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

Acts 6-7

The rest of our lesson tells about the work of the Apostles to spread the kingdom of God. How did they do it? By being witnesses for Jesus. They told others about the death and resurrection of Jesus and how those who believed in Him were forgiven and saved from the anger of God against sin because Jesus died in their place. But we will see that it is not easy to be a witness to Jesus. The Bible tells us that there will be those who do not want to be told that they are sinners. They hate anything good and love evil things. There are many people like that today. They do not believe that God cares what we do. They do whatever they want and do not believe that God will punish them. But God promises that He will punish all those who do not believe just as He punished Ananias and Sapphira in our last lesson. They will be punished in hell, forever!

As the church grew larger and larger the Apostles could not do all of the work of preaching and helping those who were in need all by themselves. So they chose seven men to help them. Those men were called "deacons," which means, "those who serve." It became their job to help those who were in need while the Apostles spent most of their time preaching.

One of those who were chosen was named Stephen. In the church today we have minister is the one who preaches but the elders, too, are to be able to teach and to rule over the church for Jesus. Even the deacons, as they serve others in the church, are to be witnesses for Jesus as are all of those who believe.

Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit and did many wonders and signs among the people. But some of the Jews did not like what he was doing. If you serve God other people will sometimes not like you, either. They will be jealous and they will maybe even try to hurt you. But as long as you know that you are doing what GOD wants you to do you can be sure that God will bless you as He did Stephen. These Jews began to argue with Stephen. Stephen said that it was more important to believe in Jesus than to keep all of the sacrifices and holy days which the Jews kept. Since the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross it was no longer necessary to offer the sacrifices at the temple any more. Jesus had paid for the sins of those who would believe in Him.

These men who listened to Stephen took him to the leaders and said that he was telling the people not to keep the law of God. Stephen then told them about God's plan to save His people through Jesus. He reminded them how God had taken care of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; how God had made a great nation from the descendants of Jacob, the nation of Israel. He reminded them how God had brought them out of the land of Egypt where they had been in slavery. But then Stephen reminded them how the people of Israel had turned away from God and had worshipped idols. God had promised to send a prophet to lead His people. This Prophet, said Stephen, was Jesus. But they were like the people of Israel before them. They did not receive Jesus but crucified Him instead. They were sinners, guilty before God and needing forgiveness.

The Jews became very, very angry then. Stephen said, "Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Then the men dragged Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death. While they stoned him Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Then he died. He had died for Jesus. Jesus had been with him. Now he was in heaven.

Memory Verse: "Be faithful, even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life!" – Revelation 2:10.

Application: Not even death can hurt those who love and serve Jesus!

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Acts 6-7

All of the lessons which follow tell us how the church continued to grow as God worked through the Apostles and other Christians. Remember that we saw on our last lesson that God wants those who are truly His people to be witnesses. It would not be long before the Apostles would see just how hard it is to be a witness for Jesus. Jesus had told them before He died that the world would hate them just like they had hated Him. Why is this true? Why do people hate you when you do good things sometimes? Why do other kids make fun of you and call you chicken because you will not do something naughty or because you do not like it when they swear and use God's name in vain? Or do you do those things? It is because they have dead spirits, and they are living in slavery to sin. But if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for your sins, then you will see that you are alive to bring glory and praise to Him, to live for Him. You do not belong to yourself anymore; you belong to Jesus.

As the church became larger, it became impossible for the Apostles to do everything. They had been preaching, teaching and praying with the people. They had also been taking all of the money and other things which the people had brought, and they were giving that to those who needed those things. So they chose seven men to help them. Since these men were put in charge of the money and the other things, the Apostles could preach and teach. These men were called "deacons", which means "those who serve." They helped the Apostles, and they sometimes talked to others about Jesus, too, as all believers should do. In the church today, we have elders and deacons. The minister is an elder who teaches and preaches. The elders are all to be able to teach. The deacons are in charge of the money and the physical things of the church.

One of the men who was chosen was named Stephen. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and God had given him the power to do many wonderful signs and miracles. Just as had happened with Jesus, some of the Jews began to argue with Stephen. He was very wise, though, and he was able to win the arguments, and he was a good witness for Jesus. He loved Jesus very much.

Stephen told these Jews that it was more important to believe in Jesus than to keep all of the sacrifices and holy days which the Jews kept. Remember that the people of Israel had been commanded by God to keep the sacrifices and holy days in the time before Jesus came, but now that Jesus had come, those things were no longer necessary. They had only been used by God to show the people that they needed a Savior. That Savior had come.

The Jews became very angry. They began to tell lies about Stephen, saying that he was telling people that they did not have to keep the commandments either. Finally, they got a mob of people together and grabbed Stephen and brought him before the leaders. There they told lies about him and accused him of teaching bad things. They did not understand why Jesus had come for their hearts were closed, and they did not believe that Jesus was the Savior.

As they looked at Stephen, it looked like his face was shining, like an angel. He told them that it was God's plan to send a Savior ever since His promises to Abraham (the Covenant of Grace). Stephen reminded them how their forefathers in Israel had sinned against God by worshipping idols but how God had promised to send a great Prophet who would tell them how to be saved and how he would take away their sins. They were guilty of crucifying Jesus, the one whom God had sent. Peter had preached like this, and the people had asked how to be saved. These Jews were not moved by God to believe. Instead they became angry. When Stephen said that he could see Jesus at God's right hand, they drug him out of the city and stoned him to death. He prayed for them as Jesus had done, then died.

Stephen Stoned (Continued)

Name: _____ Date: _____

MEMORY VERSE

"I am convinced death nor life,...nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God (that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.)" – Romans 8:38-40

APPLICATION

God tells us in His Word that we should never be afraid as long as we are doing what is right. It is when you are doing what is wrong that you should be afraid. That is true at school, home or anywhere. If you suffer for doing what is right you can be happy because you know that God is with you, just as He was with Stephen. You may think that this was a horrible thing that happened to Stephen. Indeed, the Jews were guilty of a great sin. But what happened to Stephen when he died? Yes, he went to be with Jesus! That is our comfort no matter what happens. If we believe in Him, nothing can keep us away from Him!

QUESTIONS

Fill in the blanks with the words at the bottom.

1. God wants those who are truly Christians to be _____ for Jesus Christ.
2. Some people hate people who are Christians and who do good things because it makes them look bad, and they are _____ to sin.
3. When the church became so large that the Apostles were not able to do everything, they chose seven men to be _____ and to take over the serving of the people.
4. The man which we learn about in our lesson today was one of those who was chosen to be a deacon. His name was _____.
5. Stephen was filled with the _____ so that he had power from God to do wonderful signs and miracles.
6. The Jews were angry with Stephen because he taught that it was more important to believe in _____ and to love Him than to keep all of the sacrifices and holy days which the people had kept before Jesus came.
7. The Jews lied and said that Stephen was teaching the people that they did not have to keep any of the _____.
8. As Stephen spoke to the leaders of the Jews, his face looked like the face of an _____.
9. Stephen reminded the Jews that they were _____ before God because they had not believed that Jesus was the Savior and had crucified Him.
10. The Jews finally became so angry that they drug Stephen out of the city and threw _____ at him until he died.

commandments
guilty
stones
Stephen

slaves
witnesses
deacons

angel
Holy Spirit
Jesus

Class 5 Memorization	<i>HC Q+A:</i>		<i>Scripture:</i>	
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LESSON #94 – JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES IN GALILEE

Read John 21:1-25

Does God simply call His people to believe? No, if that were so He would take us to heaven as soon as we believed in Jesus. You might think that these disciples were something special. Well, in one way they were. They would be inspired by God to write the New Testament. They saw Jesus and followed Him and heard Him so that we can believe the testimony which they give about Him. But in one way they were like all those who are God’s people. We see in this lesson that we should not wait until we think that we are perfect to serve God. We will not be without sin until Jesus returns and makes us like unto Him in all things. He will forgive us for our sins. Then, because we are thankful and we love God, we will serve Him by showing His love to others. Remember that Jesus said this is the proof that our faith is real! You are called to show others what it means to have faith in Jesus by not complaining and grumbling but living in peace and joy and then you are called to tell them of your wonderful Savior; what He has already done for you and what He has promised to do in the future!

QUESTIONS

1. Where did Jesus appear to the disciples in our lesson today? _____
2. What were they doing? _____
3. How long had they been fishing without catching anything? _____
4. Did the disciples realize at first that it was Jesus standing on the shore? _____
What did He tell them to do? _____
5. What happened when they obeyed Jesus? _____
6. What did John say to Peter? _____
7. What did Peter do immediately? _____
8. What about the rest of the disciples? _____
9. After they had finished eating, to whom did Jesus speak? _____
10. What question did Jesus ask Peter three times? _____
11. Why do you think that Jesus asked Peter that question three times? _____
12. Was Jesus trying to make Peter feel guilty? _____
What did He want to teach Peter and the rest about being His disciples? _____
13. Read Luke 5:10. How was that prediction now going to come true? _____
14. What did Jesus tell Peter about the way he would die? _____

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Do you think that it would be easier to believe in Jesus if He appeared to you? Think of some ways that you know Jesus is with you.