

Week 3: Acts 6-7 A truth worth dying for & worth killing for.

This account is very important for many reasons. But the **four** that we will primarily focus on today are;

- (1) Many attributes of Stephen's life, ministry and death _____ the life, ministry and death of Jesus. Emphasizing their parallel purpose.
- (2) Stephen was willing to die for a _____. A certain theology that he was teaching led to his death...a concept that he promoted even in his final breaths.
- (3) The Jewish leaders were willing to kill for a _____. A certain theology that Stephen was teaching led to their murderous act.
- (4) We must be willing to follow Stephen, as he followed Jesus, as He followed God, even unto _____ for certain truths.

Let's read a **brief summary** of the account in Acts 6-7 and then make some observations;

First, Stephen's life, ministry and death **mirror the life, ministry and death of Jesus**. **Eight specific parallels** are mentioned that give us a clear idea that God viewed Stephen as a worthy follower of Christ and that they both died defending/proclaiming the same truth.

Personal Notes:

(1)

(2)

(3)

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Second, Stephen was willing to die for a specific truth. A certain theology that he was teaching led to his death...a concept that he promoted even in his final breaths.

What was this truth? And why was it worthy of death?

"This man never ceases to speak **words against this holy place and the law**, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth **will destroy this place and will change the customs** that Moses delivered to us."

-Essentially, Judaism was preserved by three traditional beliefs regarding; _____, _____ and _____.

-They were mistaken in believing that God's historic presence in the temple guaranteed God's blessing, protection and salvation. In other words, their overconfidence was rooted in their mistaken notion that the promise of land, law and temple ensured God's favor, regardless of their sinful actions and attitudes.

-The essential accusation was that Stephen (like Jesus) was _____ the way to come to God, and therefore was blaspheming against God by speaking against their beliefs, specifically the _____.

Stephen was willing to die in defense of the new covenant which had destroyed (done away with) the old covenant of land, law and temple.

Third, the Jewish leaders were willing to kill for a specific truth.

What was this truth? And why was it worthy of death?

-Essentially the Jewish leaders were willing to kill in defense of the **old covenant** which Jesus and now Stephen were threatening to destroy (do away with).

But let's be more specific. Why were they so angry and willing to kill for this old way? Was it really because they loved God so much and really felt that the temple was the only way to God?

The core problem is actually much deeper;

"Make for us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands."

*"...it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet **the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands**, as the prophet says, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. **What kind of house will you build for me**, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? **Did not my hand make all these things?**"*

-The Jewish leaders were willing to kill over a belief system that made them the benefactors of the _____ of their hands. They wanted a religion that allowed them to be the gods because of their _____.

-The temple, that they built with their hands and the system of laws they contrived...were not in honor of the one true God, but the god of self-effort and self-exaltation.

Stephen condemned them for this self-worship and died for the belief that God only accepts what 'God builds with his hands' for the praise of his glory.

Forth, we must be willing to follow Christ even unto death for certain truths.....and the truth of a crucified Christ who fulfilled the law and abolished the need for an earthly, physical temple is a central truth that both Christ and Stephen died for.

Next Week: Saul's Conversion