

Stephen

Acts 6:8 – 8:3

by Don Falkos

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Stephen was full of God's grace and power. Many people tried to debate with him, but they were no match for the wisdom the Holy Spirit gave him as he spoke. Some of these people falsely accused Stephen of blasphemy. He was brought before the Sanhedrin. As the religious leaders questioned him, they couldn't take their eyes off him; his face had become like that of an angel.

In his defense, Stephen presented a short history of the Jewish people. He reminded them of Moses' prediction that God would send a great prophet, known as the Righteous One. Then he said, "God gave Moses life-giving words. But our ancestors refused to listen. You are just like them, constantly resisting the Holy Spirit. You deliberately disobey God's Law. And now you have betrayed and murdered the Messiah." Stephen looked up and said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

The religious leaders were furious. They took hold of him, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him. They left their cloaks in the care of a young man named Saul.

While he was being stoned, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees and cried out, "Lord, forgive them for this sin." Then he died.

Saul was pleased with what they'd done.

A great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Believers scattered. But the apostles stayed put in Jerusalem even though Saul was going from house to house, dragging off both men and women and putting them in prison.