

he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

The church was scattered beyond Jerusalem, but they faithfully proclaimed the word where they were scattered. (8:1-4)

How did Saul respond to Stephen's death? And how did the church respond to him?

Saul's initial response:

"And Saul approved of his execution."

The church's response:

"And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem..."

...and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria

...except the apostles

"Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him."

Saul's following response:

"But Saul was ravaging the church..."

"...and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison."

The church's response:

"Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word."

What do we see going on in this section of Acts?

- the progressing opposition to the witness of Jesus Christ and his witnesses (and the surprising aggression by those who were "near" and should have known)
- the clear continuity between the witnesses and their witness and even with Jesus Christ himself
- the contrasting responses to the witness and witnesses of Jesus Christ by the same people group, resulting in repentance and faith (2:37) and resulting in rejection and violence (7:54)
- the faithfulness of the witnesses in the face of death which demonstrate that God's plan, rather than being thwarted actually advances

Sunday, October 04, 2026
Danny Capon, *Pastor*

ACTS—The Confident Witness of Jesus Christ
No. 19 | Witnessing in Jerusalem, pt. 11

Acts 7:54-8:3(4)

Review

Acts depicts the *continuing* ministry of Jesus Christ. Though he has ascended, the witness of Jesus continues by the power of the Spirit through the spread of the gospel for the growth of the church. Those who hear and believe the witness of Jesus Christ can and should be confident following his way.

(1:1-26) Waiting for the Spirit—Confirming the Twelve Apostles

(2:1-47) Receiving of the Spirit—Birthing the Church

What then do we see in Acts 3 and following?

The witness of Jesus Christ goes from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. How?

What did the witness (and witnesses) of Jesus Christ encounter?

How did the witness (and witnesses) of Jesus Christ prevail?

Witnessing in Jerusalem, pt. 11

7:54-8:3(4)

Overview

(3:1-8:3) Witnessing in Jerusalem

(3:1-4:31) Boldness in Opposition

(4:32-5:16) Esteem in Community

(5:17-42) Obedience in Suffering

(6:1-7) Wisdom in Decision-making

(6:8-8:3) Faithfulness in Death

Stephen demonstrates that a believer who isn't an apostle can faithfully minister among the disciples and speak the word of God with boldness.

Summary

(6:8-7:1) Stephen faithfully proclaimed Jesus and was opposed.

(7:2-53) Stephen faithfully defended Scripture and challenged his opposition.

(7:54-8:3) Stephen faithfully endured death and motivated the spread of the word.

ESV **Acts 7:1** And the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

² And Stephen said...

⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things...

Stephen faithfully endured death and motivated the spread of the word.

What happened as a result of Stephen's speech (7:2-53)?

ESV **Acts 7:54** Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together¹ at him. ⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Stephen was stoned to death, but he faced death faithfully. (7:54-60)

How did the council respond to Stephen? How did Stephen respond to them?

The council's initial response:

"Now when they heard these things...

"...they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him."

Compare their initial response to Jews ("devout men") on the day of Pentecost...

ESV **Acts 2:37** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart (lit. they were pierced [*katanusso*] in the heart [*kardia*])...

ESV **Acts 7:54** Now when they heard these things they were enraged (lit. they were enraged [*diaprio*] in the heart [*kardia*]...

Stephen's response:

"But he, full of the Holy Spirit..."

"...gazed into heaven and saw..."

...the glory of God and
...Jesus standing at the right hand of God

"And he said..."

'Behold, I see the heavens opened...'

'...and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'

"Why is Jesus '**standing**' when his usual position at God's right side is sitting? His posture is repeated, so it is evidently meant to be noticed by readers....The normal position of witnesses in Jewish/OT judicial processes was standing, whereas the judge sat to hear the case and stands only to give the verdict. Given the judicial process happening on earth, this is a probable context for understanding Jesus's standing

posture and suggests that he is either acting as a witness for Stephen (whom Paul describes as Jesus's 'witness,' 22:20) against the false witnesses (6:13) or as judge, now standing as judge to give his not-guilty verdict on Stephen." (Steve Walton, p. 478)

ESV **Luke 12:8** "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God..."

ESV **Daniel 7:13** I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a **son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

ESV **Luke 22:69** "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

The council's following response:

"But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and..."

"...rushed together at him."

"Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him."

"And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul."

Stephen's response:

"And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out..."

'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

ESV **Luke 23:46** Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"

"And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice..."

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

ESV **Luke 23:34** And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

ESV **Acts 8:1** And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house,