

INTRODUCTION

- * Jesus commissioned the Apostles and then empowered the Apostles to bear witness to His death, burial and resurrection. As they began to perform this calling, thousands of people believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the payment for their sins. The strength of the message and the growth of the church did not excite the religious leaders. As the message spread and the church grew, persecution of the Apostles began to sprout up and grow.
- * As we saw two weeks ago, a transition happened in the early church when the new disciples began to take ownership of the gospel message as well, and began to boldly proclaim it. The church began to multiply! The growth required the Apostles to institute new leadership and servant roles in order to meet the needs of the assembly. This facilitated even more growth.
- * As we will see today, that growth in the assembly met with growth in persecution. Today, we will consider the testimony of the first recorded "Martyr" of the church - Stephen. A "martyr" is one who chooses to suffer death, or great suffering, rather than renounce his/her religion, or cause. The word "martyr" is a transliteration of the Greek word martus (a witness) and martureo (to witness).

INSTRUCTION

I. HIS D _____ (cf. 6:5, 8)

A. His C _____ (cf. Matthew 14:22-32; Matthew 6:30-33)

1. HE WAS FULL OF _____ (6:5)
2. HE WAS FULL OF _____ (6:8; Matthew 14:22-32; Matthew 6:30-33)

B. His W _____ (cf. Ephesians 2:8-10; John 14:12)

II. HIS D _____ (cf. 6:9-15)

A. They Were From the Synagogue of the Freedmen (cf. 6:9)

B. They Were Not Able to Resist the Wisdom and Spirit by which He Spoke (cf. 6:10; cf. Luke 21:12-15)

C. They Found False Witnesses and Stirred Up The People (cf. 6:11-14)

D. They Saw His Innocence (cf. 6:15)

III. HIS D _____ (cf. 7:1-53)

A. YHWH's P _____ of Re _____ (7: 2-8, 17)

B. Israel's P _____ of Re _____ (7: 9-53)

IV. HIS D _____ (cf. 7:54-60; cf. 2 Timothy 4:5-8)

INTROSPECTION

- * How faithful are you to witness of your faith?
- * To what extent are you willing to suffer for your faith in Christ Jesus? ... are you willing to die?
- * Are you prepare to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you?
- * Is there a need to change the way you think and therefore the way you act?

INTERACTION ... Thoughts & Questions to ponder for later discussion

- * How can we aid one another in being prepared for periods of persecution or opportunities to share our faith?