

(Luke 22:69)

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**Stephen – the First Martyr**

*“When they heard these things, they were **cut to the heart**, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. (55) But he, being **full of the Holy Ghost**, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and **Jesus standing on the right hand of God**, (56) And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the **Son of man standing on the right hand of God**. (57) Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, (58) And cast him out of the city, and **stoned him**: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose **name was Saul**. (59) And they **stoned Stephen**, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (60) And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, **Lord, lay not this sin to their charge**. And when he had said this, **he fell asleep**.” (Acts 7:54-60)*

Stephen was so much in love with Jesus that he had to share the Gospel message with those around him...**no matter the cost!**

We must be aware that the message of salvation can lead the hearers to **repentance or violence... revival or riot... and sometimes both**. Compare the first Gospel sermon by Peter with the words preached by Stephen. Both messages are very similar. However, Peter saw revival (three thousand saved), and Stephen saw the underside of a stone pile (he was killed.)

Stephen saw Jesus **standing** at the right hand of God, but we know that Jesus said that Christ would be **seated** at the right hand of the Father!

*“But from now on the Son of Man shall be **seated** at the right hand of the power of God.”*

This is amazing! Jesus **STANDS UP** to receive His martyrs into glory! Unbelievable! The King of kings **rises** when His followers are so in love with Him that they will give their life in service to others.

The amazement continues. Stephen responded to those killing him in a **similar manner as Jesus** did while on the Cross. Jesus said, **“forgive them they don’t know what they are doing,”** and Stephen said, **“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”**

God’s grace was there for Stephen; the Bible says he **fell asleep**. Stephen **died** being pelted by stones, and the description is that of **falling asleep**. That is astounding grace from the throne of God.

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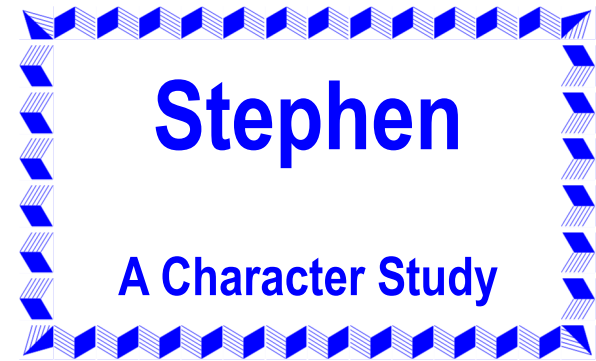
**Stephen - Conclusion**

We should grow in our love for Jesus in such a way as to live like Stephen. His death impacted the apostle Paul, who mentioned Stephen while giving his testimony. Stephen loved others like Jesus in such a manner as to pray for their forgiveness while they were killing him.

The impact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can have on a person’s life is astonishing!

Yield yourself in submission to God and **PREPARE TO BE AMAZED!**

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By: Robert Dallmann

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*“(3) Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of **honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom**, whom we may appoint over this business. (5) And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, **a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost**, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:” (Acts 6:3, 5)*

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**Stephen – Godly Character**

As the first church sought deacons to oversee the offerings, we see some of the requirements in Acts 6:3 (quoted above.) Stephen was the first man mentioned in the list of seven deacons and was a man of God with terrific spiritual integrity.

**Honest Report** – By definition, this means that other people spoke well of Stephen. Stephen was highly esteemed for his honesty and faithfulness.

**Full of the Holy Ghost** – Stephen was thoroughly permeated with the Holy Spirit. His spiritual life was complete in Christ and reflected a life led by

# STEPHEN—A CHARACTER STUDY

the Spirit of God.

**Full of Wisdom** – The Greek word used for “wisdom” has a wide array of meanings. This wisdom includes knowledge of divine and human things acquired by intellect and experience. It also encompasses management skills and prudent interactions regarding preaching and teaching sound doctrine and the Gospel.

**Full of Faith** – Stephen was steadfastly convinced of moral and spiritual truth. This phrase includes consistency in expressing faith in Jesus which is very evident, as we see when his life draws to an end.

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## Stephen – A Cut Above

Stephen seems to be foremost in the list of seven deacons. He is the **first one mentioned** and the **only one identified** as full of faith and the Holy Ghost. I don’t believe this is designed to disparage the others listed but shows how Stephen exemplified the requirements.

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## Stephen – the Servant

*“And the **word of God increased**; and the **number of the disciples multiplied** in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7)*

The apostles had these seven men chosen to “wait on tables” (oversee the distribution amongst the widows.) It was not appropriate for the apostles to spend time settling arguments; therefore, this was part of the deacons’ job.

Because Stephen and the others were willing to serve, the Word of God **increased** and the number of disciples **multiplied**.

Stephen was a servant who was content to wait on tables...to intervene in arguments...to not be in the spotlight. Praise God for faithful servants.

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## Stephen – the Powerful

*“And Stephen, **full of faith and power**, did **great wonders and miracles** among the people.” (Acts 6:8)*

It should not be surprising that a person full of faith and the Holy Spirit would do miracles. It is interesting, however, that this is noted explicitly regarding Stephen.

No person is more important than any others...but they may be more obedient to God.

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## Stephen – the Contender for Truth

*“Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, **disputing with Stephen**. (10) And **they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit** by which he spake.” (Acts 6:9-10)*

There is nothing new under the sun. Heretics still rise up against those who **fight for truth**.

Synagogue participants from different places and persuasions **resisted the teaching of Stephen**. Like today, they **arrogantly** thought they could **dismantle his doctrine** with their **presumed superior wisdom**. Scripture makes it clear that they could not overcome the wisdom and spirit in which Stephen spoke.

Since they could not outsmart Stephen, they brought false witnesses against him (as they did with Jesus.)

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## Stephen – the Angelic

*“And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw **his face as it had been the face of an angel**.” (Acts 6:15)*

I have no idea what the face of an angel looks like, but Stephen’s audience saw his face as such.

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## Stephen – The Evangelist

*“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of **the Just One**; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:” (Acts 7:52)*

*“But he, being **full of the Holy Ghost**, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus **standing on the right hand of God**,”*

(Acts 7:55)

As any genuine evangelist, Stephen made his audience **aware of their guilt**. He tells them that **they murdered Jesus**. When was the last time you did evangelism like Stephen?

Stephen preached the same Gospel as Peter, Paul, and all others in the New Testament. He **preached** the vicarious **death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ**.