

~STEPHEN (175)

(Ste'phen) [from a root meaning, crown, wreath]

.. His Appointment To A Special Ministry

.. His Defense Before The Sanhedrin

- The first Christian martyr. Though his name is Greek, he was one of the faithful Jewish remnant that accepted and followed the Messiah.

- He said; Men, brothers and fathers, hear. The God of glory appeared to our forefather Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he took up residence in Haran. ([Acts of Apostles 7:2](#))

.. His Appointment To A Special Ministry

- **Stephen's** name first appears in the Bible record in connection with the appointment of men to special service responsibilities in the Christian congregation at Jerusalem. The account reads,

- Now in these days, when the disciples were increasing, a murmuring arose on the part of the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.

- The apostles saw the need for special attention to this matter, and they instructed the congregation; So, brothers, search out for yourselves seven certified men from among you, full of spirit and wisdom, that we may appoint them over this necessary business. These qualified men were then selected and were appointed by the apostles.

- Now in these days, when the disciples were increasing, a murmuring arose on the part of the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. ([Acts of Apostles 6:1](#))

- So the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them and said; It is not pleasing for us to leave the word of God to distribute food to tables. ([Acts of Apostles 6:2](#))

- So, brothers, search out for yourselves seven certified men from among you, full of spirit and wisdom, that we may appoint them

over this necessary business. (**Acts of Apostles 6:3**)

- But we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. (**Acts of Apostles 6:4**)
- And the thing spoken was pleasing to the whole multitude, and they selected **Stephen**, a man full of faith and Holy Spirit, and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. (**Acts of Apostles 6:5**)
- And they placed them before the apostles, and, after having prayed, these laid their hands upon them. (**Acts of Apostles 6:6**)
- **Stephen** therefore received an appointment to a ministry in a special way. He and the six others appointed over this necessary business, the distribution of food supplies, may have already been older men, or overseers.
- These men were **men full of spirit and wisdom**, which this particular emergency required, for it was not only the mechanical distribution of food supplies, possibly in the form of grains and other staples, but also a matter of administration.
- The duties may have called for these men to handle buying, keeping of records, and so forth. So, although such work, if on a lesser scale or under other circumstances, might have been such as would be handled by a *di-a'ko-nos*, a ministerial servant, not by an overseer, or older man, the situation here was a sensitive one, difficulty and differences already existing in the congregation.
- Therefore it **required men of notable judgment, discretion, understanding, and experience**. **Stephen's** defense before the Sanhedrin indicates his qualifications.
- While taking care of these appointed ministerial duties, **Stephen** vigorously continued his Christian preaching. The chronicler Luke reports that **Stephen**, full of graciousness and power, and performing great portents and signs among the people, was bitterly opposed by Jews of the so-called Synagogue of the Freedmen and others from Asia and Africa.
- But **Stephen** spoke with such wisdom and spirit that they could not hold their own against him. As had been done in Jesus case,

enemies secretly secured false witnesses to accuse **Stephen** of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin.

See Also FREEDMAN, FREEMAN

•• His Defense Before The Sanhedrin

- **Stephen** boldly recounted God's dealings with the Hebrews from the time of their forefather Abraham, and he concluded with powerful accusations against his own audience of religious leaders.

- As they were cut to the heart by the truth of the accusations and began to gnash their teeth at him, **Stephen** was favored by God with a vision of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand. At his description of the vision, the assembly shouted and rushed upon him with one accord and threw him outside the city.

- Then, laying their garments at the feet of Saul, they stoned **Stephen** to death. Just before falling asleep in death, **Stephen** prayed, Yehowah, do not charge this sin against them.

- Certain reverent men came and gave him a burial and lamented his death. Great persecution then broke out against the Christians, scattering them, though the apostles remained in Jerusalem, and resulting in the spreading of the Good News.

- Now **Stephen**, full of graciousness and power, was performing great portents and signs among the people. ([Acts of Apostles 6:8](#))

- But reverent men carried **Stephen** to the burial, and they made a great lamentation over him. ([Acts of Apostles 8:2](#))

- Consequently those who had been scattered by the tribulation that arose over **Stephen** went through as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, but speaking the word to no one except to Jews only. ([Acts of Apostles 11:19](#))

- And when the blood of **Stephen** your witness was being spilled, I myself was also standing by and approving and guarding the outer garments of those doing away with him. ([Acts of Apostles 22:20](#))

- **Stephens** account delivered before the Sanhedrin includes a number of facts concerning Jewish history that are not found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moses Egyptian education, his age of 40 when he fled Egypt, the 40-year duration of his stay in Midian before returning to Egypt, and the role of angels in giving the Mosaic Law.
- Consequently Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. In fact, he was powerful in his words and deeds. ([Acts of Apostles 7:22](#))
- Now when the time of his fortieth year was being fulfilled, it came into his heart to make an inspection of his brothers, the sons of Israel. ([Acts of Apostles 7:23](#))
- And when forty years were fulfilled, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel in the fiery flame of a thornbush. ([Acts of Apostles 7:30](#))
- I am the God of your forefathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. Seized with trembling, Moses did not dare to investigate further. ([Acts of Apostles 7:32](#))
- This is he that came to be among the congregation in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai and with our forefathers, and he received living sacred pronouncements to give you. ([Acts of Apostles 7:38](#))
- **Stephen** was the first to bear witness that he had seen, in a special vision, Jesus returned to heaven and at the right hand of God, as prophesied at;
- The utterance of Yehowah to my Lord is; Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet. ([Psalms 110:1](#))
- But he, being full of Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and caught sight of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand. ([Acts of Apostles 7:55](#))
- And he said; Look! I behold the heavens opened up and the Son of man standing at God's right hand. ([Acts of Apostles 7:56](#))