

Acts 7:54-8:1

August 3, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

Following Stephen's Holy Spirit-led sermon, the Sanhedrin once again resisted the Holy Spirit. They murdered Stephen, scattering the believers who were in Jerusalem and the gospel message with them.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What has the Holy Spirit been teaching you in our study of Acts so far? Any takeaways you'd like to share?

Last week we studied Stephen's sermon before the Sanhedrin. This week we are studying the end of that account.

How do you think the religious leaders will respond?

Last week, we read about Stephen, a disciple of Jesus who was "full of grace and power" (Acts 6:8). Much like Jesus before him, Stephen was falsely accused of



wrongdoing and brought before the Sanhedrin, where he delivered a Holy Spirit-filled sermon calling out the Sanhedrin for their unfaithfulness and guilt in murdering the Son of Man. Today, we'll learn their reaction.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 7:54-57.

What stands out to you in this passage?

What did Stephen see? How would this help him endure this moment?

What was the Sanhedrin's response to Stephen's sermon and vision?

Faced with Stephen's powerful accusations, the Sanhedrin could face the truth and repent or remain rooted in pride and react with anger. They chose the latter, "resisting the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:51) again, precisely as Stephen had accused.

Luke recorded that the men gathered with the Sanhedrin were "enraged and gnashed their teeth at him" (v.54). What a contrast Stephen was in comparison! While the Sanhedrin gnashed their teeth in indignant anger, Stephen was filled with the kind of peace only God can provide.

"Full of the Holy Spirit" (v.55), Stephen saw a glorified Jesus, the Son of Man, standing at God's right hand—a place of honor and the rightful place of the Messiah according to Scripture (Psalm 110:1). Where Jesus is normally described as sitting at God's right hand (Mark 16:19), Stephen saw Him standing, perhaps to welcome the first Christian martyr to heaven.

Stephen's vision, which proclaimed Jesus once again as the risen Messiah, amounted to blasphemy in the eyes of the Sanhedrin. In response, they were further enraged and galvanized into extreme action (v.54).

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 7:58-60.

How did the religious leaders respond?

How did Stephen react to this unfair treatment?

How are we to follow Stephen's example when faced with opposition to Jesus today?



Infuriated, the religious leaders rushed Stephen and dragged him outside the city to stone him. Though stoning was the penalty laid out in Mosaic law for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16), the Sanhedrin was not supposed to execute anyone without Rome sanctioning it, and Jewish law dictated that a person on trial should not be executed on the same day as his or her trial. In their anger, the Sanhedrin ignored these restrictions and stoned Stephen then and there.

Verse 58 records the first mention of Saul of Tarsus in Acts. We may better know him as the apostle Paul, and we will read more about him and his radical transformation as we continue in our study of Acts.

Note that Stephen's response as he was being stoned was like Jesus's words on the cross. Jesus entrusted His spirit into the Father's hands (Luke 23:46), and Stephen entrusted his spirit to Jesus (v.59). Jesus asked the Father to forgive His executioners (Luke 23:34), and Stephen, too, asked the Lord for the forgiveness of his enemies.

What an example for us! Stephen was falsely accused and wrongfully murdered for speaking the truth, and yet his response was not bitter or prideful. The Sanhedrin was presented with the truth and incited a riot. Stephen had done no wrong and, with the Holy Spirit powerfully at work within him, asked for forgiveness of the sins being committed against him.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 8:1.

What does this teach us about Saul at that time?

What was one negative result of Stephen's murder? What was one positive result of Stephen's murder?

How did God use both effects for His purposes?

Acts 8:1 tells us that Saul, who watched over the coats while Stephen was being murdered, agreed with the Sanhedrin's decision to stone Stephen. We will read more about his role in the persecution of the church as we continue our study in Acts.

In this verse, we also learn the results of Stephen's murder. This event triggered "severe persecution" (8:1) against the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem—they had been growing rapidly in number in the city—and this persecution led them to scatter

This scattering contributed to the fulfillment of Jesus's words in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus's witnesses "scattered throughout the land"; they took the gospel message with them; and the Lord was glorified and magnified through Stephen's unjust murder. No sin or scheme can derail God's plan.



APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What can we learn from Stephen's heart posture in today's passage? How can we seek to live similarly?

What does this account teach us about how the gospel message might be received when we share it? How can it give us boldness?

What does this passage teach us about God?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for the examples of Jesus and Stephen in Scripture, who modeled faithfulness, humility, and care for others more than themselves. Ask that God would help your group adopt a similar heart posture and ask that He would grant you boldness as you share the gospel message like Stephen did.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.

August 10, 2025 --- Acts 8:1-8

COMMENTARY

Acts 7:54–8:1

Scholars are divided as to whether Stephen was formally sentenced to stoning, the customary Jewish method of execution, or whether he died by mob violence. The latter seems more likely. Under the Romans, the Jews could not carry out executions. What began as a formal trial deteriorated into a lynch mob, so furious were the Jewish leaders at Stephen's words. Saul is introduced to the story of Acts as the onlooker holding the stoner's garments. As the dying Jesus had committed His spirit to God, so did Stephen to Jesus (Luke 23:46). Also like Jesus, he asked forgiveness for his killers (Luke 23:34). We call Stephen the first Christian "martyr." The word martyr comes from the Greek word *martus*, which means "witness." Like all martyrs, Stephen was a witness to his Lord, even to the death.

