

Kids' Chronicle

Stephen witnesses to the Sanhedrin

BY JOE SARNICOLA

There was a man named Stephen who was filled with the Holy Spirit. Wherever he went, people were healed of their sicknesses and many came to believe in Jesus because of him.

But there were other people who were jealous of Stephen. They appealed to the leaders of the Sanhedrin with lies, saying, "This man speaks against the laws of Moses and the prophets, and he says Jesus will destroy our customs."

Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin. His face shone as if he were an angel.

The high priest stood and asked, "Stephen, what have you to say about the charges leveled against you?"

"The history of our people is one of stubbornness to God's commands," Stephen responded. "God promised Abraham a land of milk and honey. Moses led our ancestors out of Egypt's slavery into the wilderness for 40 years, and Joshua brought the people into Canaan. Then they wanted a king. So God gave them first Saul, then David, and his son Solomon after him. And Solomon built a temple for God to dwell in. But God does not live in manmade temples."

The high priest became angry at Stephen's words.

"What are you trying to say?" the high priest demanded. "Do not speak in riddles. We know the history of our people very well."

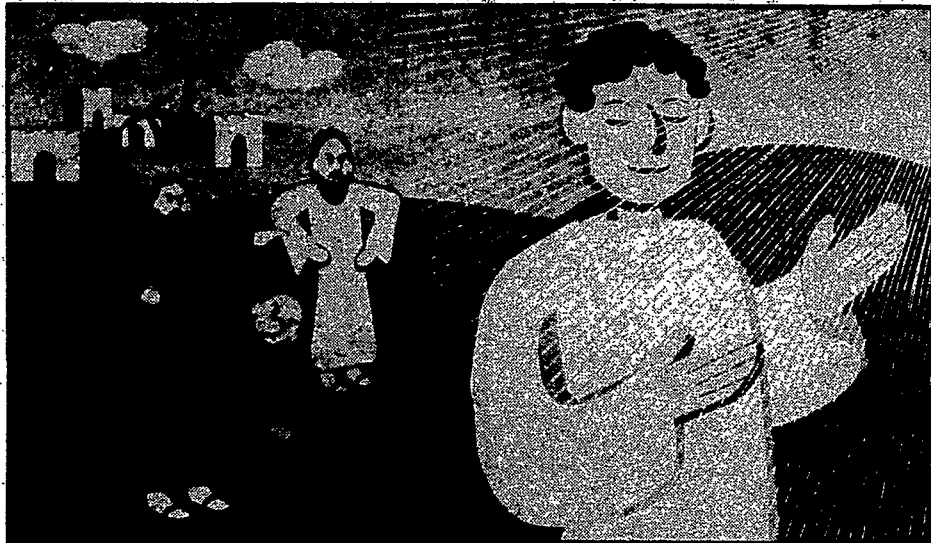


Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

Stephen looked at each of the men of the council. He spoke to them boldly, but not in anger.

"Your ears are closed to the words of God, just like our fathers and mothers before us," Stephen declared. "Which of the prophets were persecuted? They foretold the coming of one who is righteous, and some of them were put to death by people like you. The law was given to you, but you did not accept it or understand it."

The men of the council stood up and demanded that Stephen be punished for his insults to the Sanhedrin and his opinions of the history of the Jewish people. And it was decided that his punishment would be death by stoning.

The room was immediately plunged into darkness and Stephen was illuminated by a great light.

"I see the heavens open before me," he said. "I see the Son of Man standing next to God."

When the room returned to normal the members of the Sanhedrin grabbed Stephen and took him outside of the city where people began to pelt him with large heavy stones.

Stephen knelt and prayed, "Lord, take my spirit, but do not hold this sin against these people. They don't realize what they are doing."

Then Stephen died.

Bible Accent

The Acts of the Apostles is believed to have been written by Luke, a Gentile from Syria who had converted to Christianity, approximately 50 years after Jesus ascended into heaven.

Acts reads like an adventure story. The coming of the Holy Spirit to the early Christians, the ministry and miracles of Peter, and the missionary journeys of Paul are as exciting as any work of popular fiction.

Yet Luke wasn't just trying to tell good stories. He wanted to show how God, through Jesus, had made salvation available to the Gentiles (non-Jews) as well as the Jews. To that end, God sent his Holy Spirit to enable the Christians to endure hard times and to live a faith-filled Christian life. Luke also emphasized the importance of prayer in the lives of the Christians.

St. Godric

St. Godric lived in England, just after the beginning of the year 1000. He became a sailor and traveled by ship to the seaports of the British Isles and beyond.

After hearing about the life of St. Cuthbert, a British monk of the seventh century who was revered for his compassion and his miracles of healing, St. Godric decided to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He later visited different shrines and made a pilgrimage to Rome. Eventually he lived as a hermit.

His life was dedicated to helping the sick, the poor and the needy, and he was always kind to animals. Godric had occasional visions of people in distress, and he would stop whatever he was doing to pray for those people. We remember him on May 21.

Q&A

READ MORE ABOUT IT: Acts 7

1. Why were the members of the Sanhedrin angry at Stephen?
2. What was Stephen's final prayer?



Kids' Club

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Last month's winner was Jeff Tatanus, a fourth-grade student at St. Rita School, Webster. In response to the question **If you were telling a friend what kind of person Jesus is, what would you say?** he wrote:

If I had to tell a friend what kind of person Jesus was, I would say that he was a kind, generous, forgiving, loving person. He gave things to people. He healed people. He gave up his own life for all of the sins anyone has had, or will have. He still would have died if you were the only person in the whole world. The cross was made even heavier than it actually is by all of our sins.

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Puzzle

Unscramble the names of some of the early Christians written about in the Acts of the Apostles. *Answers on page 3.*

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. reept | 4. sutti | 7. hippil |
| 2. snethep | 5. snorceliu | 8. himtoyt |
| 3. jeams | 6. rabbansa | 9. lapu |

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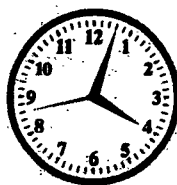
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