

“I See the Heavens Opened”

Today’s passage records a defining moment in the history of the early church. Stephen’s martyrdom initiates a necessary break between Judaism and Christianity that allows Christianity to truly become a worldwide movement for all people. Up to this point the spread of Christianity has been primarily confined to Jerusalem among Jewish people making it seem that one must first be Jewish before becoming a Christian. But as a result of Stephen’s courage and boldness the truth is affirmed that access to God is not found through Judaism and its forms, but through Jesus and Jesus alone. Jesus has opened wide the doors of heaven!

Read Acts 6:8 – 8:3

1. What sticks out to you in this passage?
2. The accusation against Stephen was that he spoke against Moses and God (v. 11) and specifically that he never ceased to speak words against the temple and the law (v. 13). Why did the gospel preached by Stephen sound to the Jewish religious leaders to be against these things?
3. Scan Stephen’s speech (7:2-50). How does he demonstrate from the Old Testament scriptures that the land, the law, and the temple were never meant to be understood as God’s final act in redemption history? How does he demonstrate that these point to a greater fulfillment?
4. Though Stephen is the one on trial, how does he turn it around and put the Jewish religious leaders on trial?
5. What is significant about Stephen seeing the heavens open and Jesus standing at God’s right hand (v. 55-66)? What does this say about access to God?

