

Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 31:1-5, 15,16

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

In this passage in the book of Acts. Luke writes about the martyrdom of Stephen. In verse 55 we read; he was full of the Holy Spirit as he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus **standing** at the right hand of God. He speaks these words, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man **standing** at the right hand of God!" This angers the crowd even more. They run at him, drive him out of the city and they stone him. Steven is recorded as speaking three things during this brutal attack; "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God," the next being "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and then kneeling down with a loud voice he cried out his final words, "Lord do not charge them with this sin." When he said this, he fell asleep.

I took note of a few things in this passage. The first being, Stephen saw Jesus, **standing**. That will always stay with me. Now, when I pray for the persecuted church, especially those dying for the faith, that is how I picture Jesus's position. Standing and welcoming them home.

The Bible refers to Jesus being seated at the right hand of God, the Father, dozens upon dozens of times. But not here, Jesus the Righteous Judge and Redeemer stands in defence to welcome the innocent martyr. I think this is the only passage where He stands up.

Acts 6:15 And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him (Stephen), saw his face as the face of an Angel. In the Psalm, David says, "My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me. Make Your face shine upon your servant; save me for Your mercies' sake. I wonder, when Stephen fell asleep, was that death OR was it a merciful moment just before his death? Either way, in his suffering he saw Jesus standing for him.

Peter, speaking to new believers encourages them to desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

As we grow, we learn to eat and chew and digest. The word of God is our lifeline.

Stephen, just before his murder, opened the Holy Scriptures from Abraham to Jesus. He had a knowledge of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant enough to share it without text.

In 1Peter 2:7 referring to Jesus the chief cornerstone, Peter says these words quoting Psalm 118:22; “Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but, to those who are disobedient, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.’”

That’s what happened to the crowd listening to Stephen. The truth became a rock of offence to them, a stumbling block to their ability to receive and, they took offence to and upon Stephen.

In the Psalm are written these words in the first half of the fifth verse; **Into Your hand I commit my spirit.** David spoke them while in adversity, Jesus spoke them in His suffering on the cross, and Stephen spoke them at the hands of the merciless.

Jesus said in John 14; “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Stephen wanted the people to know ‘The way, the truth, and the life and he was willing to lay down His life. Some will lay down their lives physically; some will lay down their lives in other ways; giving of themselves time wise, financially, or by listening.

My prayer is that as we walk through these times together that we, the congregation of St. Stephen the Martyr will walk together with this mandate ever before us; Go make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and that we would love one another as Christ has loved us. He said, “By this, all men shall know that you are My disciples.”