

Recap of 7/4/21 message (Joe Ricchuiti – Acts 7:54-60):

1. Israel's history is one of failure to perceive God's true work; a pattern of rejection of God's truth and His servants; and a tendency to become bound to man's traditions. Having Moses, the Law, and the Temple did not guarantee proper worship or keep them from rebelling against God.
2. Israel's rejection of Jesus and of the Gospel was another failure by Israel to take God's way.
3. As believers we must be sure that we remain open to God's voice in the Scriptures, and that we maintain a vital relationship with Him and not become bound to human tradition and religion."
4. Stephen is the first martyr of the church age. Our English word martyr comes from Greek **martureo**, which means "to bear witness" or "to testify." Stephen paid the ultimate price for his witness.
5. Israel is once again rejecting God's truth and murdering God's messenger. The main point of 7:54-60 is that God's servants can be silenced but the gospel cannot be stopped:
 - Opposition, even fierce opposition will fail.
 - No matter how fierce the opposition and persecution, God's servants can find peace as they look to Heaven.
 - The Holy Spirit gives boldness to witness and boldness to endure to the end.
6. "What wonder that those who sat in the Council beheld Stephen's face, as it had been the face of an angel. The light that shone there was not as when Jesus was transfigured from within—but here the glory of God shone from the open door of Heaven." (F.B.Meyer)
7. Stephen prayed for his persecutors: "But forgiveness offered does not always guarantee forgiveness received. When repentance is not present (see Luke 17:3), we must maintain a willingness to forgive and transfer to God responsibility for forgiveness, as Jesus did when He was confronted by unrepentant soldiers...(Luke 23:34.)"