

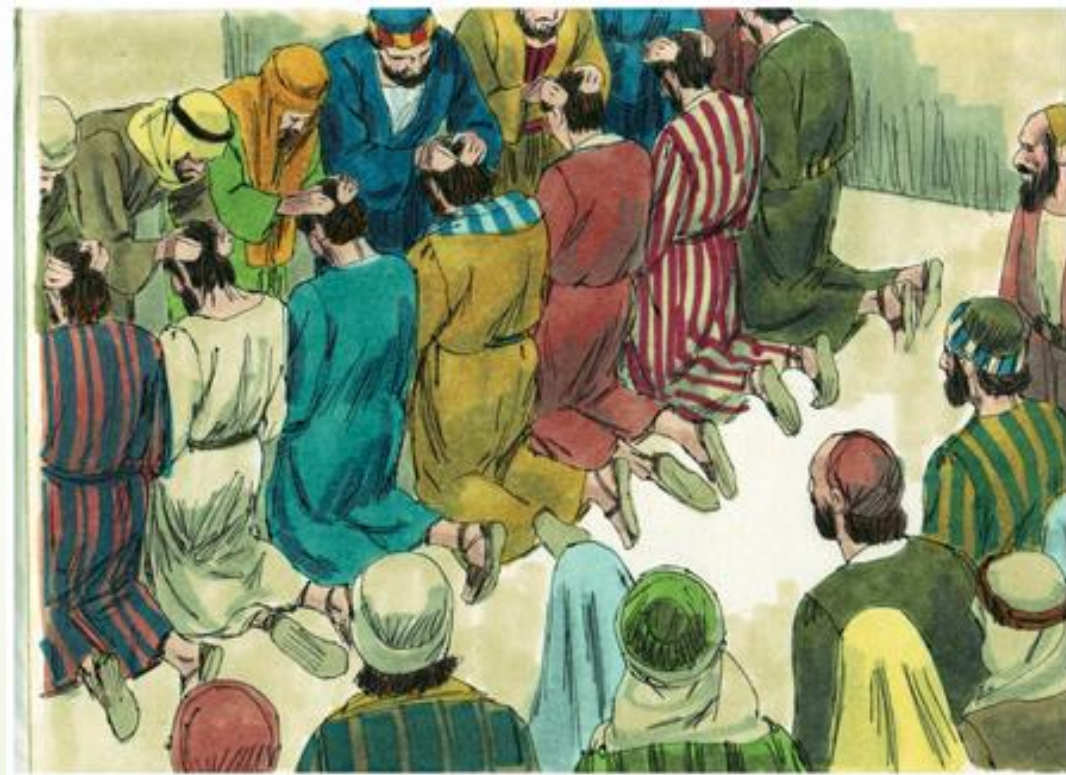


Stephen is chosen to
Spread the Word

After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the number of those who became Christians grew so the early Church needed to be organised. One of the important works of those early Christians was to care for the poor as Jesus had done. The apostles were busy preaching and teaching, so they needed help.



Stephen was one of the people chosen to help in the distribution of food so that the apostles could continue to spread the word of God. The people chosen had to be filled with the Holy Spirit to undertake this work.



Stephen was the first deacon, deacons are called to serve and witness to the Word of God. The word 'deacon' is taken from the Greek word meaning 'service'.

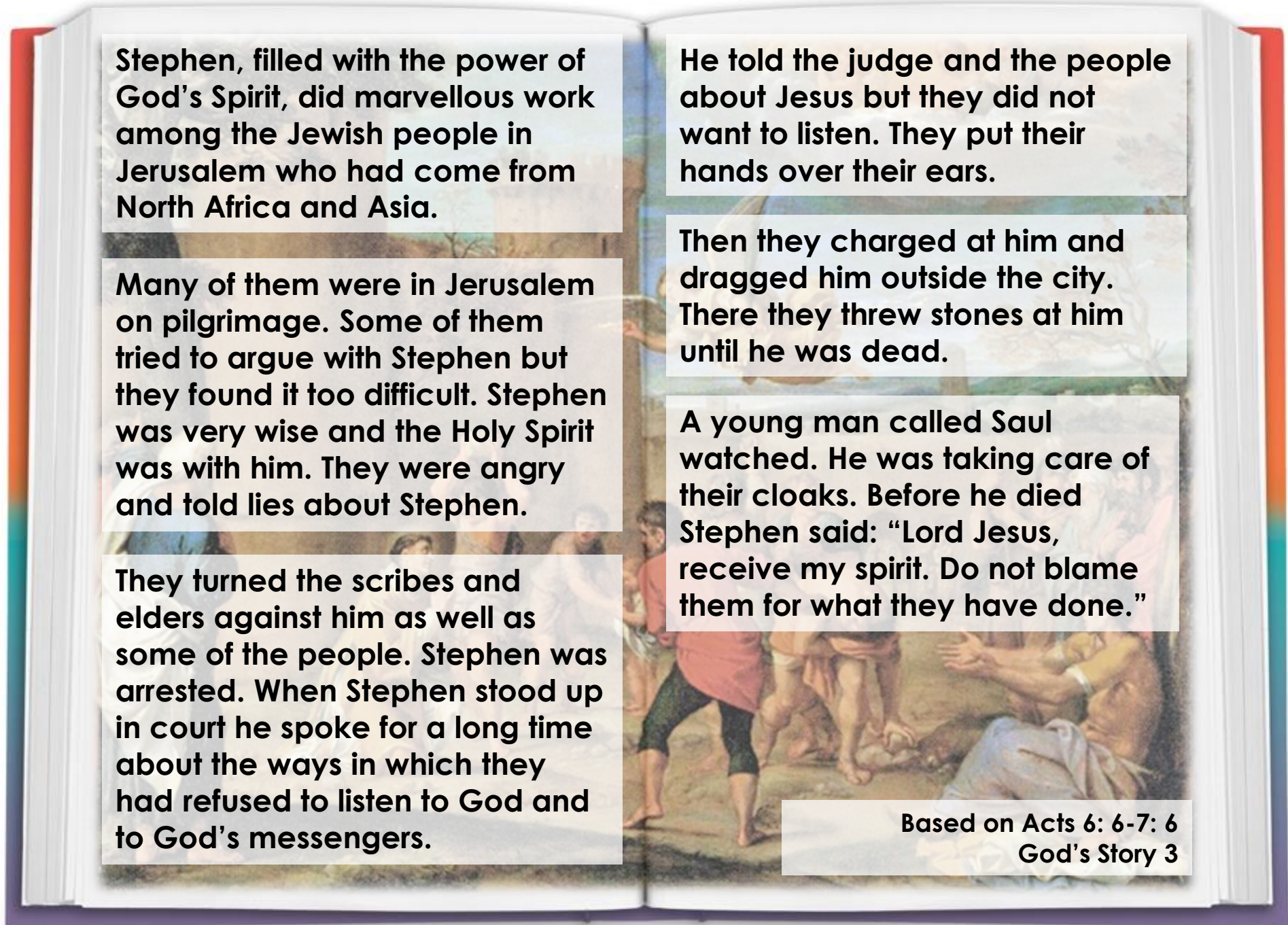


Eventually Stephen was arrested and sentenced to death for witnessing to the Good News of Jesus.



Stephen was the first Christian martyr. A martyr is a person who holds to a belief so strongly that he or she is willing to die for it. Such was the faith that Stephen had in Jesus.





Stephen, filled with the power of God's Spirit, did marvellous work among the Jewish people in Jerusalem who had come from North Africa and Asia.

Many of them were in Jerusalem on pilgrimage. Some of them tried to argue with Stephen but they found it too difficult. Stephen was very wise and the Holy Spirit was with him. They were angry and told lies about Stephen.


They turned the scribes and elders against him as well as some of the people. Stephen was arrested. When Stephen stood up in court he spoke for a long time about the ways in which they had refused to listen to God and to God's messengers.


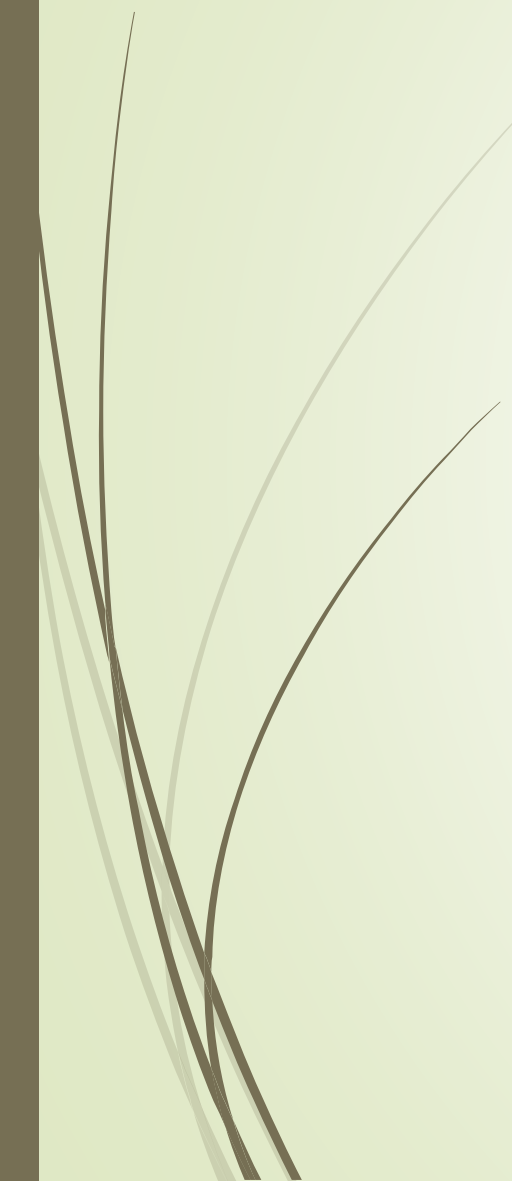
He told the judge and the people about Jesus but they did not want to listen. They put their hands over their ears.



Then they charged at him and dragged him outside the city. There they threw stones at him until he was dead.

A young man called Saul watched. He was taking care of their cloaks. Before he died Stephen said: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Do not blame them for what they have done."

**Based on Acts 6: 6-7: 6
God's Story 3**

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- ▶ Why were people finding it too difficult to argue with Stephen?
 - ▶ Why and how did Stephen remain strong?

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- Stephen said, “Do not blame them for what they have done.” What example is Stephen setting by saying this?
 - In the Scripture reading it says ‘...they put their hands over their ears’. Why do you think they did this and what did it show?

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- What do you think about Saul's action?
 - What do Stephen's last words remind you of?



Task

- Research how deacons serve in the Catholic Church today.
- Describe his work and give reasons for it. How does his role shape his own life and those around him?

Ext

- Imagine we have a deacon visiting our school. Prepare a set of questions that you could ask him about his life and the role he has in the church.