

# CHRISTIAN MARTYRS

## Chapter 3

### “Early New Testament Martyrs”

Matthew 23:34-35 - “. . .and some of them ye shall kill. . .”

INTRODUCTION: The persecution of those who stood for God and righteousness did not end with the Old Testament martyrs. As the New Testament opens, the devil became even more furious in his assault against those in the New Testament who stood for Christ and right. The Bible records the deaths of many New Testament Christians who gave their very lives for Christ's sake in defense of the truth. Notice some of the EARLY NEW TESTAMENT MARTYRS.

#### I JOHN THE BAPTIST MARTYRED AT THE CASTLE OF MACHAERUS

Mark 6:17-29 (v 27) - “. . .beheaded him in prison. . .”

John the Baptist began his public ministry when he was about thirty years of age in about 26 A.D. For the next two years, he went about preaching that Jesus is Christ, the Lamb of God, and baptizing those who repented of their sins. When John was about 32 years old, he was arrested for preaching against the king's sins. This king of Galilee and Perea at the time was Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas had a half-brother named Herod Philip I who ruled an area of northern Palestine. During a time when Herod Antipas was visiting his half-brother, Philip, he convinced his brother's wife, Herodias, to leave her husband and come away with him even though both were already married. It was against the law of Moses for a man to marry his brother's wife while his brother was yet living. (Leviticus 18:16; 20:21) Thus, John the Baptist boldly rebuked Herod Antipas for his sin with Herodias, and was cast into prison. The prison in which John was cast was located east of the Dead Sea and was called The Castle of Machaerus (meaning “the black fortress”.) While John the Baptist was in the prison, Herod Antipas had a birthday party and the daughter of Herodias, from her first marriage with Philip, danced before Herod. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the daughter of Herodias was named Salome. Her dance so stirred the lusts of this ungodly king until he promised to give her anything she wanted. Her mother had instructed her to ask for the head of John the Baptist to be brought to her in a “charger” (silver tray). After John's death, the disciples of John the Baptist buried his body at Samaria (Sebasta) in Palestine. However, in 361 A.D. a new Roman Caesar named Julian Constantius, known as Julian the Apostate, renounced Christianity and promoted paganism throughout the world. During this wicked Caesar's two year reign, the bones of John the Baptist were dug up and burned, and his ashes scattered to the wind. (Martyr's Mirror, p. 70)

#### II STEPHEN MARTYRED AT JERUSALEM

Acts 7:51-60 (v 59) - “. . . they stoned Stephen. . .”

Stephen was one of the original seven deacons who served in the first church at Jerusalem.

(Acts 6:5) Stephen's witnessing about Christ so stirred up the Jews at Jerusalem until they paid false witnesses to lie about Stephen. The Jewish officers arrested Stephen and brought him before the Jewish rulers. At this trial, Stephen boldly witnessed for Christ even stating that they had "been now the betrayers and murderers" of the Messiah. (Acts 7:52) Stephen's words so enraged the Jewish rulers until they ran upon him, and cast him outside the city gates of Jerusalem. There the Jews stoned Stephen to death. According to historical accounts, Stephen was stoned to death around Passover Feast time in the year 34 A.D. A great persecution arose against Christians after the death of Stephen. (Acts 8:1-4) During this time, Nicanor (Acts 6:5), another one of the original seven deacons, was martyred along with about 2,000 other Christians. Acts 11:19 - ". . .they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen. . ."

### III JAMES WAS MARTYRED AT JERUSALEM

Acts 12:1-2 (v 2) - ". . .he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

This James was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the brother of John. He was the first of the twelve original disciples to die as a martyr for Christ. In the year 44 A.D., Claudius Caesar ordered King Herod Agrippa I to suppress the growth of Christianity in Palestine. During the Passover Feast at Jerusalem, Herod arrested James and sentenced him to die. History records that James' accuser who was also an executioner, knew James was innocent of all charges. Upon seeing his courage in the face of death, this accuser fell down at James' feet asking his forgiveness. This man also there professed faith in Christ, and was led out with James where both men were beheaded with the sword. (Fox's Book of Martyrs, p. 2 and Martry's Mirror, p. 73) According to history, it was during this time that two more of the original seven deacons of the church at Jerusalem, Timon and Parmenas were martyred also for their faith in Christ. (Acts 6:5)

STUDY GUIDE  
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“Early New Testament Martyrs”

1. A Christian martyr is one who suffers a violent death for his \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ.
2. The word \_\_\_\_\_ is only used in the Bible three times.
3. The first martyr in history was \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The enemy of all truth is the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Jews so hated \_\_\_\_\_ preaching that they murdered him in the court of the Temple of God between the brazen altar and the Temple.
6. As the \_\_\_\_\_ opens, the devil became more furious in his assault on those who stood for Christ and right.
7. John the Baptist began his public ministry when he was about \_\_\_\_\_ years of age.
8. When John was about 32 years old, he was arrested for preaching against the \_\_\_\_\_ sins.
9. Herod Antipas convinced his brother, Philip’s, wife named \_\_\_\_\_ to come away with him even though both were married.
10. It was against the law of \_\_\_\_\_ for a man to marry his brother’s wife if the brother was yet living.
11. John the Baptist rebuked \_\_\_\_\_ for his sin with Herodias.
12. John was cast into the prison located east of the \_\_\_\_\_ Sea called The Castle of Machaerus.
13. After a dance performed by \_\_\_\_\_, the king offered her anything she wanted.
14. At the instruction of her \_\_\_\_\_, Salome asked for John’s head on a charger.
15. Stephen was one of the original seven \_\_\_\_\_ who served at the first church in Jerusalem.

16. The Jews paid \_\_\_\_\_ witnesses to lie about Stephen.
17. Stephen boldly witnessed for Christ at his \_\_\_\_\_, angering the Jews.
18. Stephen was taken outside the gates of Jerusalem and \_\_\_\_\_ to death.
19. James was the brother of \_\_\_\_\_ and son of Zebedee.
20. James was the first of the twelve original \_\_\_\_\_ to die as a martyr for Christ.
21. James' accuser was also an \_\_\_\_\_ and knew James was innocent.
22. After seeing James' courage in the face of death, his accuser fell at his feet and asked for \_\_\_\_\_.
23. After accepting Christ as his Saviour, James' accuser and James were \_\_\_\_\_ with the sword.

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