

## Lesson VIII. STEPHEN THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR February 21, 1900

BETWEEN THE LESSONS—Lesson VIII. follows close upon Lesson VII.

GOLDEN TEXT—And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—Acts 7: 59.

Memorize 7 : 55, 56. THE LESSON PASSAGE—Acts 6 : 8-15 ; 7 : 54 to 8 : 3. Study Acts 6 : 1 to 8 : 3.

8 And Ste'phen, full of <sup>1</sup>faith and <sup>2</sup>power, <sup>3</sup>did great wonders and <sup>4</sup>miracles among the people.9 Then there arose certain of <sup>5</sup>the synagogue, which is called the *synagogue* of the Libertines, and <sup>6</sup>Cyrenians, and <sup>7</sup>Alexandrians, and of them of Cilic'ia and <sup>8</sup>of A'sia, disputing with Ste'phen.10 And they were not able to <sup>9</sup>resist the wisdom and the <sup>10</sup>spirit by which he spake.11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Mo'ses, and *against* God.12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and <sup>13</sup>caught him, and brought him <sup>14</sup>to the council.13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak <sup>15</sup>blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law :14 For we have heard him say, that this Je'sus of Naz'areth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Mo'ses delivered <sup>16</sup>us.15 And all that sat in the council, <sup>17</sup>looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.Ch. 7 : 54 <sup>18</sup>When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked

Revised Version—1 grace; 2 wrought; 3 signs; 4 But there; 5 them that were of the synagogue called; 6 of the; 7 Omit of; 8 withstand; 9 Spirit (large S); 10 seized; 11 into; 12 Omit blasphemous; 13 unto; 14 fastening their eyes on him; 15 Now when; 16 But they; 17 rushed; 18 they; 19 garments at the feet of a young man named Saul; 20 the Lord; 21 there arose on that day a great; 22 in; 23 buried Stephen; 24 But Saul laid waste the church.

Daily Readings—(Courtesy, I.B.R.A.)—M.—Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Acts 6 : 1-15. T.—Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Acts 7 : 1-16. W.—Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Acts 7 : 17-34. Th.—Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Acts 7 : 35-53. F.—Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Acts 7 : 54 to 8 : 3. S.—A shining face, Ex. 34 : 29-35. S.—The reward, Rev. 7 : 9-17.

## THE LESSON EXPLAINED

Vs. 1-7 tell of the appointment of seven men, commonly called "deacons".

## I. STEPHEN ACCUSED.

—8, 9. Stephen; one of the seven "deacons". Full of grace (Rev. Ver.); gifts received through divine favor. Power; to work miracles, the way in which "grace" was manifested. Wonders and signs (Rev. Ver.); two words for miracles. Synagogue; a Jewish place of worship. The Libertines; Jews who had been slaves in Rome, but who had been set free. Cyrenians. Cyrene was in North Africa. Alexandrians. Alexandria was the capital of Egypt. Cilicia; at the southeast corner of Asia Minor. Asia; the name in the New Testament of the western portion of Asia Minor. Disputing with Stephen; putting questions to him (compare Mark 8 : 11; 9 : 14).

10-15. Not able to resist. See Luke 21 : 15. Suborned men; arranged with them in an underhand way to give false testimony. Stirred up the people; craftily striving to gain these over first, because they had hitherto been favorable to the



TRADITIONAL PLACE OF STONING OF STEPHEN

Christians (see ch. 5 : 26, last Lesson), and because the rulers would be more inclined to take action, if they were sure the people were with them. Elders, and scribes; already bitterly opposed to the followers of Jesus, ch. 4 : 5, etc. Brought him to the council; the Sanhedrin. Set up false witnesses; as at the trial of Jesus, Mark 14 : 56-59. Speak blasphemous words; irreverent and profane

words. Against this holy place; the temple. Anything spoken against it would greatly enrage the Jews. Say... Jesus... shall destroy this place; an appeal to the religious prejudices of the people, and to their selfish interests. If the temple were destroyed, and its worship, those living in Jerusalem would lose the profit of providing for foreign visitors. Change the customs; the law of Moses, and also the rules drawn from it by the scribes. As... the face of an angel; shining with a heavenly brightness.

Ch. 7 : 1-53 contains Stephen's address to the Sanhedrin.