

Lesson VIII. STEPHEN THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR February 21, 1909

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 Stephen, full of ¹faith and ²power, ³did great wonders and ⁴miracles among the people.9 Then there arose certain of ⁵the synagogue, which is called the *synagogue* of the *Liber*tines, and ⁶Cyrenians, and ⁷Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and ⁸of Asia, disputing with Stephen.10 And they were not able to ⁹resist the wisdom and the ¹⁰spirit 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 ¹³caught him, and brought him ¹⁴to the council.13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak ¹⁵blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Mo'ses delivered ¹⁶us.15 And all that sat in the council, ¹⁷looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.Ch. 7: 54 ¹⁸When 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

up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ¹¹ran upon him with one accord.58 And ¹²cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their ¹³clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon ²⁰God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Ch. 8: 1 And Saul was consenting unto his death, And ²at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was ³at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samar'ia, except the apostles.2 And devout men ²³carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.3 ²⁴As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

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.