

as constitutes perjury. They knew that they were misrepresenting Stephen's words. This was a very serious charge (Deut. 13: 6, 10) and would rouse the pharisees to join the sadducees in persecuting this new religion.

12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council—The words imply that he was seized suddenly and treated with great roughness (Luke 20: 1). There was nothing that would arouse the people like an insult to their temple and religion.

13. And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law—"A truth that is half a truth, is even the worst of lies," and their "bait of falsehood" took this "carp of truth" that probably Stephen spoke in the line of our Saviour's words to the woman of Samaria (John 4: 21; Acts 7: 48). Compare Matt. 26: 61; John 2: 21, and ch. 7: 48.

14. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us—The phrase "this Jesus the Nazarene" expresses the utmost contempt (Matt. 26: 61, 71; John 9: 29; Acts 7: 40). To "change the customs" meant to do away with the whole ceremonial law. Yet this was the truth which one of the bitterest enemies then, afterwards gloried in proclaiming as his special gospel to the gentiles.

15. And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel—Compare Exod. 33: 35; Luke 9: 29. Whether here the shining was a supernatural brightness, a special and divine radiance, or a natural effect of his own divinely inspired peace and joy, is not an important question. In either case it was the direct result of the indwelling of God with him, the fulfilment of the promise of Christ (John 14: 23, 27). That the manifestation of this inward life was not without its effect on the council, is indicated by the mildness of the high priest's question, in striking contrast with his treatment of Christ (Matt 27: 62, 63, 65) and Paul (ch. 23: 2) and by the fact that the council heard Stephen's defence until his outburst of indignation at the close. Contrast 22: 22. (Abbott).

54. When they heard these things,

they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth—This was not the penitent grief of those who were "pricked in their heart" on the day of Pentecost. The word expresses the sort of cutting that would be made by a saw, "exasperated." They were roused to a frenzy of rage, like a wild beast grinding its teeth at him (Job 16: 9; Ps. 35: 16; 37: 12).

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God—He saw some visible sign of God's presence, the brightness which conceals Deity from mortal eyes. Jesus occupied the place of dignity and power. The glorified Jesus is generally represented as sitting, to denote his victorious rest and the permanency of his rank (Matt. 26: 64; Eph. 1: 20; Mark 16: 19). Here he appears as if risen to welcome the first martyr of the church.

56. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God—This name is applied to Christ here and in Dan. 7: 13; but nowhere else except by himself.

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord—The grave sanhedrim became a furious, howling mob.

58. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul—The person to be stoned was thrown, with his hands bound, from an elevation, then a large stone was rolled down upon him by the witnesses, after which all the people present cast stones at him until he was dead. Saul must have been over 30 years old at this time as he was a member of the sanhedrim.

59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit—R. V. "calling upon the Lord." It was a direct prayer to Christ as Creator and Redeemer (Ps. 31: 5; Luke 23: 46).

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—Only Jesus could have taught such a prayer (Luke 23: 34). Perhaps Saul's conversion was the answer to it. "If Stephen had not prayed, the church would not