

chapter. Driven out of Jerusalem, he preached in Samaria and along the sea-coast, until he settled at Caesarea, where, long afterward his former persecutor, Saul, met him as Paul the apostle. **Nicolas, the proselyte.** The proselytes were people who had abandoned the worship of idols and adopted the Jewish faith. Those who simply accepted the Scriptures without becoming Jews were called "proselytes of the Gate," that is, outside the door of the temple; while those who had received circumcision were called "proselytes of righteousness." To this class Nicolas belonged. He was the first person not of the race of Abraham admitted to the Christian Church. **Antioch.** A Syrian city near the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea.

**6. Set before the Apostles.** For their approval. **When they had prayed.** For divine direction in the choice and for a blessing upon the men chosen. **7. All work should be sanctified by prayer.** **Laid their hands on them.** A ceremony here mentioned for the first time in the Christian history, though suggested by the Old Testament. It was a symbol of the endowment of one with the power possessed by another by a divine influence.

**7. Word of God increased.** By the rapid growth in the number of disciples; as a result of the healing of disensions, a more thorough administration and oversight, a better division of labour, and a general spirit of work for Christ. **Disciples** here means believers in Jesus simply, not all of whom possessed a living personal experience of salvation, or an enlarged view of the Gospel. **Company of the priests.** Various causes may be given for the adhesion of the priests to the Gospel: (1) There was a standing antagonism between the priests and the scribes, and as the latter were opposed to the Gospel, the former would be all the more favourable. (2) The priests were very numerous, were poorly supported, many were in deep poverty, and oppressed by their rulers, the chief priests, and would gladly welcome a change. (3) The preaching of Stephen might have presented what Paul afterward taught—the passing away of the ritual and the institution of something better.

**8. Stephen.** Peter sinks to the background, and Stephen comes to the front. He was a Grecian Jew, holding broad views, and proclaimed the truth in a new light, as may be seen from the charges preferred against him. No doubt he struck the key-note of Gentile salvation, as may be ascertained by close study of his speech and its purpose. (See next chapter.) **Full of faith.** "Grace" (Rev. Ver.) is the better rendering. **Power.** The divine influence accompanying his ministry. **Wonders and miracles.** Though appointed for a secular work in the Church, he at once began to preach, and the same results attended his labours as those of the apostles.

**9. Synagogue.** The place where the Jews met for the reading of the word and worship, but not for sacrifices. There were more than

three hundred synagogues in Jerusalem; Jews of each nationality and of every shade of views holding services apart. **Libertines.** "Freedmen." Jews whose ancestors had been slaves, taken in war, and afterward set free. They came mainly from Rome. **Cyrenians.** Jews from Northern Africa. **Cilicia.** The land of the young Saul of Tarsus, who in this synagogue doubtless met Stephen. **Asia.** Not the continent, but Proconsular Asia, embracing the three provinces of Mysia, Lydia, and Caria, on the western end of Asia Minor.

**10, 11. Not able to resist.** He showed the truth by the Scriptures, and with such arguments and earnestness that his antagonists were silenced. **The Spirit.** Here, not natural ability, but the divine influence accompanying his words. **Suborned men.** Hired men to give false or perverted testimony. **Blasphemous words.** Words intended to pervert men from the worship of God and obedience to the law. **Against Moses.** Against the laws of Moses. **8. Persecution** is ever the resort of those who have no arguments.

**12. Stirred up the people.** Thus far the opposition had come from the rulers; now, as the Gospel for the Gentiles begins to appear in the teaching, all the pride and hatred of the Jews toward other nations make them the enemies of the new truth. **Elders and the scribes.** The rulers and the masses joined hands in common cause against the Gospel. **Came upon him.** Suddenly, while in the act of teaching. **Brought him to the council.** Without formal arrest, or delay for investigation, he was dragged before the Sanhedrin in their session in the temple.

**13, 14 False witnesses.** False in their spirit, and distorting his words, but not telling absolute falsehoods. **This holy place.** The temple. **Destroy this place.** He had undoubtedly repeated Christ's prediction of the destruction of the temple and the city, and may have declared that the Gospel was not an institution dependent upon holy places. **Change the customs.** Perhaps a perversion of a statement that Christ had made an end of the law and the minute regulations of the scribes.

**15. All that sat.** As they sat in a double semicircle, with the accused man in the centre. **Saw his face.** This is Paul's reminiscence of what Saul saw: a memory of a face that was ever in his mind. **The face of an angel.** Lit up with a strange beauty, a joy of the heart within shining upon the countenance. **9. Often** than many suppose, the inner character looks out of the face, and stamps its impress on the personal appearance.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

Seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. Acts 6, 3.

#### OUTLINE.

1. The Seven, v. 1-7.
2. Stephen, v. 8-15.