

Lesson IX.

THE STONING OF STEPHEN

March 2, 1902

Acts 7 : 54 to 8 : 2.—Memory Verses, 59, 60

Golden Text—Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.—Matt. 5:44.

54 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 up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Je'sus 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 ran upon him with one accord,

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.

59 And they stoned Ste'phen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Je'sus, 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 at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jeru'salem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Jude'a and Sama'ria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Ste'phen to *his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

THE LESSON RETOLD

When the High Priest saw that Stephen was making no answer to the charges brought against him by his enemies, he said to him "Are these things that they say against you true? What have you to say for yourself?"

"Men, brethren and fathers, listen to me," answered Stephen. "God has blessed the Jewish nation more than any other on the face of the earth." Then he told them how God had spoken to Abraham and showed him how to worship Him in the right way, and how, when they were slaves in Egypt, He sent Moses to bring them out; and how Moses had told them that a greater Teacher than he was would come; and how Solomon built a temple for Him at Jerusalem. And God, he said, "Showed his love for us most of all in that He has sent His Son to die for us. Why has He done this? It is not because we are better than others, but only that we may spread this good news to the whole world. Instead of

carrying out God's plan, what have you teachers and rulers done? You have murdered the pure and holy Son of God!"

When the scribes and elders heard this, they were wild with rage, and began to gnash their teeth against Stephen like angry beasts. But he did not see them, for his eyes were turned upwards towards the sky, where he beheld a strange and beautiful sight. "Look," he cried, "I see heaven opened and Jesus in all His glory standing on the right hand of God."

Then they could stand it no longer, and jumping off their seats, they put their hands over their ears, that they might not hear what Stephen was saying. Then with a great shout they rushed upon him, and, catching him by the clothes, they dragged him out of the city to the place where people were put to death. Then they took off their coats and gave them in charge of a young man called Saul, who was standing by and looking much pleased with what was going on.