

Luke part 3

We spent two Friday night Sunday School classes introducing Luke, the Holy Ghost inspired writer of The Gospel According to LUKE, and The ACTS of the Apostles, which more properly should have been entitled the ACTS of the Holy Ghost, for indeed numerous acts of the Holy Ghost are recorded in the book of ACTS. And each of us could record in our own lives many more acts of the Holy Ghost that we have either experienced, or witnessed ourselves. Several have requested that I continue the lessons on Luke, that faithful follower of the Apostle Paul, who alone was with Paul when Paul wrote his last epistle, and stated in 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 *Only Luke is with me.* The other two mentions of Luke in scripture are in PHILEMON 1:24 where Paul calls him Lucas, noting there that he was a fellowlabourer with Paul, and in COLOSSIANS 4:14 where Luke is listed among the Gentile followers of the Apostle Paul, and Paul calls him “the beloved physician.” We covered these scriptures in our first lesson on Luke. Then in our previous Friday night Sunday School we explored how Luke became acquainted with the Apostle Paul, and discovered from historic records that Luke’s native city was Antioch in Syria. We also briefly made mention of the fact that the church at Antioch, Syria became Paul’s home church if you will. It is Luke who records this under appreciated fact in the book of ACTS, so let’s continue connecting the dots that put Luke, and the Apostle Paul together.

And one more thing about Luke before we connect the dots between Paul and Luke, and that is Luke recorded a lot of unique stories, and historical facts that no other author of scripture wrote about. Luke lived at the beginning of the Church Age, and mentioned more about the kingdom of God than all the other authors of scripture combined! Luke also wrote more about the Holy Ghost than all the other authors of scripture combined! These facts will no doubt manifest themselves as we continue.

It seems that Luke first became acquainted with Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul during the first visits Paul made to Antioch, Syria. The first time we read of Saul of Tarsus going to Antioch was in ACTS 11. Remember that Antioch, Syria was not a Jewish city. Antioch, Syria was a Gentile city, but in every business center of the world there were Jews because God gifted them in business. We noted in our previous lesson that Antioch, Syria was at the time of ACTS the third largest city of the Roman Empire with a population at that of 500,000. Two cities had larger populations, Rome and Alexandria, Egypt. Antioch, Syria was a link between the trade routes of the Mediterranean and the routes that lead east unto China. It was a sort of melting pot of cultures, as are most large cities. Antioch had everything that Roman wealth, Greek culture, and Oriental luxury could produce. Antioch was a wealthy city. The citizens of Antioch were somewhat unique in that they were given by the Roman Empire the privilege of worship in their own way without fear of repercussion or persecution. Antioch, Syria was called the “Queen of the East,” and “Antioch the Beautiful,” and was a fairly modern city at the time of ACTS. If it wasn’t for Luke writing about his native city of Antioch, Syria we would know much about it, or what went on there. And actually most Christians still don’t know all that much about Antioch, Syria, and it’s important place in New Testament history, but it is Luke that informs us what went on there after the death of Jesus Christ.

To fully understand the important place of Antioch, Syria in the days of Luke, and Paul, and the twelve Kingdom Apostles, let’s read a few verses in ACTS 6. The setting here in ACTS 6 is Jerusalem, and Luke wasn’t present here in Jerusalem, but after interviewing several who were there at this time, Luke wrote what took place at Jerusalem, as he does his chronology of events that he later recorded in ACTS. Let’s read this, then I will make a few brief comments about this portion. ACTS 6:1 *And in those days, (read the first 5 chapters of ACTS to see when those days were), when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* (The Grecians were Greek speaking Jews. The daily ministration was the distribution made for their daily needs, since they had all things common according to ACTS 2:44 and 4:32.) 2 *Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.*

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Each of us have probably read ACTS 6:5 dozen of times in our lives, but did you ever stop to consider the seven men mentioned here. Note this: Luke is the only author of scripture to mention these seven men. Certainly each of these seven were very important in the growth of the church there in Jerusalem. And again Luke wasn't there in Jerusalem at this time for history records he was from Antioch, Syria. So we know nothing more of these seven men than that which Luke recorded in scripture. We do know that all of these seven men were of honest report, and full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, and they were Jews. Luke only mentions the last five of these seven one time in scripture. The first two we know more about, only because Luke wrote more about Stephen, and Philip. Luke never knew Stephen, and Luke probably never met Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, and Parmenas either. There is a strong possibility that Luke may have known Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch because Luke was from Antioch. And we know for a fact that Luke did get to meet Philip, and probably got to know him fairly well, a fact we will discuss further on in this study.

Most of what we know about Stephen is recorded in ACTS 6 & 7, and he was an outstanding man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, whose life remains a testimony to us. We find Stephen mentioned by name seven times in scripture, and again seven is the number pointing to SPIRITUAL PERFECTION or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. Since we are briefly discussing Stephen, and the fact that only Luke wrote about Stephen, and devoted nearly two chapters about Stephen, let's note some brief facts about Stephen. Stephen's name means: "a crown," or "crowned." Stephen is an example to us of a full overcomer, yet not necessarily a New Testament full overcomer in the sense that he was not offered a place in the Bride of Christ. The bridal message hadn't been preached yet. Paul's gospel wasn't revealed yet. Stephen was not an Old Testament Saint either, but rather was part of those Saints who lived during the transition time between the dispensation of the law, and the present grace age, also called the church age in which we are still living. HEBREWS 11 tells us essentially that a full overcomer is one who puts their faith wholly in God, trusting Him for seemingly impossible things. We find in ACTS 6:5 that Stephen is noted to be *...a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*. ACTS 6:8 records this of Stephen: *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people*. I am jumping ahead here a little, but this is also an important point to note. ACTS 7 records Stephen's address before the Jewish Sanhedrin council. Luke wrote down what Stephen said word-for-word, yet Luke never heard Stephen speak! So how did Luke know exactly what Stephen said to the Sanhedrin council? Most of what Luke recorded in his two gospel records are eyewitness accounts that he recorded like a newspaper writer of our day, who recorded the things that were told him by the eyewitnesses. Study again LUKE 1:1-4 until you get this point: Luke wrote down the things that were delivered unto him from eyewitnesses. Luke interviewed these people, who told Luke exactly what happened. Now back to Stephen's sermon before the Sanhedrin council in ACTS 7. Who was there that heard Stephen's sermon? Remember this Sanhedrin council didn't invite the public to their sessions, so who again was there that heard Stephen's sermon, who remembered it word-for-word who years later could have told Luke his eyewitness account of what happened there? There is only one person who fits this description, and that is Saul of Tarsus. Saul of Tarsus wasn't a believer at this time, just like the rest of the Sanhedrin council, who were very religious, but non-believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. This Sanhedrin council didn't like at all Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon. Let's read the last few verses of what Luke recorded Stephen saying in ACTS 7. Starting in ACTS 7:51 *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the*

prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. 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 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 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 Stephen, calling upon God, 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. It was Luke who recorded for eye-witness account Stephen's sermon before the Sanhedrin council, and it was only Luke who wrote Stephen's last words: "...*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" If that isn't the heart of a full overcomer, then what is? But again Stephen wasn't ever offered the opportunity to be in the Bride of Christ like you and I are during this church age. The bridal message had not yet been introduced to the Apostle Paul, for the Apostle Paul was not even born again at this point in time.

Stephen's final words were a prayer: "...*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" Let's read a few PSALMS before I ask a question. PSALMS 4:1 *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.* PSALMS 17:6 *I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.* PSALMS 39:12 *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears:...* PSALMS 54:2 *Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.* PSALMS 55:17 *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.* PSALMS 61:1 *Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.* PSALMS 69:16 *Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.* PSALMS 143:1 *Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.* Here's my question: did God answer Stephen's final prayer? "...*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" The young man who heard this loud voice prayer of Stephen was Saul of Tarsus. Now note this, and highlight this in your heart: it was Stephen who first preached to Saul of Tarsus the gospel message that pricked his heart. It was Saul of Tarsus who heard Stephen's final words. The Holy Ghost inspired words of Stephen echoed over, and over again in the heart of Saul of Tarsus until he could rehearse this sermon word-for-word. This is why on the road to Damascus a few months down the road our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ would ask Saul of Tarsus: "...*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ...I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks...*" (ACTS 9:4 & 5), meaning it is hard for you to continually kick against, and resist the pricking of you conscience ever since you heard Stephen's sermon about me! So we see that it was Saul of Tarsus who rehearsed the words of Stephen's sermon years later when Saul of Tarsus became the Apostle Paul, and met Luke in Antioch, Syria. God answered Stephen's final prayer: "...*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge...*" by making Saul of Tarsus our Apostle Paul, the Apostle sent unto the Gentiles, by whose gospel message literally millions have got save!!! We can all go look in the mirror, and say thank you Lord for answering Stephen's final prayer, for I wouldn't know Paul's gospel otherwise. JAMES 5:16 in part says: *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* The meaning here is The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or thing according to the power that worketh in us. {Study EPHESIANS 3:18.} One final thought about Stephen takes us back to what was stated earlier, we wouldn't know a thing about Stephen, or who he even was without Luke, for Luke is the only writer of scripture who mentions anything about this overcomer!

The second of the seven men mentioned in ACTS 6:5 is Philip. This Philip is not one of the twelve mentioned in ACTS 1:13, but is one of the seven found in ACTS 6:5. This is the Philip called

“Philip the evangelist” in ACTS 21:8. Again keep in mind that Luke is the only writer of scripture to tell us anything about Philip the evangelist. Philip in ACTS 6:3 was also noted to be like the other six chosen with him, men of honest report, and full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom. You will have to do your own counting on this to fully appreciate that Philip, who is later identified as “Philip the evangelist,” is only written about by Luke, and Luke mentions Philip sixteen times. I seriously doubt if Luke had any idea that sixteen is the number pointing to LOVE, but the Holy Ghost knew this, and was the One who inspired Luke to write Philip’s name sixteen times.

You probably had no idea that studying about Luke would reveal so much. I think by now we see that Luke in his writings was really a historian, who wrote about the events concerning Christ, and his Apostles from the birth of John the Baptist until Paul arriving at Rome some nearly sixty years later.

We are going to discuss Philip for a few moments, but first it is imperative that we truly understand what Luke wrote in ACTS 8:1-3, which again is another portion of scripture that we all have probably read dozen of times, yet missed some very important points stated there. ACTS 8:1 *And Saul was consenting unto his death.* (Saul of Tarsus was consenting unto Stephen’s death, showing no remorse whatsoever.) *And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.* (We are going to come back to this fact again down the road if the Lord tarries, but take note of two very important points here. One, for the first time since Pentecost there was a death (Stephen’s) by the persecution against the church at Jerusalem. And we are told that those of this church scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria. In other words they left Jerusalem. Point two, they left Jerusalem except for the Apostles. The Kingdom Apostles remained in Jerusalem; remember this point.) 2 *And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.* 3 *As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.*

Luke then takes up the incredible story of Philip, Philip the evangelist, in ACTS 8, mentioning Philip by name fourteen times in ACTS 8. Fourteen is the number associated with DELIVERANCE or SALVATION. What do you think Philip preached about? DELIVERANCE and SALVATION! We will only read a few verses from ACTS 8, but be sure to study this stand alone 8th chapter of ACTS for yourself. ACTS 8:4 *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.* 5 *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.* 6 *And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.* 7 *For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.* 8 *And there was great joy in that city.* So we see that Philip, a man full of the Holy Ghost was also very much like Stephen, who did great wonders and miracles among the people, (see ACTS 6:8). ACTS 8:12 records this of Philip’s ministry: *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.* So we see that many got saved because of the ministry of Philip. ACTS 8:14 *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:* 15 *Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:* 16 *(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)* 17 *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* ...25 *And they, (Peter and John) when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.* 26 *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.* In our midnight Bible story about Gideon in JUDGES 6:11, 12, and 21 we found the angel of the Lord encouraging Gideon, and found there that the angel of the Lord was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Obviously Philip here in ACTS 8 was in tune with the voice of the Lord, and heeded His instructions without questioning. Philip was then led to the Ethiopian eunuch, who was a Gentile. So Philip the evangelist preached to the