

embarrass them, and afterwards they also ...*commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus...* ACTS 5:40. As we read earlier in ACTS 4:18 the Apostles Peter and John were previously commanded by the Sanhedrin council "...*not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus...* to which Peter replied in ACTS 4:19 ...*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.* The same response by the Apostles is found in the concluding verses of ACTS 5.

ACTS 5:41 *And they (the Apostles after being beaten) departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

Instead of stopping the spread of the gospel, just the opposite happened. There is no way the Sanhedrin council ever envisioned that the Apostles would depart from their presence "rejoicing." Peter later wrote the following in 1 PETER 4. 1 PETER 4:12 *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.* Truly here at the end of ACTS 5 we find the name of Jesus Christ magnified, and God glorified!

Furthermore let's acknowledge that in ACTS 5:42 we find: *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* Compare this to what is stated in ACTS 2:46 & 47 -- *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* Here in ACTS 5:42 we find that they were still teaching and preaching in the temple, and that they were also still teaching and preaching in every house. We do not read in ACTS 5:42 that they were also still eating their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart. The reason for this will be explained in ACTS 6 where we will find that number of disciples had greatly increased, and not everyone spoke Hebrew, which posed a new challenge to trust the Lord to solve.

## ACTS 6

As we get to chapter 6 we find that some period of time has elapsed since the events of ACTS 5. We also find Stephen, and six others introduced in ACTS 6, with the emphasis of ACTS 6 & 7 being placed upon the ministry of Stephen. Brother Copley in his ACTS study book gives a period of two years since the death of Christ until the ministry of Stephen began, and makes the assumption that the ministry of Stephen lasted about five years.

ACTS 6:1 *And in those days, 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 problem that needed a solution here was a direct result of the fact that the number of believers had increased to the point that the twelve Apostles were overwhelmed with the care of the church. Remember they had all things in common, and that distribution was made unto every man according as he had need according to ACTS 2:42-45, and ACTS 4:35. The early church was living in a millennial economy as we have discussed previously. Now here in ACTS 6:1 we find that there was a murmuring, that is a complaint that arose between the Grecians, and the Hebrews. We will discuss the complaint further shortly, but first we need to define those who were called Grecians. The Grecians were Jews who spoke only Greek. A Greek who spoke Greek was called a Greek, but a Jew who only mainly spoke Greek was called a Grecian. Recall from ACTS 2:5 after the out pouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost that there were Jews dwelling in Jerusalem out of every

nation under heaven. Those that spoke Greek were called Grecians. We find the Grecians were having trouble with the Hebrew speaking Jews in ACTS 6:1. The Grecian widows were being left out in the daily ministrations of the Apostles was the accusation in ACTS 6:1. Please note that there were not Gentiles here as part of the church at Jerusalem because the gospel message wasn't yet preached unto the Gentiles. We have to wait until ACTS 10 before that time would come. The complaint of the Grecian speaking widows was that they felt they were being neglected in the daily distribution of food, and they felt they were not receiving their fair share. Obviously there was a communication gap, a problem which the Apostles couldn't solve without some further help.

ACTS 6:2 *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.* Here we learn that the Apostles were focused on presenting the word of God, and knew that their time was best spent in the word of God, and not to be totally focused upon meeting the needs of the poor, or overseeing the distribution of provisions. Good leaders learn how to delegate, that is to entrust certain duties to others on their behalf. As we read on here in ACTS 6 we will find that the Apostles were in prayer as how to solve this problem according to God's perfect will.

ACTS 6:3 *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.*

The wisdom found in Holy Ghost inspired scripture is certainly amazing. And when we read the word "wisdom" we should associate it with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who according to 1 CORINTHIANS 1:24 and 30 is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. In ACTS 6:3 we find the word "seven," which points to SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. There were to be "seven men" sought out *...full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* Obviously these seven were to be Greek speaking men. That was only part of their qualification, for first on the list was that they should be *...of honest report.* The word "honest" is only found seven times in scripture! The Greek word translated "honest" in ACTS 6:3 is *martureo* {mar-too-reh'-o}, number 3140 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which means: to be a witness, to bear witness, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because taught by divine revelation or inspiration; or having had witness borne; to be a testimony! This goes right along with the instructions Jesus gave His Apostles before His ascension in LUKE 24:48, and ACTS 1:8 of how they were to be witnesses of those things learned and seen of Christ, and how that *...ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Thus we note that these *...seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom...* are to be an extension of the witness of the Apostles, equipped with the same power as the Apostles, being themselves also *...full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* It is only in this manner that these seven men could be a worthy extension of the Apostles business of providing the Grecian widows with provision in the daily distribution of provision. Obviously the seven honest men chosen were to also be Greek speaking as well as Hebrew speaking so that they could bridge the communication gap among the Grecian widows. The phrase *...full of the Holy Ghost...* is only found four times in scripture; once in association with Jesus in LUKE 4:1; twice in association with Stephen (ACTS 6:3 and 7:55); and once in association with Barnabas in ACTS 11:24. Note also that all seven of these men chosen in ACTS 6 were to be *...of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* Make a note in your heart also that all full overcomers from this Church Age will manifest this very same quality being Christ like, and *...of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.*

One more thought to consider here that is brought to our attention in ACTS 6:1-3, and that is who was given the charge to *...look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business...* ? It was the Apostles who gave this order to the multitude of disciples in their assembly there in Jerusalem, which consisted of several thousand. The multitude of disciples could better define who those here that spoke both Greek, and

Hebrew. And recall from ACTS 1:14; ACTS 2:1; ACTS 2:46; ACTS 4:24; and ACTS 5:12 that the multitude of disciples were of “one accord.” In other words they were all in agreement with what the Apostles were looking for, and knew what to look for in finding these *...seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom...* who were willing to serve tables. There really is no way that the Apostles could find by themselves men of such quality without having the brethren help narrow down the choices to seven men. We know that the Holy Ghost greatly helped the brethren find the right seven. As for the Apostles themselves, we read in ACTS 6:4 how they were to *...give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

ACTS 6:5 & 6 further shows the unity of the multitude of disciples here in Jerusalem in the choice of these seven outstanding men full of the Holy Ghost. ACTS 6:5 *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.*

There are several points of discussion found in these verses. Since we are studying what our Brother in the Lord Luke wrote in scripture we must note that as we get further along here in ACTS we are finding more and more people whom Luke met along his course in life of following the Apostle Paul. The date of Luke writing ACTS is somewhere between 62A.D. and 65A.D. and the events being recorded here in ACTS 6 are in the early 30's A.D. Here in verse 5 we find two, and perhaps three men Luke had either met, or learned about from his acquaintance with the Apostle Paul several years after this time frame. Certainly Luke had heard the Apostle Paul talk about Stephen many times. If it wasn't for Stephen and his testimony in ACTS 7 one has to wonder if the man then known as Saul of Tarsus ever would have gotten saved. Luke of course never met Stephen. One of the outstanding things that pricked Saul of Tarsus conscience was Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7, which fact we will again mention later in this study. Next we will find Luke later in ACTS getting acquainted with Philip, and even staying at his house in ACTS 21:8-10. If the Lord tarries we also will discuss this further in our examining these chapters in ACTS. We also find Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch, Syria from where Luke was from. Did Luke ever meet him? Scripture doesn't say one way or the other.

Of the seven Grecian men mentioned in ACTS 6:5 Stephen and Philip are found mentioned more than once, and we will discuss them in more detail as we progress with this study. It is interesting that we find excellent qualities of the full overcomer associated with the meaning of each of these seven men's names. And as we look at the meaning of their names in greater detail we must note that some of these men may have later learned Paul's gospel message. Certainly Philip (as far as we know from scripture) had the best opportunity of these seven to do so, which fact we will also point out further in this study, Lord willing.

The meanings of all of the seven men's names show seven qualities found in the full overcomer. (1) Stephen's name means: “a crown,” or “crowned.” All full overcomers will have crowns! 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 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.* Stephen's crowning final statement really pricked the heart and conscience of old Saul of Tarsus: ACTS 7:60 *...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* If this statement doesn't reflect the heart attitude of a full overcomer, then I don't know what does! This statement further shows something else. Upon the cross Jesus in LUKE 23:34 said: *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* There the nation of Israel had rejected Christ as their Messiah. When Stephen said in ACTS 7:60 *...Lord, lay not this sin to their*

*charge... it was the second time the nation of Israel had rejected Christ as their Messiah. Had they received Him we find in ACTS 7:56 that Jesus was standing up ready to return and be Israel's King had they received Him. The Kingdom Age, also called the Millennium, would have then been ushered in, and there wouldn't be the Church Age we are still living in. In the nearly two thousand years since the stoning of Stephen the gospel message has been preached throughout the whole world. ACTS 13:46 & 47 explains this further. ACTS 13:46 ...It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.* Stephen, in his impromptu sermon of ACTS 7, becomes the main channel through which the Holy Ghost pricks the heart of Saul of Tarsus. This is not to say that there were not others used of the Holy Ghost to speak words of truth to Saul of Tarsus, for I am sure there were, however the scripture records only the words of Stephen, which were then embedded in the heart and conscience of Saul of Tarsus.

(2) Philip's name means: "lover of horses," implying a lover of the race, in other words a racecourse runner. Figuratively speaking, the Apostle Paul was one of the best race horses (if you will) to be associated with. Later in ACTS we will find that Philip had plenty of opportunity to learn from the Apostle Paul, Paul's high calling gospel message. Thus we also see in studying Philip that he is an excellent example of a New Testament racecourse runner, and a full overcomer. It is also interesting to note that we find this Philip's name sixteen times in scripture. Sixteen is the number associated with LOVE. First LOVE, that is first in value LOVE, is the kind of LOVE that the Bride of Christ will have for Jesus. I think that is one reason we find Philip's name sixteen times in scripture, for it is the Holy Spirit's way of highlighting the full overcoming LOVE that race-course winning bridal Saints will have.

(3) Prochorus means: "leader of the chorus;" or "leader of praise." All full overcomers have a song in their heart and lead out in praise and worship of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! {Study REVELATION 4:9 and 5:8-12}. We find the Apostle Paul also writing the following encouragements. EPHESIANS 5:19 *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;* and COLOSSIANS 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* In ACTS 16:25 during the darkest hour of the night, Paul and Silas sang praises from their prison cell, which was when the Lord set them free.

(4) Nicanor's name means: "conqueror." Paul notes the cry of the full overcomer in ROMANS 8:37 stating: *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

(5) Timon's name means: "honourable." The full overcomers give all of their honour unto their precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. REVELATION 19:7 *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* One of the things she did to make herself ready was to give the highest honour unto Him while running that racecourse down here. PROVERBS 31 highlights qualities that are found in the virtuous woman, qualities that the Bride of Christ will also have. We read in PROVERBS 31:25 *Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.* Recall in ACTS 6:3 the qualities that the Apostles were looking for in those seven men chosen to assist in the ministration to the Grecian widows, that they were to be *...of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* Certainly "honourable" Timon had this "honourable" quality.

(6) Parmenas means: "abiding, or one who abides." The full overcomers are abiding and confiding in Jesus and His word. In JOHN 5:38 we find Jesus emphasizing the importance of having His word abiding in you.

(7) Nicolas name means: "victor of the people," or "conqueror of the people (as a whole)." I guarantee that all full overcomers will have a victory over all of the people who were a trial to them

in their life. Study ROMANS 8:35-39 and see that this is true. ROMANS 8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Nicolas is noted as being from Antioch. This is a reference to Antioch, Syria, which itself speaks to us of qualities of the full overcomer. The name Antioch is found nineteen times in scripture. Nineteen is the number of FAITH. Certainly the church at Antioch, Syria was a church of FAITH, and thus it is no wonder that we read in ACTS 11:26 that *...the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* The church in Antioch, Syria again was the one who sponsored all of the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys, and are a great part of why we have the gospel according to LUKE, and the book of ACTS, for Luke wrote these two books unto "O Theophilus" a prominent man of Antioch, Syria. Perhaps somewhere in life's journey our brother Luke met Nicolas, however we are not told this one way or the other in scripture.

Let's read again ACTS 6:5 *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.* Implied in the choice of these seven men was the fact that they were all full of the Holy Ghost for the whole book of ACTS amplifies the working of the Holy Ghost. It would be foolish to assume that these seven men were not indeed full of the Holy Ghost, for they truly needed the guiding power of the Holy Ghost in their ministry of helping the Grecian widows. Furthermore when the Apostles laid their hands upon them to pray for them, certainly the power of the Holy Ghost was made manifest as they prayed for them. Seventeen times in the book of ACTS we find the word "prayed," which is also found here in verse 6. Seventeen is the number having to do with VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS. Positive results of heavenly proportions that are exceeding abundant above all we could even think or asked for are found after one has "prayed" in faith believing. The time previously recorded in ACTS 4:31 we find the following had happened: *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.* We must note also a similar result was found here in Jerusalem after the Apostles had prayed for these seven men.

ACTS 6:7 records the results of the Apostle's prayer: *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.* Three positive things are noted in answer to the Apostles prayer. First, the word of God greatly increased meaning Jesus was further magnified. Secondly, as a result of the word of God being more widely taught, the number of believers added to the church in Jerusalem was multiplied, and no doubt increased daily. The third remarkable thing specifically noted concerning the increase of the word of God being multiplied was that even a great company of the priest became themselves believers. This third statement of ACTS 6:7 underlines the fact that the convicting power of the Holy Ghost was very much in action here. A large majority of these priests were part of the group in opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But here we find striking proof of the fact of the convicting power of the truth of the gospel preached, and taught under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. As Brother Hill used to say, he wasn't interested in what you had, but in who has you. Obviously these called *...a great company of the priests...* that were formerly under the strong influence of Satan, and his opposition to the truth, were now *...obedient to the faith...* having believed His word of truth, and received for themselves the grace of God that bringeth salvation! EPHESIANS 2:8 & 9 -- *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Praise God that in those days *...a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

## Stephen

The spotlight is then put on Stephen from ACTS 6:8 through the end of ACTS 7. Our brother in the Lord, Luke, knew full well the importance of Stephen, and how Stephen's testimony had influenced Saul of Tarsus. This will be more and more apparent as we continue studying what Luke wrote us in ACTS. Stephen is another of those characters we would know nothing about without Luke writing the book of ACTS. We find Stephen's name seven times in scripture, all the book of ACTS. The reason the Holy Ghost inspired Luke to write Stephen's name seven times is because Stephen is to us an example of SPIRITUAL COMPLETION, and SPIRITUAL PERFECTION.

ACTS 6:8 *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.* Previously in ACTS 6:5 was highlighted Stephen among the seven as being *...full of faith and of the Holy Ghost...* and here again in verse 8 we find Stephen *... full of faith and power.* Obviously Stephen received the power he displayed from the Holy Ghost, for we were also informed of this by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ back in ACTS 1:8 when He told His disciples: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:...* . These two verses of ACTS 6:5 and ACTS 6:8 are the only times we read the phrase "full of faith" in scripture. If we remember nothing else about Stephen we should note that he was "full of faith," meaning: *...full of faith and power...* because he was *...full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.* These two verses define Stephen. ACTS 6:8 tells us further that because Stephen was full of faith and the power of the Holy Ghost the he *...did great wonders and miracles among the people.* The Holy Ghost doesn't have Luke record any further information on the kind of great wonders and miracles that Stephen did among the people. The reason being that it wasn't Stephen that was to be the focus of attention, but rather the focus was to be upon the One who made possible these great wonders and miracles, who was Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, who also on the day of Pentecost sent the Holy Ghost to accomplish the kind of great wonders and miracles that Stephen did among the people. Brother Copley indicates in his ACTS study book that the career of Stephen may have lasted several years, however scripture doesn't inform us on how long Stephen's ministry lasted.

I would be remiss in not here noting one of the greatest miracles that can be attributed to Stephen, do you have any idea what that was? Stephen himself didn't get to witness this miracle, but the Holy Ghost has Luke write three separate accounts in the book of ACTS of Saul of Tarsus getting saved. It was primarily the testimony of Stephen, and the prayer of Stephen in ACTS 7:60 that led to Saul of Tarsus getting saved on the road to Damascus. Stephen's last words recorded in ACTS 7:60 *...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* That prayer was answered when Saul of Tarsus got saved. Truly this was among the *...great wonders and miracles...* that is recorded in scripture because of the testimony, and witness of Stephen. In fact when anyone accepts Christ as their Saviour they too experience one of the greatest miracles ever, that being passing from death unto life eternal!

ACTS 6:9 through 11 shows that there was a faction there in Jerusalem that wasn't happy with the great wonders and miracles that Stephen did among the people. The reason for their displeasure with Stephen in particular was because Stephen's ministry had caused *...a great company of the priests...* to become *...obedient to the faith...* {ACTS 6:7} causing a reduction in numbers of those who attended various other synagogues there in Jerusalem. ACTS 6:9 *Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.* 10 *And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.* 11 *Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.* On the surface these three verses may not seem that significant, but they reveal some startling facts, which we will now examine.

History records that there were several different kinds of synagogues there in Jerusalem at that time. Conyebare and Howson in their research came across a record of there being 480 synagogues in Jerusalem at that time, but they also state that they thought that number was too high. Nevertheless we still do find at least five different synagogues whose members were disputing with Stephen in ACTS 6:9. The Libertines were Jews who had previously been imprisoned in Rome, but

were now set free, and became freed men in Jerusalem. The Cyrenians were Jews from Cyrene in Africa, and the Alexandrians were Jews from Alexandria, Egypt. Also Jews from Cilicia and Asia made up the members of another certain synagogue, which became very much opposed the truth put forth by Stephen. It is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul later states in ACTS 22:3 that he was *...a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia*. One has to wonder if Saul of Tarsus was the main one from Cilicia that engaged in the disputing against Stephen here in ACTS 6:9. It seems that he was. In the least Saul of Tarsus certainly was among those disputing with Stephen. This will make a lot more sense as we continue further in ACTS 6 & 7, for we will be better able to understand how it is we have a word-for-word record of Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7. Remember Luke recorded what eyewitness told him, and Luke wasn't there to witness Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon of ACTS 7, but Saul of Tarsus obviously was, and Saul of Tarsus later goes on to get saved, and become our Apostle Paul, whom Luke traveled with for many years in Paul's final decade here on earth.

Why in ACTS 6:9 were these different ones from other synagogues disputing with Stephen? They were against the doctrine Stephen taught first of all, that Jesus was the Messiah, and secondly they didn't like the miracles he wrought in the name of Jesus, and thirdly they questioned his authority for doing such things because they themselves did believe in Jesus. We have to conclude that as the word of God increased, and great wonders and miracles were wrought by the hands of Stephen there in Jerusalem, the assemblies of these other synagogues would have lost members to the assembly of believers led by Peter and the Apostles, who continued to tell that they were witnesses of Jesus resurrection. Stephen's ministry had spread to members of these Greek speaking synagogues, and ACTS 6:10 tells us that *...they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake*. This was because Stephen was full of faith, and full of the Holy Ghost, who enabled Stephen in the name of Jesus to do miracles and wonders among the people. One of the very last things Stephen stated in his sermon of ACTS 7 pricked their unbelieving heart to the core, which is recorded in ACTS 7:51. 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*. In other words they were unwilling to hear in their hearts and ears the truth of the word of God! Thus we find those of ACTS 6:9 & 10 unable *...to resist the wisdom and the spirit...* by which Stephen spake.

ACTS 6:11 *Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God*. To properly understand this scripture we first need to learn the meaning of "suborned." Suborned come from the Greek word hupoballo {hoop-ob-al'-lo}, number 5260 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which is only found this one time in scripture. It means: 1) to throw or put under; 2) to suggest to the mind; 3) to instruct privately, instigate, to bribe or induce (someone) unlawfully or secretly to perform some misdeed or commit a crime; 4) to induce (a person esp. a witness) to give false testimony. Webster's Dictionary states "to suborn in law means to procure a person to take such a false oath as constitutes perjury." These hired liars told the Sanhedrin council that *...We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God*. This statement of course was inspired by the father of lies, who is Satan, whom Jesus identified, and described in JOHN 8:44 *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*. Obviously this statement concerning Stephen in ACTS 6:11 was a lie, and nothing could be stated further from the truth, for Stephen never spoke or taught blasphemous words against Moses, or God. According to what we read in scripture concerning Stephen, there was not a fault found in him.

As we read further here in ACTS 6 we find their false witness against Stephen stirred up the unbelievers. ACTS 6:12 *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, 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous 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 Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*.

Who was it in verse 12 that stirred up the people? It was these hired false witnesses of verse 13, who were directed by these members of the different synagogues we looked at in verse 9. We mentioned above that they of the synagogue of Cilicia would have included a member known then as Saul of Tarsus; Tarsus being a city of Cilicia. We must acknowledge that these false witnesses that were present when Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin council in verse 12 had with them those of the different synagogues that had hired them in the first place. Certainly Saul of Tarsus would have been with them. These false witnesses declared what that had be instructed to say before the Sanhedrin council concerning Stephen, stating: *...This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us...* ACTS 6:13 & 14.

The next verse is further proof that Saul of Tarsus was there in the Sanhedrin council's trial of Stephen.

ACTS 6:15 *And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.* "All that sat in the council" would be the members of the Sanhedrin council, obviously, and those listed above that were in the council meeting testifying against Stephen, who included those from the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and them of Cilicia and Asia all mentioned in ACTS 6:9. They all were part of "all that sat in the council." Saul of Tarsus would have been present because he was party to the hiring of these false witnesses. Secondly we know that Saul of Tarsus was present at this trial of Stephen for Luke notes two more points that only a person present would know. The first point was that all of those present were *...looking stedfastly on...* Stephen, who was the focal point of this assembly. The second point is that Luke writes about the countenance of Stephen, that *...his face as it had been the face of an angel.* Only an eyewitness could make such a statement, but Luke wasn't there at the trial of Stephen. However as we have been pointing out, Saul of Tarsus was there, and gave his eyewitness account unto Luke years later that when he, Saul of Tarsus was present in this council meeting that Stephen's *...face as it had been the face of an angel.* This was a haunting look to a young man named Saul of Tarsus, a look he never forgot. Years later when this former Saul of Tarsus became the Apostle Paul, and told this account about Stephen, he would mention that he witnessed Stephen's *...face as it had been the face of an angel.* Would you know the face of an angel if you seen one? This is quiet a description, isn't it? And it wasn't just Saul of Tarsus who noticed this, but *...all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.* All that sat in the council also had hearts as cold as ice, but still *...looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.* Let me throw out a couple of thoughts that may enlighten our understanding here. This same Jewish Sanhedrin council had most of these same members in it when Jesus stood before them. Do you suppose Jesus face, being the Son of God, may have appeared different unto them? In other words Jesus demeanor didn't show fear, but rather expressed the peace, and the love of God in a most trying situation. If one could have taken Jesus blood pressure at this time there would have been no change from normal, nor did Jesus show any excitement, or fear, knowing from the eternities past what was going to happen at this moment. No doubt the Sanhedrin council members marveled within as they witnessed Jesus countenance before them. Now Stephen stood before them, and in his face they saw the same thing they witnessed in the face of Jesus. They saw a man full of the Holy Ghost, whose spiritual eyes were fixed on heavenly things above. They saw a man whose demeanor didn't show fear, but rather expressed the peace of God, and the love of God in a most trying situation, just like they saw in Jesus. On author notes "that the angelic brightness on Stephen's face might be intended to alarm the judges, for it is possible for a countenance full of spiritual grace to be awful and terrible to those who are full of hate." What ever they saw in Stephen's face, the glow of the love of God, and the calmness of the peace of God, and a heart full of grace, and the Holy Ghost, shined unto them, and kind of haunted them like the face of an angel would. Luke in writing this account was just recording what he had been told, and since Luke being a Gentile never got the chance to interview members of the Sanhedrin council for their side of the story, we must acknowledge that the only person who could have told Luke all of this was the man

formerly known as Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul. There is no scriptural evidence that Saul of Tarsus was ever a member of the Sanhedrin council, however we must acknowledge that he truly was closely associated with them, probably because of the fact that he was a star student of Gamaliel, a high ranking member of the Sanhedrin council. This topic may come up again later in our study, if the Lord tarries.