

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.

ACTS 7

ACTS 7:1 *Then said the high priest, Are these things so? 2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.*

We first see here Stephen respectfully addressing this Jewish Sanhedrin council calling them, ...*Men, brethren, and fathers*. He was addressing them as “brethren” in respect of the fact that they were fellow children of Israel, brethren in the flesh, not brethren in the Lord. Stephen was calling them fathers because of their age and dignity, and being chosen out of the senior and wiser part of the nation of Israel. The Holy Ghost then inspires Stephen to instruct these ... *Men, brethren, and fathers...* to ...*hearken...* meaning to attentively hear or listen! As we go through this sermon realize that Stephen was preaching this impromptu sermon under the power, and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The were not Stephen’s thoughts, per say, but rather Stephen’s Holy Ghost inspired power packed words which they were told to “hearken” too. They were being instructed by the power of the Holy Ghost to attentively hear the truth of the gospel message that Stephen was about to preach unto them. This wasn’t the first time they were privileged to hear Holy Ghost inspired preaching, and teaching for they had all heard and rejected Jesus Christ’s own words when He spoke, and taught them, and during His trial before he was crucified. More recently twice they had heard Peter, and the other Apostles give them witness that this same Jesus whom they had crucified was yet very much alive, and has risen from the dead. But these proud sinners of the Sanhedrin council didn’t “hearken” to Jesus words, not to the Apostles words, and were now once again given by the Holy Ghost inspired encouragement to “hearken,” to attentively hear what was about to be said, which was words of truth, and facts once again proving that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah, the Great I AM who appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua, and had even told some of the very same Sanhedrin members the words that are recorded in JOHN 8:58, which reads: *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.* So perhaps the most important word spoken in Stephen’s sermon of ACTS 7 was the little word “hearken” found here in ACTS 7:2. And bringing this down to you and me, shouldn’t we too intently, and intently “hearken” to The Word of God as we both read the scriptures, and hear The Word imparted to us by the Holy Ghost as he uses whatever vessel to speak to our hearts?

Next in ACTS 7:2 we find Stephen using the most reverent words to describe God, calling Him ...*The God of glory*. In his sermon Stephen calls God, “God” seventeen times; he calls God, “the Lord” five times, and he calls God “the most High” one time, not to mention the many references to God in this sermon using the words, “he,” “my,” and “I.” So we see that not once did Stephen use blasphemous words against God, which we also knew he wouldn’t, nor didn’t do. Stephen also mentions Jesus as “the Just One” once in ACTS 7:52. (The translation of “Jesus” in verse 45 references Joshua.) The mention of Jesus as “the Just One” truly pricked deep into the heart of Saul of Tarsus, for later in ACTS 22:14 when the Apostle Paul gives his salvation testimony before the multitude of the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost in 58 A.D. Paul uses Stephen’s terminology calling Jesus “that Just One.” Even though Stephen was called before the Sanhedrin council to defend himself, we do not find Stephen mentioning himself at all in ACTS 7 until verse 56, at which point in time he was done with his sermon. Thus we find the secret as to why Stephen can be called an overcomer, because his focus was first upon the Lord, and not himself. Stephen departed this world in victory, still totally focused upon the Lord as he uttered his last words recorded in ACTS 7:60 ...*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* That final prayer of Stephen was answered when

Saul of Tarsus got saved on the road to Damascus. And as you know Saul of Tarsus goes on to become the Apostle Paul, who wrote fourteen books of New Testament scripture, through which literally millions more have received Jesus Christ as their Saviour! Oh the endless love of Jesus, what a marvel! As brother Hill used to say: "What a wonder, what a wonder!"

The focus of Stephen's sermon was mainly upon God, and what He had done for the children of Israel back to the days of Abraham, and how their fathers and grandfathers, had constantly failed to recognize God's divine hand in their lives, and how they had continuously failed to trust God, and put their faith in Him. There were exceptions to Israel's general unbelief in examples of some famous faithful lives of faith that Stephen also points out in his sermon. Men such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and David. Interestingly these very same seven men are listed as heroes of faith many years later in the letter Paul writes unto the HEBREWS. Whoever would have thought that some of the inspiration for HEBREWS 11 came from Stephen's sermon, but no doubt it did. In my own mind I imagine that there was never a day that went by when the Apostle Paul didn't think of the words of Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon. So powerful was this sermon that we still read it today. So powerful was this Holy Ghost inspired sermon that it pricked the heart of old Saul of Tarsus, no doubt causing him many sleepless nights pondering it's haunting truths. So powerful was this sermon that some twenty five to thirty years later Paul was still able to quote it word for word to Luke, who left us this record we read in ACTS 7. Saul of Tarsus, a student of scripture, did "hearken" to the voice of Stephen, proving in the passing of time that truly "the word of the Lord endureth forever" ...1 PETER 1:25. Let's now read and study Stephen's sermon, a masterpiece from the Holy Ghost.

ACTS 7:2 *...The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran. 3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. 5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. 6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. 7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.*

Let's spend a few moments here reflecting on this part of Stephen's sermon where the members of the Sanhedrin council were instructed by Stephen to "hearken" to what the Holy Ghost inspired him to say. There are two hundred and fifty mentions of the name of Abraham in scripture, and five are found here in Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7. You can search all two hundred fifty of the times Abraham is mentioned in scripture, and I don't think you will find any negative statements about him. In fact the name of Abraham was highly revered by all of the children of Israel for they well knew they were descendants of Abraham. Furthermore Abraham is called "father Abraham" nine different times in scripture, and all Jews are proud of the fact that they are in the flesh descendants of Abraham. Abraham is also called "father Abraham" here in ACTS 7:2. I think most people are familiar with Abraham, and as Christians we too can be identified with "father Abraham," who is listed in ROMANS 4:16 as being *...the father of us all...* meaning the father of the faithful. GALATIANS 3 along with ROMANS 4, and many other scriptures explains this. GALATIANS 3:6 *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

This fact that in the seed of Abraham shall all the nations be blessed was the fact of the Abrahamic Covenant given by the Lord to Abram in GENESIS 12. GENESIS 12:1 *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,*

unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. This great nation that was made of the seed of Abraham is Israel another name for Jacob. From the seed of Abraham came Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour by whom ...*God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed...* as we just read in GALATIANS 3:8. GENESIS 22 records what Paul summarized in HEBREWS 11:17-19. HEBREWS 11:17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.* The facts of the Abrahamic Covenant is repeated in many scriptures, and was most recently repeated in Peter's second sermon with the words recorded in ACTS 3:25 & 26. ACTS 3:25 *Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* We all should know, and realize, and very much appreciate the fact that as believers ...*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ...* as we are told in EPHESIANS 1:3.

Of course we know here in ACTS 7 that Stephen wasn't preaching a sermon to believers, but was addressing the same members of the Sanhedrin council who had Jesus crucified. Peter later wrote in 2 PETER 3:9 that the Lord ...*is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* So we find that Stephen was encouraged of the Holy Ghost to preach repentance once again to the same members of the Sanhedrin council who had Jesus crucified. Jesus Himself no doubt had encouraged some of these same members of the Sanhedrin council to "hearken" to His words way back in JOHN 8 when He covered some of these very same facts concerning Abraham. Let's read some highlights of what Jesus said back in JOHN 8.

JOHN 8:37 *I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. 38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 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. 45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. ...51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. 52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? 54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: 55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

Thus we see that the Lord Jesus Christ is the same Just One, who appeared unto Abraham in a vision GENESIS 15:1, and told him: ...*Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great*

reward. It was Jesus who said unto Abraham in GENESIS 15:7 ...***I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.*** It was Jesus again who appeared unto Abraham in GENESIS 17:1 telling him: ...***I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*** Yes indeed as Jesus stated in JOHN 8:58 ...***Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*** In EXODUS 3 it was again Jesus who appeared unto Moses on the backside of the desert, and revealed Himself out of the midst of a burning bush that was not consumed with the fire. The Lord in EXODUS 3 told Moses in verse 6 ...***I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*** Again in EXODUS 3:8 the Lord said unto Moses: ...***And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.*** Now let's read EXODUS 3:13 & 14 -- ***And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? 14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*** As you read and study the scripture you will find many appearances of our Lord and Saviour where He reveals Himself as "I AM." Later on in ACTS we see the Lord Jesus Christ revealing himself unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and telling him in ACTS 22:8 ...***I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.***

Having reviewed a little about the facts of the Abrahamic Covenant, let's continue reading Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7. ACTS 7:8 ***And he gave him (Abraham) the covenant of circumcision:...*** . The covenant of circumcision was given to Abraham in GENESIS 17, and to Abraham's seed as is noted in GALATIANS 3:16. GALATIANS 3:16 ***Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*** The promises made to Abraham in GENESIS 12:3, and 22:18, and unto Isaac in GENESIS 26:4, and unto Jacob (Israel) in GENESIS 28:14, that we also read earlier in ACTS 3:25 in studying Peter's second sermon, was that in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. That precious promised seed was a reference to Christ as we just read in GALATIANS 3:16. The covenant of circumcision was God's mark of death upon all mankind. Brother Copley in his PHILIPPIANS study book wrote: "Circumcision refers to the cutting off of the old creation thru Christ's death on the cross. Circumcision under the old covenant had the cross in view. By being circumcised, Abraham acknowledged that he had no strength to be useful and fruitful, but that God had to intervene for him supernaturally. That was the fact exactly. Not till Abraham and Sarah were past the reproductive age was Isaac born, a type of the new creation, which is wholly supernatural and spiritual. COLOSSIANS 2:11 is a clear and invincible explanation of circumcision. "***In whom (Christ) also ye were (past tense, note) circumcised (cut off) with a circumcision (a cutting off) not made by a hand, in the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh in the circumcision (cutting off) of Christ.***" This must mean the death of Christ; for the next verse declares boldly that "***God raised Him from the dead,***" and raised us up with Him. When Jesus died, we all died with Him. When He was circumcised (or cut off) for us, we were cut off too. The real circumcision was the cutting off of the old creation thru Christ's death on the cross." {End of quoting Brother Copley.}

Let's now finish this thought on the covenant of circumcision by reading what the Apostle Paul wrote in ROMANS 4 concerning Abraham. ROMANS 4:11 ***And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. 13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.***

Back to Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7. ACTS 7:8 ***And he gave him (Abraham) the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat***

Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. These members of the Sanhedrin listening to Stephen's sermon would know that Jacob's name was changed to Israel in GENESIS 32. GENESIS 32:28 where Jacob was wrestling with a man, who was an angel of the Lord, who told him: ...*And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.* God appeared unto Jacob a second time in GENESIS 35, and once again confirmed Jacob's name change to Israel. GENESIS 35:9 *And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. 10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. 11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.* However here in Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7 the Holy Ghost doesn't inspire Stephen to mention the name of Israel until verse 23, so we find that Stephen will use the name of Jacob a total of seven times in his sermon of ACTS 7.

ACTS 7:8 *And he gave him (Abraham) the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. 9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. 17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.*

Five times in verses 9-18 we read the name Joseph. Brother Copley in his ACTS study book properly points out that the Holy Ghost was inspiring Stephen to trace God's dealing with Israel from the days of Abraham to the advent of Jesus Christ. "He deftly showed that "the fathers" maltreated and resisted God's servants throughout those two thousand years. The patriarchs were moved with jealousy against Joseph, a perfect type of Christ, and sold him into Egypt (ACTS 7:9)." {End of quoting Brother Copley for now.} One more thing we must point out as we continue studying Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon of ACTS 7, and that is even though Stephen is the one put on trial here before the Jewish Sanhedrin council, it is really the Sanhedrin council members themselves, who are put on trial by the Holy Ghost! As Brother Copley correctly noted above, it was the Sanhedrin council here, the men, brethren and fathers Stephen was addressing, that were still maltreating, and resisting God's servants, which fact the Holy Ghost had Stephen point out in his defense here in ACTS 7.

Next in Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7 the Holy Ghost inspires Stephen to speak about Moses, who is mentioned by name nine times in verses 19-44. When we think about Moses we view him as an icon of faith, and thus have very uplifting, positive and encouraging memories of him leading the children of Israel out of the land of bondage. However as we will now read in verses 19-44 here in ACTS 7 we will see that the Holy Ghost inspires Stephen to point out, and really emphasize that the children of Israel failed to embrace the fact that their Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, was really the One whose leading Moses was following. It was Christ who was their Deliverer. It was Christ that was their Redeemer! It was Christ who was their Provider, and Sustainer. It was really Christ that was directing them to the promised land of Israel. As the Apostle Paul later pointed out in 1 CORINTHIANS 10:4, it was Christ ...*that spiritual Rock that followed them,....and guided, and directed them those forty years in the wilderness.* But because of their hardened hearts of unbelief

they wandered forty years in the wilderness ...until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD swore unto them... ..DEUTERONOMY 2:14. "The generation of the men of war" speaks to those ...*From twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel...* according to NUMBERS 1:3. The Lord swore unto them the following after they refused to go into the promised land of Israel after rejecting the report of Joshua, and Caleb, the two spies who said that Lord is with us, and will enable us to possess the land: NUMBERS 14:22 *Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: 24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. ...29 Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, 30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. 31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. 32 But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. 33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. 34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. 35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.*

When the forty years of wandering in the wilderness were over, Moses gave his speech to the children of Israel, which we call DEUTERONOMY. In DEUTERONOMY 1:2 Moses quickly summarizes these forty years saying in a parenthetical statement: *(There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadeshbarnea.)* Because of their unbelief, as we read above, it took the children of Israel forty years to complete an eleven day journey! Eleven is the number of INSUFFICIENCY. Insufficiency or lack of sufficient faith is what held the children of Israel back from obtaining their rightful inheritance nearly forty years earlier than they did. Forty is one of the simpler numbers to define in scripture, and it is the number of PERFECT TESTING. DEUTERONOMY 8:2 *And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. 4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. 5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. JOSHUA 5:6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD swore that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD swore unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.*

With this understanding let's now read what Stephen had to say about Moses in ACTS 7. ACTS 7:19 *The same (the Pharaohs) dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. 20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: 21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand*

would deliver them: but **they understood not**. 26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? 27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, **Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?** 28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? 29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. 30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. 35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, **Who made thee a ruler and a judge?** the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. 36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.* (This was a reference to Christ the Messiah.) 38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? 43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. 44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

In ACTS 6:14 we find Stephen brought before the Sanhedrin council accused of changing the customs which Moses delivered unto the children of Israel. Up to this point in his sermon Stephen's only mention about the law of Moses was the facts stated in verses 38 & 39 noting that it was Moses, ...*who received the lively oracles to give unto us: **To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt.*** Furthermore the point that Stephen emphasized about Moses was that the children of Israel really rejected Moses, and his leadership by twice noting both in verses 27 and 35 that they had said ...**Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?** They didn't recognize that it was God, who sent Moses to the children of Israel ...*to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush...* ACTS 7:35. Stephen further made note of the fact that the children of Israel in Moses day didn't hearken unto him either, as he made this reference to what is recorded in DEUTERONOMY 18:15 and 18 how Moses ...*said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear...* ACTS 7:37. This was a prophecy of Christ, whom this very same Sanhedrin council didn't hearken to either, but rather were the very ones who had Jesus crucified! The Holy Ghost had Stephen point out that the heart attitude of the Sanhedrin council was just like the children of Israel in Moses day who had said: ...**Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?** Again the Holy Ghost inspired Stephen's words to the Sanhedrin council, which really put them on trial here.

Stephen last mentions Moses in ACTS 7:44, where he says: *Our fathers had the **tabernacle of witness** in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.* The tabernacle in the wilderness was a tabernacle of witness to the fact Christ was with the children of Israel in every step of their journey. They saw Him

as the pillar of cloud by day, to lead them the way, to give them shade from the hot desert sun, and a pillar of fire by night to lead them the way and give them light, and heat at night. {Study EXODUS 13:21 & 22; 14:24; NUMBERS 14:14, and NEHEMIAH 9:12 & 19.} The tabernacle was a representation of Christ, and everything in it was typical of Christ. The phrase "the tabernacle of witness" is found five times in scripture once again emphasizing the GRACE of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men as is noted in TITUS 2:11. We often reference the fact, which Peter wrote in 2 PETER 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Later in ACTS 13:18 the Apostle Paul would state this about the children of Israel who wandered in the wilderness for forty years, saying: *And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.* Their manners reflected forty years of unbelief! Stephen even pointed out how the children of Israel took to worshipping idols, which they had made. ACTS 7:43 *Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them...*

In ACTS 7:45 & 46 Stephen covers the history of Israel for the next four hundred plus years from Joshua to David. ACTS 7:45 *Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus (Joshua) into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;* 46 *Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.* Joshua is mentioned 216 times in scripture, and David 1139 times. This is the sixth mention of David in the book of ACTS so far.

ACTS 7:47 *But Solomon built him an house.* (Solomon is mentioned 306 times in scripture, and ACTS 7:47 is the last time we find the name of Solomon in scripture.) 48 *Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,* 49 *Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?* 50 *Hath not my hand made all these things?*

David was not permitted of the Lord to build the temple of the Lord as we are told in 1 CHRONICLES 22:6-11, but Solomon was allowed to build the temple of the Lord. 1 CHRONICLES 22:6 *Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel.* 7 *And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God:* 8 *But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.* 9 *Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.* 10 *He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.* 11 *Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee.*

Brother Copley also here references the prayer of dedication of the temple by Solomon found in 1 KINGS 8. 1 KINGS 8:22 *And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:* 23 *And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:* 24 *Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day.* 25 *Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.* 26 *And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.* 27 *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?*

The quote Stephen makes in ACTS 7:48-50 comes from the Prophet Isaiah. ISAIAH 66:1 *Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that*

ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? 2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Luke wasn't there to hear Stephen's sermon, so we don't know the reaction of the Sanhedrin council to what Stephen had just proclaimed. The Sanhedrin council was full of indignation to begin with when Stephen was brought before them, so we know they didn't receive Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired words with open hearts, and ears. We can see by the tone that the Holy Ghost inspired words of Stephen had set that the Sanhedrin council perceived he was about to draw conclusions unfavorable to the temple, and its rituals, which they themselves practiced. Stephen was emphasizing the fact that this Messiah, whom they had crucified, was indeed the promised Son of God, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, thus the Son of David, and the promised King of Israel. By the power of the Holy Ghost Stephen perceived their heart, and with the convicting power of the Holy Ghost inspiring Stephen's words we find him bringing his sermon to a conclusion with these words: 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.*

We find here God's perspective about the heart attitude of His chosen people since the days of Moses. Seven times in EXODUS, and DEUTERONOMY we find the Lord explaining to Moses that the children of Israel were a stiffnecked people. EXODUS 32:9 *And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:...* . Read the rest of that story on your own, and see that at that time God was ready to destroy the children of Israel, but Moses intervened. Now let's read a little of the exhortation of Moses before the children of Israel went into Israel found in DEUTERONOMY 10. DEUTERONOMY 10:11 *And the LORD said unto me, Arise, take thy journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give unto them. 12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, 13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? 14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. 15 Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. 16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: 18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. 19 Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. 21 He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen. 22 Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.*

The Holy Ghost inspired Stephen to say these words to the Sanhedrin council 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.* Have you ever heard of uncircumcised ears? We find the uncircumcised ear defined in JEREMIAH 6:10 *To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.* Next we find the uncircumcised heart. Uncircumcised hearts, simply stated, love not the Lord, nor fear the Lord. JEREMIAH 17:9 & 10 pretty much defines the uncircumcised heart: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* One more thing mentioned here in ACTS 7:51 is the statement *...ye do always resist the Holy Ghost...* . One of the jobs of the Holy Ghost explained by Jesus in

JOHN 16:8 is to *...reprove the world of sin...* meaning to expose, or convict the world of sin. A man who continually resists the Holy Ghosts conviction, and thus blasphemes (counts as vile, or degrades) the Holy Ghost cannot be saved! LUKE 12:10 explains it this way: *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.*

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.* These are the last words of Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon. Here in ACTS 7:52 Stephen asked a question that Jesus Himself already gave an answer too, and some of these very same members of the Sanhedrin council may have even heard Jesus say this. The question found in ACTS 7:52 is: *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* Jesus in MATTHEW 23 told the scribes and Pharisees that sat in Moses seat the following: MATTHEW 23:29 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

ACTS 7:52 *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.*

It is interesting to also note the use of the word "disposition" found here in verse 53. This is the only time we find the word "disposition" in scripture. This comes from the Greek word *diatage* {dee-at-ag-ay'}, number 1296 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which simply means an ordinance, which is how this word is translated in ROMANS 13:2 where the reference is to the "ordinance of God." The ordinance was the law of Moses given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. PSALMS 68:17 informs us: *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.* Perhaps this was the scripture Stephen was alluding too in ACTS 7:53, however it seems more likely Stephen was referencing DEUTERONOMY 33:2 when Moses gave his final blessing unto the children of Israel. DEUTERONOMY 33:1 *And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. 2 And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.* Certainly the Sanhedrin council, whom Stephen was here addressing, they well know Moses words of blessing from DEUTERONOMY 33. And we must also once again make mention of the fact that the Holy Ghost inspired Stephen to say that the law was received *...by the disposition of angels...* which the Sadducees didn't believe in.

As we noted above ACTS 7:52 and 53 are the last words of Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon. The words of Stephen's sermon were *...quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and was a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart...* as is taught us in HEBREWS 4:12. If you take the time to further study Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7 you will see that not one time did Stephen

put the spotlight upon himself as he answered the Sanhedrin council's question to him: *...are these things so?... ACTS 7:1*. We get a very fine example in Stephen's sermon of what is in the heart of a full overcomer. Stephen wasn't focused upon himself, but manifested himself to be a man full of faith, and full of the power of the Holy Ghost as is told us in ACTS 6:5 & 8. Stephen's sermon was powerful, and was heard by all in attendance at the Sanhedrin council's meeting that day. These words of Stephen didn't fall on deaf ears, but was received by uncircumcised hearts, and ears, who refused to believe the truth of the gospel, not allowing the Word of the Lord to convert them, and heal them from their sins, ...or so it seemed. Down the road a few weeks while pursuing Christians outside the limits of Jerusalem, Saul of Tarsus got arrested by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Saul of Tarsus, (Tarsus being a city of Cilicia), was one of them from Cilicia, who hired the men who brought charges against Stephen as is recorded in ACTS 6:9-13. Saul of Tarsus heard Stephen's sermon! The Holy Ghost inspired words of Stephen's sermon in ACTS 7 echoed in Saul of Tarsus' conscience day and night, constantly pricking his heart. What happened to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus is recorded in ACTS 9; ACTS 22; and ACTS 26. ACTS 26:12-15 gives this account: *Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* (Meaning: "it is hard for you to go against the constant pricking of your own conscience.") *And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* At that instant when Saul of Tarsus called on the name of the Lord, he became a believer. ROMANS 10:13 explains: *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Saul of Tarsus there on the road to Damascus indeed saw the Lord, heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto him, and understood it was indeed Jesus Christ who was clearly speaking unto him, and he immediately confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus, believed in his heart that Christ was raised from the dead, and was then instantaneously forgiven his sins, thus he was converted and healed of his sins at that moment in time! WOW! What a moment. What a miracle! And so is the miracle of life, our new life in the Lord the instant we are born again.

Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon of ACTS 7 preached by the faith and power of the Holy Ghost was indeed the word of the Lord. Stephen never got to see from an earthly perspective what was accomplished because of his sermon, but we can. We read in ISAIAH 55:11 *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* What did Stephen's sermon accomplish? Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon did indeed deeply prick the heart and conscience of Saul of Tarsus, and as we have just read from ACTS 26, Saul of Tarsus got saved! As you also know, Saul of Tarsus went on to become the Apostle Paul, our Apostle sent unto the Gentiles. The Apostle Paul wrote 14 books of the New Testament, and his influence was upon three other New Testament books, of MARK, LUKE, and ACTS! Only the Lord knows how many millions more down through the centuries since then have become believers because of the gospel of the Apostle Paul. We certainly are grateful for Stephen, and his allowing the Holy Ghost to speak the word of the Lord through him. Was there a more important sermon recorded in scripture than the sermon Stephen preached unto the Sanhedrin council that day?

We quoted from HEBREWS 4:12 above, which again states: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* The intents of the hearts of those in the Sanhedrin council that day of Stephen's sermon is revealed in the concluding verses of ACTS 7, which we will read in a moment. Recall what Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees in JOHN 8:44 *some of whom may have been members of this very same Sanhedrin council. 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.* As we now read

the concluding verses of ACTS 7 we will see what the Holy Ghost inspired Stephen to say about the Sanhedrin council in ACTS 7:52 was indeed correct, and that being that they too were “*betrayers and murderers*,” and Stephen was going to be their next victim!

ACTS 7:54 *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.*

There are several very important facts revealed in these final verses of ACTS 7, and many of these points we have discussed in prior lessons. C. I. Scofield seldom makes a lengthy footnote, but here in ACTS 7:54 he does. ACTS 7:54 *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.* Scofield here notes: “They had brought false witnesses against Stephen; he bears true witness against them, quoting the testimony of writers they owned to be inspired. He speaks of the persistent rejection of God and His servants by the nation till at last it is brought home to themselves, and arouses the maddened enmity of their hearts. It was the final trial of the nation.” {End of Scofield quote.} Note here again that the Sanhedrin council for the second time was ...*cut to the heart*... just the same as was recorded in ACTS 5:33 when the Apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin. In ACTS 5:33 we find the Sanhedrin council was ...*cut to the heart*... literally meaning to be sawn asunder; to saw in two. This expresses rage, not conviction. One convicted by the pricking of their heart can be saved; the individual ...*cut to the heart*... with such rage against the Lord Jesus Christ, and the convicting power of the Holy Ghost, can not be saved. In ACTS 5:33 we find the Sanhedrin council enraged to the point that they took counsel to slay the Apostles! Thus as Scofield notes: “the gospel when preached in the power of the Spirit convicts or enrages.” Here in ACTS 7:54 they gnashed on Stephen with their teeth, and had him stoned to death. Gnashing with the teeth, like a rabid dog, shows the fury, bitterness, indignation, and thirst for Stephen’s blood that those of the Sanhedrin council expressed. A similar thought is also told by David in PSALMS 35. PSALMS 35:15 *But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the objects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: 16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.*

In ACTS 7:55 & 56 Stephen states what he saw next: ACTS 7:55 *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.* These two verses are one sentence, and quite the sentence it is. We first notice that Stephen was “full of the Holy Ghost.” Men and women full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith and wisdom is not unique in the book of ACTS, in fact the reason so much is accomplished in the book of ACTS, by ordinary men and women, is that they were men and women full of the Holy Ghost. We have pointed out how the Apostle Peter in ACTS 2, and again in ACTS 3 preached two very powerful sermons after which more than eight thousand souls were saved! This could only happen because Peter was full of the Holy Ghost. The same thing is stated of Peter in ACTS 4:8-12 when he being full of the Holy Ghost told this very same Sanhedrin council ...*Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved...* ACTS 4:10-12. Later in ACTS 4:31-33 the assembly at Jerusalem joined the Apostles that were praying with them, and they all were full of the Holy Ghost, 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. ...33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. In ACTS 11:24 when Barnabas first went to Antioch, Syria it is noted that he too was full of the Holy Ghost, and much people were added unto the Lord. The list is long in New Testament scripture of what happened because of men and women full of the Holy Ghost accomplishing the Lord's work, and that is why we read in Ephesus that *...mightily grew the word of God and prevailed...* ACTS 19:20.

Next in ACTS 7:55 we find that Stephen, 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.* This was an intent gaze that by the Holy Ghost's power Stephen was able to see two things: (1) "the Glory of God," and (2) "Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The phrase "the glory of God" is found seventeen times in scripture point to VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS! Stephen was a few short minutes away from seeing Jesus face to face in heaven! ACTS 7:55 & 56 are the only two times in scripture where we read that Jesus was "standing on the right hand of God." Many scriptures emphasize that Jesus Christ the Son of man is now sitting on the right hand of the throne of God where He is currently making intercession for us as is noted in ROMANS 8:34, however here in ACTS 7:55 & 56 we see that at this moment in time Jesus was standing on the right hand of God. Brother Copley writes in his ACTS study book that Jesus was standing up, ready to return and be Israel's King if they had welcomed Him, which is a true statement. However ISAIAH 46:10 tells us that the Lord knows the end from the beginning, and He also knew that they were at this time not going to welcome Him as their King of kings, and Lord of lords. Brother Hill used to say here that Jesus was standing by the right hand of God at this time waiting to receive Stephen into His loving arms, which He did a few short moments after Stephen made this statement. Brother Hill added that when someone real important enters a room the correct and proper thing to do is stand up. We must acknowledge that overcomer Stephen was indeed welcomed to the throne room as the first martyr by His Saviour standing upon His feet just as Stephen had stated in ACTS 7:55 & 56.

ACTS 7:57 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.

Let's step back for a moment and view this scene from the perspective of the "they" referenced in ACTS 7:57. Who were the "they" Luke was mentioning here in ACTS 7:57? We know from ACTS 7:1 that Stephen was respectfully answering the question asked of the high priest of the Sanhedrin council. In ACTS 7:2 Stephen politely addresses those of the Sanhedrin council, and the others in attendance as "Men, brethren, and fathers." We cannot assume that this now famous sermon of Stephen's here in ACTS 7 was exclusively made to the Sanhedrin council only, but they were the ones Stephen was called before to answer the false charges brought against him. Stephen's accusers were there too, and perhaps even many other of the children of Israel were in attendance as spectators, and witnesses as to what the Sanhedrin council was going to do with Stephen. So even though Stephen was primarily addressing the Sanhedrin council in ACTS 7, those parties mentioned in ACTS 6:9-14 of the various synagogues, and the false witnesses, who presented false charges against Stephen, were in attendance at this council meeting also. These all collectively were the "they" mentioned here in ACTS 7:57, who *...cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord.* This was the same "they" of ACTS 7:54 who *...heard these things...* (of Stephen's sermon); the same "they" of ACTS 7:54 who *...were cut to the heart,* (because of Stephen's sermon); and the same "they" of ACTS 7:54 who *...gnashed on him with their teeth.* This whole collective group of the Sanhedrin council, Stephen's accusers, and the false witnesses, plus any other spectators to this Sanhedrin council meeting were all part of the participants of ACTS 7:57 & 58. *ACTS 7:57 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.* This collective group all were party to crying *...out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord...* and stoned Stephen. The purpose of stoning someone was to put them to death, not to teach a person a

lesson. One stoned in scripture was stoned to death outside the city limits, outside the camp, according to LEVITICUS 24:14-23, and NUMBERS 15:35. This collective group ran upon Stephen in one accord, and hauled him passed the city limits, and then stoned him to death.

Twenty-four times in scripture we find the phrase; “hear the word of the Lord.” Twenty-four is a priestly number, the number of PRIESTHOOD. Stephen’s Holy Ghost inspired words of ACTS 7 were indeed the word of the Lord; words inspired by the Holy Ghost that Stephen strongly encouraged urged the hearers to “hearken” unto in ACTS 7:2. We mentioned earlier that the word “hearken” found in ACTS 7:2 may have been the most important word that should have been heeded here in Stephen’s sermon, for every word that followed was the gospel truth! Yet as we read in ACTS 7:57 this collective group of ACTS 7 refused to “hearken,” for they refused to “hear the word of the Lord,” thus they *...stopped their ears...* and stoned the Lord’s messenger to death! This was a monumental moment in the history of Israel, for this was the point in time when Israel nationally rejected Christ as their Messiah. Had the nation Israel accepted Christ as their Saviour at this time, then we find here as Stephen witnessed, that Jesus was “standing on the right hand of God” waiting to come back and set up His Kingdom, which will happen in the Millennium, also known as the Kingdom Age. But that didn’t happen for they of the children of Israel had *...stopped their ears...* thus the Church Age was ushered in, which purpose can be summarized as being the age where God the Father is seeking a wife for His Son Jesus. The Bride of Christ will come out of this Church Age we are still living in. Marvel of marvel’s, and wonder of wonders is the fact that this young man Saul introduced to us for the first time in scripture in ACTS 7:58 will be the one that God uses to teach the facts about the Bride of Christ!!!

This young man named Saul mentioned for the first time in scripture in ACTS 7:58 will go on to become the Apostle Paul. I doubt that a day ever went by from this point forward when this man Saul, Saul of Tarsus, and later the Apostle Paul, didn’t have a thought or two about Stephen, whose sermon of ACTS 7 echoed in the back of his mind for the rest of his life. We read of one recollection of the Apostle Paul concerning Stephen in ACTS 22:20, which reads: *And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.* Truly the stoning of Stephen was not only a monumental moment in the history of Israel, but also a monumental moment in the life of Saul of Tarsus! This was a day he never forgot.

This brings us back to the last two verses of ACTS 7 where we find the final words recorded of full overcomer Stephen, which are actually two prayers. ACTS 7:59 *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.* In verse 59 we read these five words of GRACE found in Stephen’s first prayer: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* Scofield here notes that Stephen was saying; “Lord Jesus, give welcome unto my spirit.” Obviously Stephen knew he was dying, yet he had one more request, which didn’t concern himself. Stephen well knew that the Lord Jesus was about to welcome him with open tender loving arms, and then with his last ounce of strength Stephen in verse 60 *...he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* This was the second prayer, and Stephen’s final words. 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 here received Him we find in ACTS 7:56 that Jesus was standing up ready to return and be Israel’s King. 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 as we noted above.

ACTS 7:60 *And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* This was the final statement of a full overcomer. These words of Stephen spoken with a

loud voice were words, which Saul of Tarsus heard; words which pricked his heart; and words that he didn't fully understand until after the day of his salvation. Stephen's final cry, his final prayer, was answered the day Saul of Tarsus finally got saved. Conybeare and Howson stated in their book "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul:" "We cannot dissociate the martyrdom of Stephen from the conversion of Paul. The spectacle of so much constancy, so much faith, so much love, could not be lost. It is hardly too much to say with Augustine, that 'the church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen.'" {End of quote.} So we too must acknowledge that we owe one hundred chapters of Paul's gospel message as the Lord's answer to Stephen's final prayer: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

Philip the Evangelist

Before we move on to ACTS 8, and beyond let's take another inventory of where we are in our studying about what Luke wrote us in scripture. As we know Luke got most of his information that he documented in The Gospel of LUKE, and the book of The ACTS from eyewitness accounts. Of course it was the Holy Ghost who inspired our brother in the Lord Luke to write his accounts that have become scripture. Most of what Luke recorded in the first seven chapters of ACTS would have come from the eye witness accounts of both Peter, and the Apostle Paul, and perhaps any interviews Luke would have had with the other Apostles. As we move beyond ACTS 7 the information that Luke records will come from interviews again with Peter, and the other Apostles, and the contact that Luke later had with Philip the evangelist. Additionally from ACTS 16 on are events that Luke himself was a party too, thus he would have had first hand eyewitness experiences of the Lords working during that time.

So let again recall how it was that Luke had opportunity to interview those eyewitnesses he first mentioned in LUKE 1:1-4, which would have included even Mary the mother of Jesus. We know that Luke spent some time with the Apostle Paul on Paul's third missionary journey from what Luke wrote us in ACTS 16. When the Apostle Paul concluded his third missionary journey, Luke was with him as is documented in ACTS 20, especially verses 5 & 6 where Luke writes again in the first person of "we" and "us." Luke journeyed with Paul to Jerusalem, and was with him when Paul was arrested in ACTS 21. According to ACTS 24:27 Paul was held prisoner for the next two years, and was transferred from Jerusalem to Caesarea. But Luke wasn't arrested, so Luke hung around Jerusalem, and made frequent visits to Caesarea to visit Paul during these two years when Paul was held prisoner in Caesarea. In ACTS 27 when Paul was sent to Rome by king Agrippa, we find in ACTS 27:1 that Luke was again traveling with Paul, and remained with Paul through the final verses of ACTS 28. And Luke was still with Paul when Paul wrote in 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 "Only Luke is with me." Thus we find Luke kept close tabs on the Apostle Paul from the conclusion of Paul's 3rd missionary journey until the end of Paul's life.

It was during those supposed two silent years when Paul was prisoner at Caesarea that Luke stayed in Jerusalem, and did most of his interviews with those eyewitnesses, who had been with Jesus, and with the Apostles those previous years recorded in LUKE 1 through the time frame of ACTS 7. If we put ourselves in Luke shoes when he was staying with that old disciple Mnason (ACTS 21:16) in Jerusalem during these same two years, it was during this time that Luke had the unique opportunity of interviewing many of these old eyewitnesses.

Now let's read a huge tidbit of information that Luke pointed out in ACTS 21:8 concerning **Philip the evangelist**. Keep in mind that this is when Luke first got to meet **Philip the evangelist**, for as we will now read, Paul, and those several traveling with him as he concluded his third missionary journey, they all stayed at the house of **Philip the evangelist** in Caesarea a few short days before Paul and company went to Jerusalem. ACTS 21:8 *And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.* (The "we" shows that Luke was with Paul here.) This is when Luke first got to meet **Philip the evangelist**. Luke here plainly tells us that this was the

same **Philip** found in ACTS 6:5, who was part of the *...seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom...* spoken of in ACTS 6:3.

Now let's put ourselves in the house of **Philip the evangelist** as he hosted Paul's entourage. How many minutes passed before Stephen's name came up? Stephen is kind of like the elephant in the room isn't he? You know Stephen's name came up. **Philip** had his memories of Stephen, which included statements found in ACTS 6 stating that Stephen was *...a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost...*, and that Stephen was *...full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people*. Paul had his memories of Stephen, which included a word for word recollection the powerful sermon of ACTS 7. **Philip** had memories of what took place in his life after the death of Stephen. The Apostle Paul also had memories of what happened unto him after the death of Stephen, and how Stephen's testimony lingered daily in Paul's life. Yes Stephen's name came up, and we see the heart attitude of a full overcomer in **Philip the evangelist** as he hosted in his own home the very same man who was there at the stoning of his good friend Stephen! And Luke was there taking notes.

Now move ahead in time a few days. After the Apostle Paul and company left the house of **Philip the evangelist** Paul went up to Jerusalem where a few days later he was arrested. After a short period of time Paul, now a prisoner of the Roman Empire, was transferred to Herod's judgment hall as a prisoner back in Caesarea where **Philip the evangelist** lived. A short while later Paul was brought before the governor Felix, where he spoke in his own defense. Then we read in ACTS 24:23 that Felix *...commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him*. Was that centurion familiar with fellow centurion Cornelius, who also lived at Caesarea? Who was Paul's acquaintance there at Caesarea? Was it not **Philip the evangelist** with whom he stayed in ACTS 21:8? ACTS 24:27 further informs us that Paul was kept prisoner in Caesarea for two years! This means that **Philip the evangelist** had the opportunity to learn first hand the gospel of Paul from Paul's own mouth for two years! Did **Philip the evangelist** take advantage of this opportunity? **Philip the evangelist** was full of faith, full of the Holy Ghost, full of wisdom as was Stephen, so to my sanctified imagination I can reason that **Philip the evangelist** did indeed get the unique opportunity to learn Paul's gospel message from the mouth of the Apostle Paul himself. No doubt **Philip the evangelist** had a frequent visitor card as he was one of the primary ones who came to minister unto Paul, and was thus ministered to himself. It seems Luke also got to witness these two men of God fellowshiping together. **Philip the evangelist** was one of those transition characters who lived through the transition from the last age into this Church Age.

Philip the evangelist name as **Philip** is mentioned sixteen times in scripture, all in the book of ACTS. Sixteen is the number of LOVE, thus again **Philip the evangelist** is a great example to us of a New Testament full overcomer, and one who fully manifests the LOVE of God. I think that the Holy Spirit left us an example of the fact that **Philip** ended up a full overcomer in this Church Age, in catching away **Philip** from one place and transporting him to another place about forty miles away in an instant, as a figure of the outward translation that will take place at the end of this Church Age. {Study this part of ACTS 8:39 & 40: *...the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus:...* about forty miles distance.} **Philip's** name means "lover of horses," showing that he loved the race, and figuratively speaking, the Apostle Paul was one of the best racecourse runners to be associated with.

Again, Luke calls **Philip the evangelist** in ACTS 21:8. An evangelist is one who is a preacher of the gospel, which is to say a messenger of the good news of the gospel proclaiming salvation through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In EPHESIANS 4:11 we read that Jesus *...gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*. **Philip** was an **evangelist**, and his progress as an **evangelist** full of the Holy Ghost is tracked for us in ACTS 8. We find **Philip's** name fourteen times in ACTS 8. Fourteen is the number that has to do with DELIVERANCE or SALVATION, and in studying **Philip the evangelist** in ACTS 8 we see that he preached a message of SALVATION, and that many were DELIVERED from various diseases.

And one more thought concerning **Philip the evangelist** being a full overcomer will be manifested as we study ACTS 8 for we will see no evidence of **Philip the evangelist** showing any bitterness over the stoning of his close associate Stephen. It seems the Holy Spirit also encouraged **Philip the evangelist** to not lay this sin of the stoning of Stephen to the charge of any who were guilty of this action. Thus **Philip the evangelist** was encouraged to spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God without prejudice. So again **Philip the evangelist** is a great example to us of a New Testament full overcomer, and one who fully manifests the LOVE of God, and shows the LOVE of God to all he came in contact with. **Philip the evangelist** also knew, and taught ...*that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners...* ...1 TIMOTHY 1:15.

ACTS 8

ACTS 8:1 *And Saul was consenting unto his death. 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. 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.*

This was the testimony of Saul of Tarsus. He was consenting unto Stephen's death, and did nothing to stop the stoning of Stephen. Furthermore we read here that Saul of Tarsus ...*made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* Later after he got saved, and became the Apostle Paul we read more of what Saul of Tarsus did. In ACTS 22:4 Paul said ...*I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.* In ACTS 26:11 Paul again noted the fact that he was a persecutor of Christians, stating: ...*I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* In 1 CORINTHIANS 15:9 Paul again confesses: ...*I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* In GALATIANS 1:13 & 14 Paul once again writes: *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* We will read more about Saul of Tarsus when we get to ACTS 9.

Concerning Stephen, Jesus' words of MATTHEW 5 certainly apply to him. MATTHEW 5:10 *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

The stoning to death of Stephen we learn in these first three verses of ACTS 8 caused many of the believers to leave Jerusalem. The reason is explained in ACTS 8:1 *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.* Where did the Kingdom Apostles go? The answer is that they stayed in Jerusalem, for some of the believers were unable to go anywhere else. And no doubt the Apostles were further encouraged of the Holy Ghost to remain in Jerusalem at this time, which obviously they did. In time the Kingdom Apostles would make journeys outside of Jerusalem, however Jerusalem remained the focal point of Jews from all over the world. The Apostle Paul visited Jerusalem five times after his salvation, and when Paul was later arrested in Jerusalem, the Kingdom Apostles were still there, as ACTS 8:1 indicates. However as we will find in ACTS 8, the Apostles did for the first time since Pentecost, travel beyond the city limits of Jerusalem. The scattering of the disciples from Jerusalem was foretold by our Saviour in ACTS 1:8, where Jesus told them just before His ascension: *But 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.* A hundred and twenty plus were filled with the

Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, but we don't read of any of them traveling beyond Jerusalem until the time they were scattered in ACTS 8:1, and note they then went to ...*the regions of Judaea and Samaria*... which Jesus told them they would back in ACTS 1:8.

ACTS 8:2 points out that Stephen had a proper burial: *And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.* We can see **Philip the evangelist** also being among them, for he was a close associate of Stephen. The funeral of Stephen seems to have been a very loud public event, and the Greek word for lamentation only used here means: to beat the breast as a sign of grief. {Kopetos number 2870 in The Strong's Greek Concordance.} The make up of those noted to be "devout" men here is not told us, but we must know and realize that the majority were Christians, Stephen's friends and acquaintance, plus perhaps some who weren't pleased with the Sanhedrin's treatment of Stephen, allowing him to be stoned to death. The "great lamentation" made of Stephen in such a loud public manner was no doubt made in protest of the Sanhedrin councils treatment of Stephen. The number of people that took part in Stephen's burial must have put the Sanhedrin council on notice to tone it down. We don't read in scripture of the Sanhedrin council trying anyone else until Paul was brought before them years later in ACTS 23. Perhaps also the Sanhedrin council here finally heeded the words of Gamaliel from ACTS 5:38 & 39 to ...*Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.*

In ACTS 8:3 we read of the behavior of Saul of Tarsus: *As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* Luke will continue to document the life of Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 9, but the remainder of ACTS 8 revolves around the ministry of **Philip the Evangelist**, whose ministry was every bit as profound as Stephen's.

In ACTS 8:1 we find*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.* Philip was one of the ones scattered abroad, and he went from serving tables to preaching the word. ACTS 8:4 *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.* They were preaching the word of the Lord, the word of God, and we know The Word of God is another name for Jesus as REVELATION 19:13 informs us. They were preaching Jesus Christ. The Greek word for "preaching the word" is euaggelizo {yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo}, number 2097 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which is where the word "evangelizing" comes from. Euaggelizo is almost always used of the good news concerning the Son of God according to Vine's Dictionary. ACTS 8:5 further verifies this, stating: *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.* The literal translation of this verse reads: "And going down to a city of Samaria, Philip proclaimed Christ to them." Many commentators make note that at this time there was not a city called Samaria, for the former city called Samaria, Josephus notes, had been destroyed, and was rebuilt by one of the Herod's. In JOHN 4:5 we read that Jesus came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, and it is thought that this is the same city Philip came to. Still **Philip the evangelist** did preach Christ unto them no matter what city in Samaria Philip was in.

If we go back and read JOHN 4:9 we find this statement, which reveals the attitude of the Jews concerning the Samaritans. The last part of JOHN 4:9 states: ...*for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* But obviously that attitude had changed after Jesus revealed himself to the Samaritan woman at the well as being Christ the Messiah, the Saviour to all who believe on Him to life everlasting. 1 JOHN 5:13 tells us: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* We could say that Jesus paved the way for **Philip the evangelist** to preach Christ unto the Samaritans several years after Jesus did.

Preaching the word, and preaching Christ is a common theme in ACTS 8, as we will see when we get further into this chapter. We are not told in scripture when **Philip the evangelist** got saved, but he was taught by the Apostles, whom we read in ACTS 5:42 ...*ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* The believers, and the Apostles were told by Jesus in LUKE 24:47 ...*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

Certainly Philip was among the recipients who heard the Apostles *...daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ...* as is recorded in ACTS 5:42. Philip then preached the word of God, and the word of God he had to preach from was the Old Testament scripture. Philip taught the doctrines of Jesus Christ as he had been taught by the Apostles, how Jesus Christ indeed was the promised Messiah, and how He died upon the cross of Calvary, and how He arose again on the third day, and was seen of all of the Apostles multiple times as we have documented many times before in this study, and how He sent the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.

ACTS 8:5 *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.* In verse 5 we find Philip doing the work of an evangelist, which was to preach Christ unto them. Notice in verse 6 that all the people really “gave heed” to what Philip had to say, that is they really gave an effort to pay close attention to the Holy Ghost inspired words or Philip. And the reason they paid so close attention was because they were hearing and seeing things, which proved that Philip was a man truly sent by God because they also witnessed *...the miracles which he did.* How did Philip do these miracles? By laying his hands on these people and praying in the name of Jesus for their healing.

The end result of **Philip the evangelist**’s preaching is highlighted in ACTS 8:8 *And there was great joy in that city.* There was “great joy” because so many got saved, and healed because **Philip the evangelist** *...preached Christ unto them...* for they *...with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did...* verses 6 & 8. Thus we see that the ministry of **Philip the evangelist**, a man like unto Stephen, whom we read in ACTS 6:3 was full of the Holy Ghost, and who like Stephen in ACTS 6:8 *...did great wonders and miracles among the people.*

I want us to jump ahead for a moment and read two more verses of ACTS 8 that define for us who **Philip the evangelist** was. In ACTS 8:12 we read: *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.* Later in ACTS 8:35 at the leading of the Lord, **Philip the evangelist** got the opportunity to preach unto the treasurer of Ethiopia, and here again we find **Philip the evangelist** doing the work of an evangelist, for we see here that once again *...Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.* Then in ACTS 8:40 we read that **Philip the evangelist** *...preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea...* thus continuing his work as an evangelist.

In ACTS 8:9-25 the Holy Ghost inspires Luke to write about Simon the sorcerer, who was used of Satan to attempt to trick the new believers of Samaria. In 1 JOHN 4:4 we read the truth that *...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Of course **Philip the evangelist** already knew this truth, as did the Apostles. It seems to me that Luke may have got his information about Simon the sorcerer from three people; **Philip the evangelist**, and Peter and John. Before we dig into this further, let’s read the story Luke wrote in ACTS 8:9-25.

ACTS 8:9 *But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12 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. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. 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. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

Before we read what Brother Copley wrote in his ACTS commentary, we need to zero in on the word "believed" in verse 13. "Believed" is Greek word *pisteuo* {pist-yoo'-o}, number 4100 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which is also translated as believe, believeth, trust, and believest. *Pisteuo* is the same Greek word found in the following scriptures: JOHN 3:15 *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* 16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* *Pisteuo* is found in about 220 verses of New Testament scripture, and is also found twice in JAMES 2:19, which reads: *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.* The devils mentioned in JAMES 2:19 do not believe (*pisteuo*) to the saving of the soul, and as we will now see in reading Brother Copley's commentary of ACTS 8:9-25, neither did Simon the sorcerer believe for himself in the saving power of Jesus Christ, for if he had he wouldn't have been found in "...the gall of bitterness..." as is noted in verse 23. Again truly the heart examiner, who is Jesus Christ Himself, as is noted in JEREMIAH 17:10, and many other scriptures, is the One who would know if Simon the sorcerer ever did accept Christ as his Saviour. JEREMIAH 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

Brother Copley in his ACTS study book wrote an excellent commentary concerning Simon the sorcerer, which we will now insert into these notes. Brother Copley wrote: *"But there was a certain man, Simon by name, which before time in the city used sorcery and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God' (ACTS 8:9-10).* The essential difference between Philip and Simon is obvious. Simon magnified Simon, Philip exalted Christ. Simon proclaimed himself; Philip proclaimed Jesus. Simon's religion was cunning, beguiling, enchanting witchcraft. It was of the devil. Philip's Gospel was simple, comforting, and sufficient. It was altogether Divine. Simon the sorcerer is an illustration of those who become religious for the purpose of speculation. *"Simon believed also and was baptized, continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs that were done" (ACTS 8:13).* Yes, he believed, or assented to what Philip taught, but he did not believe to the saving of his soul. See Verse 23: Peter told him, *"For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."* It is easy to be baptized and appear religious in view of getting a name and the people's money. His witchcraft had succeeded before, *"giving out that himself was some great one."* (ACTS 8:9) Now he sees an opportunity to add to his trickery. "Perhaps I can even get Philip with me," he thinks. Then he imagines that the power of dispensing the fullness of the Spirit, with the entrancing sign of speaking in other languages can be bought with money, he is engulfed with the hope of unparalleled prosperity. Observe that Peter's rebuke does not induce him to repent. He only selfishly desires to escape judgment. Fellow Student, consider the most dangerous species of witchcraft, typified by Simon's career. Do you know that the Holy Spirit calls seeking justification by works, or seeking the Spirit by works, sorcery and witchcraft? (GALATIANS 3:1-5) *"Are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"* asks the Apostle of the Galatians. Be it ever remembered that the "Simon crew" are not all gone yet. Their number is legion.

It is amazing how men, some of them professedly Spirit filled, can deceive hungry, needy hearts by their make-believe piety and holy walk. People look up to them as marvels of perfection, because they talk boldly of straightening up back tracks, paying debts, keeping the sabbath, etc. And because they have learned to throw a religious, pious spell over people by their own peculiar personality, they get a hearing before thousands, get results, and get the people's money. However, it is simply pious, religious flesh inspired by the devil. God rightly calls it "witchcraft." {End of quoting Brother Copley.} Thank God for Brother Copley, and his Grace and Glory study books.

We just read the demise of Simon the Sorcerer in ACTS 8:9-25, so let's spend a few moments looking at more of **Philip the evangelist's** ministry in these verses. Recall in ACTS 8:5-8 that **Philip the evangelist** *...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.* In ACTS 8:12 we read further: *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.* Here again we see that Philip was doing the work of an evangelist, and we find that many believers were added to the church because of the evangelistic preaching of Philip. Here in verse 12, and again in verse 16 we see that **Philip the evangelist** *...baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* We have talked about this before how that during this Church Age we find Jesus disciples baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Peter in ACTS 10 went to the house of Cornelius, and the Gentiles got filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter in ACTS 10:48 *...commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.* In ACTS 19:5 when Paul came across the dozen disciples, who knew only the baptism of John the Baptist, who preached of the coming Messiah, Paul in verse 5 baptized them in water after teaching them that Christ Jesus had already come, as John the Baptist taught them He would, and that Christ was crucified, and now is risen from the dead. As the expression of their belief in the risen Saviour, the Apostle Paul baptized them in ACTS 19:5, and *...they were baptized (in water) in the name of the Lord Jesus.* In these three examples we find Jesus disciples baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus, not baptizing *...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...* as is found in MATTHEW 28:19. The reason that they didn't baptize *...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...* is because they understood it wasn't yet the Lord's ordained time for nations to get saved, it was the time for individuals to get saved. Jesus words of MATTHEW 28:19 will happen after the Church Age is over, and then will be the time mentioned in MATTHEW 28:19 when Israel as a nation will -- *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* That will be in the Millennium, the Kingdom Age. So we find **Philip the evangelist** following the pattern of baptizing to be used during this Church Age.

In doing his evangelistic work **Philip the evangelist** became famous, for ACTS 8:14 tells how word of his preaching reached back to the Apostles at Jerusalem. 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.*

This is the first time since Pentecost that we read of the Apostle Peter and John going outside the city limits of Jerusalem. The Apostle's Peter and John in ACTS 8:17, came to Samaria, and *...laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* There are a couple of things to point out here that will help us as believers better understanding the out pouring of the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is common to hear on television, or radio the terminology "the baptism of the Holy Ghost," or "have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost?" The baptism of the Holy Ghost happened on the day of Pentecost, and the proper terminology for us now is to ask, like the Apostle Paul did in ACTS 19:2 *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* Again the baptism of the Holy Ghost happened on the day of Pentecost, and at that time they were all filled with the Holy

Ghost, and began to speak in other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance as ACTS 2:4 informs us. The Apostle Paul calls this the “one baptism” in EPHESIANS 4:4-6. The gift of the Holy Ghost was given on the day of Pentecost. EPHESIANS 4:4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Brother Copley here comments in his tract on “The Holy Spirit – One Baptism and the Anointing:” “God counts all believers for all this present Church Age as baptized in the Spirit. “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body” - “in one Spirit we all into one Body were baptized” – writes Paul. Therefore, there is “one Body” and “one baptism” - EPHESIANS 4:4,5.” {End of Brother Copley quote.} The baptism of the Holy Ghost, which Jesus told of in ACTS 1:5, happened on the day of Pentecost ten days later in ACTS 2:1-4, and is called the “one baptism” in EPHESIANS 4:5. Brother Copley also wrote in his tract on “The Holy Spirit – One Baptism and the Anointing:” “We nowhere read of anyone being baptized in the Spirit after the Day of Pentecost. Never! ...The question “Have ye been baptized in the Spirit?” is never once asked in Scripture.” {End of quoting Brother Copley.} Here in ACTS 8:17 we find that the believers, when the Apostles *...laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* The same thing happened in ACTS 19:6 to the dozen disciples Paul was dealing with, for we read in ACTS 19:6 *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.* Were they baptized with the Holy Ghost, or did they receive the Holy Ghost? The proper answer is of course that they received the Holy Ghost. The second point we have just covered, but needs to be emphasized. When we get to ACTS 9, when did the Apostle Paul get filled with the Holy Ghost? In other words when did the Apostle Paul receive the Holy Ghost? You Bible students will get this first, but the answer is found in ACTS 9:17 after the Lord Himself strongly encouraged Ananias of Damascus to go pray for Saul of Tarsus. ACTS 9:17 reads: *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.* Well did the Apostle Paul here receive the Holy Ghost? Lord willing we will cover this matter again when we get to ACTS 9, but the answer is yes, this is when our beloved Apostle Paul received the gift of the Holy Ghost, after Ananias of Damascus put his hands on him and prayed that he would receive the Holy Ghost. I will give you one more example of this, which is found in 2 TIMOTHY 1:6, which reads: *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.* What was Paul here talking about? Paul here was reminding Timothy that way back when Paul had laid his hands on him, and prayed that Timothy would receive the gift of God, the Holy Ghost, whom Jesus sent on the day of Pentecost, to give us power, and the sign and the evidence of having received the Holy Ghost is told us in ACTS 2:4, and 19:6, and other places, which was speaking with other tongues!

What we are going to see next in ACTS 8 is that Philip was a humble man in spite of his fame, for in ACTS 8:26-40 the Lord sends him into a dry desert place for the purpose of preaching to just one man! So often in scripture the dry desert place is where great eternal treasure is found. Moses was inspired of God to lead the children of Israel while in the backside of the desert in EXODUS 3 & 4. The Apostle Paul received his gospel message from Jesus Christ Himself in the desert regions of Arabia, (study GALATIANS 1:11-17). But back to Philip. Philip was willing to still do whatever menial task the Lord required him to do, even if it was to go into the desert and use his evangelistic skills to preach to just one man.

ACTS 8:26 *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 Gentiles way before Peter did in ACTS 10. Let's just enjoy this unique story for a few verses.

ACTS 8:27 *And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,* 28 *Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.* (Reading from ISAIAH 53.) 29 *Then the Spirit said unto Philip,* (the Holy Spirit) *Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.* 30 *And Philip ran thither to him,* and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* (Note here in verses 29 & 30 that Philip was very much in tune with the leading of the Holy Ghost, and when told to do something by the Spirit, Philip immediately ran after that opportunity. Such is the heart of a racecourse runner. Philip wasted no time in catching this chariot. Philip had no idea at first whose chariot he was running to, and it didn't matter to him any way; he ran with haste, without hesitation because the Holy Spirit told him to "...join thyself to this chariot." Stated another way, Philip was willing to do the will of the Lord without hesitation or questioning. This again shows his willingness to do the will of the Lord. Obviously Philip also was a man of full of faith like was told us of Stephen in ACTS 6:5 & 8.) ACTS 8:30 *And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?* 31 *And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.* 32 *The place of the scripture which he read was this, (ISAIAH 53:7 & 8) He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:* 33 *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.* (The eunuch was reading from ISAIAH 53:7 & 8 from the Greek version of the Septuagint, which is what is quoted here. Recall from ACTS 6:1 that Philip was among the seven chosen to assist the Greek speaking Jewish widows at Jerusalem, so Philip was no doubt speaking Greek as he communicated with the Ethiopian eunuch.) 34 *And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?* 35 *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.* (Here we find Philip doing the work of an evangelist, which is preaching Jesus, not preaching politics, not preaching send me money, not preaching about self improvement, but simply preaching Jesus.) 36 *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?* 37 *And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* 38 *And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.*

As we noted above in verse 12, and again in verse 16 we see that **Philip the evangelist** ...baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, so Philip also here baptized in water the Ethiopian eunuch.

What happens next foreshadows, I believe, future events in Philip's life. ACTS 8:39 *And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.* 40 *But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.* Here we find a mini translation, for Philip was "caught away" from the Ethiopian eunuch and was found some 34 miles away at Azotus. This phrase "caught away" is the same in the Greek as the translation spoken of 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17 *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Note the last part of verse 40 ...*and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.* Here we find Philip continuing to do the work of an evangelist, which was preaching in all the cities. Luke doesn't tell us how long a time this took, so we have no idea how much time passes until Philip came to Caesarea. We will next see in ACTS 21 where our brother in the Lord, Luke records that **Philip the evangelist** settled in Caesarea, for that is where we last read about him by name. ACTS 21:8 *And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and*

abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. The events recorded in ACTS 21 happened more that 20 years after ACTS 8!