

have had his first direct confrontation with a Christian in this exchange with Stephen.

The Greek word translated “disputed” means to question or to exchange questions, sometimes with rancor or evil intent in the questioning. See Mark 1:27; 8:11; 9:14, 16; 12:28; Luke 22:23.

V. 10 - God, we believe, enabled Stephen to answer effectively all their questions, so that they were never able to have any advantage over him. Paul later was like this in Acts 17. Naturally, having lost face in public, the Jews, rather than admit defeat, stooped to worldly ways.

V. 11 - Because truth was too evident in Stephen’s answers, the men resorted (as did the Jewish leaders with Jesus) to underhanded tactics. (A good lesson for us: face the truth squarely, and if proved wrong, accept it and repent. It is also pertinent that we not be like those Jewish men: equate our understanding of God’s Word as being equal to it; thus holding that any disagreement with us is tantamount to disagreement with God. It might not be so! We, as Christians, should be willing to accept truth wherever we find it, knowing that God’s truth is not undermined by any other truth. Of course, the charge of blasphemy, if true, was serious. The truth was, however, they were the ones who were blaspheming Moses and God. Ref. 3:22.

QUESTIONS

65. Stephen was said to be “full of grace.” What did that expression mean?

66. From what sections of the world did (some of) the Libertines come?

67. Why would they “secretly” conspire against Stephen? Would this indicate good motives?

68. Was Stephen actually preaching about the destruction of the temple, or was the temple’s demise to be one of the effects of Christianity?

LESSON EIGHT

(6:13 - 7:60)

Stephen Before the Sanhedrin, 6:13-7:57

13 And set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” 15 And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

*7 And the high priest said, “Is this so?”
2 And Stephen said: “Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, ‘Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.’ 4 Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living; 5 yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child. 6 And God spoke to this effect, that his posterity would be aliens in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and ill-treat them four hundred years. 7 ‘But I will judge the nation which they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’ 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac*

became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

9 "And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, 10 and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him governor over Egypt and over all his household. 11 Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers the first time, 13 And at the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. 14 And Joseph sent and called to him Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five souls; 15 and Jacob went down into Egypt. And he died, himself and our fathers, 16 and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

17 "But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt 18 till there arose over Egypt another king who had not known Joseph. 19 He dealt craftily with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, that they might not be kept alive. 20 At this time Moses was born, and was beautiful before God. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house; 21 and then he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. 22 And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

23 "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking the Egyptian. 25 He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and would have reconciled them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other?' 27 But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you ruler and judge over

us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' At this retort Moses fled, and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

30 "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw it he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to look, the voice of the Lord came, 32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. 33 And the Lord said to him, Take off the shoes from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have surely seen the ill-treatment of my people that are in Egypt and heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

35 "This Moses whom they refused, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' God sent as both a ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush. 36 He led them out, having performed wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. 37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up.' 38 This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living oracles to give to us. 39 Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, 40 saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their hands. 42 But God turned and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

'Did you offer to me slain beasts and sacrifices, forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 43 And you took up the tent of Moloch, and the star of the god Rephan, the figures which you made to worship: and I will remove you beyond Babylon.'

44 *“Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. 45 Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations which God thrust out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, 46 who found favor in the sight of God and asked leave to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. 47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him. 48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says,*

49 ‘Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? 50 Did not my hands make all these things?’

51 “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56 and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him.

As we begin this discussion of this section, we must consider the charges against Stephen, 6:13-14, and the meaning of these charges, as the Jews understood them, and as Stephen understood them. Each group saw the charges as they understood the O.T. Scriptures. Stephen’s apology in ch. 7 (the word then meant “defense of,” not “excuse for”) was designed to show how the O.T. record, understood rightly, would exonerate him, and correct the matter against him. (Chapter 7 is a perfect example of the point made in 6:10 that Stephen’s arguments were not answerable.)

Stephen had perceived the true nature of the O.T. law (and all its related things): it was all type and shadow, predicting the true and the real. It was to be realized and completed in Jesus and that which Jesus established; the Church. As the speech showed, God was not limited to one holy place, because many places were holy: Egypt, Arabia; and his promises were not exclusively limited to or involved with Jewish people and culture. Something international and cross-cultural in scope was indicated (note Rom. 3:27-31). Hence, an unbiased look at their history, not colored by national pride and racial bigotry, would show that God’s field was the world, that the children of promise rather than children of flesh were reckoned as seed, Rom. 9:6-8.

Any candid perusal of Jewish history would show that, by and large, “A wicked and adulterous nation” was all too descriptive of the people of that history. As Moses said of the people of his generation, “You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you” (Deut. 9:24). Paul, quoting Isaiah 65:2, depicted God stretching forth his hand “all day long” to a “disobedient and rebellious people” (Rom. 10:21). As Stephen pointed out to the council members, the patriarchs were jealous and wicked; their descendants refused Moses; the prophets were ill-treated (note Matt. 21:33-45 here), and *the prophet* like unto Moses, Jesus of Nazareth, they themselves had rejected and crucified; all of which painted the picture of a people decidedly against the Holy Spirit.

This speech is one of the great bits of history recorded for our admonition and learning. It helps us to clarify in our minds the real differences between Judaism and Christianity. Here are the struggles of the early church (as seen in Acts 10-11; 15; 22-23; 28; and in Galatians to realize the vast difference in the two institutions); and the majestic lessons in the Hebrew epistle. All are backdrops of what Stephen proclaimed in the face of those who would take his life for His proclamation. May we see as perceptively as Stephen the true nature of that which we have espoused, and be ever diligent that we do not confuse God’s truth with our understanding of it, but rather make every attempt

to remove ourselves from among those “ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth.” May we hold fast to that which is eternal, and be found in Christ, in whom “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

V. 13 - Stephen evidently saw clearly the nature of Christianity, and presented the same truth as Jesus in Matthew 5:17, etc.

false witness - The charges these men brought were perversion, for Stephen’s witness was not really as they made it out to be. Jesus was accused of the same things at his trial.

never ceases - Stephen never rested in his presentation of Christianity as the ultimate and intended effect of the whole Jewish system. For those opposed, who thought the Jewish system was to continue, his work was quite clearly of a blasphemous nature, since he opposed what they thought was true.

V. 14 - As Jesus said in John 4, the time had come when men would worship God in many places, not just Jerusalem. Christianity was going to be new wine in new wineskins! While remarking as we did in v. 13, the acceptance of Christianity as the fulfillment of Judaism would bring about the end of the temple and the law. In this sense, the accusations against Stephen were true.

V. 15 - What is meant by the description of Stephen’s face may well be this: it was an obvious testimony from God to him (as also with Moses and the shining face he had when coming from the presence of God). Whatever may have been God’s intention, it had no visible effect on the council, at least at that moment.

7:1- The high priest asks: guilty or not guilty? He evidently ignored the appearance of Stephen’s face, or did not realize the implications thereof.

V. 2 - **God of glory** - Often a characterization of God in the O.T. God used many things to represent his presence (like the Shekinah, Exodus 13:21-22; the burning bush, Exodus 3:1-6;

the Ark, Numbers 10:35-36), helping faith become sight.

in Mesopotamia (land between the rivers)

- The lesson: God had faithful people apart from Palestine, yea, even before there was a Palestine in the sense they knew it. Moreover, even at that time, God had a plan: to honor those who had faith.

in Haran - Genesis 12 picks up the story in Haran, but as seen in Genesis 15:7 and Nehemiah 9:7, God brought Abraham out of Ur of Chaldees, from among idol worshipers, Joshua 24:2.

V. 3 - That Abraham followed God by faith is the lesson they were to get, a faith that trusted God, even to the forsaking of the understood for the not understood (that is, he trusted God enough to give up what was then his to go where God wanted to take him).

V. 4 - Haran, the name of Abraham’s older brother, and also the name of the city in which Abraham lived before going on to Palestine. Though Terah was not faithful to God as was his son and the call was not to him, yet he went with his son - probably because of the close family ties.

V. 5 - Point: Abraham never realized the promise of God about possession of land, since he died a sojourner (Heb. 11:8-10), only possessing what he purchased: a burial place (Gen. 23:9-17). Hence, the promise was realized only in faith. The issue was about temporal versus eternal things, not just a piece of earth and a building somewhere. One of the problems of the Jews was their attachment to material things and places, and failure to look for a city whose builder and maker was God.

V. 6 - Further indication that God’s people lived by faith, not by sight: they were but sojourners in a strange land. **400 years** - Stephen quotes Genesis 15:13. Exodus 12:40-41 shows the exact total was 430 years.

V. 7 - Only after hundreds of years did God choose a holy place. He had had a holy place long before such, a most important point and He finally led them to a land he had set aside for them.

V. 8 - As this verse shows, outward signs were only given after hundreds of years. As Romans 2:25-29; 4:1-23 show, God's faithful were such, quite apart from things that the Jews greatly emphasized. No outward sign, or combination of them, could suffice if faith was not present.

Isaac - The first of many promises God kept to Abraham, because he was faithful to God.

V. 9 - The character of the twelve patriarchs is stated. (It was because of jealousy that Jesus was killed). Foolish pride (i.e., jealousy) will cause Stephen's death, just as it brought the brothers to sell Joseph.

V. 10 - Point: God was not to be thwarted by the jealousy of some unbelieving men because he had greater things in store.

Pharaoh - The word was a title like president and was applied to many different rulers of Egypt. Sometimes the Bible referred to the pharaoh as king.

V. 11 - God had prepared Egypt for the famine by his revelations to Joseph, and his blessing upon the land itself. Canaan (i.e., Palestine) had not been so blessed.

V. 12-16 - The beginnings of the Jewish nation, but in a foreign land and soon in bondage. Joseph and Jacob, and the patriarchs will die in a strange land, not possessing one part of the land of promise. Only Jacob and Joseph would be buried in Palestine; Jacob in a tomb purchased by Abraham at Hebron (Gen. 23:1-20; 50:4-14), and Joseph in a parcel of land bought by Jacob at Shechem (Joshua 24:32).

This compression of the two in Acts 7:16 could be caused by an accidental omission of a line or two of Acts in a very early copy.

V. 17 - Now, and only now, is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham mentioned as near to being kept, though he had been with them all the time. One of the things that Stephen is showing is the way God keeps His word.

God had granted - The Greek word is normally translated "confess." God's promise was assured to Abraham.

V. 18 - We do not really know who the Pharaoh was who started the oppression. About 1700 B.C., the Hyksos peoples invaded Egypt, and ruled awhile, though finally were overthrown. The XVIII dynasty kings (about 1550 B.C.) continued the oppression, if they did not begin it. The XIX dynasty had several kings with the name Rameses, one of whom (maybe Rameses II) built cities. About 1486 B.C., Thutmose III took over the land, and probably was the Pharaoh when Moses left Egypt. The step-mother, and also mother-in-law of Thutmose, Hatshepsut, queen of Egypt prior to Thutmose, is probably the one who found a baby in the Nile, put there to be found, and there because the parents of Aaron, Miriam and Moses (Amram and Jochebed) had disobeyed the Pharaoh's orders (Ex. ch. 1).

We can not help but marvel at the influence Joseph had, evidently for a long time after his death.

When Moses returned to Egypt after 40 years, at the age of 80, it was probably Amenhotep II; the time of the Exodus (the going out) was 1445 B.C.

Moses was instructed - The Greek term is of wide meaning, involving all the things that go into rearing a child. It includes teaching, Acts 22:3, caring, discipline (Heb. 12:5, etc.), and even scourging, Luke 23:22.

V. 23 - The mother of Moses had instructed him well in respect to his heritage!

V. 24 - **being wronged** - The Greek term is to do wrong to, to treat unjustly, injure, as in v. 26; Matt. 20:13; Acts 25:11; Gal. 4:12; Col. 3:25; Rev. 22:11.

V. 25 - **he supposed** - As with Joseph earlier, and the prophets later, Moses assumed that God's people would recognize God's deliverer, but not so (see John 1:11). It is evident that Jochebed taught her son who he was, and who he was not.

deliverance - The Greek word is generally translated as salvation since the term was applied to any kind of rescue, restoration, etc.

V. 26 - **would have reconciled** - The Greek says: would have changed them unto peace (i.e., a whole relationship). Moses made the point that they were brethren, and asked for what purpose they were fighting each other.

V. 27 - One, at least, of the Israelites did not accept Moses' leadership, and rather forcefully rejected him, in action and word (v. 28), which let Moses know that his attempt to deliver his people by killing an Egyptian was known, but not appreciated.

V. 29 - Read Hebrews 11:23-28 here, which points up the faith of Moses vs. the unbelief of this people, plus the fact that God was with him though he was rejected by Israel.

an exile - The same Greek term as in v. 6 (about Abraham's seed), Eph. 2:19, and I Peter 2:11, concerning Christians, whose citizenship is in heaven, Phil. 3:20-21. Note also that Moses lived in a strange land, married a strange woman, worked for a strange man, and had two sons, but all were blessings from God. V. 30 will continue this idea of God at work and blessing people who were outside the holy land but faithful to God.

V. 30 - **a holy place** - A burning bush, a thing and place not made with the hands of men. Sometimes it seems as if the expression "angel of

the Lord" equaled the Lord, Exodus 3:1-6. Angels played an important part in God's dealing with his people, as in Genesis 19:1; Numbers 22:22; II Sam. 24:16; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 1:14; 12:22.

V. 32 - Note in passing, God said: I am (not was), which Jesus pointed out in Luke 20:37-38 meant not only that God always "is" (some 600 years elapsed between Abraham and Moses), but also that the dead live after death (a point for the Sadducees listening to Stephen).

V. 33 - **The Lord said** - Moses was instructed to remove his shoes; evidently the priests did not wear shoes in the temple either, since no instructions were given about footwear.

V. 34 - God was always aware of the afflictions upon his people, but in his wisdom, he did not always respond. Faith in God was a requisite then, and now, since he doesn't always answer when we call.

I will send - The noun form is transliterated "apostle." God had "seen" and "heard" and at the right time had decided to act.

V. 35 - **Moses...refused** - The same point was made in Acts 3:14 about Jesus. Note that God chose what Israel refused, a repeated refrain throughout this history.

deliverer - The word carries the idea of redeemer, as was Jesus. See Luke 1:68; 2:38; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12.

V. 36 - God used Moses in a mighty way, despite the protests and unbelief of Israel. Numbers, the history of a people gone bad, records for our learning the general disposition of the Israelites. Some of them were faithful in some ways, but most were fickle.

V. 37 - The prediction and the fulfillment are seen in Acts 3:22-26, where Peter elaborated the same basic theme. Implied is the fact that as Moses was treated by God's people, so was Jesus; though both were sent by God.

V. 38 - **congregation** - Translates the term rendered church or assembly. As with the first church, the church which Jesus leads is a pilgrim one, a people of God, holy to him, wherever they are, destined to be purified with him in the age to come.

living oracles - The Greek means living sayings, especially used of messages from God. See Romans 3:2; Hebrews 4:12; I Peter 1:23.

V. 39 - Moses was God's spokesman, Exodus 33:11; Gal. 3:19, and to disobey Moses was to disobey God. See Numbers 12:1ff. It was correct to equate Moses (i.e., the words of Moses with the words of God) as in 6:11. So it was with the words of the apostles to the church. They are equal in force to God's words.

V. 40 - Note: They completely ignored God's part in their redemption from Egypt, blaming Moses for it all. Their unbelief was never manifested more clearly, a point Stephen wanted to make. The Psalmist in ch. 115:3-8 and ch. 135:15-18 went to some lengths to describe the stupidity of people who worshipped their own handiwork. See also Habakkuk 2:18-20; Rom. 1:18ff.

V. 41 - Read here Exodus 32:1ff. The people of Israel ended up drinking water upon which Moses had thrown the ground-up bits of golden calf - a belly-full of idolatry! The account shows that Aaron was carried away with the crowd.

V. 42 - **host of heaven** - Apparently God let them reap the wages of their sin. Certainly the Israelites worshipped idols after they entered the land of promise. See Deut. 17:3; II Kings 17:16; 21:3; II Chron. 33:3, 5; Jeremiah 8:2; 19:13; etc. The quote is from Amos 5:25-27.

book of the prophets - This is the typical usage of O.T. prophecy, in that the quote is from a prophet who lived long after the wilderness wanderings, but whose words were applicable to the subject at hand.

V. 44 - All the preceding was true, yet God still was willing to forgive and continue the revelation through Moses to them. So, a tent of testimony/witness was made, the type of that which was to come, Heb. 9:1ff. It is true to say that there is considerable disagreement about the type-antitype among brethren yet today. Of course, the Jews had missed the point badly in their day.

V. 45 - **Joshua** - In Greek, the word is the same as that for Jesus. Joshua was only able to do what he did as God directed him. The land of promise, after some 700 years, was finally inhabited by the children of Israel, descendants of Abraham by the son of promise, Isaac. As pointed out earlier, not all of the Israelites were reckoned as children of Promise, but only those who lived by faith (see Gal. 3:25-29). Their fleshly lineage counted for nothing unless they had faith.

David - It was not until David's time that the land promised by God to Abraham (see Gen. 15:18-20 and Numbers 34:1-15, where the details are) was conquered and controlled. But see Joshua 1:4-6 and the fulfillment cited by Joshua in 23:14. Finally, read the specific statement in I Kings 3:8, that Solomon ruled the land God had promised to Abraham. Note also in I Kings 3:9 that the people were so numerous that Solomon describes them as uncontrollable. All this is to help us see that God made a specific promise to Abraham and God fulfilled that promise, just as he did the other promises he made to Abraham.

V. 46 - A place to dwell was not too important to God, as David thought, or as the council might have thought. V. 48 makes this exact point.

V. 47 - Solomon was chosen because of David's past life, I Chron. 28:3.

V. 48 - Point: God can't be contained in brick and mortar houses (nor by the thinking of men, either, it is implied). Remember that one of

the charges against Stephen was about the holy place, 6:13. The quote is Isaiah 66:1ff.

V. 49 - The continuing theme: God can't be limited, and is not limited to one little place - He is God of the universe, and his dominion is over the universe. The ideas of Jesus in John 4 are relevant here: God had always sought those to worship him, wherever they were, who would do so according to his will, and especially in the age that began with Pentecost and the church.

V. 50 - The Bible, over and over, presents God as the sole creator of the universe. Only men who disbelieve could miss the point.

V. 51 - Israel's history was marred with just such descriptive terms, as in Exodus 33:3,5; 34:9, Deut. 9:6; 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; 6:10. Now read Rom. 2:25-29.

Stephen's declaration about the Holy Spirit brings out what was really true in the O.T. times, though not very openly seen, and that is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people even before N.T. times. The text in Genesis 6:3 is a good example. To be so described by Stephen would indicate that they were really not God's people as they thought themselves to be.

V. 52 - They had likewise been so accused by Jesus in Matthew 23:33-37; Luke 11:47; and Peter in Acts 3. See Romans 10:2-4. Though they gloried in the law, they did not keep it, as Paul mentions in Rom. 2:17-24. The important keeping of the law would have been to accept him to whom it pointed, Gal. 3:24ff.

V. 53 - There is no specific mention in Exodus of angels, but that does not mean that none were involved in the giving of the law.

V. 54 - As in 5:33, they were "cut in two" by Stephen's remarks. It was a terrifying accusation by Stephen, and created a violent reaction in the men of the council.

V. 55 - Christ is depicted as being at God's right hand, the position of power, both sitting and standing. Scripture nowhere explains where heaven is; but rather just teaches that there is such a place, that God is there, that Jesus is there, etc. God didn't try to answer all the questions we might ask about things such as heaven. He wants us to trust in Christ and leave the matters we can not understand up to him.

gazed - The Greek word means to look intently, to fix one's eyes upon, as in Luke 4:20; Acts 13:9; II Cor. 3:7, 13.

V. 57 - A hard-hearted response, certainly. One wonders if Joseph or Nicodemus or Gamaliel were there. Stephen was right!

QUESTIONS

69. In what sense do you think Stephen spoke against the law and the temple? Could one preach the Gospel and not do that?

70. What does the apology (= defense) of Stephen attempt to do?

71. What characterized Abraham as opposed to those in his day? (Read Romans 4:1-22.)

72. Why bring up Joseph?

73. How did Moses fit into the discussion?

74. Stephen discussed the tabernacle and God's relationship to it. Why?

75. Would the description in Romans 10:21 be applicable to the Jewish leaders, as Stephen saw them?

Outside the City Wall, 7: 58-60

58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

V. 58 - **young man** - The term was commonly applied to young men between the approximate ages of 24-40. The witnesses would probably be those who falsely testified against Stephen, and were to take the lead in such action, Leviticus 24:14; Deut. 17:7.

V. 59 - Here is the prayer directed at Jesus as Lord, though this is not a normal thing that is taught in the N.T. Of course, being stoned to death is not normal either. We are expected to address

our prayers to God, and recognize that Jesus is the mediator between us and God, especially in respect to our sins.

V. 60 - At least Stephen died with the right attitude of forgiveness, as should every Christian, Rom. 12:19-21. Stephen certainly followed in Jesus' footsteps at his death, both in his prayer for himself and request in behalf of others.

fell asleep - The term is equal to death as in John 11:11-14; I Cor. 11:30; 15:18; but is also used in the sense we use it, as asleep at night, etc. Jesus was asleep, Matt. 8:24; Peter also, Acts 12:6.

QUESTIONS

76. Was Stephen's appraisal of his auditors verified?

77. Where was Jesus in Stephen's vision of heaven? Do other scriptures verify the same fact about Jesus?

LESSON NINE

(8:1-40)

The Church in Judea and Samaria, 8:1 - 12: 25

The Dispersion, 8:1-4

8 *And Saul was consenting to his death.*

And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul laid waste the church, and entering house