

LESSON 29
“The Number of the Disciples Was Multiplied”
Acts 6-9

OVERVIEW:

7 men ordained to oversee the temporal affairs. Stephen is martyred. Philip ministers. Saul receives a vision.

SCRIPTURES:

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
CHAPTER 6

Apostles choose seven to assist them—Stephen transfigured before the Sanhedrin.

1 AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians (**Jews who spoke Greek**) against the Hebrews, because their ^awidows were ^bneglected in the daily ^cministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you **seven men** of ^ahonest ^breport, (The apostles made the appointments; the delegation of authority came from them, but nominations came from the church members. In principle this is the same as a bishop recommending a young man to serve as a missionary with the actual call coming from the President of the Church. Those who receive the inspiration from the Spirit to call people to church service can and should receive recommendations and counsel from those in positions to give it. DNTC, 2:65-66) full of the Holy Ghost and ^cwisdom, whom we may appoint over this ^dbusiness. (The appointment of these seven was the creation of a new body with specific and limited jurisdiction under the Twelve. Because seven men were appointed, some have wondered if their office is analogous to that of the seven Presidents of the First Quorum of the Seventy in the church today. This analogy appears unlikely since the seven were especially appointed to serve tables, whereas the calling of a seventy is to preach the gospel. It is probably only coincidental that this group consisted of seven men. Regarding Stephen and Philip, it might be that Stephen and Philip were called to do missionary work in addition to the welfare assignment, or they may simply have been reassigned. In the church today, most calls to serve are temporary, and a person is likely to serve in several different callings in the period of a few years. Studies in Scripture, 6:29)

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ^aministry of the word. (**The duty of the Twelve**)

5 ¶ And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they ^achose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the ^bHoly Ghost, and ^cPhilip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they ^alaid their ^bhands on them. (By setting apart, it endows the members with the needed power and authority to perform the assigned task. DNTC, 2:66)

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and **a great company of the ^apriests were obedient to the faith.** (Many of the priests under the Aaronic order, direct descendants of Aaron, joined the Church.)

8 And Stephen, full of faith and ^apower, did great wonders and ^bmiracles among the people.

9 ¶ **Then (And)** there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the (who are called) ^aLibertines, (**Freed-men**) and (also) Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of

Asia, ^bdisputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the ^awisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak ^ablasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council, (Sanhedrin)

13 And set up ^afalse witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the ^acustoms which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the ^aface of an ^bangel.

CHAPTER 7

Stephen recounts the history of Israel and names Moses as a prototype of Christ—He testifies of the apostasy in Israel—He sees Jesus on the right hand of God—Stephen’s testimony is rejected and he is stoned to death.

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 ^aAbraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in ^bCharran, (Haran. This agrees with Abraham 1:16-19 -16 And his voice was unto me: ^aAbraham, Abraham, behold, my ^bname is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy ^cfather’s house, and from all thy kinsfolk, into a strange ^dland which thou knowest not of; 17 And this because they have turned their ^ahearts away from me, to worship the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; therefore I have come down to ^bvisit them, and to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life. 18 Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. 19 As it was with ^aNoah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my ^bname shall be known in the earth ^cforever, for I am thy God.) (Stephen here demonstrates how all the prophets preached of the coming of Christ and his divine Sonship.)

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy ^acountry, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the ^aChaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: (Haran) and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. (Stephen’s account is the true one and not the Old Testament account. DNTC, 2:71)

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he ^apromised 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 ^asojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into ^bbondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. (Gen 15:13 agrees. Ex 12:40 and Gal 3:17 say 430 years. DNTC, 2:71)

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.

8 And he gave him the covenant of ^acircumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve ^bpatriarchs.

9 And the patriarchs, moved with ^aenvy, sold ^bJoseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

10 And ^adelivered him out of all his ^bafflictions, 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 ^adearth (famine) 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 ^acorn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second time ^aJoseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto ^bPharaoh.

14 Then sent ^aJoseph, and called his ^bfather ^cJacob 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 ^abought 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 ^aking arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same 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 ^aexceeding fair (comely, beautiful to God), and nourished up in his father's house ^bthree months:

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own ^ason.

22 And Moses was ^alearned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And when he was full ^aforty years old, it came into his heart to visit his ^bbrethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was ^aoppressed, and ^bsmote the Egyptian:

25 For he supposed his brethren would have ^aunderstood how that God by his hand would ^bdeliver 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 ^awrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ^aruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then ^afled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two ^bsons.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an ^aangel of the Lord (Both God and an angel spoke to Moses. Ex 3&4) in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the ^asight; (vision) and as he drew near to behold *it*, the ^bvoice of the Lord came unto him,

32 *Saying*, I am the ^aGod 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 ^adeliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He ^abrought 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 ^aprophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. (The perfect interpretation of this prophecy is found in these words of Jesus to the Nephites: 3 Ne. 20: 23 Behold, I am he of whom Moses

spake, saying: ^aA prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.)

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 ^aoracles to give unto us:

39 ¶ Whom our fathers would not ^aobey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us ^agods to go before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we ~~wot~~ (know) not what is become of him.

41 And they made a ^acalf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned, and ^agave 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 ^afashion (pattern) that he had seen.

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with ^aJesus (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.

47 But Solomon built him an house.

48 Howbeit the most High ^adwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 Heaven *is* my ^athrone, 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 ^amade all these things?

51 ¶ Ye ^astiffnecked and ^buncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always ^cresist the ^dHoly Ghost: as your ^efathers *did*, so *do* ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers ^apersecuted? 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 ^aangels, and have not ^bkept *it*.

54 ¶ When they heard these things, they were ^acut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the ^aHoly Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the ^bglory of ^cGod, and ^dJesus ^estanding on the ^fright hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I ^asee the heavens ^bopened, and the ^cSon of man standing on the right ^dhand of ^eGod.

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 ^aclothes at a ^byoung (the Greek word used identifies a man who is younger than forty years of age) man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they ^astoned ^bStephen, (and he) ^ccalling upon ^dGod, and saying (said), Lord Jesus, receive my ^espirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and ^acried with a loud voice, ^bLord, lay not this sin to their ^ccharge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER 8

Saul persecutes the Church—Philip’s ministry in Samaria—He works miracles and baptizes men and women—Peter and John come to Samaria and confer the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands—Simon seeks to buy this gift and is rebuked by Peter—Philip preaches Christ and baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch.

¹ AND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great ^apersecution against the ^bchurch which was at Jerusalem; (Church headquarters) 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 ^alamentation over him. (Devout men are usually regarded by New Testament scholars as Greeks who were favorable to Judaism but not actual proselytes. Being buried by them suggests something of Stephen’s Hellenistic background. Craig K. Manscill, Lesson 29, p. 2)

³ As for Saul, he made ^ahavock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to ^bprison.

⁴ Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. (Persecution caused the scattering. Even though inconvenienced, they preached the gospel where they could.)

⁵ Then Philip went down to the city of ^aSamaria, and preached Christ unto them. (Philip only held the Aaronic Priesthood. And yet, Philip, magnifying his calling, casts out devils, commands the lame to leap and the sick to rise from their beds of affliction. Miracles are wrought by the power of faith, and a righteous man need not hold the Melchizedek Priesthood to have power and influence with his Creator.

As Joseph Smith said, “If a priest understands his duty, his calling, and ministry, and preaches by the Holy Ghost, his enjoyment is as great as if he were one of the Presidency. TPJS, p. 112. DNTC, 2:81. Wilford Woodruff said: “I desire to impress upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the key of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest. The Lord revealed to me by visions, by revelation, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me. Millennial Star, 53:629.

Do women hold the priesthood or can they exercise priesthood power? "All priesthood is Melchizedek; but there are different portions or degrees of it. **The priesthood bestowed in the temple is the same priesthood given by the laying on of hands, but it is a fullness of that authority and embraces all other authorities, appendages, and offices.**" - Prophet Joseph Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980, page 59. **It is a precept of the Church that women of the Church share the authority of the priesthood with their husbands, actual or prospective; and therefore women, whether taking the endowment for themselves or for the dead, are not ordained to specific rank in the priesthood. Nevertheless, there is no grade, rank, or phase of the temple endowment to which women are not eligible on an equality with men.**" - James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1912), p. 94. **"If a woman is requested to lay hands on the sick with her husband or with any other officer holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, she may do so with perfect propriety. It is no uncommon thing for a man and wife unitedly to administer to their children, and the husband being mouth, he may properly say out of courtesy, 'By authority of the holy priesthood in us vested.'"** - Prophet Joseph F. Smith, *Improvement Era* 10 (February 1907), page 308.)

⁶ And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip ^aspake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

⁷ For ^aunclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many ^btaken with palsies (paralytic and lame), and that were lame, were ^chealed. (The distinction between the power of the Aaronic and the Melchizedek priesthoods is illustrated in Philip’s preaching

and baptizing at Samaria. But it was Peter and John, not Philip, who conferred the gift of the Holy Ghost. In the case of Philip when he went down to Samaria, when he was under the spirit of Elias, he baptized both men and women. When Peter and John heard of it, they went down and laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. JS-H 1:70-72,)

8 And there was great joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used ^asorcery, and ^bbewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some ^cgreat 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 ^apreaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the ^bname of Jesus Christ, they were ^cbaptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and ^awondered, (was amazed or astonished) beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the ^aword 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 ^alaid they *their* hands on them, and they received the ^bHoly Ghost.

18 And when Simon saw that through ^alaying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this ^apower, 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 ^agift of God may be ^bpurchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not ^aright in the sight of God.

22 Repent therefore of this thy ^awickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the ^bthought of thine ^cheart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the ^agall of bitterness, and *in* the ^bbond 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.

26 And the ^aangel 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.

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 ^aworship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the ^aSpirit said unto Philip, 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?

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, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a ^alamb 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. (He is reading from Isaiah 53. This chapter is quoted and then explained by Abinadi in Mosiah 14 & 15.)

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 ^aJesus.

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 ^abelievest 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 ^abaptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the ^aSpirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. (Nephi the son of Lehi and Nephi the son of Helaman both had this same experience. (1 Ne. 11:1 - FOR it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat ^apondering in mine heart I was ^bcaught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high ^cmountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot.; Hela. 10:16-17 - 16 But behold, the power of God was with him, and they could not take him to cast him into prison, for he was taken by the Spirit and ^aconveyed away out of the midst of them. 17 And it came to pass that thus he did go forth in the Spirit, from multitude to multitude, declaring the word of God, even until he had declared it unto them all, or sent it forth among all the people. Apparently some similar experiences were known in the Old Testament times. 1 Kings 18:12 - And it shall come to pass, *as soon as* I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall ^acarry thee whither I know not; and *so* when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth., 2 Kings 2:16 - ¶ And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the ^aSpirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. DNTC, 2:88.)

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to ^aCaesarea.

CHAPTER 9

Jesus appears to Saul—Saul a chosen vessel—Ananias restores Saul's sight—He is baptized and begins his ministry—Peter heals Aeneas and raises Dorcas from death.

1 AND Saul, yet breathing out ^athreatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him ^aletters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. (Damascus is about 150 miles north of Jerusalem, so it would take Saul and his attendants about a week to travel the distance. Perhaps during those few days of comparative leisure, he began to wonder whether what he was doing was right or not. Perhaps the shining face of the dying Stephen and the martyr's last prayer began to sink more deeply into his soul than it had done before. Little children's cries for their parents whom Saul had bound began to pierce his soul more keenly, and make him feel miserably unhappy as he looked forward to more experiences of that kind in Damascus. Perhaps he wondered whether the work of the Lord, if he were really engaged in it, would make him feel so restless and bitter. He was soon to learn that only the work of the evil one produces these feelings, and that true service for the Lord always brings peace and contentment. Ancient Apostles, p. 120)

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a ^alight from heaven: (Why did Saul have this experience when he was persecuting the Church? Elder McConkie says: There can be only one answer – pre-existence. Saul had gained the talents and risen to

the spiritual stature in the pre-mortal life which qualified him to stand as an apostolic minister of Him who now chastened him on the Damascus road. DNTC, 2:89. Joseph Smith taught that every man called to minister through the priesthood was foreordained in the Grand Council of God before they came to this earth. TPJS, p. 365)

4 And he ^afell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, ^bSaul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am ^aJesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to ^bkick against the pricks.* (Pricks are promptings of the Spirit)

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, ^awhat wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 ^aAnd the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a ^bvoice, but seeing ^cno man. (they who were journeying with him saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him who spake to him.)

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, (His physical blindness was probably given to him as a symbol of his spiritual blindness.) and neither did eat nor drink.

10 ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named ^aAnanias; (He was probably the presiding officer of the church in Damascus.) and to him said the Lord in a ^bvision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, (Ananias was probably going to be the target of Saul's intended arrest and imprisonment.)

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight. (Saul apparently received great spiritual manifestations during his three days of fasting, blindness, and prayer. At least we here learn he had another vision before his coming baptism. DNTC, 2:91)

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much ^aevil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a ^achosen vessel unto me, (Saul was foreordained, nothing he had done on earth qualified him for what was ahead; but his native spiritual endowment, nurtured and earned in pre-existence, prepared him for the coming ministry. DNTC, 2:91) to ^bbear my ^cname before the ^dGentiles, and ^ekings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must ^asuffer for my name's sake. (Being human, we would expel from our lives physical pain and mental anguish and assure ourselves of continual ease and comfort, but if we were to close the doors upon sorrow and distress, we might be excluding our greatest friends and benefactors. Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery. Spencer W. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, p. 98)

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his ^ahands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that ^bappeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath ^csent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the ^dHoly Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received ^asight forthwith, and arose, and was ^bbaptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that ^adestroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them ^bbound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to ^akill him:

24 But their ^alaying await (lying in wait) was known of Saul (plot, conspiracy was known). And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a ^abasket.

26 And when Saul was come to ^aJerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. (Three years after his conversion, Saul went to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17-18) but he found that the members of the church there were afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. The scriptures do not give an account of what they (Peter and Paul) talked about. We assume that in addition to discussing the scriptures and points of doctrine, Saul must have asked many things about Jesus and his ministry. How thrilling to ask the chief apostle about when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, walked on water, opened the eyes of the blind, healed the sick, fed the five thousand, challenged the teachings of the Pharisees, suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane, and visited with the eleven for forty days following his resurrection. What an opportunity to ask James (Gal 1:17-19 - 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to ^aJerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the ^aapostles saw I none, save ^bJames the Lord's ^cbrother.) about Jesus as a boy, about Mary and Joseph and Jesus' other half-brothers and half-sisters, and about other things that James would know firsthand. Studies in Scriptures, 6:32)

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had ^aseen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and ^adisputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

30 *Which* When the brethren knew (this), they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were ^aedified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the ^bcomfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. (The Prophet Joseph Smith described Saul as being "about five feet high, very dark hair; dark complexion, dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembled the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator, active and diligent, always employing himself in doing good to his fellow man. TPJS, p. 180)

32 ¶ And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, (these regions) he came down also to the ^asaints which dwelt at Lydda. (Peter was touring the missions and branches of the Church.)

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was ^asick of the palsy (paralyzed).

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 ¶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha (Aramaic), which by interpretation is called Dorcas (Greek, meaning gazelle): this ^awoman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber:

and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, ^aarise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the ^asaints and widows, (he) presented her ^balive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. (Peter stays in Joppa and Cornelius sends for him in next week's lesson.)

Additional Reading:

These next two chapters recount Saul's conversion experience. Notice that each of the three versions differs slightly. Critics of the Prophet Joseph Smith say that he gave differing accounts of his First Vision. If giving different versions means an account is untrue, then the conversion of Saul must also be untrue. From a realistic point of view, no one will ever recount a personal experience exactly the same each time it is given. Some parts of the experience may be emphasized more than others depending on who the story is told to. In fact, law enforcement officers are suspicious of those who recount a story in exactly the same words each time. To them it means that a story has been memorized, rather than truly experienced.

CHAPTER 22

Paul recounts the story of his conversion and also tells of seeing Jesus in a vision—He is accorded some privileges as a Roman citizen.

1 MEN, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3 I am verily a man *which am* a ^aJew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the ^bfeet of ^cGamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the ^dlaw of the fathers, and was ^ezealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

4 And I ^apersecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received ^aletters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great ^alight round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, ^aSaul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am ^aJesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the ^avoice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed ~~for~~ (of) thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one ^aAnanias, a devout man according to the law, having a good ^breport of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy ^asight. And the same hour I

looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his ^awill, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his ^awitness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be ^abaptized, and ^bwash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER 26

Paul recounts his former persecution of the saints as a Pharisee—He testifies of the appearance of Jesus on the Damascus road—Agrippa is ‘almost persuaded’ to be a Christian.

1 THEN Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 Especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a ^aPharisee.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7 Unto which *promise* our ^atwelve tribes, ^binstantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should ^araise the dead?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things ^acontrary to the ^bname of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the ^asaints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to ^bdeath, I gave my ^cvoice against *them*.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto ^astrange cities.

12 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 ^alight 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, ^aSaul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is hard for thee to kick* ^bagainst the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have ^aappeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a ^bwitness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I ^asend thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn *them* from ^adarkness to ^blight, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.