

## LESSON 3: Acts 6, 7, 8, 9

### READING 1 – READ STUDY NOTES FROM LESSON 2; ACTS 6: 1-15

1. What scripture, thought or concept did you find helpful from the notes on chapter 2?

Acts 6:1 brings up the immediate question: who were the “Grecians” and the “Hebrews”? The Grecians or Grecian Jews were Jews of the Diaspora (see Bible Dictionary), that is, they were Jews who had been living outside of Palestine for generations and whose native language was Greek. These Jews were culturally Greek and worshipped at Hellenistic synagogues in Jerusalem which conducted services in Greek. The “Hebrews” were Palestinian Jews who spoke Aramaic and considered the Greek Jews as second –class Israelites and not true, pure Hebrew Jews. The early Christian church contained converts from both these Jewish communities. Often the Hellenized Jews had come to Jerusalem like the Zionists of our day, wanting to return to their religious roots. Women who had left family behind to come to Judea were necessarily cut off from support if they were widowed. This was a time period with no government social services. Widows had claim upon their families and their religious communities for support. There was no other.

2. Note Acts 4:34-35 in connection with Acts 6:1. What church program today is similar to what was being done by these early Christians? Do you think they were living the law of consecration? Give your reasons.

3. a. Read D&C 1:30 ( See Scripture List for Lesson 3). Something that is alive can grow, adapt and change. One of the great strengths of the true church is its ability to respond to the needs of the present by adapting. What changes did Peter and the apostles make to solve the problems created by the “culture clash” of Grecian-Jewish converts versus Hebrew-Jewish converts?

b. What similar problems might be faced in a worldwide church today?

c. Name one change that you have seen in your lifetime in the church that has enabled the church to respond to changing conditions?

4. What qualities did the apostles look for in choosing leaders to assist the saints temporally?

5. Why must both temporal and spiritual considerations be addressed in Christ's church?

6. What facts did Luke record in chapter 6 about Stephen that show how powerfully the spirit of God was with him? Cite verses.

7. What were the charges brought against Stephen in his hearing before the council of Jewish leaders? (Note: “Suborned” in 6:11 means to pay someone to lie in court.)

### READING 2 -- ACTS 7:1-60

Jewish religious life at this time focused on three things: the promised land of Judea, the temple that was the daily center of worship, and the law given to them by Moses. Stephen, a Greek Jew, had been boldly preaching that the Messiah had already come. The Jews of the Greek synagogues would be particularly sensitive to any appearance that they were not completely orthodox or faithful. Note how Stephen attempts to get his listeners to understand that the law of Moses, the promised land, and the temple were not to be worshipped themselves. Rather they would point the faithful to God who could then lead them according to His divine will and purposes. Remember, at this point, converts did not think of themselves as giving up their Jewish religion but rather, fulfilling it, and specifically, how it pointed toward the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

8. Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin council begins with a recitation of Jewish history that systematically topples each of the three props on which they based their right standing before God.

a. The Abrahamic covenant consists of several different promises. Which one does Stephen focus on at the beginning of his speech? (Verses 1-7)

b. According to verse 5, did Abraham ever actually possess the Promised Land during his life?

c. The great patriarch Jacob, or Israel, father of the 12 tribes, ended up with how much of a land inheritance in the area of Israel? (see verses 16 and 17)

d. Moses, the first great lawgiver, also never lived in the Promised Land. Stephen recounts the 120 years of Moses' life in three parts.

The first forty years were spent in \_\_\_\_\_ (see verses 19-25 )

The next 40 were spent in \_\_\_\_\_ (see verse 29. Note also v.33 )

The final 40 were spent \_\_\_\_\_ (see verse 36)

e. So, according to Stephen, how important was it to live in the Promised Land to worship God rightly?

9. In verse 37, Stephen refers to an important prophecy found in Deuteronomy 18:15-19, (Scripture list) one that his listeners would know well. Peter had also quoted this scripture before the Sanhedrin (Acts 3:22). Most of the book of Deuteronomy is one long farewell sermon from Moses, giving laws and advice for the future. He also tells them that there is another prophet coming, who, like him, would give law to the people and to whom they must listen. (This is a V.I.P.-Very Important Prophecy!)

a. Who is the prophet referred to by Moses?

b. From your general scriptural knowledge, did any of the other Old Testament prophets deliver new law to Israel? What did they do?

c. The law that Moses delivered and upon which Israel based its civic and religious life is known as the Mosaic law. What do we call the teachings that constitute the new laws Jesus gave the people?

10. Name one Mosaic Law and its counterpart as given in Christ's new law?

11. The Jews were extremely proud of their temple and thought that one had to go there to find God. What simple truth did Stephen remind them of that would let some of the air out of their pride? Cite verse.

12. In spite of having the Mosaic law, the temple, and being in Israel, Stephen pointed out that Israel had failed to live up to its privileges in important ways. What sins of the Jewish people did Stephen point out?

13. Why would comparing the council to the unbelieving forefathers be an especially cutting insult?

### Reading 3 -- Acts 8: 1-40

14. Why did Phillip (see Acts 6:5 for Philip's former assignment) go to Samaria to preach the gospel?

15. Phillip found a ready hearing among the Samaritans, who were no strangers to being maltreated by the Jews. Phillip backed up his preaching by what actions that had great effect among the people?

16. How would you describe the "notable person," Simon, who was baptized in response to Phillip's preaching?

17. What were Simon's motives for wanting the priesthood power that Peter had?

18. Simon's actions dramatically show that a person's response to gospel truth can be genuine and wholehearted or counterfeit and self-serving. Beside each of the following references, write one thing you learned about having a heart that is "right in the sight of God." (Scripture List)

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|---------------------|---------------------|
| a. D & C 6:16 _____ | 2 Nephi 31:13 _____ |
| 3 Nephi 9:20 _____  | Alma 12:10 _____    |
| Moroni 8:26 _____   | Ezekiel 33:31 _____ |

19. What things can we do to make sure that our hearts are "right" before God?

20. What were the prejudices the Jews had against the Samaritans? (see Bible Dictionary under "Samaritans")

21. a. What verse in Acts 1 shows that Christ himself directed that his disciples preach the gospel to Samaria?

b. What do we learn about God's heart from this fact? (see D & C 38:16 in Scripture List)

22. How did Phillip end up preaching the gospel to the Ethiopian Eunuch? Cite verses. Note: This man was a proselyte to Judaism, i.e., he was born a Gentile but converted (or was converting) to Judaism.

23. CHALLENGE QUESTION: Skim the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Why would reading this particular chapter have readied someone to hear the gospel message?

### READING 4 -- ACTS 9: 1-43

24. From chapter 8 & 9, what kinds of persecutions did Saul inflict upon the saints? (More are listed in Acts 26:10-12)

25. How might God have used Saul’s sudden blindness to instruct him? What could be symbolized by “scales falling from his eyes?”

26. Acts 9:15 & 16 are two verses that express the massive changes brought about in the life of Saul by the experience he had on the road to Damascus. From these verses, note how Saul becomes Paul:

<u>Saul</u>	<u>becomes</u>	<u>Paul</u>
Was a persecutor of Christians		_____
Only had a concern for the Jewish people		_____
Had glory as a prominent Pharisee among Jews		_____

27. The Lord tells Ananias that Saul is a chosen vessel to him. According to D&C 121:34-40, why are more people not chosen? (See Scripture List)

28. What was Paul’s two-part message in Damascus? Cite verses. (note: *Christ* is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Messiah* .)

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

29. Who defended Paul before the Jerusalem church leaders?

30. PERSONAL: Has God ever used you as a “Barnabas” to restore peace or harmonize differences between age groups, cultures or people in His church?

31. What were the miracles in this reading and what part did they play in the growth of the early church?

32. PERSONAL: What place do miracles play in Christ’s church today? How have miracles in your life deepened your own testimony or spirituality?