

# “The Number of the Disciples Was Multiplied”

Lesson  
**29**  
Summary

*Acts 6–9*

## Scripture Summary:

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

---

## Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

**“Three,” “Twelve” and “Seventy,” an Ancient and Modern Organization:** The Church in the Meridian of Times parallels the organization of the Church in ancient as well as in modern times. These were and are men, in their respective times, who had authority from God to bring light and truth to the people. Anciently, Moses had a “First Presidency:” two assistants, Aaron and Hur. Additionally, he had an organization of Twelve and Seventy. The parallel organization is seen in the primitive Church with Peter, James and John appearing as a “First Presidency” within the original Twelve and the Seventy. And, of course, we see a similar structure today in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Restoration Gives Insight to the Past:** The LDS ecclesiastic organization today may give us insight to what was happening in former days. The appointment of officers and leaders was compared to parts of the body. All parts were needed and had to work together. The metaphor of the Church and the body was used in ancient times, the meridian of times, as well as today. A beautiful attribute of the Savior is His being, His body that He gave for us. Isaiah suggested that everything around us can remind us of Him, that “body language” refers to Him. There are numerous verses created as “imaging” that include how He was called from the womb, a perfect body with attributes as eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, neck, heart, shoulder, hands, arms, belly, womb, leg, knee, and foot. This constant use of body language can be seen as a metaphor of the “body of Christ.”

**Members of the Body:** The Prophet Joseph Smith emphasized the same principle. “The Church is a compact body composed of different members, and is strictly analogous to the human system, and Paul, after speaking of the different gifts, says, “Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular; and God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” (1 Corinthians 12:27) Are all Teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” It is evident that they do not; yet are they all members of one body. All members of the natural body are not the eye, the ear, the head or the hand -- yet the eye cannot say to the ear, I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee; they are all so many component parts in the perfect machines -- the one body; and if one member suffer, the whole of the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the rest are honored with it.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Five 1842-43 Pg.244)

**Insight to Stephen’s Stoning:** In many cases, the bodies of the Lord’s appointed servants were hurt or killed, yet their testimonies and witnesses remained to strengthen the Church members. Stephen’s stoning was a dramatic example. A more accurate understanding of the process of stoning would also give added insight to the New Testament accounts of Stephen’s stoning as well as a woman brought to Jesus. Stoning is a capital punishment indicated in the Mosaic Law. Biblical punishments were based on the crime, unlike today’s punishments which are based on the person or the circumstances. Stoning was the punishment for a number of gross sins including murder (Numbers 35:30), adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22-24), blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16), breaking the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-35), Apostasy (Deuteronomy 13:6-10), and rebellion against parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the convicted be thrown (hurdled) over a cliff. One of at least two witnesses and thereby accusers was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. The aversion to taking another’s life would motivate the accuser’s success in having the fall cause the death of the accused. Another witness/accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all others threw stones to cover the body (brings about the burial). Abandoned quarries (where the stone was rejected) would be likely locations for such rare executions.

**Saul Witnesses Stephen's Stoning at the Place of a Skull:** It may be possible that Stephen did not immediately die from the execution's hurdle. The power and glory of his vision of the Father and the Son transcended the cruelty of those who waited to witness his bloody broken body disrespectfully covered with stones. The likely place of Stephen's execution is likely where the Savior was crucified and where He transcended death, beginning a process of redemption of all mankind. It is an abandoned stone quarry, rejected by builders thousands of years ago because the stone was too crumbly. Stephen's death, with his accompanying compassion and heavenly witness, was witnessed by "Saul, the Pharisee," beginning a process of changeover to "Paul, the Apostle." Later, his own conversion would ultimately be followed by hurt, persecution, and even an execution attempt where the "hurdle" did not result in death.

**Philip, a Seventy, Bears Witness to an Ethiopian; Was He an Israelite?** An interesting development in modern Israel is the influx of tens of thousands of black Jews from Ethiopia. ". . . members of this group refer to themselves as Beta Israel . . . they practice an early form of Judaism; the chief rabbis of Israel have recognized them as Jews . . . according to their tradition, their ancestors were Jerusalem notables who came with Menelik, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, when he returned home . . . they said that he brought Judaic customs and civil law to Ethiopia. The lion of Judah was the symbol of the emperor of Ethiopia." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The Ethiopian's Judaism differs from the Western Rabbinical Judaism that most Jews relate to. It is possible, through anthropological studies of these Ethiopian Jews, to catch a closer glimpse of Judaism as it might have been three thousand years ago.

**Other References Indicating Ethiopian Connections to Israel:** "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." (Numbers 12:1) "Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die." (Jeremiah 38:10) "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," (Acts 8:27) The conversion of the Ethiopian Queen Candace's Minister of Finance brought him from his ancient Israelite connection to the restoration of the covenant in his own time. Through his reading, searching and letting his eyes be opened, he received the promised gift of forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

**Crossroads of the East Drew Diverse Converts:** Great things were happening in those days. Great and influential men from each end of the Crossroads of the East, Ethiopia, and Damascus were being touched by the light of truth. Men with worldly experience had their eyes touched with the greater heavenly light which was once again available. Saul's "brighter than the midday light" experience on the way to Damascus blinded him physically so that his spiritual eyes could be opened. His experience of watching Stephen's stoning, holding the witnesses' clothes, ultimately became his own. As his eyes were opened, his commission as one of the Twelve was to open the eyes of the Jews and the Gentiles, to give them light and truth. (Acts 26:16-18)

As the truth went forth, more and more people were enveloped in its light, and the number of disciples was multiplied.

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at [www.HolyLandsRevealed.com](http://www.HolyLandsRevealed.com). (Just click "LDS SUPPLEMENTS")

(1) a short e-mailed WEEKLY REMINDER

(2) a one-page two-sided SUMMARY HANDOUT (plus a "PDF" version for printing)

(3) the COMPLETE SUPPLEMENTAL MANUAL LESSONS. All are available *FREE* at [www.HolyLandsRevealed.com](http://www.HolyLandsRevealed.com)

*You may copy and print the information from any of the website versions to distribute to your class members and friends.*