

## **The 1858 Great Controversy Chapters 13-15.**

### **Chapter 13. The Death of Stephen.**

Disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. The word of God increased, and many of the priests were obedient unto the faith. Stephen full of faith was doing great wonders and miracles among the people. Many were angry; for the priests were turning from their traditions, and from the sacrifices and offerings, and were accepting Jesus as the great sacrifice. Stephen, with power from on high, reproved the priests and elders, and exalted Jesus before them. They could not withstand the wisdom and power by which he spoke, and as they found that they could prevail nothing against him, they hired men to falsely swear that they had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. They stirred up the people, and took Stephen, and, through false witnesses, accused him of speaking against the temple and the law. They testified that they had heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the customs which Moses gave them.

All who sat in judgment against Stephen saw the light of the glory of God in his countenance. His countenance was lighted up like the face of an angel. He stood up full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and, beginning at the prophets, he brought them down to the advent of Jesus, his crucifixion, his resurrection and ascension, and showed them that the Lord dwelt not in temples made with hands. They worshiped the temple. Anything spoken against the temple filled them with greater indignation than if spoken against God. The spirit of Stephen was stirred with heavenly indignation as he cried out against them for being wicked, and uncircumcised in heart. Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit. They observed the outward ordinances, while their hearts were corrupt, and full of deadly evil. Stephen referred them to the cruelty of their fathers in persecuting the prophets, saying, Ye have slain them which shewed before the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.

The chief priests and the rulers were enraged as the plain, cutting truths were spoken; and they rushed upon Stephen. The light of heaven shone upon him, and as he looked up steadfastly into heaven, a vision of God's glory was given him, and angels hovered around him. He cried out, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. The people would not hear him. They cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. And Stephen kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

I saw that Stephen was a mighty man of God, especially raised up to fill an important place in the church. Satan exulted as he was stoned to death; for he knew that the disciples would greatly feel his loss. But Satan's triumph was short; for there was one standing in that company, witnessing the death of Stephen, to whom Jesus was to reveal himself. Although he took no part in casting the stones at Stephen yet he consented to his death. Saul was zealous in persecuting the church of God, hunting them, seizing them in their houses, and delivering them to those who would slay them. Satan was using Saul effectually. But God can break the Devil's power, and set free those who are led captive by him. Saul was a learned man, and Satan was triumphantly employing his talents to help carry out his rebellion against the Son of God, and those who believed in him. But Jesus selected Saul as a chosen vessel to preach his name, to strengthen the disciples in their work, and more than fill the place of

Stephen. Saul was greatly esteemed by the Jews. His zeal and his learning pleased them, and terrified many of the disciples.

## **Chapter 14. The Conversion of Saul.**

As Saul journeyed to Damascus with letters of authority to take men or women who were preaching Jesus, and to bring them bound unto Jerusalem, evil angels exulted around him. But as he journeyed, suddenly a light from heaven shone around him, which made the evil angels flee, and caused Saul to fall quickly to the ground. He heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Saul inquired, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And Saul trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

The men who were with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but saw no man. As the light passed away, and Saul arose from the earth, and opened his eyes, he saw no man. The glory of the light of heaven had blinded him. They led him by the hand, and brought him to Damascus, and he was three days without sight, neither did he eat or drink. The Lord then sent his angel to one of the very men whom Saul hoped to make captive, and revealed to him in vision that he should go into the street called straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hands on him, that he might receive his sight.

Ananias feared that there was some mistake in this matter, and began to relate to the Lord what he had heard of Saul. But the Lord said unto Ananias, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Ananias followed the directions of the Lord, 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 Spirit.

Immediately Saul received sight, and arose, and was baptized. He then preached Christ in the synagogues, that he was the Son of God. All who heard him were amazed, and inquired, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem? and come hither on that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews. They were again in trouble. Saul told his experience in the power of the Holy Spirit. All were acquainted with the fact of Saul's opposition to Jesus, and his zeal in hunting out and delivering up to death all who believed on his name. His miraculous conversion convinced many that Jesus was the Son of God. Saul related his experience, that as he was persecuting unto the death, binding and delivering into prison, both men and women, as he journeyed to Damascus, suddenly a great light from heaven shone round about him, and Jesus revealed himself to him, and taught him that he was the Son of God.

As Saul boldly preached Jesus, he carried a powerful influence with him. He had knowledge of the scriptures, and after his conversion a divine light shone upon the prophecies concerning Jesus, which enabled him to clearly and boldly present the truth, and to correct any perversion of the scriptures. With the Spirit of God resting upon him, he would in a clear and forcible manner carry his hearers down through the prophecies to the time of Christ's first advent, and show them that the scriptures had been fulfilled, which referred to Christ's sufferings, death and resurrection.

## Chapter 15. The Jews Decided to Kill Paul.

The chief priests and rulers were moved with hatred against Paul, as they witnessed the effect of the relation of his experience. They saw that he boldly preached Jesus, and wrought miracles in his name, and that multitudes listened to him, and turned from their traditions, and looked upon them as being the murderers of the Son of God. Their anger was kindled, and they assembled to consult as to what was best to be done to put down the excitement. They agreed that the only safe course for them was to put Paul to death. But God knew of their intention, and angels were commissioned to guard him, that he might live to fulfill his mission, and to suffer for the name of Jesus.

Paul was informed that the Jews were seeking his life. Satan led the unbelieving Jews to watch the gates of Damascus day and night, that as Paul should pass out of the gates; they might immediately kill him. But the disciples in the night let him down by the wall in a basket. Here the Jews were made ashamed of their failure, and Satan's object was defeated. And Paul went to Jerusalem to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him. They could not believe that he was a disciple. His life had been hunted by the Jews in Damascus, and his own brethren would not receive him; but Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

But Satan was stirring up the Jews to destroy Paul, and Jesus bade him leave Jerusalem. And as he went into other cities preaching Jesus, and working miracles, many were converted, and as one man was healed who had always been lame, the people who worshiped idols were about to sacrifice to the disciples. Paul was grieved, and told them that they were only men, and that they must worship God who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. Paul exalted God before them; but he could scarcely restrain the people. The first knowledge of faith in the true God, and the worship and honor due to him, were being formed in their minds; and as they were listening to Paul, Satan urged on the unbelieving Jews of other cities to follow after Paul to destroy the good work wrought through him. The Jews stirred up, and inflamed the minds of those idolaters by false reports against Paul. The wonder and admiration of the people now changed to hate, and they who a short time before were ready to worship the disciples, stoned Paul, and drew him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But as the disciples were standing about Paul, and mourning over him, to their joy he rose up, and went with them into the city.

As Paul preached Jesus, a certain woman possessed with a spirit of divination, followed them, crying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. Thus she followed the disciples many days. But Paul was grieved; for this crying after them diverted the minds of the people from the truth. Satan's object in leading her to do this was to disgust the people, and destroy the influence of the disciples. But Paul's spirit was stirred within him, and he turned to the woman, and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her, and the evil spirit was rebuked, and left her.

Her masters were pleased that she cried after the disciples; but when the evil spirit had left her, and they saw her a meek disciple of Christ, they were enraged. They had gathered much money by her fortune-telling, and now the hope of their gain was gone. Satan's object was defeated; but his servants caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place, unto the rulers, and to the magistrates, saying, These men being Jews do exceedingly trouble our city. And the multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when

they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. But the angels of God accompanied them within the prison walls. Their imprisonment told to the glory of God, and showed to the people that God was in the work, and with his chosen servants, and that prison walls could be shaken, and strong iron bars could easily be opened by him.

At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sung praises unto God, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and I saw that immediately the angel of God loosed every one's bands. The keeper of the prison awoke and was affrighted as he saw the prison doors open. He thought that the prisoners had escaped, and that he must be punished with death. As he was about to kill himself, Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here. The power of God convicted the keeper. He called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. The jailer then assembled his whole household, and Paul preached unto them Jesus. The jailer's heart was united to those brethren, and he washed their stripes, and he, and all his house, were baptized that night. He then set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house.

The wonderful news was spread abroad of the glorious power of God which had been manifest in opening the prison doors, and the conversion and baptism of the jailer and his family. The rulers heard of these things, and were afraid, and sent to the jailer, requesting him to let Paul and Silas go. But Paul would not leave the prison in a private manner. He said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves, and fetch us out. Paul and Silas were not willing that the manifestation of the power of God should be concealed. The sergeants told these words unto the magistrates; and they feared when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.