

July 10-16, 2023

## Acts 6–9

“WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO”?

---

**Summary:** *Acts 6. The Apostles choose seven to assist them—Stephen is tried before the council.*

*Acts 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.*

*Acts 8. Saul persecutes the Church—Philip’s ministry in Samaria is described—Philip performs 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 about Christ and baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch.*

*Acts 9. Jesus appears to Saul—Saul is a chosen vessel—Ananias restores Saul’s sight—Saul is baptized and begins his ministry—Peter heals Æneas and raises Dorcas from death.*

---

### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### When did the organizational formation of The Lord’s kingdom begin?

The organization and growth of 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. “And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have matters to do, let him come unto them.” (**Exodus 24:14**) “These are those that were numbered . . . and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers.” (Numbers 1:44) “And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.” (**Exodus 24:1**)

### How consistent is the Lord’s priestly organization throughout the ages?

The parallel organization is seen in the primitive Church with Peter, James and John appearing as a “First Presidency” within the original Twelve. “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother,” (**Matthew 10:2**) “And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;” (Luke 6:13) “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.” (**Luke 10:1**) And, of course, we see a similar structure today in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church. The twelve traveling councilors are called to

be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling. And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned. The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:22-25)

**How important is the organizational structure of the Lord’s kingdom?**

In that sense, the organization today may give us insight to what was happening in former days. “And it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy;” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:93) “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint . . .” (Acts 6:3) 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. Remember, there are two things necessary to understand the scriptures, the learning of the Jews and the spirit, the “still small voice,” that reveals deeper meanings. This lesson deals with so many qualities of the Lord that it would be impractical to comment on each one. One beautiful attribute is His being, His body that He gave for us.

**What does “body language” teach me?**

Could Isaiah have been suggesting that everything around us can remind us of

Him, that even “body language” refers to Him? Our Creator came from the womb, a perfect body with attributes of eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, neck, heart, shoulder, hands, arms, belly, womb, leg, knee, and foot.

“Lift up your <b>eyes</b> on high,” (Isaiah 40:26)	“Thou hast <b>heard, see</b> all this . . .” (Isaiah 48:6)	“my <b>mouth</b> like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his <b>hand</b> hath he hid me,” (Isaiah 49:2)	“I have graven thee upon the palms of my <b>hands</b> ,” (Isaiah 49:16)
“To open the blind <b>eyes</b> ,” (Isaiah 42:7)	“Kings shall <b>see</b> . . .” (Isaiah 49:7)	“their <b>tongue</b> faileth . . .” (Isaiah 41:17)	“make bare the <b>leg</b> , uncover the <b>thigh</b> . . .” (Isaiah 47:2)
“Bring forth the blind people that have <b>eyes</b> , and the deaf that have <b>ears</b> . . .” (Isaiah 43:8)	“And they shall be made perfect notwithstanding their <b>blindness</b> ,” JST (Isaiah 42:20)	“yet he laid it not to <b>heart</b> .” (Isaiah 42:25)	“the Lord GOD will come with strong <b>hand</b> , and his <b>arm</b> shall rule for him:” (Isaiah 40:10)
<b>Seeing</b> many things, but thou observest not; opening the <b>ears</b> , but he heareth not.” (Isaiah 42:20)	“formed me from the <b>womb</b> . . . glorious in the <b>eyes</b> of the LORD,” (Isaiah 49:5)	“consider eth in his <b>heart</b> ,” (Isaiah 44:19)	“he shall gather the lambs with his <b>arm</b> , and carry them in his <b>bosom</b> ,” (Isaiah 40:11)

"thy <b>neck</b> is an iron sinew, and thy <b>brow</b> brass;" (Isaiah 48:4)	Lift up thine <b>eyes</b> round about," (Isaiah 49:18)	"a deceived <b>heart</b> . . . my right <b>hand</b> ," (Isaiah 44:20)	"his <b>arm</b> shall be on the Chaldeans . . ." (Isaiah 48:14)
"for the <b>mouth</b> of the LORD hath spoken it." (Isaiah 40:5)	"say again in thine <b>ears</b> ," (Isaiah 49:20)	"thou didst not lay these things to thy <b>heart</b> ," (Isaiah 47:7)	"with the strength of his <b>arms</b> . . ." (Isaiah 44:12)
"the <b>hand</b> of the LORD hath done this . . ." (Isaiah 41:20)	"for the <b>mouth</b> of the LORD hath spoken it." (Isaiah 40:5)	"Then shalt thou say in thine <b>heart</b> , Who hath begotten me these, <b>seeing</b> I have lost my children," (Isaiah 49:21)	"I will lift up mine <b>hand</b> to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their <b>arms</b> , and thy daughters shall be carried upon their <b>shoulders</b> ." (Isaiah 49:22)
" <b>Hear</b> , ye deaf; and <b>look</b> , ye blind, that ye may <b>see</b> ." (Isaiah 42:18)	"the word is gone out of my <b>mouth</b> . . . every <b>knee</b> shall bow, every <b>tongue</b> shall swear." (Isaiah 45:23)	"He hath no <b>hands</b> . . ." (Isaiah 45:9)	"with his <b>feet</b> ." (Isaiah 41:3)
". . . for he hath shut their <b>eyes</b> , that they cannot see; and their	"I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth	"and concerning the work of my <b>hands</b> . . ." (Isaiah 45:11)	"And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens

<b>hearts</b> , that they cannot understand." (Isaiah 44:18)	out of my <b>mouth</b> , and I showed them . . . and they came to pass." (Isaiah 48:3)		thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their <b>face</b> toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy <b>feet</b> ;" (Isaiah 49:23)
		"my <b>hands</b> , have stretched out the heavens . . ." (Isaiah 45:12)	"called him to his <b>foot</b> ," (Isaiah 41:2)

This constant use of body language can be seen as a metaphor of the "body of Christ." "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

### How are body parts used to emphasize the diversity of Lord's kingdom membership?

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 those miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 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)** 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. Let us review stoning from another of this year's lesson supplements,

### **What is the real way of "stoning?"**

One of the methods of execution was stoning. A truer understanding of the process of stoning would give added insight to the New Testament account of a woman brought to Jesus. The procedure included causing death by precipitating the convicted over a cliff (like an abandoned stone quarry). That part included the participation of one of the witnesses. The second witness threw or placed the "first stone" on the body in a process of burying the convicted. The stoning was more a disrespectful burying, depriving the convicted of a mourning chamber and a burial chamber. "It [the execution] was accomplished by hurling down? Scripture states, And he shall be cast down. And whence the necessity of stoning? Scripture states, he shall be stoned. And whence do we know that both stoning and hurling down [were employed]? From the verse, he shall surely be stoned or thrown down. And whence do we know that if he died through being hurled down, it is enough? Scripture states, or cast down. Whence do we know the same procedure is to be followed for [all subsequent] generations?" **(Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 45a)** It should be noted that the Hebrew rendition of stoning including "hurling" or "laying on hands;" to "cast" or "throw" down is not as distinguishable in the

English King James Translation of **Exodus 19:13** and **Leviticus 24:14**. 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**). A better insight into capital punishment can be seen in the Talmud. Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the convicted be thrown over a cliff. One of at least two witnesses and thereby accusers was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. If not, one of the witnesses/accusers had to take the first stone and break the convict's heart. The intense aversion to directly taking another's life would motivate the accuser's success in having the fall cause the death of the accused. A witness/accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all others threw stones to cover the body (the burial). Abandoned quarries (where the stone was rejected) would be likely locations for such rare executions.

### **How did Stephen's martyrdom represent the "forgotten Savior/**

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, not providing a memorial. The likely place of Stephen's execution is precisely where the Savior was crucified and where He transcended death, beginning a process of redemption of all mankind. It is still known by Jews in

Jerusalem as the place of execution, stoning, and ultimately, two thousand years ago, crucifixion. Near the place known as The Garden Tomb is a "Place of a Skull." It is an abandoned stone quarry, rejected by builders thousands of years ago because the stone was too crumbly. Unbeknownst to most Jews, it is where the Lord's compassion and heavenly witness were rejected, as Pharisees and wicked priests urged His crucifixion. Stephen's death, with his accompanying compassion and heavenly witness, was witnessed by Saul, the Pharisee, which began a process of redemption for 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. (That stoning will be considered in another lesson). Another of the seven leaders of the Seventy, Philip, bore witness to an Ethiopian.

### **How are Ethiopians Jews connected to Solomon?**

Today in Israel, we have a better insight as to whom this Ethiopian might have been. Again, we recall from a previous year's lesson supplement, Recent developments in Israel have brought the name of King Solomon to the foreground again. The most interesting development is the influx of tens of thousands of black Jews from Ethiopia. They feel they are descendants of King Solomon through one of his wives, the Queen of Sheba. "In 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. Until brought to Israel, they lived in the provinces around Lake Tana. 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.**)

### **How has the gathering brought "Ethiopian Jews" to Israel?**

"Operation Solomon" was the name of a remarkable plan to bring these Jews to Israel. In the early Nineties, fifteen thousand Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel in thirty-one hours. One 747 Jumbo had more than eleven hundred Ethiopian Jews on one flight. In order to keep count and due to the basic illiteracy of Hebrew, each had a number stuck to his clothing. When they landed, two unnumbered disembarked - newborn babies in an unknown land. The Ethiopian's Judaism differs from the Western Rabbinical Judaism that most Jews relate to. It is possible, through anthropological studies, to catch a closer glimpse of Judaism as it might have been three thousand years ago. References to Enoch appear in several apocryphal works. The Ethiopian Jews who claim to be descendants of King Solomon (and the Queen of Sheba) have brought their holy books from Ethiopia to Israel. Although they are recent in terms of age (less than two thousand years old), they do contain two apocryphal books, one of which is the Book of Enoch. As of June 1999, another 3,000 to 5,000-member group of Ethiopians Jews, the Quara, are being brought to Israel, the land of their ancient forefather, Solomon. "Tomorrow night's expected arrival of the first group of 80-100 Quara Jews from Ethiopia since 1992 has enthralled the Jewish Agency Assembly, which opened last night and continues through Wednesday in Tiberias. The agency's board of governors yesterday approved an allocation of \$11 million for their absorption and for the absorption of Yugoslavian and Russian immigrants in the coming months."

(Jerusalem Post, Aryeh Dean Cohen , David Rudge, June 21, 1999) “According to agency officials, some 3,500 Quara Jews are currently in Gondar, from where they will be moved to Addis Ababa for processing. They are the remainder of the Quara community: Some 3,500 Jews living in Upper Quara were brought to Israel seven years ago, while the 2,500 Jews of Lower Quara were left behind - except for 200 who trickled in recently. Four Interior Ministry officials of Ethiopian descent and a doctor were among those traveling to Ethiopia yesterday to help speed up the processing of the newcomers.” “. . . an unofficial census has identified around 25,000 Ethiopian Jews - most of them Falash Mura - who have the right under the Law of Return to come to Israel.” (Jerusalem Post, Elli Wohlgelernter, Aryeh Dean Cohen, June 23, 1999) “Jews from Quara arrive yesterday at Ben-Gurion Airport, as part of an operation to rescue some 3,000 Ethiopian Jews left behind in previous airlifts.” “. . . Michael Jankelowitz, a spokesman for the Jewish Agency . . . was speaking of this group of Jews who were left behind in the major rescue of 1991, when the Quara province they lived in was under rebel control and they could not make their way to Addis Ababa to take part in Operation Solomon.” “For Zerihun Fenta Goshu, 75, sitting at a table with his son, daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren, all that is important was that they are here. 'I'm very happy because this is the only place for me, the land of our forefathers.”

### **How were other Ethiopians touched by the Lord?**

Other references indicating the loyal and possibly ethnic Ethiopian connection to Israel include: “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. 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 would be opened. His experience of watching Stephen’s stoning, holding the witnesses’ clothes, ultimately became his own.

### **How do I hear the answer, to “What wilt thou have me to do?”**

As Paul’s 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. “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, 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.” (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.