

“Persecution Accompanies Witness!”

Acts 6:8-15

And **Stephen, Full Of Faith and Power**, did **Great Wonders and Signs** among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the **Synagogue of the Freedmen** (Former Slaves who were Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), **disputing** (debating and arguing) with **Stephen**. And **they were not able to resist** the **Wisdom** and the **Spirit** by which **he (Stephen) spoke**. Then they **secretly induced** (bribed and convinced) certain men to say, “We have heard **him speak blasphemous words** against **Moses** and **God!**” And they **stirred up the people**, the **elders**, and the **scribes**; (House of the Sadducees) and they came upon (armed with intent) him, seized him, and brought him to the **Council (Sanhedrin)**. They also **set up false witnesses** who said, “**This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this Holy Place (Temple) and the Law (God’s Word)**; for we have heard **him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this Place (Temple) and change the Customs (Traditions of Worship) which Moses delivered (entrusted) to us!**” And all who sat in the **Council (Sanhedrin)**, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel!

Acts 6:8-15 (NKJV)

Q: “Who Was Stephen?”

A: A Greek Pagan Convert to Judaism & Christianity!

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve (apostles) summoned the multitude of the disciples (followers) and said,” ...

Acts 6:1-2a

**A: One Of Seven Men Picked By The New Followers Of The Faith
To Act As A Deacon – Elder In The Church**

“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, Full of the Holy Spirit and Wisdom (Truth), whom we may appoint over this business” ...

Acts 6:3

A: A Man Full of Faith & Full of the Holy Spirit

*“And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose **Stephen**, a man Full of Faith and the Holy Spirit” ...*

Acts 5a

A: A Man Full of Faith & Full of Great Power

“Who Was Accompanied With Great Wonders & Signs

... And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.”

Acts 6:8

Q: “What Caused The Religious Authorities & Jewish People To Rise Up Against Stephen?”

A: A Religious Debate & Dispute Broke Out As Stephen Preached

The Gospel Of The Good News & Healed The People In The Name Of Jesus Christ?

*“Then there arose some from what is called the **Synagogue of the Freedmen** (Former Slaves who were Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), **disputing** (debating and arguing) with **Stephen**.”*

Acts 6:9

Q: “Who Were These Freedmen” From These Different Places?”

A: Other Pagan – Greek / Hellenists Who Had Also Converted To Judaism – Like Stephen

A: They Were Also Descendants Of Former Slaves To Roman Masters

After The Capture Of Israel & Jerusalem By Pompey In 63 BC

Q: *“Where Were They From In The World?”*

A: From Cyrene (Like Simon Who Helped Carry The Cross Of Christ)
From Alexandria in Egypt, From Cilicia In Tarsus – Like Saul (Later Paul),
And From All Over The Middle East & Asia Minor

A: They Also Had Their Own Synagogue Of Hellenized Jewish Converts
Apart From The Jewish Born Believers From The 12 Tribes Of Israel

Q: *“What Was The Outcome Of Their Debates & Disputes With Stephen?”*

A: And they were not able to resist the **Wisdom and the Spirit** by which **he (Stephen) spoke**.

Acts 6:10

Prophecy / Teaching & Provision / Authority

Jesus instructed and warned His Followers, *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ... “But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.””*

Mark 13:9-11 - See Also **Matthew 10:16-20** & **Luke 12:11-12**

Q: *“What Did These Hellenistic Jewish Converts Do*

When They Could Not Win Their Debate & Disputes With Stephen?”

A: They Resorted To Bribery & Spreading Lies & False Accusations Against Him Personally!
*“Then they secretly induced (bribed and convinced) certain men to say, “We have heard **him speak blasphemous words** against **Moses** and **God!**” And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; (House of the Sadducees)” ...* **Acts 6:11-12a**

Q: *“What Were The Supposed Evil & Crimes That Stephen Had Done?”*

A: **Blaspheming (Speaking Untruths) About The Meaning Of The Words Given By God**
& **The Title Given By God To Moses** (The Prophet)

According To The Jewish Theological Understanding!

Q: *“Were Their Accusations Truthful?”*

A: **NO** - *“Then they secretly induced (bribed and convinced) certain men to say...”*

Q: *“Was There Traditional Jewish Theological Understanding Of Moses
And The Coming Prophet Of God’s Own Choosing Correct
According To God’s Understanding When God Spoke Them To Moses?”*

A: **NO!** – Let Me Try To Explain!

“FORESHADOWING” - Stephen’s Own Words In His Defense!

Stephen testified, ... *“This is that Moses who said to the Children of Israel,
‘The Lord Your God Will Raise Up for you a Prophet
like me from your brethren. Him you Shall Hear!’”*

Acts 7:37 - Deuteronomy 18:15

A: **NO** – *“And they stirred up the people, the elders,
and the scribes; (House of the Sadducees) ...”*

They Needed The **Support Of The People** Who Would Gladly Join In As The **Cancel Culture!**

Q: *“What Did They Resort To When All Of This Failed?”*

A: Unlawful Arrest & An Unlawful Trail Of The Accused
*“... and they came upon (armed with intent) him, seized him, and brought him to the **Council (Sanhedrin)**.” Acts 12b*

Q: *“What Were The Supposed Evil & Crimes That Stephen Had Done?”*

A: **Blaspheming (Speaking Untruths)** About The Significance Of The Temple & The Law (Words Of God)!

*“They also set up false witnesses who said, “This **man** does not cease to **speak blasphemous words** against this **Holy Place (Temple)** and the **Law (God’s Word)** ...”*
Acts 6:13

Q: *“Were Their Accusations Truthful?”*

A: **NO** - *“They also set up false witnesses who said, ...”*

Q: *“What Had Jesus Actually Taught About The Destruction Of The Temple & Temple Mount?”*

That After His Death, Resurrection, & Ascension Back Into Heaven, & Beginning Of Christianity: The Jewish Priests, & All Jewish Traditions, & Temple Would No Longer Be Necessary! Because The Law Is Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Himself – New Covenant By Completing Law & The Prophets – Old Covenant!

A1 – Temple

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord!’”
Luke 13:34-35 - See Also Matthew 23:37-39

A2 – Law

Jesus Taught On The Mountain, *“Do not think that I came to Destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to Destroy but to Fulfill. For Assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law Till All Is Fulfilled.”*

Matthew 5:17-18

Q: *“What Were The Other Supposed Evil & Crimes That Stephen Had Done?”*

A: Insurrection, Desecration, & Heresy Charges Against The Temple Mount, Religious Authority Of Priests & The Sanhedrin Council, & Teaching The People To Worship In A Heretical & Profane Manner !

*“They also set up false witnesses who said, ... for we have heard **him say** that this **Jesus of Nazareth** will **destroy** this **Place (Temple)** and **change** the **customs** (traditions of worship) which **Moses delivered (entrusted)** to us!”*

Acts 6:13-14

Q: *“Were Their Accusations Truthful?”*

A: **NO** - *“They also set up false witnesses who said, ...”*

Q: *“What Had Jesus Actually Taught About The Destruction Of The Temple & Temple Mount?”*

A1: That He Was The Embodiment Of The Temple

Now All Would Worship God In Spirit & In Truth As God Desired Them To!

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the Temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables . And He said to those who sold doves, *“Take these things away! Do not make My Father's House a House of Merchandise!”* Then His disciples remembered that it was written, *“Zeal for Your House has eaten me up!”* So, the Jews answered and said to Him, *“What Sign do You show to us, since You do these things?”* Jesus answered and said to them, *“Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise It up!”* Then the Jews said, *“It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and will You raise It up in three days?”* But He was speaking of the Temple of His Body. Therefore, when He had Risen from the Dead, His Disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the Word which Jesus had said.

John 2:13-22

**A2: Since He Was The Embodiment Of The Temple
It Would No Longer Be Necessary Or Rebuilt!**

Then, on another occasion, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, Jesus said to them, *“These things which you see, (The Temple & Buildings on the Temple Mount), the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.” ... So, they (disciples) asked Him, saying, “Teacher, but when will these things be?” ¹ “And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?” ² ... Jesus replied, *“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near ... For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled ... And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”**

Luke 21:5-7, 20, 22, & 24

Q: “What Did All Of Stephen’s Accusers Witness When They Looked Upon This Godly Man?”

A: That He Was A Man FULL Of Faith, God’s Holy Spirit, Wisdom, Truth, & Power!

“And all who sat in the Council (Sanhedrin), looking steadfastly at him, saw His Face as the Face of an Angel.”

Acts 6:15

LET US PRAY – PLEASE RISE

*“Oh Lord Fill Us Your People Full Of Faith In You, May We Embody You In Word & In Deed
By The Fullness Of Your Presence Living Within Us By Your Holy Spirit!*

May We Come To Study & Know Your Wisdom & Truth,

*May We Have Your Power To Perform Signs & Wonders In Your Name,
& To Testify To You Before All We Meet & All Who Come Against Us!*

May Your Abiding Presence Within Us Shine Forth Through Us

To Make Our Face Like The Holy Angels Above & Around Us,

That We May Accept Persecution For Your Name’s Sake With Grace & Dignity!

So That We May Give To Others The Gift Of The Good News Of Your Gospel,

And Thereby Set Them Free To Love & Serve You, As We Already Do!”

“AMEN!”