

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Part V: The Ministry Of The First Local And Universal Church, Acts 3:1-8:3
F. Christ's Work To VERIFY The CREDIBILITY Of His Witnesses
(Acts 6:8-15)

I. Introduction

- A. We Christians who believe in Christ are called of God to disciple the nations, Matthew 28:19-20a.
- B. However daunting such a task may seem, Christ promised to be with us in the process to make our way effective, Matthew 28:20b. His work to verify the credibility of Stephen's witness before opponents who sought to counter him and his testimony is portrayed in Acts 6:8-15 for our encouragement:

II. Christ's Work to VERIFY The CREDIBILITY Of His Witnesses, Acts 6:8-15.

- A. One of the Grecian Jews selected by the Church body and approved by the Apostles for feeding the widows in Acts 6:1-7 was Stephen, a man who was "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," Acts 6:5 ESV; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., fn. to Acts 6:5.
- B. His control by the Spirit of God led to a ministry that displayed God's grace to and through him, and in great power, for he was performing great wonders and signs among the people, Acts 6:8 NIV, ESV.
- C. However, regardless of these evidences of his leading by God, those of the synagogue of the Freedmen, men composed of Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Asia and Cilicia, disputed with Stephen, Acts 6:9 NIV.
- D. The issues about which they disputed doubtless were related to their later charges made against Stephen in the nation's ruling religious body of the Sanhedrin as listed in Acts 6:11, 13-14 (as follows):
 - 1. Noting the gracious, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in **Grecian** Jews like *himself* along with the **Hebraistic** Jews, and hearing the Gospel was for the whole world (Acts 1:8; 2:39), Stephen had discerned that the Law would pass away in that the boundaries between Jew and Gentile in the Church era would be removed, cf. Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 369; cf. Ephesians 2:11-22.
 - 2. Accordingly, Stephen had taught that the role of the Jewish temple and Moses' Law was temporary, riling the devout and legalistic Hebrews in the synagogue of the freedmen, Acts 6:11, 13-14.
- E. However, as evidence of God's help to Stephen in his ministry and words, he was able to counter their critiques, for with wisdom of the Holy Spirit, Stephen's argument successfully defeated their own, 6:10.
- F. Thus, Stephen's opponents resorted to godless misrepresentation, and the secretly stirred men up to slander him, claiming Stephen had slandered Moses and blasphemed God, Acts 6:11.
- G. This report roused the anger of the people, the elders and the scribes, and the latter proceeded to seize Stephen and bring him before the Sanhedrin, Israel's ruling religious body, Acts 6:12; *Ibid.*, p. 368.
- H. In the meeting of the Sanhedrin, false witnesses were put forth to provide partially true charges that were stated in such a way that they elicited damaging, false testimony against Stephen, Acts 6:13-14:
 - 1. Stephen's statements that the Law was temporary and the temple would be destroyed in fulfillment of Christ's predictions for Israel's rejection of Him (Luke 19:42-44) were misused against him.
 - 2. His accusers claimed Stephen had consistently spoken against the temple and the Law, implying Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple and that Moses' customs were to be godlessly changed, 6:13-14.
- I. To **counter** this **undermining charge** of his foes, the risen Lord caused Stephen's face to shine as had the face of Moses when he had been on Mount Sinai, and receive the Law of God, Acts 6:15; Exodus 34:29, 35! This event as seen by the Sanhedrin officials who gazed upon him indicated the God whose glory had affected Moses' face when He received the Law was the same God Who equipped Stephen in his ministry so that the God of Moses expected the Sanhedrin to heed Stephen's words as they had Moses' ministry!

Lesson: *God the Holy Spirit under the ministry of the risen Lord (John 16:13-14) verified the works and words of Stephen to be from the SAME GOD Who had given the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai; thus, all Israel, both its people and its religious leaders, were to HEED the Gospel of Jesus Christ!*

Application: *(1) May we trust God to VALIDATE our works and words, and so serve the Lord in FAITH that He will make us believable! (2) Even if our ministry is opposed, recall that even Stephen's ministry was unjustly countered regardless of God's evident signs, and so keep serving the Lord!*