



The Word

one to one





○ JERUSALEM

Episode 15



Stephen accused

ACTS 6:8-15

*In the previous episode:
Keeping the Word at
the centre.*

*In this episode:
Stephen finds himself
on trial for his life.*

⁸ Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.

⁹ Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) – Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia – who began to argue with Stephen.

¹⁰ But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Opposition grows...

Stephen was one of the people chosen to make sure the widows in the church were treated fairly.

He's full of God's grace and power, even doing miracles (great wonders and signs). But he's about to face huge opposition.

Where does the opposition come from?

- From religious people; a Jewish synagogue with its roots in Greek-speaking areas outside Israel (Cyrene, Alexandria). **(v. 9)**

As Stephen's name is Greek, it's likely that he knew these people.

How do their arguments end up?

- They are no match for the Holy Spirit's wisdom. Stephen can't be beaten. **(v. 10)**

But will that be the end of it?

¹¹ Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, 'We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.'

Blasphemous words: speaking in an offensive, abusive way about God. It was a serious charge – under Jewish law it deserved the death penalty.

Moses: the greatest spokesman for God (prophet) in the Old Testament. God gave him the Ten Commandments, the heart of the law that the Jews lived by.

Despite the miracles, and having lost the argument, Stephen's enemies decide to attack him another way.

What do they accuse Stephen of?

- He is said to be insulting not only Moses, but God Himself.

Notice that they have to persuade people to lie to make the accusation.

From the start, we know these charges aren't what they seem.

¹² So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.

¹³ They produced false witnesses, who testified, 'This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.'

¹⁴ For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.'

Two charges

For the first time in Acts, a crowd is stirred up to put a Christian on trial in front of the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin). (v. 12)

What charges do the false witnesses make against Stephen?

- He's against the temple (this holy place). (v. 13)
- He's against the law (the customs Moses handed down to us). (vv. 13, 14)

These two charges go right to the heart of Jewish faith – there was nothing more sacred to their religion.

For Jews, destroying the temple would separate the people from God. Attacking the law of Moses was attacking the character of God.

No wonder the crowd is angry.