

# The Wisdom and Spirit of Stephen

**Key Verses:** *“Some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.”*

*—Acts 6:9,10, New American Standard Bible*

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Acts 6:1-15**

## **STEPHEN’S LIFE AND LEG-**

**acy** are prominent in Christian history. As the fledgling church was developing its structure and government, issues arose. Our Selected Scripture passage observes that brethren of Greek origin felt that their widows were being snubbed in favor of the Hebrew widows. We realize the volatility of such confrontations. The Apostles, realizing the time and energy required to resolve this problem, instructed the church to choose “from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.” This found approval with the congregation, and one of the seven they chose was Stephen, “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.”—Acts 6:3-5, NASB

The church, numbering several thousand by this point in time, chose only seven men. We may think of them as “the cream of the crop.” Indeed, they were to be of good reputation, filled with

the spirit, and notably wise. The fact that we hear no more about the disparity of food distribution among the widows implies that the issue was speedily resolved. It is telling also that the first to be identified among the seven was Stephen.

Stephen's abilities brought him into the limelight in the emerging conflict between Jews and Christians. The account states: "Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people." (Acts 6:8, *NASB*) Our Key Verses then speak of those who rose up and argued with Stephen, but were unable to answer the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. "Then they secretly induced men to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council."—vss. 11,12, *NASB*

Often, when the great and irrefutable truths of Christian faith are presented, falsehood cannot cope with the wisdom and spirit contained in them. Stephen's challengers induced others to bear false witness against him. Jesus forewarned his disciples of such actions. "They will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute."—Luke 21:12-15, *NASB*

In fulfillment of our Lord's words, none could resist or refute Stephen's message. Because of his stand for Truth he became an early martyr for Christ. The Greek word from which we derive the English word martyr literally means "witness." This is fitting, as Stephen's example resonates with us today, encouraging trust in the Lord and reliance upon his spirit as we face our challenges. ■