

***The Power of False Witnesses?***  
***International Bible Lesson***  
**Acts 6:8–7:2**  
**Sunday, October 7, 2012**  
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*“And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6:13, 14—KJV).*

*“Then they brought in some men to tell lies about him. ‘This man,’ they said, ‘is always talking against our sacred Temple and the Law of Moses. We heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will tear down the Temple and change all the customs which have come down to us from Moses!’” (Acts 6:13, 14—GNB).*

*“They set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us’” (Acts 6:13, 14—NRSV).*

When some people cannot win a debate or overcome “the wisdom and the Spirit” with which the other person speaks, they sometimes resort to telling lies and misrepresenting the ideas of the other person (Acts 6:10). The first Christian martyr, Stephen, suffered from the intentional deception of some religious leaders, and it cost him his life. The same thing happened to Jesus. When the

religious leaders tried Jesus, “many false witnesses came forward” (Matthew 26:60).

Stephen proclaimed the message of Jesus with power (and did so once again before they stoned him to death); therefore, his accusers lied about him and the teachings of the Christian church. Ignoring the fact that Christians continued to worship God in the temple, they accused them of speaking against the temple and saying Jesus would destroy the temple. However, Jesus spoke of the religious leaders destroying His body when He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John explained that when Jesus spoke about destroying “the temple,” He was “speaking of the temple of his body” (John 2:19-21). Three days after Jesus died on the cross, He raised up “the temple,” His body. Jesus did not change the Law of Moses, but showed how current religious customs distorted the Law of Moses. Jesus actually taught, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

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## **Thinking Further**

1. What qualities did the Apostles tell the people to look for when they evaluated those around them and chose the first deacons for the church?
2. What qualities do churches look for when they choose leaders today?
3. What made Stephen an exceptional leader?

4. What are some of the problems that can occur when people misrepresent the ideas or teachings of others?

5. Why do you think the Apostles, Stephen, and others in the New Testament Church continued to teach about Jesus even in the face of opposition that might lead to imprisonment and death?

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