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December 17, 2023

## ACTS 6

### The Seven Chosen to Serve

[\(1 Timothy 3:8-13\)](#)

**1And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.**

We see that someone is complaining about the treatment of the widows, but who? And we see that Peter uses the name Hebrew and not Jews, or Christians; and Grecians not Hellenists, why is that?

To set the stage here, let's start with who are the "Grecians".

According to Strong's Concordance:

*"Phonetic Spelling: (hel-lay-nis-tace')*

*Definition: a Hellenist (Greek-speaking Jew)*

*Usage: a Hellenist, Grecian Jew, a Greek-speaking Jew, that is one who can speak Greek only and not Hebrew (or Aramaic)."*

In some translations you will see the term "Hellenist or Hellenistic" as opposed to Grecians. It simply means that these were Jewish people by birth, but they spoke Greek. The term Hellenist is a

reference to a time in history from Alexander the Great 330 BC to the death of Cleopatra VII 30 BC. I could find no better explanation of the word. However, a site called “my Jewish History” has quite a lot to say about the Hellenists.

<https://www.jewishhistory.org/the-hell-in-hellenism/>

If you read from this site called “my Jewish History” you will see a much more in-depth revelation as to the Hellenists and much more derogatory tale of the division between the Jews and the Hellenists as this letter of Acts was written.

According to this site “my Jewish History” after the death of Alexander the Great the Greek conquered lands were divided into two parts, the Northern Kingdom (Turkey, Syria including Greece and Asia) under Seleucus and the Southern Kingdom (Egypt, Africa) under Ptolemy. All was well when the two Greek kingdoms were at peace but being between the two when war broke out was not good.

Many Jews preferred and were enamored with the Egyptian Greek kingdom due to their captivity there years before.

Alexandria was home to massive Jewish synagogues as well as an exact replica of the lost Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. One synagogue in Alexandria was so massive that it sat almost 10,000

people. As to the temple built in Alexandria the priests carried on the animal sacrifices in accordance with the law. Only problem is that this temple was not authorized by God and was not in the only place the Temple was allowed to be; Jerusalem.

The Jews started shunning their own heritage as back woods, small time history and embraced the Greek culture. As it is put in “my Jewish Learning” the Jews set out to “out Greek the Greeks”. They eventually abandoned all Jewish customs and adopted Greek gods and practices. It is said that the Jews always having to prove themselves threw themselves into whatever they were attempting to do. It got so bad trying to be Greek that many Jewish males would undergo painful reattachment of the foreskin. The reason being that the Greek culture competed in sporting events in the nude. So, Jews were easily identified and felt they had to overcome that problem.

I am going to quote from this “my Jewish Learning” document.

*“The Jews in Alexandria were so influential that the Greek rulers of the Ptolemaic empire became very interested in Jewish customs, ideas and behavior. Consequently, the emperor of the southern kingdom, Ptolemy,[1] commissioned the first translation of the Torah into a foreign language: Greek.*

*Until then, the Torah had only appeared in its original Hebrew, and it remained a sealed book. However, from the second century BCE on the Torah became the open book for the world, which it is*

*today. Only the Oral Law — the transmission and interpretation of the Torah, which later became written down and called the Talmud – would remain a “sealed book.”*

*The Talmud (Megillah 9b) tells how Ptolemy placed 72 Jewish scholars in different rooms and told them to translate the Torah. In miraculous fashion the 72 translations all matched each other. In Greek, the translation became known as the Septuagint, which means “the 70” in reference to the amount of scholars who translated it. This is the basic translation of the Bible that much of the non-Jewish world has today.”*

I should say that in “my Jewish Learning” it does not speak highly of the King James Version of the Bible, claiming translation problems between languages: Hebrew, to Greek, Greek to Latin and Latin to English. One word they seem upset about is speaking of the Virgin Mary, the King James or Latin refers to Mary as a “young girl” instead of a “virgin girl” apparently the same word in Latin. I have always used the KJV and never had any issue with understanding that Mary was young and a virgin when pregnant with Christ.

### **Back to the issue in our study Vs 1.**

The issue of course is not the language but the complaining of these Greek speaking Jews about how the widows were being left out by the disciples as they carried out the ministries. Even though called murmuring IE: grumble, it was a valid concern. We had seen that as this group of Believers had grown, they had sold

their possessions and were living communally, sharing all they had with the group.

As a side note communal living has taken on a bad aura over the years for a number of reasons. We saw this within communism/socialism of old and socialist hippy type living in the 60's and even recent years. The idea is not dead and is still being promoted as socialist and today's youth can do it right unlike any before who have tried it. It was a lie then and a lie today, communism/socialism is about separating the very wealthy from the rest of the population. The wealthy holding all power over the masses.

The problem with communism/socialism or collectivism is that there is always someone that wants more and usually becomes a dictator. With "hippy" type socialist communal living there were no moral standards, no self-imposed health or cleanliness standards as to who was sleeping with who and of course the drug culture. It was doomed from the start. All of that has given the Godly ideal of communal living a poor name.

Communal living under the rulership of Christ is and will be perfect, but NEVER under man's rule or leadership.

Back to verse 1, the term Hebrew is used and according to Strong's Concordance:

*"Phonetic Spelling: (heb-rah'-yos)*

*Definition: a Hebrew or Jew*

*Usage: a Hebrew, particularly one who speaks Hebrew (Aramaic)."*

The word "Hebrew" which was what the 12 tribes were known as when they entered Egypt after leaving the Promised land of Canaan due to a famine. The word Hebrew is believed to come from the patriarch Eber was the great-grandson of Shem the son of Noah. Eber in Hebrew means to "crossover". The word "Hebrew" was first used in connection with Abraham in Genesis 14.

***Genesis 14:13* And there came one that had escaped, and told **Abram the Hebrew**; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. (emphasis mine)**

Remember the etymology of the word Hebrew goes back to Eber which means to crossover. When Abraham left the land of Ur, he likely crossed over the Euphrates and the River Jordan while enroute to the Promised Land. His first stop was in Haran until his father died at around 205 years old.

Back to our study;

**2Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.**

The first order of business for this communal living was to establish priorities. The Apostles and Disciples were all called to share the Good News to the world. That did not leave much time for the “home front” duties so they determined to establish a next level of leadership. Based on the whole council of God it appears God led them in this manner of dealing with growth in the Believers (Church). A systematic approach to overseeing the Works God gave man.

**3Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.**

When establishing this new level of leadership again a list of priorities was established to find certain qualities within this new leadership level.

First, they determined the number of these brethren to be 7. The 7 must have the following qualities. Why 7? Again, if they are being led by God, God uses that number to reference “completeness”. Which also means unity, totality. So again, the full council of God always points toward a unity of Belief and Believers with Christ.

The criteria for being chosen was:

Honest report

Full of the Holy Ghost

Wisdom

**4But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**

The leadership established their own priorities to be “prayer and ministry of the word”. God’s direction to the apostles.

**5And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.**

The meaning of each name of these chosen are:

Stephen; crown

Prochorus: leader of the dance

Nicanor: conqueror

Timon: castigate -chastise

Parmenas: constant

Nicholas: victorious



All these names together forming a sentence may mean something like this. The only reason I did this is that sometimes when God has a list of names it is really a hidden message but it has to comport with the whole council of God.

***The leader of the dance who wears the crown is true and constant. He is the conqueror who has victory over Satan and will castigate evil. (my thoughts not Biblically verified)***

The Believers seemed pleased with the idea and the selection. God's direction to these Believers settled well with them.

**7And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.**

God said His word would not return void.

***Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.***

God's Word rules creation and all that is in the universe both seen and unseen.

***Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.***

In this case the Word of God increased, meaning the ability to share the Good News increased. Within the realm of influence that the Word of God had, it also included Jewish Priests. It does

not tell us exactly who or what station they had in Judaism, suffice it to say that their hearts were pricked by the Word of God. His Grace and Mercy and Salvation were delivered and received.

### **Stephen Arrested**

**8And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.**

Stephen was a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus, walking in righteousness and filled with gifts from the Holy Spirit that were manifested in miracles.

**9Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.**

These are predominately of geographical places. Libertina is a city in North Africa, Cyrene is a city in Africa, Alexandria is in Egypt, Cilicia is in Asia Minor north of Cyprus. Tarsus where Paul was from is near Cilicia, so when Paul visited Jerusalem he would like see many of these folks. Remember all these area mentioned were under Greek Control for some time.

There were estimated to be over 800 Synagogues in Jerusalem at this time. There were Jews from a large part of the former Greek Empires both North and South. Many due to language or culture

from where they had been living ended up doing what we see today in America; they enclaved together.

One of these enclaves were from the area of Tarsus part of the old Northern Greek empire under Seleucids, as we had said where Paul was from. Paul was about to become a big problem for the Believers and the anger may well have started right in one of these Synagogues. The Jews were angry over a number of things, being pushed around by a number of conquering kingdoms. They were extremely sensitive to anything that was impacting their Jewish lifestyle and religion. Christianity was doing that in a big way.

**10And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.**

When the Truth cannot be refuted, usually anger takes over. We see it today all throughout country where anger is on full display to drown out the Truth.

God told us that to have wisdom one must start with Fear of the Lord. In vs “**10And they were not able to resist the wisdom”**

**Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

They could not deny the Truth that Stephen was speaking so in order to save face they resorted to violence.

**11Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against God*.**

A similar tactic was used against our Lord Jesus Christ in that they brought liars in and told lies about Jesus. The same tactic was used here.

**12And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council, 13And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:**

Satan is a master at taking a small bit of truth and attaching it to a lie. That is what they did here. Jesus did indeed say that the temple would be destroyed but He spoke of Himself. Jesus never said that He would destroy anything but that it would be destroyed. The fact is that the law was fulfilled the offering of animal sacrifices was at an end for this time. Under Christ we are under Grace not the Law.

**14For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.**

***John 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.***

Satan the “thief” just puts lies into man’s head and man is stupid enough to say whatever it is. Steal, kill and destroy.

***John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.***

**15And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.**

There is no last word from any man, the last word or last action always belongs to God. He is God. There lying eyes could see but their hearts could not understand.