

Chapter Six

Chapter 6

- Chapter 6 begins with the description of an issue between two camps of Jews, the Hellenists, or Greek speaking Jews, and the Hebrews, referring to the Hebrew speaking Jews. Both of the groups were Jewish. The primary differences were due to cultural and language differences rather than ethnicity. It is not an absolute separation on the basis of language, however. Many of the Hellenist Jews spoke Hebrew and many of the Hebrew Jews spoke Greek.
 - Hellenist Jews tended towards assimilation with Greek thought and even attempted to blend Greek philosophical ideas with the Torah. Examples here are Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus.
 - Hebraic Jews were far more traditional in terms of Torah observance and interpretation. The Greek philosophical structures and cultural practices were

rejected and considered anathema by the Hebraic Jews. It is of note that the Apostle Paul was trained as a Pharisee under Gamliel and not only was fluent in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek but learned much about Greek culture and philosophy. The need for such training for a Pharisee was undoubtedly to be able to effectively interact with the Roman government. Later in his writings we see Paul quoting Greek philosophers and poets such as Aratus and Epimenides (Titus 1:12) and Meander (1 Cor 15:33).

- As we recall from chapter 2, there was a large influx of Jews from all over for the festival of Shavuot. In response to their new-found faith in Messiah, they chose to stay in Jerusalem, although they were not financially prepared to do so. There was, therefore, a significant need for increasing support. The leadership responded by appointing dedicated, godly men to serve the needs of the growing congregation.
 - As listed in verse 3, what were the qualifications for these servants?
 - As noted in verse 4, what was the desired outcome for this allocation of resources?

- According to verse 5, how did this plan appeal to the whole multitude?
- According to verse 7, was their plan effective?
- What do you make of the statement that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"?
- How does verse 8 describe Stephen?
- Opposition to Stephen's teaching soon arose from within the synagogue of "The Libertines", also called the "Freedmen" or "Freed Slaves". This was a congregation of Jews who had been emancipated from Roman slavery. This included Jews from Cilicia so it may have been the congregation that Paul had attended, being from Tarsus. Perhaps Paul was in attendance during Stephen's teaching and was the source of his anger against this movement.
- What does verse 10 indicate about Stephen's responses?
 - Would we do as well under pressure?
 - How sharp do we keep our sword of apologetics?

- Are we prepared, like Stephen, to obey 1 Peter 3:15 that says, "Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with humility and fear"?
- Verses 11 and 12 describes the methodology and ethic behind the opposition party. Do you think this describes an honest debate over the facts or something else?
- Verses 13 and 14 make a critically important statement regarding these so-called witnesses. Were these witnesses true or false?
- Why is it important to recognize that the testimony of these witnesses was false?
- The false witnesses alleged that Stephen was guilty of the following:
 - Blasphemy against Moses (Moses = Torah)
 - Blasphemy against God
 - Spoke against the Temple
 - Spoke against the Torah

- Yeshua will destroy the Temple
- Yeshua will change the customs of Moses (Torah)
- Recalling that the testimony of the witnesses was FALSE, what does it mean when we read modern commentary from theologians that appears to agree with the false witnesses more than with Stephen?
- Verse 15 describes the countenance of Stephen as he is hauled before the Sanhedrin. How do you account for this? How does verse 3 aid in your understanding?
- How do you think you would do in a similar circumstance?