

ACTS 6 vs 1

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Luke, the beloved physician, what an interesting person he must have been. The renowned archaeologist Sir William Ramsey wrote of him: Luke is a historian of the first rank. Not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy... but he should be placed along with the very greatest of historians. Luke has been compared with the Greek historian, Thucydides, who is often called: the father of scientific history... because of his strict standards of evidence gathering and analysis. Luke was not an eye-witness to Christ; but he was a disciple of Paul. Luke wrote:

¹ And in those days, when the number of the disciples multiplied / Luke writes of the earliest days of the church, after Jesus ascended, and the Spirit was given; **mathetes**; this word is used 160 times Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; 78 times in John's book; 28 times in the book of Acts, and then no longer appears in the NT, replaced with: saints, and other endearing words. Luke tells us about those doing the math, life-long learners... struggling to be orderly, putting it all together piece by piece; work out their salvation with fear and trembling with the Spirit's help.

there arose a complaint by the Grecians against the Hebrews / in Greek: hellenistes; here, Luke reminds us... the early church, with all its shared learning to experience... first grew under Greek influence and language, rather than by the influence and language of the strangers of Rome: a fact... so hard to remember; yet a truth too difficult to ignore.

in Greek: hebraios, the locals; the huge multitude of those who abandoned the priesthood, who were obedient to the faith. Luke tells us, the unorthodox, those who grew up outside legalistic traditions... were disagreeing with the locals.

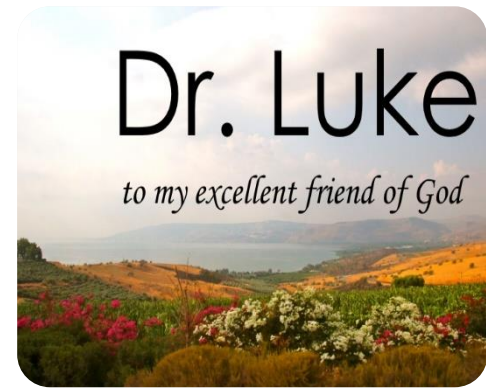
It is interesting: opening the classic Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary 1880s, my thoughts were halted as I waded through the brief comment: **the Grecians** -- the Greek-speaking Jews, mostly born in the provinces, **the Hebrews** -- those Jews of Judah born in Judea who used their native tongue, and tended to look down on the "Grecians" as an inferior class. Okay! Not difficult to understand. Yet, I noticed... those perpetuating the best: traditions of men... usually do so beginning with those who want to demonstrate their grand expertise. So, I opened up several Bibles to see what they said; we read:

The NIV, the Grecian Jews... against the Hebraic Jews.

The ASV, the Grecian Jews...

The TCNT, the Greek-speaking Jews... against the Native Jews.

The NASB, the Hellenistic Jews... against the native Hebrews -- NASB should have eliminated their italics... and it would have been best.



My problem with inserting the word: Jews... is simple: instead of blaming the Jews... Jesus when He first called his disciples said, But go rather to the house of Israel... not merely to the house of Judah who were suffocating in their traditions; and then, I remember... most people have no idea what the prophet Isaiah wrote when he said: **to both of the houses of Israel**; Isaiah says there are 2 houses; the same word used when we read about animals entering into Noah's Ark... **two** by **two** -- same word! -- **Isaiah 8:14**

So, on this and similar verses... I will go with the clarity of the King James Version,

Grecians complaining against Hebrews / Hellenistes disagreeing with Hebraios;

because their widows were neglected

in the daily distribution / diakonia. Apparently, women who no longer had the support of husbands, were being over-looked... in the daily services provided among the church Jesus is building: perhaps, at the tables... or maybe, in the feeding of Jesus' sheep. Were they not being fed? **Or** were they not being adequately fed the word... in their language? And they were starving for the Good News!

² Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them / probably those 12... although by this time, I'm sure Thomas was heading to India; and Bartholomew and Thaddeus were on their way to Armenia and Russia; the 12 whoever they were gathered together the growing number following the Lord;

and said, It makes no sense that we should give up preaching the word of God, to serve tables / latreuo, this tradition was no longer needed, fulfilled in Christ. So just like Paul, Luke took this word and found new application. The early church was concerned about waiting on the Word of the Lord, in love for God our Father; and waiting on tables, too in love for one another. Now, others... needed to help.

³ For this reason brothers and sisters, look among you for seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom who we may appoint to this need / they were relying on the Spirit of the Lord; rather than full of themselves; to be responsible for this job.

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

⁵ And the saying pleased the entire multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch / Luke tells us Stephen was a man full of what pleases God, and fully reliant on the Spirit who brings us to remember all Jesus said: and Luke points out that these are the names of Hellenistic men, as the Gospel reaches out to the Gentile nations:

⁶ whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them / these 7 men were brought before the church, and like John Wycliffe pointed out: having done all they knew to do... observing the words of life; and asking the Lord to direct their paths. Having done all, then those maturing in faith lay hands on newly selected individuals, and publicly identify with the younger, claiming the Lord Jesus alone will guide and prosper them on the Way,

⁷ So the word of God spread; and the number of disciples greatly multiplied in **Jerusalem** / wherever the powerful word of God, like a seed... takes root and grows... so likewise, the number of life-long learners continue to grow;

and a large group of the priests were obedient to the faith / leaving their old, tired traditions, no matter how quaint the customs seemed; certainly, no matter how religious and holy the customs appeared ... most likely discarding their goofy garments and gowns, too.

⁸ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people / filled with what pleases God, empowered by His grace; so nothing about Stephen reeked; Jesus said, Greater things will some do; and here is evidence Jesus was not just addressing the first 12 disciples; and those greater things will be as different and varied as all the individuals the Lord Jesus welcomes into the family of His Father, where He is head, and all of us are so individually unlike Him in many ways! But don't fall out of the saddle! Jesus can handle those differences; the Lord loves variety those full of faith.

⁹ Then opposition arose from some of the synagogue of the liberated / now, is this an example of a group of foreigner Jewish people gathering to form a synagogue? The old law required a minimum of 10 men -- some say, 10 families... before they form a worship center for its dual purpose: 1. to educate the young; and 2. to gather to hear the reading of the Torah and the prophets. It seems, this meeting place in Jerusalem drew a crowd of: freed men, progressives, and other high-society liberals,

and Cyrenians and Alexandrians and of them of Cilicia and of Asia Minor / those from Cyrene, the chief city of Libya, northern Africa, / from Alexandria, capital of Egypt: second most important city in the roman empire; from the roman province adjacent to Syria, Tarsus was a principle city; it is where Paul was born; Ephesus was the capital of western Asia Minor,

and they began to argue with Stephen.

¹⁰ But they were unable to stand against his wisdom and the Spirit by whom he spoke.

¹¹ So they secretly persuaded some to say, We heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.

¹² And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council / the religious insiders always do that; John in the Revelation says, they will stir up and cause division... until the end when Jesus comes, so expect it. So this is same religious crowd who hated the Lord Jesus; and if they hated the Lord, they will hate His followers also; they were troublemakers who seized Stephen, and took him to the Sanhedrin for an inquisition, for a shake down. Things were rapidly deteriorating in Jerusalem.

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¹³ And set up false witnesses, who said, **This** man never stops to speak blasphemous words / verified by all the news media outlets...

against **this** holy place and the law / what holy place? who is speaking blasphemously; or, at the least very presumptuously? The word is: **topos**, a desert place; as for their descriptor: **holy**... I doubt it. Matthew 23 records the more refined verdict given by Jesus, in his last words to the religious leaders, Jesus said: **Your house is left for you desolate!** not His Father's house, Stephen knew what Jesus said,

¹⁴ For we have heard him say, that **this** Jesus of Nazareth will destroy **this** place / John 2 records a dialogue with those not paying attention. Jesus said, destroy this naos... and He was speaking about the naos of His body,

and change the customs that Moses handed down to us / **No!** the religious leaders already had done an excellent job ignoring Moses, creating a burdensome legalistic system, destroying their community; while replacing the word of the LORD... who had called them and had promises for them; replacing them with their words.

¹⁵ And all who sat in the Sanhedrin, looked intently at him, and saw his face was like the face of an angel.

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