

Who Were The “Freedmen” of Acts 6:9?

by Wayne Goff

“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke” ~ Acts 6:8-10

“Freedmen” (Greek, Libertinos)

Strong’s Concordance of the Bible tells us that these men were “**1:** one who has been liberated from slavery, a freedman, or the son of a freed man. **2:** Libertine, denotes Jews (according to Philo) who’d been made captives of the Romans under Pompey but were afterwards set free: and who although they had fixed their abode in Rome, had built at their own expense a synagogue at Jerusalem which they frequented when in that city. The name **Libertines** adhered to them to distinguish them from free born Jews who had subsequently taken up their residence at Rome. Evidence seems to have been discovered of the existence of a ‘synagogue of the Libertines’ at Pompeii.”

Luke points out in the book of **Acts** that these particular “Freedmen” were from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia. Undoubtedly these were dedicated, knowledgeable and influential Jews from these locations who staunchly defended the Jewish nation and Jewish customs. Unfortunately, like their Jewish counterparts who murdered Jesus Christ, these Freedmen could not “**resist the wisdom and Spirit**” by which Stephen spoke concerning Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. In other words, they were fighting against God and not Stephen!

Why Their Dishonesty?

The reaction of the Freedmen to Stephen’s inspired testimony and miracles (**Acts 6:8-9**) was to “**secretly induce**” men to accuse Stephen of blasphemy, and to stir up the people, the elders, and the scribes (**Acts 6:11-12**). We see people today doing the same thing in order to promote their unreasonable, illogical and sometimes illegal “agendas” for political purposes. So why did these Freedmen do this?

We can only conclude that when faced with **Divine Facts** of the gospel they were unwilling to make the **transition** from the Jewish Nation and Temple to the **spiritual** Messiahship of Jesus Christ and the New Testament Kingdom or Church! Admittedly that would be a difficult thing to comprehend and do, but God gave them sufficient information and evidence to make the change. And while these Freedmen then decided to “do evil that good(?) may come” there were others like the “**great many**” priests who became “**obedient to the faith**” (**Acts 6:7**) who did not!

The apostle Peter later wrote of such Jews who practiced a Jewish religion that *claimed* to be founded in the Law of Moses, but which had, in fact, become corrupted by human doctrine. “**Knowing that you were not redeemed ... from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ...**” (**1 Peter 1:18**). Jesus had previously accused these Jewish leaders of “**teaching as doctrines the commandments of men**” (**Matt. 15:9**). So those who refused to see the Law of Moses and the nation of Israel as the **forerunners** of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and the Gospel (see **Acts 8:12**) chose rather to continue promoting their own nation, religion and agenda – even to the point of murdering Stephen!

The apostle Paul later explained to those who still promoted Judaism over Christianity: “**What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator**” (**Galatians 3:19**). There are good people today who try to follow both the Old Law and the New Covenant, but they do so ignorant of the truth taught. Teach them better, and pray that when they learn the truth they will believe and obey it!

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