



Acts Chapter 6

Lets quickly recap what we learned last week, and then we'll dive into Acts chapter 6.

We talked about the two Christian Gods of Christianity that are found throughout many different denominational charters today. Those who teach and preach that their Jesus is the new God, and that the God of the Old Testament is out of date and primarily done away with.

They will teach and preach that the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob is now null and void and all of his laws, commandments, precepts and appointments are all done away with and nailed to some tree somewhere so we don't have to bother with them.

They will wrongly teach that their new man made, man created, man fabricated holidays, festivals, rituals and myths are all you have to keep, and that Gods commandments, precepts, Sabbaths, and his appointments are all done away with. Even though we know that that is not at all what Yahshua or Paul or any of the Apostles ever taught.

We talked about 2nd Timothy 4:3 where we were warned:

2Ti 4:3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,
2Ti 4:4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

We talked about what our Messiah said in Matthew 15:8 when he said that people were honoring him with their lips but their heart was far from him because they were teaching the doctrines and commandments of men.

We talked about Romans 13 one of the most famous scriptures of the Bible, and how Hitler himself used this very scripture out of context to keep the people under the thumb of his Nazi henchmen.

We talked about civil disobedience, and how it is not only acceptable when the laws of God are overwritten by men, but that it is expected of us as Gods family to stand up and be strong when it comes to the wickedness of men who would shake their fist in the face of God our Father and claim his authority for themselves.

And we saw first hand how Peter and John and the Apostles had indulged in civil disobedience time and time again refusing to obey men rather than God. And we saw how they were jailed and beaten and flogged by men for not obeying their governmental leadership.

The Apostles knew better than to obey the commandments of men over the commandments of God the Father, and they rejoiced over being found worthy to be jailed and beaten for their obedience to God, and their Savior.

So if you missed us last week and all of this sounds strange to you, we invite you to go back and watch our study of the 5th Chapter of the book of Acts last week.

With that being said.. lets move on into Acts chapter 6

Acts Chapter 6:

Lets go ahead and read Acts Chapter 6:

Act 6:1 Around this time, when the number of talmidim was growing, the Greek-speaking Jews began complaining against those who spoke Hebrew that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.

Act 6:2 So the Twelve called a general meeting of the talmidim and said, "It isn't appropriate that we should neglect the Word of God in order to serve tables.

Act 6:3 Brothers, choose seven men from among yourselves who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will appoint them to be in charge of this important matter,

Act 6:4 but we ourselves will give our full attention to praying and to serving the Word."

Act 6:5 What they said was agreeable to the whole gathering. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Ruach HaKodesh, Philip, Prochoros, Nikanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicholas, who was a proselyte from Antioch.

Act 6:6 They presented these men to the emissaries, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Act 6:7 So the word of God continued to spread. The number of talmidim in Yerushalayim increased rapidly, and a large crowd of cohanim were becoming obedient to the faith.

Act 6:8 Now Stephen, full of grace and power, performed great miracles and signs among the people.

Act 6:9 But opposition arose from members of the Synagogue of the Freed Slaves (as it was called), composed of Cyrenians, Alexandrians and people from Cilicia and the province of Asia. They argued with Stephen,

Act 6:10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke.

Act 6:11 So they secretly persuaded some men to allege, "We heard him speak blasphemously against Moshe and against God."

Act 6:12 They stirred up the people, as well as the elders and the Torah-teachers; so they came

and arrested him and led him before the Sanhedrin.

Act 6:13 There they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops speaking against this holy place and against the Torah;

Act 6:14 for we have heard him say that Yeshua from Natzeret will destroy this place and will change the customs Moshe handed down to us."

Act 6:15 Everyone sitting in the Sanhedrin stared at Stephen and saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

The Clash of Cultures!

Now before we get to far ahead... I want us to take notice of the cultural differences that we begin to see in the first few verses of Chapter 6.

What was the immediate problem that we see right off the bat? It was that some of the community seemed to be experiencing a favoritism for the Hebrew speaking Jewish widows. So the talmidim (Apostles) gathered in a meeting to put this idea of favoritism to rest, and they chose 7 different men to be in charge of feeding and distribution so that everyone would be taken care of equally.

And there's something else that I want us to see here in how they solved this problem. Notice that all 7 of the men they chose all had Greek names. Nicholas was Gentile by birth and had been living in Antioch in Syria, but he had converted to Judaism, so all 7 of these men were most likely Hellenists, which meant that they were a mixture of Greeks and Israelite's that spoke the Greek language.

Hebrews on the other hand spoke either Hebrew or Aramaic which is closely related to the Hebrew language. So once again we can see a clear distinction between cultures, and this is important to understand as we move forward.

One of the most important things to understand if we're going to attempt to understand the scriptures as they were written is the battle that was going on between not just the cultures of that day, but also the different fractions of Judaism and the different fractions of Jewish believers back in that time period, and we'll cover this more in detail as we move forward here this evening.

We have the Israelites of the despota who were originally from the Northern Kingdom, and who were divorced from God and were in the process of being scattered into the four corners of the Earth. These Israelite's who were known as the "Lost Sheep of Israel".

And these Israelites had all but lost their faith in the one true God of Abraham Issac, and Jacob. Many of which had already learned to become gentiles and how to live in a gentile world, and

then we had the Holy Land Jews who had returned to the promised land and who had kept the Torah with them but who had written their own man made laws over top of what was commanded in the Torah, and this is why Yahshua had so much contention with them through out his life, and why he said... *“this people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me, teaching the doctrines of men”*.

And in-between all of this we have the Goyim (Gentiles) who were into all kinds of Hellenistic Paganism and everything from the worship of angels, to the worship of idols, and the sun, moon and stars. They were into the higher thinking of mans Platonism, and Aristotle, and Socrates, and the Greek gods of Zeus and Hermes, and the goddess Diana, and so on and so fourth.

And we even see many of these people believed that Paul and Barnabas were the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes, and they even began to make sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas because they thought that they were Zeus and Hermes in the flesh.

Act 14:11 When the crowds saw what Sha'ul had done, they began to shout in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the form of men!"

Act 14:12 They began calling Bar-Nabba "Zeus" and Sha'ul "Hermes," since he did most of the talking;

Act 14:13 and the priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates, intending to offer a sacrifice to them with the people.

So my point is that there was a real mixed bag of cultures that were literally colliding with the Gospel message of Yahshua that the Apostles were trying to teach and preach. And not everyone was eager to hear this new Gospel Message, and even those who were, were prone to at least in part... fall back into some of their old pagan ways, and began mixing their old pagan traditions and rituals with Christianity, and we'll see more examples of this as we move throughout the New Testament writings.

And this is not just true of just the Gentiles but also of the Jews. Many of the die hard Torah believing Jews who were zealous for the letter of the Law had a hard time understanding the Gospel message that the Apostles were trying to deliver to them, and we'll see this more and more as we venture through not only the book of Acts but all through the Brit Hadasha (New Testament).

Now with that being said.. if we look at verse 7 we can clearly see that a large crowd of Jewish Priests were being converted as well, and this should not surprise us because these “Cohanim” (Priests) new the Torah well and many of them had committed the Torah to memory. So how much more easily would it have been for them to know and understand who their Messiah really was, and this reminds me of what Paul said in the book of Romans:

Rom 11:24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary

to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

We have to remember that a lot of these cultural battles were also with in the ranks of the Jews themselves. Many of the Jewish leadership did convert and become believers, however... many of them were nothing more than spy's trying to spy out the new churches that the Apostles were planting and if you've been studying the book of Galatians with us over the past few weeks on our "7th Day Sabbath" broadcast you're already aware of these Jewish spy's were that came from the "circumcision group" that we find in Acts chapter 15, but that's another story.

As we've said many times.. ones you sit down and explain true Christianity with a Jewish person.. that Jewish person often times will come to the truth of who their Messiah really is. The problem is that most of the Jews in Israel think that Catholicism is Christianity. And Catholicism is not Christianity. Catholicism is Catholicism. It is it's own religion.

They have their own man made, man created, man fabricated holidays, Sabbaths, rituals, and myths that they keep none of which are sanctified, or ordained by God or Scripture. Catholicism and most of her protestant daughter churches are teaching and preaching "The Other Jesus" that Paul preaches against in 2nd Corinthians:

2Co 11:4 For if someone comes and tells you about some other Yeshua than the one we told you about, or if you receive a spirit different from the one you received or accept some so-called "good news" different from the Good News you already accepted, you bear with him well enough!

2Co 11:5 For I don't consider myself in any way inferior to these "super-emissaries."

2Co 11:6 I may not be a skilled speaker, but I do have the knowledge; anyhow, we have made this clear to you in every way and in every circumstance.

So once again we see this warning from Paul in 2nd Corinthians that try's to warn us about what was already happening in his day.. and this is exactly what was happening, not just in Paul's time but also in our time, and this is why most Jews won't have anything to do with Christianity, because they think Christianity is Catholicism and it's not. The Roman Catholic Church Murdered millions of true Christians who believed in scripture only, and they still condemn us as heretics to this very day.

Once a true Christian sits down with a Jewish person and truly explains that their Messiah did not come to abolish or do away with the prophets or the Law, and that his laws, commandments, precepts, and appointments still stand.. this opens the door of truth for them to walk through and many of them are walking through that door of truth even as we speak.

But back in Peter and the Apostles time it was even easier to convince a Jew who their Messiah was because true Christianity was just then being born right in front of them. Remember what

was the original title of the book of Acts and the book of Luke? “The History of Christian Origins”, and that's exactly what we're reading from. So once again.. many of the Jewish Priests themselves were becoming believers according to Acts chapter 5 verse 7.

The Persecution of Stephen:

Now as we move on to verse 8 we see a pivotal moment here where Stephen become the focus of attention, and this is the same Stephen that we see in verse 5 who was noted as being “full of faith and the Ruach Hakodesh”, and if we move down into verse 8 we're told that Stephen was so full of faith and the Ruach Hakodesh that he began to do miracles, and signs among the people.

And so what do you think happens next? It's pretty easy to guess as we read down into verse 9 that the same Jewish Pharisees and Scribes that jailed and flogged Peter and John..didn't like Stephen taking away from their authority either.. and so as soon as they realized that Stephen was a believer in Yahshua and that his knowledge was far superior to theirs.. they sought to kill him just like they did our Messiah, and just like they wanted to do to Peter and John before Gamliel talked them out of it, and warned them that if they fought against these men.. they may be found guilty of fighting against God.

And again my friends these are the same men that we've been studying who according to Torah, really had no authority at all.. they were self proclaimed frauds parading around like they had some kind of authority but according to Torah.. but in reality.. they were really nothing but a bunch of men anointed by men.

Remember the High Priest according to the Levitical law had to be in the blood line of Aaron, and since the Macabean revolt back in 640bc they had over run the blood line of Aaron and replaced the High Priest with their own self appointed High Priest completely ignoring the Levitical law passed down through Moses. They had set this hole governmental system up by their own authority, and this is why our Messiah says this in Revelation 3:9 as he's talking to the Church at Philadelphia:

Rev 3:8 "I know what you are doing. Look, I have put in front of you an open door, and no one can shut it. I know that you have but little power, yet you have obeyed my message and have not disowned me.

Rev 3:9 Here, I will give you some from the synagogue of the Adversary, those who call themselves Jews but aren't—on the contrary, they are lying—see, I will cause them to come and prostrate themselves at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 Because you did obey my message about persevering, I will keep you from the time of trial coming upon the whole world to put the people living on earth to the test.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon; hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your

crown.

Anointed by themselves they were puffed up and full of vanity and self loathing, and they couldn't stand anyone who threatened their self created authority. And if you think that's bad.. all we need to do is look around today in our time.. and we can find the exact same spirit of deception alive and well today at work in today's Christian denominational charters of men.. almost all of them are anointed by the teachings of men, but not anointed by God. Teaching and preaching things not found anywhere in scripture.

So as we see these men once again conspiring against Stephen I just want us to keep these things in mind so that we are well aware of who these so called men of authority were.. and more importantly.. who they were not.

THE BIRTH OF THE SYNAGOGUES:

Now before we get to far ahead I want us to understand this idea of “Synagogues”. What exactly was a “Synagogue” and where did these “Synagogues” come from?

About 3 centuries leading up to New Testament times the “Synagogue” was something very different from the Temple. While the Priests and the Levites were attached to the Temple.. all other Jews were part of the Synagogue, and the other Jews who were part of the Synagogue had limited contact with the Temple depending on how far away they lived from it.

The first thing that we need to understand is that during the time of Yahshua and the Apostles the Jews were divided up into three main religious groups, you might even call them denominations somewhat like we have today.

They were called the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. Aside from the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes there was a fourth group of religious men called the Samaritans, and these Samaritans called themselves Jews, and they also claimed the law of Moses but by design they were disconnected from Jerusalem and the Temple, and this group reaches back to the time of King Jeroboam back around 925BC.

The Samaritans were an interesting people who set up their own Temple at Mount Gerizim in Samaria, and they started their own Priesthood and they shunned the Temple and the Priesthood in Jerusalem. They had their own version of the Torah, which was modified in key places in order to accommodate their own belief system (sound familiar?).

The Samaritans did consist of a few of the 10 tribes of Israel who were part of the despora of the Northern Kingdom but not all of them were from the 10 tribes of Israel. And it's interesting

to note that the Jews living in Jerusalem who were associated with the Temple and the Synagogues, shunned the Samaritans because the Samaritans would not submit to the Temple in Jerusalem or the Synagogue hierarchy.

So the Pharisees ran the Synagogues, and the Sadducees ran the Temple, but the Essenes had disconnected themselves from the Temple because they saw it as wicked and corrupt which it was, but the Essenes did favor the Synagogues and its leadership even though they kept themselves apart from joining the Synagogues. So the Essenes had their own separate religious centers and they too shunned the Samaritans.

Now.. with all of that being said.. if we stick to the Torah and what Yahovah our Father had commanded.. we know that there was only one place where he commanded there to be a convocation of worship and of his ritual laws.. and that was at his Temple.

The first was the Tabernacle that was built in the wilderness that the Hebrew people moved from place to place as they journeyed across the desert, and then the Temple that was built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

In 587BC we know that the Babylonians destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem and carried the spoils away over about a thousand miles from Jerusalem and so the one place commanded by God for them to worship was taken away from them.

The Jews were taken into captivity as slaves, and from that point on they had to figure out other ways to meet together and to worship, because the Temple had been destroyed. So the Synagogue was born due to the Temple being destroyed.

It was in the Synagogues that they taught the Torah and the laws of Moses, and because the original Priests were unable to oversee things the lay people became the leaders of the Synagogues.

As you can imagine.. this changed things drastically from what was prescribed in the Torah. With out the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood, or the High Priesthood of Aaron which was part of Gods original court system the Jews could no longer atone for their sins, or become ritually pure when they became defiled, so they began to practice their own traditions and customs which were designed to fix these problems the best they knew how.

It's also important to understand that when the Persians overtook the Babylonian Empire from them and King Cyrus liberated the Jews, about 95% of them did not return to Jerusalem, and this is important to keep in mind. This 95% of the Jewish people who did not return to Jerusalem are today known as the "Diaspora" also known as "The Dispersed Jews".

Now once the Temple was re-built and came back into existence you can imagine that there was

this kind of thorny revelry between the Synagogues and the Temple leadership, but the Synagogues and the Temple authorities did work together in some areas.

The Pharisees who were the leadership of the Synagogues expected their congregations to go to the Temple to observe certain times appointed by Moses in the Torah. So the Synagogues did not disavow the Temple, nor did they discourage their congregations from going to the Temple but they did often times conflict when it came to the man made authority of the Synagogues which was not found in the Torah.

However the leadership of the Synagogues were not going to lay down their authority and bow down to the authority of the Temple so there was this rivalry of authority gong on between these two systems.

However the Jews themselves found no problem with belonging to the Synagogues that kept the teachings of the law and the proper way to observe the Torah, while still going to the Temple to observe the ritual and sacrificial commandments of the Torah and it's Levitical laws, commandments, and precepts.

So I want to just recap a little bit of what we've just gone over to try and cement some of these things in your mind before we end here this evening.

We know that the Pharisees ran the Synagogues, and we know that the Sadducees ran the Temple. We know that the Essenes were a separate religious group with their own religious centers who rightly opposed the leadership of the Temple and it's fake authorities, and we know that the Synagogues ran by the Sadducees also rejected the authority of the Temple who were at odds with the Synagogues because they saw them as a man made authority.

And this doesn't even include the Samaritans where shunned by both the Temple authorities and the Synagogue authorities who had also created their own brand of worship, and called themselves Jews.

In a nut shell.. it's not hard to understand the fractured underpinnings of Judaism back in the time of Yahshua and the Apostles. All of these different factions of Judaism were at odds with each other in one way or another.

So we have a lot in common with the broken and splintered factions of Judaism and it's man made, man created, man fabricated religious systems and today's man made, man created, man fabricated religious denominational charters of men.

Back then all these different fractions of the faith called themselves Jews.. and today all these different denominational charters of men call themselves Christians. And as I have often said time and time again.. we as Christians today... are no different from our Jewish brothers and

sisters of yesterday.

All we have to do to see ourselves today is to look at our Jewish brothers and sisters of yesterday.. it's like looking into a mirror. We as Christians today are making the exact same mistakes that our true "Church Fathers" (who are the Israelite's) made thousands of years ago.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters had broken away from the commandments, and the precepts of God to build their own denominational divides created by men, just like we as Christians today have broken away from the commandments, and the precepts, of God to follow after our own denominational divides created by men.

The only difference is that we not only have broken away from the commandments and precepts of God our Father... we've also broken away from his Sabbaths, and his appointments, and his commanded feast days and replaced them with our own man made, man created, man fabricated Sabbaths, rituals, festivals, and myths that are found no where in either the Old or the New Testaments!

And so you see this is where we are. Both Jew and Christian. All of us have become nothing more than a misguided band of rag tag children wondering throughout a world full of deception and division designed to keep us all in the dark bumping heads with each other because we've all been programmed in one way or another to ignore what the scripture says and to follow after some man made, man created, man fabricated, denominational charter of men.

And I would be re missed if I did not remind us of what our own Messiah commanded us not to do!

Mat 23:8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.

Mat 23:9 And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.

Mat 23:10 Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.

Mat 23:11 The greatest among you shall be your servant.

Mat 23:12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Paul tells us exactly what Shepherds, and Teachers, and Pastors are here for in the book of Ephesians:

Eph 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

Eph 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Eph 4:14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

We as Teachers are here so equip the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of the Messiah so that we are no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and by human cunning and craftiness, and our adversaries deceitful schemes! NOT TO RULE OVER ONE ANOTHER!

And with that being said.. it is also written that a workman is worth his wage.

1Ti 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

1Ti 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

And with that we would ask that if you have been blessed by this teaching and this ministry and by our labor in teaching and preaching the truth of the Gospel of our Messiah.. that you would also support us both in prayer and offerings so that we might continue our work in bringing Gods people back to his given scriptures, and away from human cunning, craftiness, and deceitful schemes.

Our objective is to build and plant home churches now.. while we still have the window of opportunity to speak and to teach freely because the time is coming when that window of opportunity will be shut as it has been in so many countries around the world today.

We need your help, your partnership, and your commitment. We need you to stand with us today.

