

April 23, 2023
Acts 6:8-7:1 "In The Face Of Persecution"

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

To this point there have been three times the disciples of Jesus were brought before the Sanhedrin. The first ended in a warning, the second in a beating, and this third time will ultimately end in Stephen's death by stoning. Costly discipleship. In Acts 2-5 the witness has been primarily to the Jews. They had experienced favor among the people at the outset, now the people's hostility toward the Christians will grow exponentially. The witness will remain in Jerusalem despite the persecution and it will also begin its penetration across the world to the uttermost parts of the earth. We are in for a great adventure! Gleaned from *John B. Polhill*

The synagogue of the Freedmen by name indicates that many of the people had been former slaves or at least descendants of slaves. They were Jews from the Diaspora. The apostle Paul was from Cilicia, he "may" have been one of the attendees of this synagogue of the Freedmen.

It took 10 men to establish a synagogue. The Talmud speaks of 480 synagogues in Jerusalem. This was a big city. In 61 BC Pompey had forcibly taken many hundreds of Jews captive and sold them as slaves. Many of their descendants eventually gained their liberty and were considered Romans. Their gravitation back to the holy city was a most natural occurrence for these pious, devout Jews. Gleaned from *R. C. H. Lenski*

Diaspora Jews could be described as highly nationalistic, they had left their homes of the Diaspora to return to the holy city to be near the temple. They were zealous for both the Law and the temple. To their surprise they would hear of a new covenant, read, **Jeremiah 31:31**.

As they debated with Stephen they found themselves to be no match for his God given wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised that in times of persecution He would give His followers "words of wisdom" see **Luke 21:15**.

Application:

We live in perilous times. The entire world is changing in ways Christians of our times have never seen. Persecution of believers is on the rise. This persecution will come in many forms. Remember the passage in **Luke 21:15**, "for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you!" NLT

People need the Lord, let's be good witnesses for Him in our daily lives.