

Acts Chapter 6

G. Choosing of the seven, 6:1-7

Act 6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number,

Despite the persecution the Apostles faced the church continued grow.

a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews,

The Hellenistic or Grecians Jews, “refers to those Jews who spoke Greek or otherwise followed Greek usages” (Pulpit Commentary). They were likely from the dispersion who lived in countries where Greek was spoken, and who themselves spoke Greek.

The native Hebrews would be Palestinian and other Jews. They spoke Aramean.

because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

Here we have an example of the church providing for its own as in the past, **Acts 2:45**; but in this case it is the widows, **1Tim. 5:3-16**.

Act 6:2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples

The twelve refers to the apostles, **Acts 6:6**. This shows that the people were looking to them for guidance and following their lead, **Acts 2:42, Eph. 2:19,20**

and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

The way this is worded it is possible that the twelve were helping to serve the meals to these widows.

“Not desirable” is literally “not pleasing.” It’s not pleasing to serve tables when they have more important things to do. They must tend to the word.

NOTE: This gives us some insights into the different works of the church, (ie... Elders, Evangelists, Deacons, **Eph. 4:11**) and the importance of each being allowed to do theirs. The apostles show that although serving tables was needed, it was not good for them to neglect the word, **Acts 6:4**. This is where they needed to focus their attention. Others could handle the work of feeding the widows.

Act 6:3 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

"Therefore, brethren,

Brethren - ἀδελφοσ (adelphos) – This is a masculine noun, making reference to men.

select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

Some believe seven were chosen because it is the number of completeness, but this is purely conjecture.

There were certain qualifications that must be met by those chosen.

1. *Must be a man*
2. *Good reputation*, literally “borne witness to” **Heb. 11:4,5; Acts 10:22; 16:1,2**
3. *Full of the Spirit*, could be Holy Spirit or some gift, **Acts 2:4; 4:8**. It seems just as likely the indwelling of the HS is referred to, **Acts 6:8**, or even attitude, **Rom. 8:15**
4. *And of wisdom*, Clarke writes...”Prudence, discretion, and economy; for mere piety and uprightness could not be sufficient, where so many must be pleased, and where frugality, impartiality, and liberality, must ever walk hand in hand.”

NOTE: The word “congregation” in v.2 is noun neuter and the word “disciples” is noun masculine. In v.3 the word “brethren” is noun masculine. The seven that were chosen were men (aner), noun masculine. Lenski writes, “...likewise, he (Luke) need not mention the fact that only men voted in accord with the Jewish practice which is based on Gen. 2:18-23; 3:16.”

From the Greek it would seem that the apostles called together the men of the congregation to choose seven men from themselves to take charge of this work. This, along with **1Tim. 3:8-12** would eliminate the practice of some who put women in as “deacons,” using **Rom. 16:1** as their platform.

Act 6:4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

But we will devote,

Clarke writes, “We will steadfastly and invariably attend, we will carefully keep our hearts to this work. The word is very emphatic.

ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

These two always go hand in hand, **Col. 4:2-6**, and is needed if the work is to get done.

Act 6:5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit

The qualifications required that they be full of the spirit. Here he's referred to as having the Holy Spirit as per **Acts 2:38**

and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

These are all Greek names. Maybe chosen because they were more closely related to those overlooked, but not necessarily so.

Act 6:6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

The purpose of laying their hands on them this seems twofold.

First, to show that the apostles gave approval of these men, **Num 27:18**,

Acts 13:3.

Second, to pass on the miraculous gifts, **Acts 6:8; 8:16-20; 1Tim. 4:14**,

2Tim. 1:6

Act 6:7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

This is the result of the apostles being devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word.

The word was being put out for people to hear and souls were being won even the priests. It wasn't just a few souls, the disciples **increased greatly** and a **great number** of priests were becoming obedient.

Note: If we allow things to be done Gods way the result will be positive.

H. Stephen, 6:8-7:60

1. His arrest, 6:8-15

Act 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

Some have debated whether Stephen's power to work signs and wonders is related to the laying on of the Apostles hands. I see a connection for two reason.

1. The terminology is different from Acts 6:5
2. The laying on of hands to pass on the miracles is supported in the Scriptures as discussed in v.6.

Note: Charlie DiPalma, Jr of the WVBS writes in his syllabus. It is clear that Stephen received this miraculous power from the apostles of Christ when they laid their hands on him (:6).

- a. Before the apostles laid hands on him and the other six, there is no record of anyone other than an apostle of Christ working miracles.
- b. Then the apostles laid hands on the seven (:6).
- c. Then, right after that, we are told Stephen worked miracles.
- d. Later, there is a record of Philip working miracles also (8:6,7).
- e. The conclusion: Stephen and the other six men received the power to work miracles though the laying on of the apostles' hands.
- f. The validity of this conclusion will be reinforced when we study the case of Simon the sorcerer in 8:14-19.

Act 6:9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

the Synagogue of the Freedmen

One of many Synagogues found in Jerusalem along with other Jews, the Cyrenians, Alexandrians and some from Cilicia and Asia.

rose up and argued with Stephen.

The cause of this arguing was the teaching of Stephen. Although there is no mention of teaching it should be concluded without saying, **Acts 8:5,6**

Act 6:10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

But they were unable to cope

Cope = (αντιστηναι) = to set in opposition. They were unable to oppose what Stephen was teaching.

with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

In all likelihood the wisdom spoken of here is of the miraculous kind, **1Cor. 12:7,8**

The Spirit is either the Holy Spirit Stephen possessed or his attitude. The context would indicate whether this is the Holy Spirit or not. But here it is not clearly defined. It could just as easily be the boldness (attitude or spirit) with which Stephen was speaking. In other words they were not able to silence him. He stood his ground and kept on preaching.

Act 6:11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

Then they secretly induced men to say

It never ceases to amaze us of the corruptness of the hearts of the people. They did what they did in **secret**.

These men were secretly induced (suborned (KJV)) others to make this claim of blasphemy. Induced is from "hupoballo", which originally meant "*to put under like a carpet, to bring men under one's control by suggestion or money.*" (H. Leo Boles).

These men were bribed so that false accusations might be offered.

"We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

To say something against Moses was to say something against God,

Numbers 15:22,23; 30-31

Act 6:12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council.

The council is referring to the Sanhedrin. Probably the same court that tried Jesus or at least a large portion of it is.

Act 6:13 They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

"This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

Their claim is similar to that made against Jesus, **Matt. 26:59-61; Mark 14:55-59**

Act 6:14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

The claim of what Stephen speaks against the temple is that Jesus would destroy it. The claim of what Stephen spoke against the law is that Jesus would alter it in some way.

These claims were never made by Jesus nor would Stephen make them.

Concerning what Jesus said about the Temple, **John 2:19-21**

Concerning what Jesus said about the Law, **Matt 5:17**

Note: Since they are making the claim that Stephen said these things and we know he didn't because we know Jesus didn't say them; Stephen was probably making reference to the resurrection of Jesus, which is what Jesus was speaking of when he referred to the destruction of the temple. As for altering the law or customs, **Matt. 12:6.**

Through Jesus not only came the end of the old Law, but a church universal which excluded the Jerusalem Temple and all its practices.

Col. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:13-16; Gal. 3:15-29; Heb. 8:6-13

Act 6:15 And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

And fixing their gaze on him,

The accusation has been made and the council now turns its attention to the accused.

all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

There are two primary theories as to what the “face of an angel” refers to.

1. Some believe that Stephen's face was illuminated like unto Moses when he came down from Sinai, **Ex. 34:30; 2Cor. 3:7**. See also **Dan. 10:6, Rev. 10:1**
2. Others see this as simply being a manifestation of Stephen's sincerity.

As Barnes writes, *“This expression is one evidently denoting that he manifested evidence of sincerity, gravity, fearlessness, confidence in God.”*

Whatever it was it got the attention of the Council. It was something they saw yet as typical they did not connect to what Stephen was about to say. Why? **Act 7:51**