

Acts 6:1-7; **Division and Discrimination.**



“Division in the Body of Christ.”

UNITY

“What do WE do with problems .”



Acts 6:1-7; Seven Serving men?

“Division in the Body of Christ.”

**In our study of Acts 5;
We saw a vibrant community empowered
by the Holy Spirit indwelling their lives.**

**We saw important events:-
Hypocrisy began to develop
Within the community,
the deception of Ananias and Sapphira.**

God moved with powerful discipline.

Acts 6:1-7; Seven Serving men?

Miracles were used to confirm the words of the apostles. The angel of the Lord delivered the apostles from prison.

Gamaliel's wise advice regarding dealing with the apostles.

Now a THIRD ATTACK!
“Division in the Body of Christ.”

Acts 6:1-7; Seven Serving men?

“So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.”

“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.”

“We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” Acts 6:2-4;

Acts 6:1-7; Seven Serving men?

Up to this point **the twelve Apostles** have had the full responsibility of the **leadership** of the church.

Although the number of members added to the Congregations has increased rapidly. The church has not expanded beyond Jerusalem and has NOT needed more LEADERS.

But with the events recorded in this chapter, that situation will change.

Acts 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,”

The problem arose at that time, **that is,**
during the days in which the apostles
were busily preaching and teaching. (5:42;)

As a result of their efforts during time, the number
of the disciple multiplies. **In this verse we have the**
first use of the word **disciples** in the book of **Acts.**

A disciple is a pupil who **adheres** to the principles
he learns from his teacher and **models his life**
after his teacher. Christians

Are **disciples of Christ,**
our Teacher and Example.



Acts 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,”

A PROBLEM AROSE! - HOW NATURAL –
HOW UNDERSTANDABLE THIS IS.

The very **RAPIDITY** and **EXTENT**
of the **growth** of the **body of Christ**
was the thing which **BROUGHT** the problem.

Rather different from today, do you not think?
Congregations in **THESE days** struggle
with the problem of **DECLINING membership**.

HERE, we see the Congregation
struggling with the problem created
by **INCREASING membership!**

Acts 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,”

First persecutions, then sin in the assembly
that has to be punished.

When there is growth we are to also expect
problems. **Until now Luke has been speaking
and teaching about harmony in the new assembly.**

Acts 1:14; 2:1; 4:24, 32; 5:12;

But as a faithful historian
that does not write only the positive
but also **Luke mentions
the negative that existed in the assembly.**

**God's people are growing, multiplying,
Wherever you have people you will expect
to get problems and challenges.**

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.

This refers to believing Jews, those who were from **Palestine** and spoke primarily **Aramaic** and those who grew up in the **Diaspora** and spoke primarily **Koine Greek**.

Cultural differences began to create a rift in this community that had grown so close.

Acts 6:1-7; Division in the Church?

Two Types of division?

Passive Division:-

Disengaged from healthy relationships.

No outward hostility,

but unwilling to invest deeply in relationships.

Active Division:-

Members are actively divided against each other in bitterness or suspicion.

1 Cor 3:3; Gal 5:20; Phil 2:3,14; 1 Pet 4:9;



Acts 6:1-7; Division in the Church?

What Division Isn't

Dissention:- Issue oriented conflict,
or differences of opinion.

Organizational diversity:-
Differences in approaches
to Christ's work can be good.

Acts 6:1-7; Division in the Church?

Effects of Division Koinonia:-

(sharing) is lost-

Bitter gossip and rivalries occur.

Witness of the congregation is lost.

Potential devastation.

Matt 12:25; “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand.”

Acts 6:1-7; Division in the Church?

Danger Signs of Division:-

Offences and annoyances prominent.

**A focus on the negative aspects of others.
Increasing suspicion of others' motives.**

**Aversion to, or disinterest
in being around other members.**

Grecian Widows Neglected



Acts 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,”

**It is clear that the early congregations
LOOKED AFTER their POOR!**

**These were GENERALLY the WIDOWS,
who, in those days - even more so than today –
had great difficulties in making ends meet.
This was true under NORMAL circumstances.**

**I think we SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE THE JEWISH PRACTICE
that the NEEDY widows among the Jews
WERE indeed catered for, because there was a REGULAR
DISTRIBUTION to the widows at the SYNAGOGUE.**

**There were officials of the synagogue who went around
the city, collecting money, or food from the merchants every
FRIDAY. And, BEFORE THE ONSET OF THE SABBATH,
at 6 p.m., this would have been distributed to the needy.**

Acts 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,”

It seems from history that many Jewish families who lived and worked in other countries **returned to Palestine in the father's later years so that he could be buried in the Promised Land.** Therefore, there were **many widows** in Palestine, especially the Jerusalem area.

Judaism had an institutional (i.e. Mosaic Covenant) concern for the poor, alien, and widows.

(cf. Exod. 22:21-24; Deut. 10:18; 24:17).

Luke's writings show that Jesus, too, cared for widows.
(cf. Luke 7:11-15; 18:7-8; 21:1-4;)

It is, then, **natural** that the early **assembly, patterning itself on both the Synagogue social services and the teachings of Jesus,** would have an overt **concern for the widows.**

Acts 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,”

If they were **widows** who were in permanent need, they would be **given enough** to last them for a **whole week**, in fact **enough for 2 meals a day**.

But **when WIDOWS became CHRISTIANS** in those early days the hardship was compounded - intensified - because any **JEWISH relatives** they might have, **would disown them** altogether and **leave them** absolutely **poverty-stricken** and bereft of **ANY** material support whatsoever.

Therefore, **the Christians** took care of these sisters, and, as 6:1; makes clear, each day, they were **given sufficient to meet their needs**.

Acts 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,”

I might add that, as time went by,
very clear and definite rules were laid down
for this **'WIDOW MINISTRY'** as it came to be called.
And if you are interested in following this up you should
study what PAUL wrote to TIMOTHY in 1 Tim 5;

There, among other matters, he wrote of **ENROLLING the widows**. Which means that they actually created a LIST of those who were entitled to receive assistance.

(Entitled by NEED and AGE.)
as the assembly grew, this work
became more difficult to supervize.

Indeed, there was a remarkable
ABSENCE OF ECCLESIASTICAL STRUCTURE
in the **EARLY** history of the assembly. And in this,
it was different from either the temple or the tabernacle”

Acts 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,”

When GOD gave instructions concerning
the way in which the ISRAELITES
were TO worship, after they left EGYPT.
They were VERY SPECIFIC instructions
as to how everything was to be done.

How the **CEREMONIES**
were to be carried out.

How the **PRIESTS**
were to be selected and installed in office.

ALL THIS WAS DONE BEFORE
they began to worship, under the Law of Moses.
all according to the pattern shown on the mountain.

Acts 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,”

BUT, When the called out were established,
it was different. The assemblies acquired organisation
AS IT BECAME NECESSARY.
And there was wisdom in this.

IF members were brought into an assembly which was
FULLY ORGANIZED, they may not have seen the wisdom
behind the way in which the organisation had been set up.
They may not have UNDERSTOOD,
or APPRECIATED the organisation.

They would probably **fail to understand the ROLE** which
had been **ASSIGNED** to the men who had been appointed.
JUST AS TODAY, NEW CHRISTIANS, when they
come into a congregation, do not usually appreciate
either the **WORK** or the **AUTHORITY** of **ELDERS.**

Acts 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,”

**They often suppose that the congregation
is a sort of DEMOCRACY,
in which all have an equal say
in the decision-making process.
And that is a mistake.**

**The congregation is led as GOD
commands that it should be led,
and this is something which
new Christians OUGHT to be taught,
because FAILURE to teach
on this subject invariably leads
to problems which could EASILY be avoided.**

Acts 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,”

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM IN THIS CASE? It is stated in that 1st verse, as we have seen. **CERTAIN WIDOWS WERE BEING NEGLECTED IN THE DAILY DISTRIBUTION.**

There were rumbles of discontent.
That is what the word 'murmured' means.
This was NOT SOMETHING
THAT WAS EXPRESSED OPENLY.

‘Murmured’ The very word implies that there was a 'LOW GRUMBLING SOUND' –
People MUTTERING TO EACH OTHER,
in a discontented kind of way.

Acts 6:1; A Problem with the Daily Distribution?

During the first days of the assembly, some of the Hellenist widows were being neglected during the daily distribution.

People had been selling some of their possessions and giving the proceeds to the apostles for the care of those in need.

Acts 6:1; A Problem with the Daily Distribution?

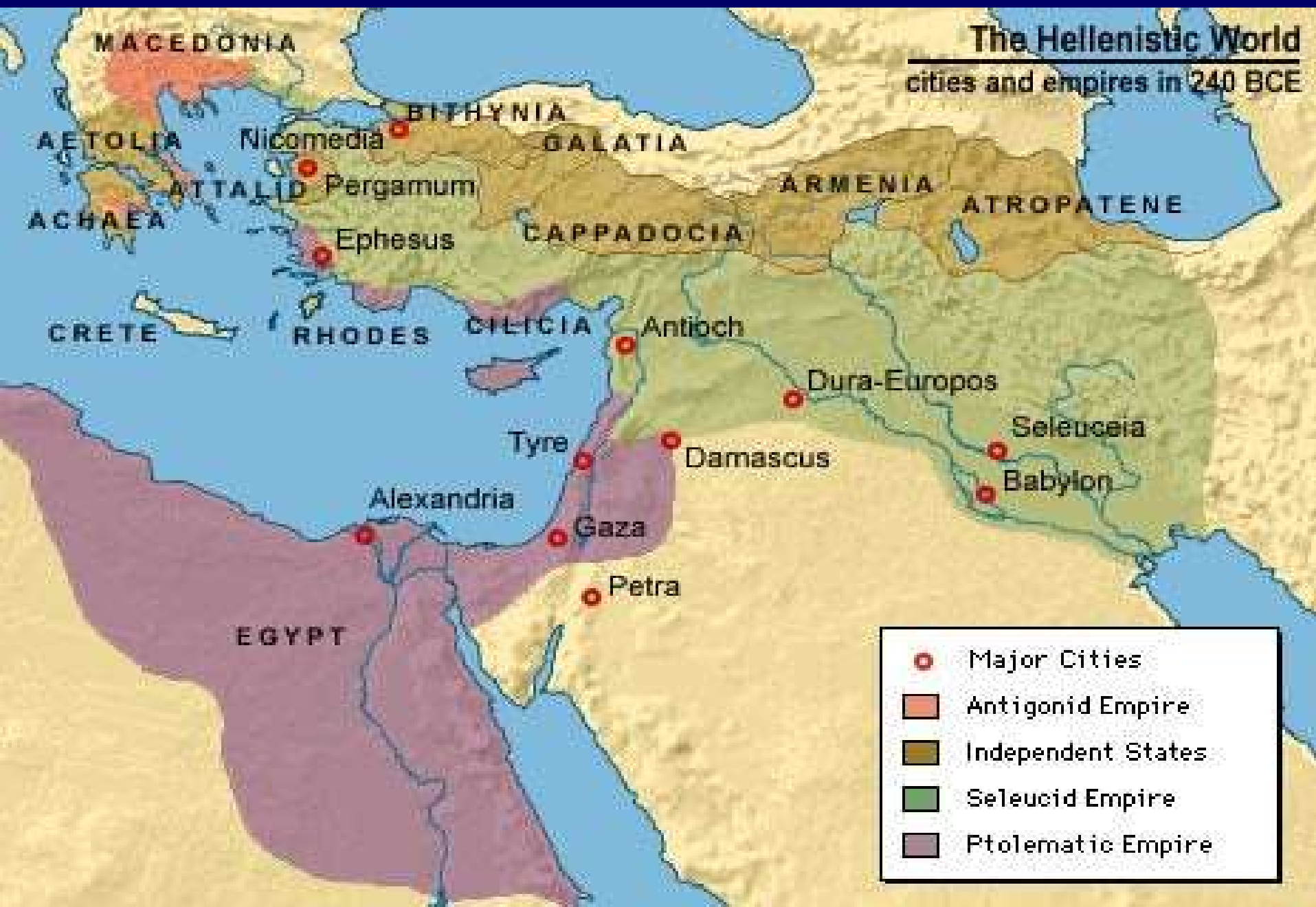
What was the difference between the "Grecian" and "Hebraic" Jews?

**Who were these "Hellenistic Jews"?
In the time when the Gospel was first preached, there were two classes of Jews.**

The Hebrews:- Those who were born in Palestine and who spoke Hebrew language;

The Hellenists:- Those who were born of Jewish parentage outside of Palestine, who spoke the Greek language, and who used the Septuagint in their synagogues.

Acts 6:1; Hellenistic World?



Acts 6:1; A Problem with the Daily Distribution?

The Hellenistic Jews, to a greater or lesser degree, had adopted more of the Greek ideals and customs after Alexander the Great had carried them over the world when he had conquered it about 300 years earlier.

In Jewish communities the Hebrews, who had not adopted the Greek customs, tended to look down on the Hellenists as being somewhat less holy.

Perhaps some of the old feelings are in the background of this present dispute.

Hellenistic Jews were also known as **"those of the Dispersion."**

Acts 6:1; A Problem with the Daily Distribution?

The Greek-speaking Jews complained because their widows were being overlooked by the Hebrew-speaking Jews, those whose permanent residence was Jerusalem and its environs.

These Aramaic speaking Jews were expected to be the hosts of the others and the money and goods that were being donated daily to take care of the needs of these **Greek-speaking Jews** for some reason was not getting to them.

Acts 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,”

So, we see that **THERE WERE PEOPLE FROM BOTH GROUPS** in the assembly. **They had become CHRISTIANS**, but had **still retained their distinctive culture** and they **would have to LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER IN THE BODY**.

We should always be grateful for the Book of Acts, because it dispels, for US, the false idea That the early assembly was perfect. **It was NOT!**

The **Holy Spirit** has placed on record the fact that, although there were **VICTORIES, SUCCESSES, GROWTH**, there was **also FRICTION and PROBLEMS**.

There are **ALWAYS** going to be problems in the assembly, so long as it is here on earth. **BECAUSE THE CALLED OUT CONSISTS OF HUMAN BEINGS - YOU and ME, And the HELLENISTS and the HEBREWS!**

Acts 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,”

We need to notice that THIS IS **NOT A COMPLAINT ABOUT DELIBERATE DISCRIMINATION BUT NEGLECT.**

The word means '**TO VIEW AMISS**' and implies that **these widows** were being **OVERLOOKED.**

Let us give the congregation the benefit of any doubt and accept that this was an **UNINTENTIONAL OMISSION** that was being committed. And I think that this will become very clear when we look at the way in which the problem was handled.

HUMAN NATURE DOESN'T CHANGE VERY EASILY. Difference in **CULTURE** and **CLASS ALWAYS** make people very sensitive **OVER-sensitive in fact**, because such differences often lead **people to imagine that an offence has been committed when no offence was intended.**

Acts 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,”

Luke does not state the reason for this oversight, **but the Hellenists, quite naturally, complained.**

This problem was potentially disastrous for **a failure to resolve it** would have resulted in a split within the assembly.



Acts 6:2; “So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said,
“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God
in order to wait on tables.”

The problem came to the attention of the apostles,
who called the whole body together.

They did not speak Sharply to anyone. They did not
tell the Hellenists that they were 'IMAGINING THINGS'
or that 'THEY OUGHT NOT TO BE SO SENSITIVE.'

**They did not IGNORE the problem,
or CLAIM THAT IT JUST DID NOT EXIST.
They didn't BRUSH IT ASIDE
as something TRIVIAL and UNIMPORTANT.**

**THEY TREATED IT SERIOUSLY
and THEY ACTED PROMPTLY.**

**Calling the whole body together
BROUGHT THE PROBLEM OUT INTO THE OPEN.**

Acts 6:2-4; A Solution Proposed!



Acts 6:2-4; A Solution Proposed!

2 “So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.”

**3 “Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them
4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”**

Acts 6:2; “So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said,
“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God
in order to wait on tables.”

FIRST; THEY STATED THEIR OWN POSITION
in relation to this ministry. v.2. **"It is not RIGHT."**

One version says **"NOT FITTING"**, but the word
is a very strong one, and it implies that
the **ENTIRE TIME** of the apostles was now being taken up
in taking care of this work of distribution.

You will remember that those who sold property **brought**
the money to the apostles who **WERE**
then responsible for its distribution. (4:35; 5:2;)

**But with the growth of the family of God,
it apparently was becoming a FULL TIME TASK
and so the apostles said "IT IS NOT RIGHT."**

Now, **THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT THE APOSTLES**
were **TOO PROUD** to do this work. **It simply meant that**
THE PURPOSE OF APOSTLESHIP was not **Serving tables.**

Acts 6:2; “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said,
“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables,”

It is not reasonable.

The original words used here properly denote,
it is not pleasing, or agreeable;
but the meaning evidently is,
it is not fit, or proper.

It would be a departure from
the design of their appointment,
which was to preach the gospel,
and not be distracted from it to attend
to the daily affairs of the congregations.



Acts 6:2; “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said,
“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables,”

That we should **leave the word of God.**
That we should **neglect, or abandon** the preaching
of the gospel so much as would be necessary,
if we attended personally to the **distribution**
of the alms of the family of God.

The gospel is here called the word of God,
because it is His message;
it is that which He has spoken;
or which **He has commanded**
to be proclaimed to men.



Acts 6:2; “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said,
“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables,”

Serve tables.

This expression properly denotes **to take care of, or to provide for the table**, or for the daily wants of the family. **It is an expression that properly applies to a steward, or a servant.**

The word tables is, however, sometimes used with reference to money, as being the place where money was kept for the purpose of exchange, etc.

Here the expression means, therefore, **to attend to the financial transactions** of the assembly, and to make **the proper distribution for the needs of the poor.**

Acts 6:3; “Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”



Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

Seek out, pick, select, choose.

Notice that it is the congregation who is to do the choosing.

There is no clergy who will come and appoint “a preacher” in the congregation, there is no school that will come and “appoint a preacher in the congregation.”

If the assembly has elders it is because the assembly has desired it so, if the assembly has deacons its because it has desired it so.

The congregation and not “one man” has the right to appoint her leaders.

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

**The apostles were saying that
THIS WAS A JOB WHICH SOMEONE ELSE COULD DO,
and for which SOMEONE ELSE should become responsible.
In other words THIS IS A SHARED MINISTRY.**

**SO! BRETHREN LOOK OUT FROM AMONG YOURSELVES
SEVEN MEN whom WE MAY APPOINT OVER THIS WORK**

**By the way, that word
‘BRETHREN’ ADELPHOI
is one of the earliest names by which
the early Christians called each other.
The apostles did not make the choice.**

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

From Among you.

Elders and deacons and preachers

All chosen by the congregation.

Every good preacher of the gospel

**Should be made within the congregation
and for the congregation.**

**So these men were chosen, from among
the Grecians and Hebrews, that there may
be justice done, and no further cause of complaint.**



Acts 6:2-4; A Solution Proposed!

Thousands of people

had become Christians by this point.

It is difficult to know how many of these gathered for this meeting but according to Luke it was all who were considered disciples.

It is possible **Solomon's Porch** was the place of a meeting of this magnitude. This would also be a friction point with the Jews.

The assembly conducted its business in full view of the worshippers at the temple.

Acts 6:2-4; A Solution Proposed!

If we have a problem in the congregation! What is the proper way to complain? or sort it out?

They call for the recognition of spiritual leadership to resolve the problem.

Good leadership OUGHT to be a safeguard against division.

Acts 6:3; “From among you!”

The **Apostles’ proposed solution** was that the Greek-speaking Jews should appoint from among themselves the seven men who would then take over this responsibility.

The **“ministry”** these seven were to perform was, in Greek, **“diakonia”** (“ministration,” verse 1 - Young’s Literal Translation).

This is **the kind of service deacons** in the congregations **today** might be asked to do.

It is often CLAIMED that these seven were the first deacons.

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

Yet these men did not have the qualifications later required for the proper organisation of the assembly.

The word “deacon” itself comes from a Greek word made up of two parts: “dia,” meaning “through” or “by means of,” and “konos,” from which “koinonia,” meaning “fellowship,” “sharing” and “communion” come as translations.

The idea is that the deacon serves the congregation by using the common or shared resources.

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

These men chosen by the congregation and as we will see set apart by the laying on of the apostles hands in 6:6; were not deacons in The later understood official meaning of the word. As per the qualifications found in 1 Tim 3 and Titus.

These men would not be seen as leading the congregation spiritually but dealing with physical needs.

This would also require skills of thinking on their feet and dealing with people wisely and being capable of the logistics of ensuring everyone had something and no one was missed out.

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

These men described as **Leaders**
in the congregation.

Have some similarities with men
who are described as **leaders later in Acts 15:22;**

**Men chosen by the congregation for a specific task
and men who show they have the ability to preach.**

Stephen will become **the first martyr** after delivering
a tremendous sermon in ch 6 and 7

Phillip will be found **teaching** and **preaching**
and baptising the Ethiopian in chapter 8

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

**I would also bring to your attention Silas
in chapter 15:22; where the greek word used
is (leader in the assembly)
leaders / leading men / chief men**

τον	καλουμενον	βαρσαββαν	και	σιλαν	ανδρας	ηγουμενους	εν	τοις	αδελφοις
ton	kaloumenon	barsabban	kai	silan	andras	hEgoumenous	en	tois	adelphois
THE	one-beING-CALLED	BAR-SABBAS	AND	SILAS	MEN	beING_LEADING~	IN	THE ^(s)	brothers
the	one-being-called	Bar-Sabbas	and	Silas	men	leading	among	the	brethren

**They were not elders and deacons but in both cases
they were chosen by the congregation and in both cases
they turned out to be men who could organise and teach.**

**15:32; Being prophets and gifted speakers.
15:40: Silas goes with paul on missionary journey.
16:31-32; they taught / spoke / taught the word.**

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

THE MEN HAD TO POSSESS CERTAIN QUALIFICATIONS.

These were qualifications laid down BY THE HOLY SPIRIT – revealed to the apostles, in this case. "Of good repute".
(men with good reputations and good characters)

"Full of the Holy Spirit."

(Spiritual and spiritually- minded men.)

"And of wisdom"

(wise men.

The word 'SOPHIA' is only used of God and good men, in the Bible.)

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

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

NASB, NJB, NKJV. "of good reputation"

NRSV. "of good standing"

TEV. "who are known to be" REB, Peshitta. "of good repute"

Good Reputation:-

**Proven record of serving love.
men of integrity. testified of, or borne
witness to, i.e. whose characters
were well known and fair.**

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

“When the good shepherd puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

John 10:4-5;



Acts 6:1-7; Seven Serving men?



**Full of the
Holy Spirit!**

**Full of
Wisdom!**

Acts 6:3; “brothers, **pick out from among you seven men of good repute,** full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

What does it mean to be “**full**” of the **Spirit**?

Jesus gave a clue when He described to Nicodemus how a person was to know someone had been “**born**” of the **Spirit**.

He gave the illustration of the wind,
an invisible force,
being “**seen**” by its effects.



Evidence of Wind – Sahara.

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

Full of the Holy Spirit

Men who were spiritually minded or who were of distinguished humility. Focused on doing God’s will in God’s way.



Willing to put God’s will first and sensitive to his responsibility to others.

Prepared to be a PEACEMAKER rather than a POWER SEEKER.



Acts 6:3; “brothers, **pick out from among you seven men of good repute,** full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

A SPIRITUALLY MINDED MAN.

**“Do not get drunk on wine,
which leads to debauchery.
Instead, **be filled with the Spirit.**”
Eph 5:18;**



Acts 6:1-7; Seven Serving men?

Does one have to be able to do miracles to be full of the Spirit? NO.

Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23; They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

If we see these qualities in a person's life we know he or she is "full of the Spirit."

We require no miraculous sign to make this decision about whom to choose to appoint to a position to serve the assembly

Acts 6:3; “brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

And Wisdom, Prudence, or skill,

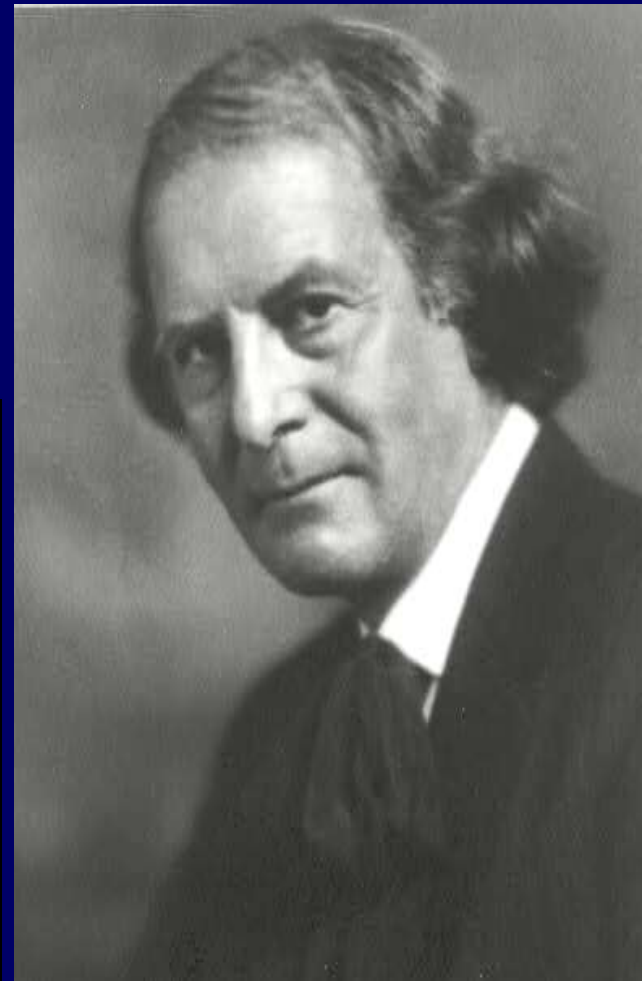
to make a wise and fair distribution.

1) grasp of knowledge (academic) 2) wise living (practical)

**“Every man is a fool
for at least
five minutes every day;”**

**“Wisdom consists
of not exceeding
the limit.”**

Elbert Hubbard.



**Acts 6:1-7; Full of Wisdom:-
Applied knowledge of God's word.**

Prov 9:8; “Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, reprove a wise man, and he will love you.”

12:15; “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.”

14:16; “A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless.”

1:7; “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

11:2; “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”

28:26; “He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.”

Acts 6:3; - Solution?

Good Reputation:-

Proven record of serving love.

Full of the Holy Spirit:-

A SPIRITUALLY minded man.

Full of Wisdom:-

Applied knowledge of God's word.

**This profile for spiritual leadership
fits with other NT examples.**

Acts 6:2-3; DISCUSSION QUESTION?

It appears that verse 2 & 3 indicate that the assembly divided up various duties.

In the typical modern congregation, what are activities that everyone in the congregation should be involved in?

What are activities that some members should specialize in?



6:4; “We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

The apostles were committed to “majoring in the majors.”

They did not want “social ministry” to take their focus away from what was their primary importance the preaching of the Gospel.

Nor did they want the physical needs of people neglected.

**Acts 6:4; we will devote ourselves to prayer
and to the ministry of the word.”**



Acts 6:4; DISCUSSION QUESTION?

**What does it mean to
"give attention to prayer
and ministry of the word"?**



Please how important **prayer is
in the life of the leaders of God's family.**

Acts 6:4; “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer
and to the ministry of the word.”

The apostles want to continue
with **the preaching** of the **Word**.
That is, with **the ministry** of the **Word**.

They are still **servants** of God,
They don't want to be distracted by the world
with the regular affairs of life.

It is not fair to **leave** the **Word of God**
on the side
Because we are **distracted by the world**.

Acts 6:5; “This proposal pleased the whole group.”

The **Congregation agreed** readily –
which surely suggests that **NO OFFENCE
HAD BEEN INTENDED IN THE FIRST PLACE.**

It was an **oversight**
a **misunderstanding** - and handled
In the right way was easily dealt with.

May I suggest that very often
the problems which Congregations
often struggle with are **rooted**
in **either OVERSIGHT**
or MISUNDERSTANDING.

Acts 6:5; "And the saying pleased the whole multitude."

The assembly agreed with the apostles and chose to select seven men who could work with the apostles and take this burden and allow them to focus on the proclamation of the Gospel.

Those chosen were highly gifted individuals willing to do the most menial tasks.

All Had Greek Names



Ruins of Gate at Nicolas' Antioch.

Acts 6:5; “And the saying pleased the whole multitude. **And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit,** and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,”

**Two of these first seven serving men,
Stephen and Philip,
became famous evangelists
as we will see later in the story.**

Philip:- Later known as “**The Evangelist**”
reached an **entire city in Samaria**
and opened **Ethiopia to the gospel.**

Acts 6:5; Stephen?

Stephen, A profound preacher,
because of his public preaching,
antagonized the unbelieving Jews.

They had him stoned to death. Thus
he **became the first Christian martyr.**

“Martyr” is from a Greek word
that simply means, **“witness.”**
But the English form came to mean
**one who was killed because of
his or her testimony about Jesus.**



Acts 6:5; Seven Serving men?

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and **Nicolas** from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

These names look like mainly Hellenistic members.



Nicolas is not even an ethnic Jew!

Acts 6:5; DISCUSSION QUESTION:-

What is the significance of Nicholas being a convert to Judaism?

Nicolas, was from Antioch. There were several cities with this name. The best known and the one that would not require additional identification was **Antioch in Syria**.

Nicolas was a Gentile who had been circumcised and vowed to obey the laws of Moses and Israel. He was **a convert** to the religion and culture of the Jewish nation.

Old Picture of Antioch



Acts 6:5; “And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and **Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,**”

Some commentators have connected this Nicolas with the Nicolas who founded the Nicolaitans that Jesus condemned in Revelation 2:6-15;

There is no conclusive proof of which I am aware that identifies this particular Nicolas as the founder of that cult.

But it probably had been someone named Nicolas who had once been a member and leader in the congregations of Christ.

Acts 6:5; “And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and **Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,**”

NICOLAS! a GENTILE PROSOLYTE.

What did it mean to be a PROSELYTE.

**If you go back to the O.T. you find that ORIGINALLY
it simply meant A STRANGER LIVING IN ISRAEL**

**For instance, in Ex 20:10; you find the expression
"The stranger within your gates" The Hebrew word
for such a person was "GER". A SOJOURNER
A foreigner to whom certain privileges
were extended as a **RESIDENT ALIEN.****

**BUT LATER the word 'proselyte came to indicate
a GENTILE WHO HAD ACCEPTED JUDAISM,
and by submitting to certain ceremonies,
had been allowed into full fellowship.**

In fact, that word 'PROSELYTE' means ONE WHO COMES TOWARDS. We do not have the time to discuss this fully. The ceremonies involved in the making of a proselyte were: CIRCUMCISION. / BAPTISM. / SACRIFICE.

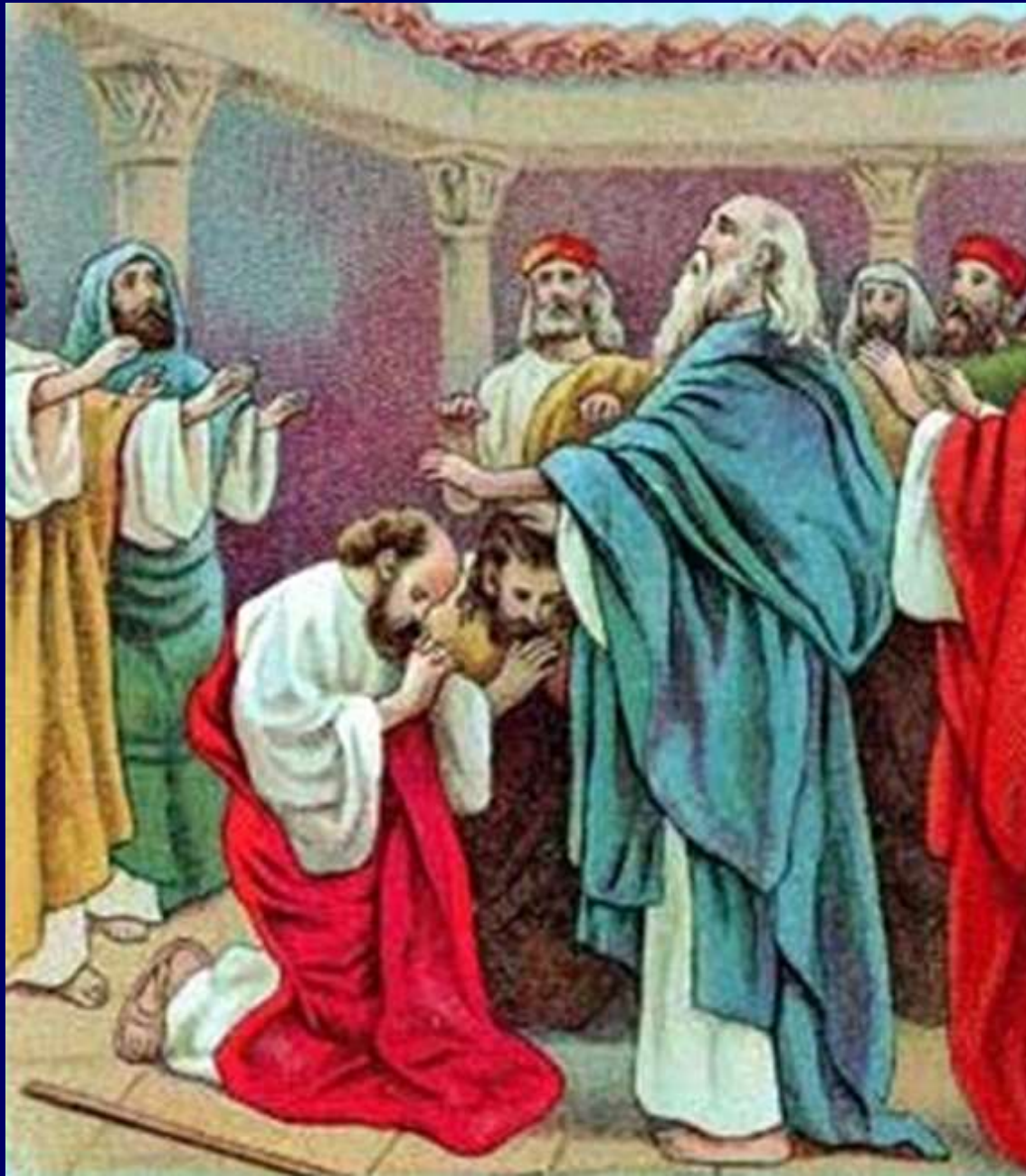
Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was the FIRST of these ceremonies which was the REAL TEST, and the reason why more WOMEN were converted to Judaism.

The MEN opted for a LOOSER connection with JUDAISM, so they became known as GOD-FEARERS. (ch13:l6; etc.)

Someone said that whilst they feared God, they feared circumcision more.

So the difference between the two is described as FULL PROSELYTES, and GOD-FEARERS. Or PROSELYTES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. And PROSELYTES OF THE GATE."

“Laid Their Hands on Them.”



Acts 6:6; “Laid Their Hands on Them.”

“These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.”

It was not the Apostles who chose these seven servants. The congregation chose them and brought them to the apostles.

These men were set before the whole assembly and were “set apart” for this ministry.

Acts 6:6; “Laid Their Hands on Them.”

Numbers 27:22-23; “And Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and he **laid his hands on him and commissioned him** as the Lord directed through Moses.”

Acts 13:2-3; “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then **after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them** and sent them off.”

Laying on of hands.

**The apostles were
showing their support
and approval
for the seven.**



**They were also passing
on miraculous gifts.**

Acts 6:6; “Laid Their Hands on Them.”

The **laying on of hands** in this age of the assembly when miraculous gifts could only be passed from the Apostles to others by laying their hands on them was very important. (14:23;)

Acts 8:14-19; “Then they **laid hands** on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18. When Simon **saw** that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19. “with the words, “Give me the **same power** so that anyone I **lay my hands on** will receive the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 6:6; “Laid Their Hands on Them.”



‘Lay my hands’
Acts 8:19;

“They had heard of
the miracles he worked
and because **they saw**
them for themselves.”
Acts 8:6;

‘**He saw**’ Acts 8:13;

Philip had the gift through **the laying on
of the apostle’s hands.** Acts 6:6;

Acts 6:6; “Laid Their Hands on Them.”

**When the apostles died, there was
no one else to pass on these gifts.**

**When those who possessed these gifts
through the laying on of the apostles hands died,
all the miraculous capabilities
of the first century church died with them.**

**Love never fails. But where there are prophecies,
they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled;
where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know
in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness
comes, the in part disappears. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10;**

See special study

[The Work of The Holy Spirit \(graemebibleresources.com\)](http://graemebibleresources.com)

Acts 6:6; “Laid Their Hands on Them.”

Acts 13:7-8; “One day while they were offering worship to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said,”

“I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them.”

3. So it was that after fasting and prayer they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”

Laying on of hands is a tradition still used in the ordination ceremony today in many churches.

Acts 6:1-7; “Laid Their Hands on Them.”

The appointment to a position of service in which one is authorized to use the common resources of the congregation is a solemn occasion. It is not to be taken lightly.

The **Apostles prayed** about what they were about to do, invoking God's guidance and blessing. **Then they laid their hands on these seven men** and in this way **appointed them** special servants of the congregation.

**People are set apart for service
never for salvation.**

Apostles Were Also the Leaders.



Acts 6:1-7; Apostles Were Also the Leaders!

At this time the Apostles were all in Jerusalem.

**They were functioning as Apostles
but also as Leaders of the Jerusalem assembly.**

**Later the LEADERS of the congregation
as we learn from **1 Timothy 3** and **Titus 1**
are called ELDERS, BISHOPS or PASTORS
and are the primary leaders
of each local autonomous congregation.**

They would require **the qualifications
described in **Timothy and Titus.****

**The Apostles would be moving on
to other places. Then elders would
be needed in the Jerusalem congregation.**

Elders Soon Appointed



Elders Soon Appointed.

**The elders of the congregations of Judea,
would include the Jerusalem congregation,
are first mentioned in Acts 11:29-30;
They are next mentioned in Acts 15;**

**If you would like to learn more about
the qualifications and duties of elders
of the church? Then see later studies
In **Topical Studies** on my website.**

Acts 6:7; The Result of the SOLUTION?

The choice of these men and how they were chosen shows how the Spirit works.

The Hellenists imagined that the HEBREWS were neglecting THEIR widows.

Yet when the problem is brought out into the open, the assembly REVEALED ITS STRENGTH -NOT WEAKNESS!

The HEBREW Christians acted SO GRACIOUSLY, by agreeing to appoint ALL SEVEN from the people who thought that they were being neglected!

They PILED ALL THE HONOURS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICE on the people who thought they were being ignored!

Acts 6:7; The Result of the SOLUTION?

Now, quite apart from being in harmony with the Spirit of Christ, what they did was plain common sense, **GOOD PSYCHOLOGY!**

Is there someone in the congregation who is critical and complaining?

**PUT HIM TO WORK! GIVE HIM A JOB!
BURDEN HIM WITH RESPONSIBILITY!**

Acts 6:7; The Result of the SOLUTION?

**“The word of God kept on spreading;
and the number of the disciples continued
to increase greatly in Jerusalem.”**

**“a great many of the priests
were becoming obedient to the faith.”**

**Hearing the Apostles preach every day in
the temple courts had an effect
on the many sons of Aaron who served
as priests in the temple every day.
A large number were converted.**

Acts 6:7; The Result of the SOLUTION?

**“The word of God kept on spreading;
and the number of the disciples continued
to increase greatly in Jerusalem.”**

**These verses refer to Apostles
and Disciples. What is the difference
between an Apostle and a Disciple?**

**“The things that mark an apostle signs,
wonders and miracles, were done
among you with great perseverance.”**

2 Cor 12:12;

Acts 6:7; “A Large Number of Priests.”



Acts 6:7; “A Large Number of Priests.”

“a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”

With good leadership and the ministry carried out effectively in every area, the church grew.

Many people and even some of the leaders of the Jews had believed in Jesus but had been afraid to publicly confess their faith because they would have been put out of the synagogues. (John 12:42;)

Power of the Pharisees



Power of the Pharisees?

The Pharisees controlled the synagogues of Israel and were the main enemies of Jesus.

These priests who accepted the gospel were no doubt ostracized by the High Priest and their synagogues.

The priests become more bold in publicly professing Jesus as the congregations grows.



Acts 6:7; “obey the gospel?”

**All who do not obey the gospel
will be destroyed because of their sin at
the return of Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:8;).**

**“Obeying the faith” (Acts 6:7;) means
doing what Jesus has commanded an
unsaved person to do in order to be saved.
(Mark 16:16;).**

**It does not mean earning one’s salvation
by perfect law keeping.**

**This is the kind of works that
cannot save us (Ephesians 2:8-10;)**

Acts 6:7; “obey the gospel?”

The kind of works that save us is the kind James describes in James 2:21-28;

**Baptism is commanded
but the “sinner’s prayer” is not.**

Acts 6:1-7; Division in the church?

**Do we see the same kinds
of divisions today?**

What can we do about it?

“Take every care to **preserve the unity
of the Spirit by the peace
that binds you together. Eph 4:3;**

Loving each other from the heart. (1 Pet 1:22;)

United in Purpose. (Phil 2:2;)

Bearing one another's burdens. (Gal 6:2;)

**Strongly unified across ethnic, cultural,
and sociological boundaries. (Gal 3:28;)**

Acts 6:7; Maintain the Unity?

Unity is a key factor for body life
and spirituality.

Satan seeks to **destroy unity** by tempting
members to turn on one another
or by apathy.

Quality spiritual leadership
may aid in preserving unity
It's ok to disagree, but not to divide.

Acts 6:1-7; Seven Serving men?

To Maintain unity of the body in Christ.

All of us MAY have to SUFFER and SERVE in whatever capacity is needed.

EVEN be asked to **lay down our lives for the SAKE of our Lord and MASTER.**



Acts 6:1-7; In Conclusion!

Remember the **key points** seen in our study:-

There is a distinction between the work of the congregation in **evangelism** and providing **benevolence** to needy saints.

Even **religious leaders who are in error** can be taught the word of the Lord.

There will be those who will **reject the Word of God.**

Some people will be **strongly affected by God's word.**

Acts 6:1-7; Division and Discrimination.

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**Next in the series:- 6:8; to 7:29;
Stephen Preaching**