

Acts 6

Acts 6.1-7

V1 – Was the complaint that arose in the church at Jerusalem? The Greek-speaking widows were not being fed

-Why were there Greek-speaking widows in Jerusalem (a Hebrew and Aramaic speaking city)? Because of the people who were in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost from many other parts of the world

V2 – Why did the apostles not take care of the problem themselves? They had many other things to do that could only be handled by them

-They needed to delegate this job to other men in the congregation - We call this the "delegation of jobs" or "delegation of authority" today

V3 – What did the apostles tell the congregation to do? Choose 7 men from the congregation to take care of the feeding of the Greek-speaking widows

-What were the qualifications that the apostles set for these men? Good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom

-Technically, why were these not the first deacons? Because the qualifications for deacons are given in *1 Timothy 3* and are different from the qualifications of these 7 men

-However, they were definitely forerunners of deacons

-Why? Because the deacons do for the elders what these 7 men did for the apostles: Carry out assignments that the leaders of the church did not have time to do deal with

-We might call these 7 men "proto-deacons" – in other words, forerunners of deacons

-Are there any Old Testament examples of the delegation of jobs? Read Exodus 18.13-27 –

The father-in-law of Moses urged Moses to appoint men to deal with problems with the people

-Otherwise, Moses would have been overcome with the job that he had

-This is a great principle for elders today – there is literally not enough time for the elders to take care of everything at a typical congregation

-So deacons are to be appointed to carry out assignments on behalf of elders

-What are some examples of jobs that can be assignments to deacons today? The treasury, building and grounds, snow-plowing (in the North), cutting the grass (in the South), the list goes on and on

-Good and wise elders will delegate jobs to the deacons, so that the elders can deal with the spiritual needs of the congregation

V4 – What did the elders at Jerusalem need to do the most? They had to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word

V5 – How did the congregation react to this plan? They were very much in favor of it, and 7 men were chosen

-Do we ever hear of any of these men again? Yes: Stephen and Philip (both became preachers, although Stephen died shortly after this passage)

-Some people say that possibly the descendants of Nicolas were the Nicolaitans (false teachers mentioned in the letters to the seven churches of Asia in *Rev. 2.6, 15*; however, there is no evidence of this

V 6 – The apostles approved of the recommendations of the congregation and passed on the spiritual gifts to the 7 men

V 7 – One of several reports in *Acts* on the growth of the church

-**What people in particular were being converted?** Priests

-**A great lesson here?** Never to prejudge anyone as unfit to be invited to become a Christian

Acts 6.8-15

V 8 – **What was Stephen doing?** Performing miracles

V 9 – **Who argued with Stephen and his preaching and miracles?** Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria and Cilicia and Asia Minor

V 10 – **Were these false teachers able to refute the preaching of Stephen?** No

V 11 – **What did they resort to doing?** They brought in false witnesses to tell lies about Stephen

-**Specifically, what charge did they bring against him?** That he had blasphemed Moses and God

V 12 – They stirred up the people of Jerusalem and the Jewish elders and scribes

-**What did they do to Stephen?** They dragged him to the Sanhedrin

V 13 – They brought more false witnesses to testify against Stephen

-Remember that the 10 Commandments forbade bearing false testimony against someone (*Exodus 20.16* – Commandment #9) – so they were openly violating the 10 Commandments in their attempt to discredit Stephen

V 14 – **What were the specific charges that they brought against Stephen?**

1. That he was preaching that Jesus would destroy the temple

2. That he would change the customs handed down to the Jewish people

-Very interesting: both charges were false - **How could those charges be refuted?**

1. Jesus was not talking about the literal temple, but his body

2. The Jewish people could still practice their customs, but their Old Testament law had been done away with when the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom at the death of Jesus Christ on the cross

V 15 – **How did Stephen appear as he was standing before the Sanhedrin?** He had the face of an angel

-But notice: They still were not ashamed of what they were doing (in spite of all the terrible things they were doing to Stephen)

-**What person who became famous in the New Testament was present at the interrogation and stoning of Stephen?** Saul (later named Paul)

-**Read Acts 7.58, Acts 22.20, Acts 26.10, and 1 Timothy 1.12-17** – incredible words of remorse as Paul as he looked back on his involvement with the treatment of Stephen