



Acts 6 | Session 16 | Serving, Seven, and Synagogues

Acts 6

Verse 1—

And in those days, the days of daily teaching in the temple, and in every house (5:42). **The number of disciples was multiplied.** The word **disciple** means a learner or pupil. The apostles were fulfilling what Jesus had taught them in Matthew 28:19,20. They were teaching the Law, and preparing the Jews to enter the Kingdom of God, by *repentance and baptism*. The word **disciple** is not used by the apostle Paul. Today, we are not called disciples, rather as the body of Christ, we are *complete in him* (Colossians 2:10). As the body of Christ, we are not commanded to *make disciples, per se*. We are to *seek those things which are above* (Colossians 3:1,2).

There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews. **Grecians** were the *Greek speaking Jews*; i.e. the *Hellenistes* (these were most likely born in foreign lands and who embraced Greek culture). **The Hebrews** were those of the Israel nation. It has been repeated over and over that these spoke Aramaic, but we should question that. More likely, Hellenists spoke Greek and Hebrews spoke Hebrew. **Their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations**, that is *the daily diakonia*. This is from the word *diakonos* which means *servant* or where we get the word *deacon*. This daily **ministrations** was the handing out of food and other necessities for those in the Jewish *ekklesia* who were poor and needed help (Acts 4:35). Because there were so many in need as the **disciples** multiplied (at this point there were thousands), these particular widows were getting passed over by the apostles.

Verse 2—

The twelve are identified separately from the **multitude of the disciples**. They were now established as the leaders of the assembly. The work load was becoming too much for the **twelve**. **Called the multitude of the disciples**, the passage doesn't tell us where or how they did this. Likely, they gathered around them the **multitude** of those who were at the temple (Solomon's porch), and presented them with the problem which was the distribution of food was expanding—those who were doing the serving needed more help and it would not have been practical for the **twelve** to serve since they would no longer be able to teach and preach the **word of God** (i.e., make more disciples). **Serve tables**, staff the tables where the food was handed out.

Verse 3—

The apostles quickly resolved the *murmuring* in verse 1 with a plan. **Seven men of honest report.** These men would have been in charge of the finances, buying the food, etc. They would be holding the *money bag*, so to speak. Honesty was important. Maybe the apostles thought back to Judas Iscariot who was in charge of the *money bag*, and *who was a thief* (John 12:6). Notice these **seven men** would be over the **business** of the *assembly*.

Verse 4—

The apostles were not the pastors. This was not a model for the church today. At this point the **word** that is being given is the kingdom. Their prayers were likely prayers for *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done*. Today we live in a different dispensation with pastors, deacons, church administration and program (I am not saying all these are necessarily good things).

Verse 5,6—



How **they chose** the men we are not told. In Acts 1:26 they *cast lots*, but after the Holy Spirit had been given the casting of lots is never mentioned again. Perhaps they chose them by vote? All of the men chosen have Greek names, **Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas**. The people chose the men, but the **apostles** commissioned them or ordained them by **prayer and the laying on of their hands**.

Verse 7—

The result of the problem being solved was that the **word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly**. Even many of the Jewish **priests were obedient to the faith**, that is they believed that Jesus was Messiah, had repented and had been baptized. The commission given to the apostles by Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8) had not spread further than Jerusalem at this point. But that is about to change.

Verse 8—

And Stephen, *Stephen* was the first of the seven who had been chosen to serve the tables. He was one of the seven men of honest report. Now we discover more about Stephen, he was **full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people**. The Jews always required a sign (John 4:48). He, like the apostles, had *received power by the Holy Ghost* who enabled him to manifest these *wonders*. We are not told what these were, but the point is that Stephen is now acting as an ambassador for Christ on account of the Apostle's commission.

Verse 9—

Then is a conjunction that connects verse 8 with 9, *because of the wonders and miracles, then...* **There arose certain of the synagogue**. The **synagogue** is the Jewish gathering place, or the Jewish place of worship—it is not a church. This **synagogue** was made up of a group of extremely devout Jews who were **Libertines** who were freedmen, or liberated slaves. Rabbinic tradition says there were around 480 synagogues in Jerusalem. For this particular one to **dispute with Stephen** may give an indication that it was large and influential.

Verse 10—

They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit of Stephen's speech. In other words, he spoke wise truth.

Verse 11—

What do evil men do when they can't stand up to the truth? They spread lies, and in this case **they suborned men**. The word **suborned** is an interesting Greek word, *hupoballo*. The word *hupo* can be translated *under*. And the word *ballo* is to *throw*, like our word *ball*. We have a saying, *they threw him under the bus*. That's the idea of what happened here. We have Stephen, an honest man, full of faith and wisdom, and well spoken. These underhanded men claimed Stephen was a blasphemer against Moses, and God!

Verse 12—

And, just like we see happening today **they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes**. Repeat a lie often enough and people will believe it. These **suborned men came upon him** that is they stood next to him, **and caught him**. This doesn't mean he was running away, but that they grabbed him by force, and **brought him to the council**, that is, they held on to him.

