



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Acts of the Apostles

## Chapter 6

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# Introduction

In This Chapter We Will :

- Learn how the church in Jerusalem handled their internal problems
- Examine the process of selecting and appointing those who serve in the Lord's church
- Evaluate the charges that were brought against Stephen

# Seven Chosen to Serve (6:1-7)



## The Problem (1)

- As the church grew, there arose a complaint
- When Satan has assailed the Church on the outside, and with little result and in vain, he assails it on the inside, with civil dissension and strife between themselves: but the apostles take occasion by this to set order in the Church
- The Hellenists were complaining against the Hebrews
- The Grecians were not Greeks, or Gentiles, but foreign Jews, who were born and brought up out of Palestine, and spoke the Greek language
- The Hebrews were Jewish Christians who sought to preserve Jewish culture

# Seven Chosen to Serve (6:1-7)



## The Solution (3-6)

- The twelve apostles summon the multitude of disciples
- The twelve: This language shows beyond doubt that Matthias was recognized as an apostle
- That it was not proper that the apostles should give their time to these matters instead of preaching
- To look after the distribution of food

# Seven Chosen to Serve (6:1-7)



- The Apostles summon the disciples and charge them to select seven men whom the apostles might appoint to take care of this responsibility
- They must be filled with gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, necessary to rightly managing this trust; men of truth, and hating covetousness
- In choosing deacons (and much more in choosing ministers and priests) there must be an examination of both their learning and their manners of life
- So the apostles might give themselves to prayer and the word of God
- Observe that the apostles regard prayer of equal importance with preaching

# Seven Chosen to Serve (6:1-7)



- Seven are selected by the people and appointed by the apostles through prayer and the laying on of hands
- Stephen: A person every way properly fitted for his work; and thus qualified to be the first martyr of the Christian Church
- Philip: Distinguished as Philip the evangelist
- He gave the gospel to Samaria, converted the eunuch, and afterwards lived and labored at Caesarea (Acts 21:8)
- Their names are all Greek, it is likely they were all of the "Grecian" class, which would effectually restore mutual confidence



# Seven Chosen to Serve (6:1-7)



- With the problem solved, the word of God spread
- And the number of disciples multiplied greatly, including the obedience
- By such preachers as the apostles and these deacons, no wonder the doctrine of God increased - became widely diffused and generally known; in consequence of which, the number of the disciples must be greatly multiplied: for God will ever bless his own word, when ministered by those whom he has qualified to proclaim it

# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



## His Ministry (8-10)

- Full of faith and power, Stephen did great wonders and signs among the people
- The remarkable death of this first Christian martyr, which soon occurred, gave occasion to the sacred writer to give a detailed account of his character, and of the causes which led to his death
- He is the first gospel preacher, not an apostle, whose work is named
- He is also the first, not an apostle, under the new dispensation, to work miracles



# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



- Philip, also, of the seven, possessed miraculous power (Acts 8:6)
- Both received the imposition of apostolic hands
- This was the first in a series of persecutions against Christians which filled the church with blood, and which closed the lives of thousands, perhaps a million, in the great work of establishing the gospel on the earth
- Disputed with some from the Synagogue of the Freedmen
- The Jews were scattered in all parts of the world
- In every place they would have synagogues
- Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia

# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



- But it is also probable that there would be enough foreign Jews residing at Jerusalem from each of those places to maintain the worship of the synagogue; and at the great feasts, those synagogues adapted to Jewish people of different nations would be attended by those who came up to attend the great feasts
- It is certain that there was a large number of synagogues in Jerusalem
- Stephen was wise, well exercised and experienced, in Divine things; and, as appears by his defense, in the following chapter, well versed in the Jewish history

# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



- The spirit by which he spoke was the Holy Spirit, and its power was irresistible
- They were obliged either to yield to its teachings, or were confounded by its truth

# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



## The Accusations (11-14)

- When they could not answer Stephen's arguments as a disputant, they prosecuted him as a criminal, and brought false witnesses against him
- Hired false witnesses, which seems to have been commonly done by the Jews; so they did in the case of Christ
- They accused him of speaking against the law of Moses, and so against God
- They alarmed people's fears, as had been done before when they sought to put the Lord Jesus to death, Matthew 27
- The elders - The members of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council
- To bring him to the (Sanhedrin) council

# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



- Set up false witnesses: False, in that they perverted what he said, so as to give it a meaning not meant
- They charged Stephen with blasphemy against:
  - The holy place the temple & against the law of Moses
- An example of frivolous objectors or false accusers, who gather false conclusions from things that are well uttered and spoken
- He no doubt did preach the end of the Jewish dispensation and the reign of Christ, but he neither blasphemed Moses nor God

# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



## His Composure (15)

- All who sat in the council looked steadfastly at him
- Fixing the eyes intently on him
- They were probably attracted by the unusual appearance of the man, his meekness, his calm and collected fearlessness, and the proofs of conscious innocence and sincerity
- The face of an angel - This expression is one evidently denoting that he manifested evidence of sincerity, gravity, fearlessness, confidence in God



# Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (6:8-15)



- It is used in the Old Testament to denote special wisdom, 2 Samuel 14:17; 2 Samuel 19:27
- The expression is used to denote the impression produced on the countenance by communion with God; the calm serenity and composure which follow a confident committing of all into his hands



# Conclusion

- What initiated the need for the deacons' ordination in this chapter?
  - a. The increase in the disciples' number
  - b. The disciples were tired of the service
  - c. Trying to find a job for those to be ordained
  
- How many deacons were to be ordained?
  - a. 2
  - b. 5
  - c. 7
  
- What specifications would they look for in these deacons?
  - a. Of good reputation
  - b. Full of the Holy Spirit & wisdom
  - c. Cool, funny, and beautiful voice.
  - d. Both a & b



# Conclusion

- In v.5, name the chosen men who became deacons.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_
- When does the ordination of deacons occur in the Coptic Church nowadays?
  - a. After the reading of the Acts
  - b. After the Prayer of Reconciliation
  - c. During the Vespers' prayers



# Conclusion

- Fill in the blank. The twelve are called to focus on: -----  
and -----, with the other ministries being accomplished by-----  
----- and-----
- According to Acts 6, ordaining Deacons is:
  - a. A synergy between Laity and clergy.
  - b. Congregation submit names and Bishops ordain them.
  - c. neither congregation nor bishops have a role in that.
  - d. a & b.
- What is the meaning of these ranks of deaconship?
  - a. Psaltos = \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Anagnostis = \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Epideacon = \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Archdeacon = \_\_\_\_\_



# Conclusion

- What was St. Stephen's rank?
  - a. Archdeacon
  - b. Reader
  - c. Priest
- People from the Synagogue of the Freedom were not able to resist the wisdom & the Spirit by which St. Stephen spoke, that's why, they accused him with blasphemy.
  - a. True
  - b. False
- How did the people in the council see St. Stephen when looking steadfastly to him?
  - a. His face as the face of an angel
  - b. Terrified & praying to God to deliver him
  - c. Seeing the Heavens opened & the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God