

Elections & Ordinations

1. The first election and ordinations are found in Acts 6:1-5:

*(1) “In those days when the number of **disciples (church members)** was increasing, the Grecian Jews (from outside of Jerusalem) among them complained against those of the Aramaic speaking community (lived inside Jerusalem) because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. (2) So the **Twelve (Apostles, Pastors, Overseers, Elders)** gathered all the **disciples (church members)** together and said: ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to **wait (diakonon, serve)** on tables. (3) **Brothers (church members), choose** seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. **We (Apostles, Pastors, Overseers, Elders)** will **turn this responsibility over to them (first Deacons), (4)** and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word.’ (5) This proposal pleased the whole group. **They (church members) chose** Stephen...Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas...(6) **They (church members) presented these men to the Apostles (Pastors/Overseers/Elders), who prayed and laid their hands on them (ordained).***

A. It is to be noted that the **Apostles were the acting Pastors, Overseers, or Elders of this first Church** (see “**Elders/Pastors**”). They made the decision on **how** the Church would correct the problem that they were having with the widows, and **gave the qualifications and number** of the men whom the members of the Church would **choose** to serve and co-ordinate this special office (distributing food to all the widows in the Church).

(1) By the definition of the word **Deacon (diakonon, servant)**, it is assumed that since these seven men were chosen by the congregation **not** to oversee the entire Church, but **one specific area of the Church**, they must have been **the first Deacons**, not Elders (joining the Apostles in overseeing the entire congregation).

B. It should also be noted that the **Apostles (acting Pastors, Overseers, Elders)** told the “**brothers**” to “**choose**” the men that would fill this special office or position.

(1) In *verse 3*, the “**Brothers**” (referring to the “**disciples**” or church members mentioned in *verse 2*) are asked to “**choose**” seven men to oversee this service to the widows. The word “**choose**” is the Greek word “**episkeptomai**,” translated: “*to seek out.*” It comes from the Greek word “**episkopeo**,” translated: “*to look carefully, to exercise the oversight, to visit or care for.*”

(2) In *verse 5*, “**Choose**” is the Greek word **eklego**, translated: “*to pick out, select...in the Middle Voice, to choose for oneself...*”

C. In *verse 3*, “**we will turn this responsibility over to them,**” is literally translated in the Greek: “**we will appoint over this office.**”

(1) “**Appoint**” is the Greek word “**kathistemi**,” translated: “*to appoint, or ordain*”

a person to a position. In this sense the verb is often translated to make or to set, in appointing (or ordaining) a person to a place of authority.

(2) The Apostles (Pastors, Overseer, Elders) set up the **position and office** that needed to be filled. In other words, as Overseers, they gave the **qualifications and duties of this particular office**:

a. The **duties** of this office are found in *verse 1*: The Church needed men to **oversee the distribution of food to the widows** in the Church.

a. The **qualifications** are found in *verse 3*: “**choose seven men**” who were “*known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*”

(3) Then, according to *verse 6*, the Apostles (Pastors, Overseers, Elders) officially “**ordained**” or “**appointed**” them into this “**office**” or **position** of the Church.

2. Titus 1:5: “*The reason I (Paul) left you (Titus) in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and **appoint** Elders in every town, as I directed you.*”

A. “**Appoint**” is the same Greek word “*kathistemi*,” used in *Acts 6:3* (see 1-C).

(1) It must be remembered that when the *Apostles (Pastors, Overseers, Elders)* **appointed** men to a special *office* or position, the *disciples (church members)* still did the **choosing**.

(2) Titus was to set up the office of Elders (being a new and spiritually immature Church, they may have already had Deacons — *1 Timothy 3:8-12* — when Paul was with them, as the first Church in *Acts 6:1-6*; and Titus remained until some of these men could grow spiritually mature and qualify to take an Elder position) and give the qualifications that were to be met as directed by the Apostle Paul (*1 Timothy 3:1-7*)

(3) Titus would then be the acting **Pastor, Overseer, or Elder** (leading the congregation and any Deacons who may have been chosen) until such time that the members could “**choose**” men **qualified** to be Overseers or Elders, whom Titus would then “**appoint**” or “**ordain**” these men into the “**office**” as the Apostles did in the first Church as recorded in *Acts 6:1-6*.

3. Acts 14:23: “*Paul and Barnabas **appointed** Elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord.*”

A. “**Appointed**” is the Greek word “*cheirotoneo*,” which translates: “*primarily used of voting in the Athenian legislative assembly and meaning to stretch forth the hands (cheir, the hand, teino, to stretch).*”

B. This same word, “*appointed*” is used in *II Corinthians 8:19*: “*What is more, he (Titus) was chosen (cheirotoneo appointed) by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering.*”

4. When both *Acts 14:23* and *II Corinthians 8:19* are taken literally, and used with *Acts 6:2-6* (in context), they indicate that the early Church (both Jew and Gentile) *chose* (by a show of hands) their own leaders (Pastor, Overseer, Elder or Deacon) to fill special *offices* in the Church as deemed necessary by the acting Overseers, who led them in such elections.

A. The **acting Overseers** (Apostles, Evangelist, Pastor, Elders) were the ones responsible for “*appointing*” men to the office of Elder or Deacon, because they led the church members in their selection or election of such men, and officially “*ordained*” them into the office.

(1) In *Titus 1:5*, Paul told Titus to “*appoint Elders in every town.*” He used the word “*kathistemi*” (to *appoint or ordain*).

(2) When *Acts 14:23* explains how Paul and Barnabas “*appointed Elders for them in each Church,*” it uses the word “*cheirotoneo*” (to *appoint or chose by a show of hands*).

B. When we **compare all three Scriptures**, it is clear that the **acting Overseers** decided **when** the Church needed either Elders or Deacons, **how many** the Church needed, **the duties** of their jobs, and **the qualifications** they must meet before they could be selected (or voted on by a show of hands of the church members); and then they officially **ordained** them into that position or *office*.

5. Once you choose Elders & Deacons:

A. I Thessalonians 5:12,13: “*Now we ask of you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord, and who admonish you. Hold them in high regard in love because of their work.*”

B. Hebrews 13:17: “*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*”

C. I Peter 5:1-4: “*To the Elders among you, I appeal as a fellow Elder...Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as Overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*”

D. I Timothy 5:19: “*Do not entertain an accusation against an Elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*”