

## Acts Chapter 6

### Vvs 1-7

This is a transition section leading to a new phase of the mission outside of Jerusalem. The community has developed a little dispute concerning the distribution of food. Previously it had been noted that there was not a needy person among them for they shared. This is great grace. Now it seems some less than Hebrew Hellenists were not getting a fair share.

So the infrastructure must be the problem. A practical solution is proposed.

I love the way the disciples remain above the fray. We will keep praying and sharing the Word and here is the solution to the problem. This solution does not involve or include the 12.

Surprise surprise the church requires administration and the disciples don't want to handle that part of the job. They are the prophetic voice. Oh how nice it would be to not have to deal with administration.

This section begins to share a pattern of resolving congregational conflict.

There is disparity among the people (especially regarding assets). Growth brings potential problems and there are needy among the faithful.

The OT prophets make clear that the treatment of the poor and powerless effectively gauges Israel's relationship with God and calls Israel to repentance and renewal. Even though the Hellenists and Hebrews are identified as groups it is assumed they are of one mind and one witness. This designation seems to related to which languages they speak. So, it also may be a language barrier that separates them as much as anything.

The establishment of a second tier hierarchy within the fellowship is interesting. The 12 who I shall start referring to as the apostles only designate these leaders from among a larger group of disciples. Disciples now learn from the apostles. The apostles gather the community and ask them to select 7 from among their number for a leadership role. They must be of good standing, full of the Spirit and full of wisdom.

There is diversity among these seven.

Commentators have made much of the Apostle's laying on of hands. This service of installation indicates their religious authority to govern the community's internal life and sanction its decisions.

This section ends with the assumption the problem is solved the community of the faithful is growing and all is right with the world. Amen

Vvs 8-15

Stephen is not the focus of attention and will be for the entirety of chapter 7 and the first few verses of chapter 8.

In these verses Stephen (not Paul) becomes the center of our attention. He is one of the new 7 leaders that has the charge to distribute the food and make administrative decisions for the faithful.

He is called to continue the work the Messiah taught.

Stephen is prophet like, does many deeds of power in God's name. Stephen is confronted by a new group (almost zealous in their faith). Outsiders from the diaspora – Freedmen. They are not happy with Stephen and his ways.

He is accused of opposing Moses and God. Which leads to his soliloquy in Chapter 7.

Luke is clear that Stephen is a man of the Holy Spirit and prophet-like.

He speaks with power and performs signs and wonders

Again signs and wonders is reminiscent of Joel's prophecy. Yet the faithful Jews argue with Stephen concerning their repentance and their opposition to Stephen and his kind.

The synagogue of the Freedmen is not a place but a fellowship of freed slaves from outside Jerusalem. They may have acquired influence with their freedom and potentially were Roman citizen's – Jews – that settled back in their homeland. Seems to be some relation between the Hellenistic people of Jesus way and the Freedmen.

The Freedmen level 3 accusations – blasphemes against Moses and God, never stops saying things against the holy place and the law, and he claims that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place.

Interesting that blasphemy against Moses is not illegal.

Stephen's trial seems to parallel Jesus' own trial. He is brought before the same tribunal that has already flogged the apostles. Not much of a chance of a fair trial.

The charge that Jesus will destroy the Temple is the first mention of this in Acts.

Jesus in a sense replaces the Temple, by fulfilling the law and thus eliminating the need for the Temple.

Having the apostles and now Stephen center their actions in the Temple and Temple area highlight the fact that Jesus surpasses the Temple authority.

I find it fascinating that Stephen is almost transfigured (his face like that of an angel) in the face of his accusers.

Like Jesus on the mountain top, like Moses after encountering God, Stephen is transformed and angelic.

Thus ends chapter 6