

**Acts 6:1-7, Appointment of the Seven**  
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**Overview**

1. The Overall Movement of Acts 1:8
  - a) 2:5-5:42, Jerusalem
  - b) 6:1-12:25, Judea and Samaria (with a push out to Antioch)
  - c) 13:1ff, Ends of the Earth
  
2. Place of 6:1-7 in the book: it is a transition between the first and second sections, belonging to the second, but closely recalling the first. **(Detailed notes here not in sermon.)**
  - a) Does it belong with what goes before?
    - 1) Some argue that the summary nature of 6:7 (compare 12:24; 19:20 about the growth of the word of God, the seed of Mark 4:8; 9:31; 16:5 about the growth of the churches) shows that this is the END of a section.
    - 2) Note that the sequence (internal order in 1-6 yields external growth in 7) is a recapitulation of ch. 5. In fact, compare

a> Initial growth	ch. 2,3	6:1a
b> Need for internal order	ch. 5a	6:1b-6
c> Further growth	5:12-17	6:7
  
  - b) Does it belong rather with what goes after?
    - 1) 6:1 "In those days" sounds like a new beginning;
    - 2) The emphasis on Hellenists, and the introduction of Stephen, set up for the spread of the next chapters;
    - 3) Levinsohn p. 116 suggests that the *kai ... kai ... te* structure shows that this looks forward instead of back.
  
  - c) This kind of ambivalence is characteristic of a transitional section. Summarizes 3-5, and uses this as a base for the next section.
  
  - d) Query: Do the "summaries" all belong to transitional sections???
    - 1) 12:24 comes at the end of an external inclusio, thus secondary material. Thus 12:25, not 24, ends this section, and the next begins, as did ch. 6, with a look into the organizational features of the early church. In fact, if we include 1:15ff with the Jerusalem section, each of these three begins with organizational information!
    - 2) None of the other summaries is associated thus with organizational info. Perhaps Acts is tripartite after all, marked by geographic spread per 1:8, and successive insight into the organization of the church.

**A. Looking Back and Ahead**

This paragraph is transitional, so a good place to recall the

lessons we've learned and anticipate what is to come.

1. Looking Back: Recapitulation of ch's 2-5

This brief paragraph recaps the lesson of 4:32-5:11, that the church's effectiveness in external outreach depends on its internal love and purity.

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|----------------------------|-----------|--------|
| a) Initial growth          | ch. 2-4   | 6:1a   |
| b) Need for internal order | 4:32-5:11 | 6:1b-6 |
| c) Further growth          | 5:12-17   | 6:7    |

In 2-5, some aspects of the prayer of 4:29,30 were answered immediately, but the full blessing awaited the internal business of 4:32-5:11. Here, the disciples are multiplied (1,7), but only after the discussion of the Seven do we learn of the salvation of many priests.

Beloved, let us love one another. Rounding out our theology of the relation between love and evangelism:

- a) There is no biblical basis for seeking to attract people to the Lord by telling them, "God loves you."
- b) But there is definite place for love in two ways:
  - 1) WE must love them; 2 Tim. 2:10, cf. the compassion of Jeremiah.
  - 2) We must show them how we love one another (John 17:21). It's easy to bandy about the "love of God." But the effective love is only that which we demonstrate ourselves.

2. Looking Ahead: Setting Up for Gentile Expansion

- a) Hints in this section about growing diversity in the church
  - 1) The Twelve are all palestinian Jews, born and raised in the land of promise.
  - 2) 1, Grecians vs. Hebrews. All are Jews, but some have roots in the diaspora and speak Greek, while others are long-time residents of Jerusalem and speak Hebrew or Aramaic. (NB: Manifesting unity in the diverse body of Christ has always been a very difficult challenge, but a very important one, for which the Lord prayed in John 17.)
  - 3) Nicolas was a "proselyte," thus born a Gentile and converted to Judaism. Proselytes may have been saved earlier (Acts 2:10), but this is the first one we know of for certain.

b) What do we see in the chapters to come?

Like ch. 2-5, this section begins with a major speech and continues with results stemming from that speech.

- 1) Stephen does NOT preach the gospel. His message is not that the savior has come, but that Israel has repeatedly rejected the Lord. See this as preparation for turning to the gentiles. The Jerusalem precedent to 13:46, 51 (Paul and Barnabas shaking the dust off their feet in Antioch of Pisidia).

- 2) The response to Stephen's sermon is NOT turning to the Lord, but violent persecution. As the event that splashes believers throughout the land, this also prepares for the coming gentile emphasis.
    - a> Leads to geographic spread of the believers, 8:4; 11:19.
    - b> As a result, increased diversity:
      - 1> 8:4-40 Philip and the eunuch (Gaza; a believer to the south)
      - 2> 9:32-11:18 Peter and Cornelius (Caesarea; first Gentile saved directly into the church without first becoming a Jew)
      - 3> 11:19-30 Founding of church in Antioch; famine visit
  - 3) This section phases Peter out and Paul in, replacing the Apostle of the Circumcision with that of the Uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7,8).
    - a> 9:1-31 Salvation of Saul (the church in Damascus; believers to the north)
    - b> 12:1-24 Peter's imprisonment and escape; Herod's death
- c) The lesson for us is that diversity in the church, while difficult, is the Lord's will. Need to rely on him to handle it properly.

## B. The Division of Labor

1. The apostles' recognition of their own limitations (!) is a germinal recognition of the notion of spiritual gifts, and with it, the ministry of the body.
  - a) A few can't do it all, even if they are apostles.
  - b) All who labor should not be doing the same thing. Though the sequel shows that the Seven can indeed teach, that is not the purpose for which they are set apart. Some concentrate on teaching, others on service.
2. Qualifications for Leadership
 

These qualifications are required in two ways: the candidate must have the *substance*, and it must be *evident* to those around him.

  - a) Evidence: they must be of "honest report," *marturoumenous*. The idea of the word is that of bearing testimony; their qualifications must be so strong that others recognize them.
    - 1) People described thus:
      - a> Cornelius, 10:22
      - b> Timothy, 16:2
      - c> Ananias, 22:12
      - d> Paul, 26:5 (testify)
      - e> Heroes of the OT, Heb. 11:39
    - 2) Criterion for position in the assembly:
      - a> Widow, 1 Tim. 5:10
      - b> Elder, 1 Tim. 3:7 (marturia) -- by those without; even

unbelievers recognize the characteristics.

- b) Substance: twofold, echoed in vv. 5 and 8.
  - 1) Full of the HS. Contrast "filled with." The term here indicates spiritual maturity. Not only is the Spirit in them; he fills and controls them, thus giving them power (1:8; cf. v.8 here).
  - 2) Full of wisdom (vv. 5,8: faith). These are practical skills conveyed by the indwelling Spirit (cf. Isa. 11:2). Both are listed as gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8,9).
- c) Thus they must both have the *substance* of the Spirit's mature work in their lives, and show *evidence* of this substance that others can perceive. We err if we do not check for both; substance without evidence shows the need for further growth and experience, while evidence without substance is hypocrisy.

### 3. Beyond Qualifications

Attention to qualifications sometimes leads to a mechanical approach to identifying the ones the Lord has chosen to serve his people. The congregation here does not lose sight of the forest for the trees. They appear to go beyond the qualifications: the Seven selected to tend to this business all have Greek, not Hebrew, names. While such names could occur among Palestinian Jews (cf. Philip and Andrew among the Twelve), one suspects that the congregation concentrated on Greek-speaking men for this role as a dramatic assurance to the Grecian brethren of their love and concern.

### C. Comparison with 1:15-26

As we noted in ch. 1, we have two instances of selecting leaders, one before and one after the coming of the Spirit. What changes, and what stays the same?

#### 1. Comparison of the episodes

	ch. 1	ch. 6
a) Identification of the Need	15-22	2-4
b) People present ( <i>isthmi</i> ) a candidate	23	6a
c) They pray about it	24-25	6b
d) Confirmation	26 (lots)	6c (hands)

#### 2. There are two differences between these accounts: how the need is recognized, and how the candidates are confirmed. In which of these is the difference due to the coming of the Holy Spirit?

a) How are needs recognized? Do you need a verse for everything?

- 1) Acts 6 seems to show that the HS can guide us in particulars for which there are not specific scriptural guidelines. Not every particular of daily life is prescribed in the word of God. We can trust the Spirit to guide us in these matters. The alternatives are either paralysis (doing nothing where the Scriptures are silent) or twisting the Word of God to try to get it to teach what

it does not. It is better to follow the example here and trust God to guide through his Spirit.

2) This does not mean that after Pentecost we no longer look to the Scriptures for direction! We must never act contrary to Scripture, and where the Scriptures do speak, we should seek to know and follow them.

a> 13:44-47. Isa. 49:6 leads Paul and Barnabas to turn deliberately to the Gentiles.

b> 15:13-21. Amos 9:11,12 leads James to suggest minimal restrictions on Gentile believers.

3) *Application*: The believer has two guides to life: the Scriptures, and the Spirit. Like the pillar of cloud and fire in the OT. One pillar, but sometimes you could see the cloud, other times the fire. They will never lead in separate directions, and we are happy indeed when we see both together.

b) How are decisions confirmed? Here there does seem to be a real difference before and after Pentecost. 1:26 is the last time in the biblical history of God's people that they cast lots as a means of confirming a decision. Before the Spirit, the congregation selects two men, but only one is right. After, the Spirit guides them to select just the right set the first time. Cf. also 13:2.

### **Summary**

Principles here for our guidance:

1. External fruit requires internal love.
2. Diversity is a challenging blessing.
3. Recognize that God works through different gifts.
4. Church decisions should attend both to rigid qualifications and deep love.
5. The Spirit can lead us in daily decisions.

**Hymn:** Ps. 72:16ff (On Hilltops Sown) or "Bringing In the Sheaves" or Ps. 126 "When the Lord Turned Again"

### **Analysis**

#### A. Selection of the Seven

1. 1 )En de\ tai^s h(me/rais tau/tais plhquno/ntwn tw^n maghtw^n e)ge/neto goggusmo\s tw^n (Ellhnistw^n pro\s tou\s (Ebrai/ous, a) comments on *en tais hmerais tautais* (Heb. *bayammim hahem*) in the gospels and Acts: occurs in past tense narrative in three forms.

1) Sentence initial, as here, Matt. 3:1; Mark 8:1; Acts 1:15;

- seems to introduce new section.
- 2) Sentence initial with *kai egeneto* < *wayyehi*, Mark 1:9; Luke 2:1; 6:12; Acts 9:37; more continuity with what precedes;
  - 3) Non-sentence-initial, as in Luke 1:39; 4:2; 9:36; seems just to be temporal clause, with no discourse impact.
2. o(/ti pareqewrou^nto e)n th^| diakoni/a| th^| kaqhmerinh^| ai(xh^rai au)tw^n.
  3. quote p
    - a) quote f: 2 proskalesa/menoi de\ oi( dw/deka to\ plh^qos tw^n maqhtw^n ei)^pan,
    - b) quote:
      - 1) Ou)k a)resto/n e)stin h(ma^s katalei/yantas to\n lo/gon tou^ qeou^ diakonei^n trape/zais:
      - 2) contrast p
        - a> thesis: comment p
          - 1> text: 3 e)piske/yasqe de/, a)delfoi/, a)/ndras e)c u(mw^n marturoume/nous e(pta\ plh/reis pneu/matos kai\ sofi/as,
          - 2> comment <andras>: ou(\s katasth/somen e)pi\ th^s xrei/as tau/this:
        - b> antithesis: 4 h(meis de\ th^| proseuxh^| kai\ th^| diakoni/a| tou^ lo/gou proskarterh/somen.
  4. 5 kai\ h)/resen o( lo/gos e)nw/pion panto\s tou^ plh/qous,
  5. comment p
    - a) text: kai\ e)cele/canto Ste/fanon, a)/ndra plh/rhs pi/stews kai\ pneu/matos a(gi/ou, kai\ Fi/lippon kai\ Pro/xoron kai\ Nika/nora kai\ Ti/mwna kai\ Parmena^n kai\ Niko/laon prosh/luton )Antioxe/a,
    - b) comment <Stefanon>:
      - 1) 6 ou(\s e)/sthsan e)nw/pion tw^n a)postolwn,
      - 2) kai\ proseuca/menoi e)pe/qhkan au)toi^s ta\s xei^ras.
  6. 7 Kai\ o( lo/gos tou^ qeou^ hu)/canen,  
Growth idiom: parable of sower in Mark 4:8; Mustard seed in Matt. 13:32; Luke 13:19; Lilies in Matt. 6:28, Luke 12:27; for the idiom, 1 Cor. 3:6,7
  7. kai\ e)plhqu/neto o( a)riqmo\s tw^n maqhtw^n e)n )Ierousalh\m sfo/dra, closes *inclusio* with v.1???
  8. polu/s te o)/xlos tw^n i(ere/wn u(ph/kouon th^| pi/stei.