

ACTS 6:1-7

Introduction:

1. As believers, we know Satan doesn't give **up** in trying to stop God's purpose and people in the Church. We have seen how Satan has attacked the early Jewish Messianic Church in chapters 3-5. Satan used **outside** persecution and **inside** sin.
2. Now in Chapter 6, Satan (having failed up to this point) tries a third tactic. He sought to divide the believers by way of **ethnic** tension within and **favoritism**.

A. The Problem (Attack) -

Acts 6:1 - And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

1. At this time, there was a great growth of believers. Just meeting their spiritual needs would be a daunting **task**. But, also, there was the responsibility to make sure everyone could **eat** (common kitty-kingdom mindset).
2. The apostles/disciples realized that it was **impossible** to do all of this themselves. No doubt, it was discouraging to hear the believers murmuring among themselves.
 - a. With their numbers multiplying, it was easy for some to be neglected or **over**looked. The Grecians murmured about the Hebrews receiving better treatment and more food than the Grecian widows.
 - b. The Grecians were Jews who were non-Palestine Jews. Many Jews had been dispersed into **other** nations but still practiced Judaism. Living in foreign lands, they had learned the country's language, which was mainly **Greek** (these were 2nd-3rd generations).
 - c. Grecian widows were being neglected/**cheated** of necessary food to live on. They were seemingly pushed aside and called outsiders! This second-class feeling group of Jews was the result of some **racial** and cultural hostility carried into the Messianic Church.
3. Many of the Greek-speaking Jews had been to Pentecost and evidently had become believers. Because of this, they had remained under the apostles' ministry.
 - a. Jewish society/**families** tried to obey God's command to take care of their widows (Deut. 24:19-21, 26:12).
 - b. Paul also instructed believers within the Body of Christ:

1 Timothy 5:3-11 - Honour widows that are widows indeed. 1Tim. 5:4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 1Tim. 5:5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 1Tim. 5:6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 1Tim. 5:7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 1Tim. 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1Tim. 5:9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 1Tim. 5:10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 1Tim. 5:11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

B. The Apostles Priority -

Acts 6:2 - Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

1. The apostles had enough wisdom to stay **focused** on their message and calling. The 12 heard about the murmuring and neglect of some widows. So, they called for a meeting with the believers to explain that serving tables would take them **away** from their God-called responsibility of preaching the Kingdom offer. They couldn't handle both at the same time.

*They were saying, "You handle the tables and we'll serve the **Word**."

2. There are two important lessons here for us today:

- a. One lesson is that it is important to learn when to say **no**!

- b. The second lesson is there are many today who trust their programs rather than the Word and prayer. Too many pastors are forced to become C.E.O.s and administrators of the Church. But the pastor's priority is to equip believers for their knowledge, **lives**, and ministry.

*If a pastor goes administrative, he dooms the congregation to remain in spiritual **infancy**. That leaves the believers without enough truth to anchor them when problems or trials hit. There is **no** substitute for God's Word, power, and prayer!

Romans 1:9-10 - For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Rom. 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

Ephesians 1:16 - Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Philippians 1:3-4 - I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Phil. 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

Colossians 1:9 - For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

C. Qualifications Of Spiritual Men -

1. The apostles tell the believers to choose some spiritual men to organize and **oversee** the money and

Acts 6:3 - Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

feeding of the people, leaving no one out. In this way all could survive with fairness.

2. Then the apostles give the qualifications for the people they needed to appoint - seven qualified men.

- a. [of honest report] - These were men who had a good, **above** reproach reputation. They were witnessed to be men of integrity, holiness, and spirituality. This was because they would be entrusted to handle large sums of **money** for food. Also, they would organize the system and be relating/reacting with the people. They needed to be **trusted** to do their job.

*A lesson from this is that not all believers can be trusted (Ananias and Sapphira)!

- b. [full of the Holy Ghost] - These men were to be marked by a life **fully** yielded and surrendered to the Lord. They understood their sufficiency was all in God, so they were dependent upon Him.

*Paul said to us:

II Corinthians 3:4-6 - And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: 2Cor. 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God; 2Cor. 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

- c. [full...and wisdom,] - They had to have biblical (O.T. Apostles' truth) understanding with the ability to **apply** truth to life's situations.

James 1:25 - But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

*It was important to know truth (to have insight and discernment) in order to practice that truth.

Psalm 119:98-100 - Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me. Psalm 119:99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation. Psalm 119:100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

James 1:5 - If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

- d. [seven men] - Those who lead should be **men**. Ladies were/are equal, not inferior. But they are **never** to be leaders over men. God's order and design for the Church Body today is for men

to

take leadership positions as pastors and deacons - over the church and home!

I Corinthians 11:3 - But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God

I Timothy 2:11-14 - Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 1Tim. 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 1Tim. 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 1Tim. 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

God created first a man - **Adam**.

To build the ark against the flood, God chose a man - **Noah**.

The Nation Israel's leader was a man - **Abraham**.

To deliver Israel out of Egypt, God chose a man - **Moses**.

It was a man who built the Temple - **Solomon**.

In the Old Testament and in captivity, prophets were men.

Christ's twelve disciples were men.

The Body Church's originator was a man - **Paul**.

It was forty men who wrote the Bible.

The Godhead - Trinity is always in the "masculine gender".

The pastor...[if a man desires the office of a bishop].

The home is to be led by the man.

(I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:25)

3. Some believe these seven men were the first **deacons**.
 - a. These men were **never** called deacons, even though their spiritual qualifications were similar. (Remember, these are kingdom believers.)
 - b. The Greek word is "diakonos", simply meaning servant or to minister. This word is translated 29 times in the New Testament and it is only translated deacon **5** times (24 times it is not).
 - c. Also, Stephen and Philip are never called deacons elsewhere in the Scripture. Philip actually is called an **evangelist** (Acts 21:8).

D. The Apostles Commitment -

Acts 6:4 - But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

1. It

was the apostles' responsibility to teach the Words of God into the believers. Their teaching was powerful in part because of their praying.

*Prayer on the Word was vital in order to penetrate the **heart** of its hearers.

Remember:

Luke 24:44-45 - And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

John 14:26 - But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 16:13 - Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

2. Paul also said it is the Word (doctrine-truth) that builds **up** the believer.

Ephesians 4:14-15 - That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; Eph. 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

Acts 20:31-32, 36-38 - Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. Acts 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Acts 20:36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. Acts 20:37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Acts 20:38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

E. The Believers' Agreement and Appointing -

Acts 6:5-6 - And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Acts 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

1. All seven men chosen were to ensure **equality** of **distribution** of food to **all**, including the Greek-Jews-widows. This demonstrated the **love** of this Messianic Church. This helped to resolve the tension and avoid a split.
2. Stephen is one who is singled out as being a **stronger** believer spiritually [full of faith...Holy Ghost].
*Interestingly, all seven men chosen are **Grecians**, as all seven names are **Greek** and not Hebrew!
3. In verse 6, the apostles lay hands on the seven chosen men. This set them apart for their ministry. It identified and affirmed them by the Church's approval. By the apostles doing this, it also signified that they backed and **endorsed** them.

F. The Word's Explosion -

1. The pinnacle of the kingdom offer is **happening**. A multitude of Jews, including priests, believed in

Acts 6:7 - And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

the apostles' kingdom gospel. Jesus was the living Messiah. As a **nation**, they needed to repent and be water baptized to prepare themselves to be a kingdom of priests.

2. They had grown so much that they **lost** count of the exact number of converts. With some of the priests coming to faith, it truly was a demonstration of miraculous **conversions**.

Note: Acts 2:41 - 3000 were added to their group

Acts 2:47 - Believers were added daily

Acts 4:4 - Their number had grown up to 5000

Acts 5:14 - More were added, even multitudes of men-women

Acts 6:1 - Their number is multiplied

Acts 6:7 - Their numbers greatly increased

***How** could Israel turn their back on such evidence of the Kingdom-Messiah gospel truth that was being believed?

Perhaps the better question is, **why wouldn't the religious rulers embrace Messiah themselves?