

The Book of Acts

Chapter 6

Growth of the New Testament Church

Quiz

2

- What couple lied to God and died?
 - Ananias and Sapphira
- Specifically, what was their sin?
 - They **said** they gave all of the sale but they kept back part.
- What evil attitude was at the root of their sin?
 - Pride
- In Acts 5, how did the apostles get out of prison?
 - An angel delivered them

Quiz

3

- What did the angel tell the apostles to do once released?
 - Go, standing speak, in the temple, to the people, words of life
- Why were the guards and religious leaders perplexed when they opened the prison?
 - The doors were still locked but the men were gone
- Why did they recapture the apostles gently?
 - They feared the people would stone them
- What did Peter answer when rebuked for preaching?
 - “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Complaint in the church, v.1-2

4

- Note that the number of disciples multiplied. They now numbered in many thousands (Ac 2:41; 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1). As numbers increased so did the work and conflicts.
- Grecians murmured against the Hebrews.
 - The Grecians were “Jews” who had lived among the Gentiles, and who spoke the Greek language.
 - Hebrews were Jews that spoke mainly Hebrew.
- Grecian widows were not getting equal share of alms or food.
- The 12 said they should not leave the word to serve tables.

This division between predominantly Aramaic speaking Jews and predominantly Greek speaking Jews was marked everywhere in Judaism and no more so than in Jerusalem. The **Hellenists** (Greek speaking Jews) tended to be more affected by Greek culture and to use the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) rather than the Hebrew Scriptures, and thus to be broader in their views and outlook. They had a tendency to interpret things differently from the more orthodox, tending to be freer spoken in religious matters and interpretation. Naturally therefore, without actually splitting off, they tended to band together both doctrinally and practically. They felt more at home with each other. In Jerusalem there would be a number of synagogues which were regarded as Hellenistic. Peter Pett

Who were the Grecians?

5

Serving solution proposed, v.3-4

6

- The apostles proposed appointing seven Grecian deacons.
 - Choose men “among” (lit. out from) you, Grecians.
- The men must be qualified.
 - Honest report
 - Full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom
- They must be appointed over this business.
- The apostles determined to steadfastly continue in prayer and the ministry (i.e., serving) of the Word.

First deacons were chosen, v.5-7

7

- This pleased the whole multitude.
- The congregation chose seven men, v.5
 - Steven was noted for his fullness of faith and the Holy Spirit.
 - The Greek names imply that all were Grecians.
- The apostles prayed and laid their hands on them.
- After this, the word of the Lord increased. With more time to pray, the word's influence increased in the lives of hearers.
 - Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem (exceedingly) great.
 - A great company (lit. multitude) of priests were converted. **Amazing!**

The laying on of hands was regularly in the Old Testament evidence of identification. Men identified themselves with their sacrifices by laying their hands on them. They appointed representatives by laying hands on them. Thus by this act these seven men were designated as representatives of the Apostles. Peter Pett

This was common in the Old Testament. In their sacrifices, **Exo 29:15**; In their blessings, **Gen 48:14**; In their designations unto a charge or office; thus Moses on Joshua, **Num 27:18**. Poole

Laying on of hands

Steven's power and opposition, v.8-10

9

- God mightily used Steven, v.8
- Religious enemies made Steven the target of their hate, v.9
 - **Libertines** - Perhaps Jews who were slaves freed from Rome
 - **Cyrenians** - Jews from northern Africa
 - **Alexandrians** - Jews from lower Egypt
 - **Cilicia** - Jews from the south-eastern province of Asia Minor
 - **Asia** - Jews from Asia Minor
 - These were all Grecian Jews. Steven must have focussed on them.
- They could not refute Steven's preaching

False witnesses are hired, v.11-12

10

- The enemies suborned men. This means they privately instructed them on what to say. Note the lie, v.11.
- They stirred up the **people**, the **elders** and the **scribes**.
- They caught Steven and took him to the Sanhedrin council.
 - Sanhedrin, always translated “council” in the KJV.
 - The supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Christ and earlier. The origin of this assembly is traced in the Mishna to the seventy elders whom Moses was directed, (**Numbers 11:16-17**) to associate with him in the government of the Israelites. ^{Smith}

Steven's face shown, v.13-15

11

- False witnesses stood and testified against Steven, v.13-14
 - They claimed that Steven blasphemed the temple and the law
 - They claimed he said that Jesus would destroy the temple and customs of the law.
- Those in the council fixed their gaze on Steven
- They saw (factually) Steven's face as it were the face of an angel, v.15
 - They knew the facts, yet they followed their feelings.
 - **We must never trust our feelings over the facts of the Bible.**

Applications for us today

12

- The murmuring of the Grecians was not treated as sin but as a genuine concern.
 - There is nothing wrong with expressing concerns in a proper manner.
 - We must be careful not to be critical or hurtful. This is true in marriage as well.
- Delegation can ease much tension.
 - It spreads out the work load.
 - It allows others to serve and learn.
 - It can increase the quality of work.
- The deacons were to be honest, wise, and Spirit-filled.
 - This should be true of each of us.
 - Make it your passionate goal in life.
- Steven was so close to the Lord that others could see it on his face.
 - This too should be our personal goal.
- Beware of trusting your feelings.
 - Feelings deceive and change.
 - Build your life on the facts of the Bible.