

# Week 12

## THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTION – PT 6

### **The Ministry of the Church Develops a New Order**

It is an exciting thing to see how the early church responded to problems. There was unity among the Apostles, and they lead the people in prayer about whatever situation was facing them. In chapter 6, we see the first hint of racial tension in the church.

Apparently, the Greek Jewish widows (Hellenists) were being neglected as the daily distribution food was handed out. Whether they were neglected or not is debatable, but clearly some felt they were and began to act jealous of the distributions given to the Jewish widows. It is hard to imagine the Apostles being prejudicial. However, what we can see is that as that church grew it was outgrowing the direct leadership by the Twelve over every aspect of the church.

The Apostles handled the situation by calling everyone together; again, we see the unity of the church in action. The Twelve clearly felt their first calling was to the preaching of the Gospel and the prayer and study of the Word to help them preach.

The decision was made to create a new order of ministry that would be ‘hands on’ among the people. Here we see the first ‘Deacons’ ordained by the laying on of hands. This is an important step in the formation of the church’s leadership. The word ‘deacon’ is from the Greek word, ‘diakonos’, which is used in Acts 6 for the words “waiting on tables”.

At this point we now have a church with a two-tiered hierarchy of leadership. The Apostles are themselves the leading overseers of the entire church, and they have now appointed the order of deacons to serve under their leadership within the church.

We see that there were three qualifications for the order of deacons. The Apostles allowed the people of the church to set forth seven candidates for the new order. To qualify they had to have a good reputation among the people. They must be wise. And they must be ‘full of the Holy Spirit’. The last qualifier is interesting as it suggests that some of the church people were not necessarily ‘full’ of the Spirit. This is an important point in our understanding of a definite second work of grace known theologically as being ‘Entirely Sanctified’.

The doctrine of Entire Sanctification would later become a hallmark of John Wesley’s theology, as born out of his understanding of scripture and personal experience. It is important to note that Wesley did not feel he was developing a new doctrine, but rather that he was rediscovering the ancient church doctrine in the East of ‘Theosis’, of which many early church fathers wrote about as “becoming like God”.

E. The Church Develops Orders of Ministries

- a. Racial tension in the Church (6:1-7)
- b. The Problem (6:1)
- c. The solution (6:2-6)
- d. The result (6:7)

F. PERSECUTION TURNS DEADLY: STEPHEN KILLED (6:8-8:3).

- a. Stephen brought before a council (6:8-15)
- b. The wisdom of Stephen (7:2-52)
- c. The trial of Stephen
  - 1. False Witness (7:11-14)
  - 2. The Lynching of Stephen (7:54-60)

## Revive Us Again: How the Church Changed the World and Can Again

## Study Notes – Week 12

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