

Week 13

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTION – PT 7

The Blood of a Martyr – The seed of the Church

In the first section of chapter six, we saw the church operating within structure and organization as it created 'Deacons', a new order of ministry. While the problem that arose had a bit of a racist flavor, as the Jewish believers were being favored over the help given to the Greek speaking Jewish believers, interestingly the seven who were chosen to be the first Deacons all had Greek names. Perhaps a message is hidden there that the church was to be for the whole world, and not only for the Jews of Israel.

In this next section, which comprises the last of chapter six and all of chapter seven, we see person of Deacon Stephen as he emerges as to become much more than the role developed for him as a deacon. Stephen had much wisdom, one of the qualifications. His wisdom was such that he had a great understanding of the real story of his people and God's plan for the world. He had clearly heard and understood the call of Christ, that the gospel was for the whole world, not just the Jews.

We do not know how much time passes for Stephen's ministry, but we can discern that it was not a long time. While his ministry was short, it was very full. He served "diakonos" in more ways than what was thought for he became a preacher of the gospel as well while he was serving. It was precisely this that got him into trouble.

The rulers of the Jews did not like that Stephen was preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, so they arrested him. His trial, like that of Jesus, was a travesty of injustice. The charges against him were untrue and witnessed to by lies.

When it came time for Stephen to give his defense, he gave a passionate account of the whole story of God from the beginning of God's call of his chosen people to his present time. He showed the people how he understood the ministry of messiah as it was foreshadowed in the great lives and stories of the Old Testament.

Stephen's spirit was clearly one so pure that his evil accusers could not stand to even look at him, and his defense was cut short. No verdict was rendered but that of an angry mob who took him by force and lynched him.

And this section of the ministry of the church in Jerusalem ends with the death of Stephen, the first Christian era martyr. And we learn at the end, that all of it was done with the approval of the chief bounty hunter of Christians, Saul of Tarsus, the future Paul the Apostle.

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
