SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 6

Seven Men and a Face Like an Angel — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The church meets its first internal crisis with humility and wisdom: the apostles guard prayer and the word, and Spirit-filled men take up the tables, and the word spreads. Then one of those servants, Stephen, is falsely accused like his Lord and shines with God's glory before the Council.

00 The Text

ACTS 6 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

3 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council.

13 They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

15 And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in
the Council saw △ his face like the face of an angel.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “a complaint arose” — Sin / warning
- **v1** “their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food” — Sin / warning
- **v2** “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables” — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** “select from among you seven men of good reputation” — Command / instruction
- **v4** “we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” — Command / instruction
- **v5** “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v6** “after praying, they laid their hands on them” — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** “The word of God kept on spreading” — God — His character & actions
- **v7** “a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” — Promise / blessing
- **v8** “full of grace and power” — God — His character & actions
- **v9** “the Synagogue of the Freedmen” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking” — God — His character & actions
- **v11** “they secretly induced men” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “They put forward false witnesses” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place” — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** “his face like the face of an angel” — God — His character & actions
- **v2** “word” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v3** “full of” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

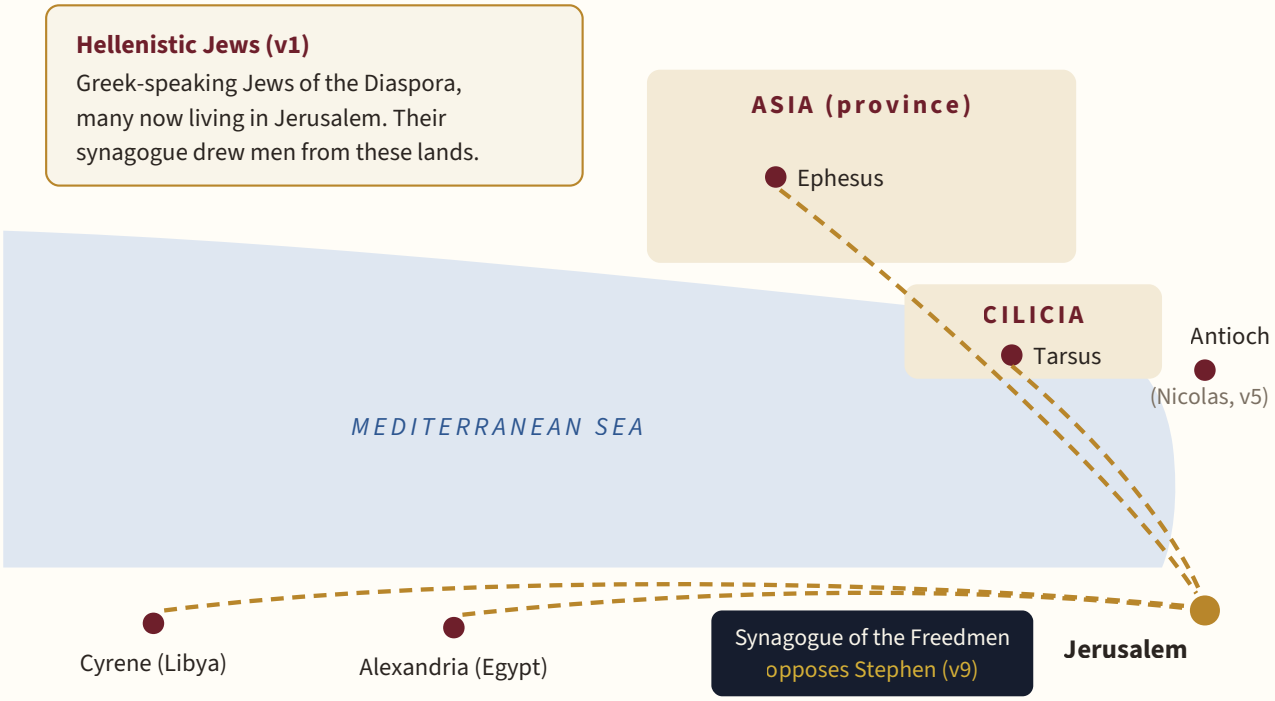
WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 6:1

"Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, ⚠a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because ⚠their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food."

FIGURE · WHERE THE HELLENISTS CAME FROM

Schematic, not to scale · north at top



The Greek-speaking Jews of verse 1 and Stephen's opponents in verse 9 came to Jerusalem from these Diaspora lands — including Cilicia, home of Tarsus.

Setting. Jerusalem, as the church keeps growing after Acts 5. Greek-speaking Jewish believers (Hellenists) complain that their widows are overlooked in the daily food distribution (v1). The Twelve call the congregation together (v2); seven men are chosen and set apart (vv5–6). Stephen, one of the seven, works wonders and is opposed by the Synagogue of the Freedmen, then dragged before the Council (vv8–12).

Structure:

- vv1–4 — **the complaint:** disciples increasing; a complaint from the Hellenists — widows overlooked (v1); "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables" (v2); select seven men of good

reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom (v3); "we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (v4).

- vv5–7 — **the seven:** the congregation approves and chooses Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas (v5); prayer and the laying on of hands (v6); the word keeps spreading; many priests obey the faith (v7).
- vv8–10 — **Stephen's wisdom:** full of grace and power, great wonders and signs (v8); the Synagogue of the Freedmen — Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicia, Asia — argue with him (v9); they cannot cope with his wisdom and the Spirit (v10).
- vv11–15 — **the charges:** men secretly induced — "blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (v11); the people, elders and scribes stirred; dragged to the Council (v12); false witnesses: "against this holy place and the Law" (v13); "this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place" (v14); his face like the face of an angel (v15).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "say / said / speak / speaks / speaking" ×7 — vv2, 10, 11 (×2), 13 (×2), 14.
- "word" ×3 — vv2, 4, 7 ("the word of God" ×2 — vv2, 7).
- "disciples" ×3 — vv1, 2, 7; "serving / serve / ministry" ×3 — vv1, 2, 4.
- "full of" ×3 — vv3, 5, 8; "Spirit" ×3 — vv3, 5, 10.
- "God" ×3 — vv2, 7, 11; "Stephen" ×3 — vv5, 8, 9; "men" ×3 — vv3, 9, 11.
- "increase / increasing" ×2 — vv1, 7; "congregation" ×2 — vv2, 5; "pray / praying" ×2 — vv4, 6.
- "wisdom" ×2 — vv3, 10; "faith" ×2 — vv5, 7; "Moses" ×2 — vv11, 14; "place" ×2 — vv13, 14.
- "Council" ×2 — vv12, 15; "heard" ×2 — vv11, 14; "face" ×2 — v15; "arose / rose up" ×2 — vv1, 9.

Contrasts: Hellenists ⟷ native Hebrews (v1). The word of God ⟷ serving tables (v2). The seven at the tables ⟷ the Twelve at prayer and the word (vv3–4). Priests who condemned Jesus ⟷ priests obedient to the faith (v7). Stephen's wisdom and Spirit ⟷ opponents unable to cope (v10). Honest debate ⟷ secretly induced men and false witnesses (vv9–13). Accused of blasphemy against Moses ⟷ a face shining like Moses' (vv11, 15).

Shape of the chapter: a problem solved (1–7) and a servant attacked (8–15). Verse 7 is a hinge — one of Luke's progress reports — and the chapter ends on a face, not a verdict, setting up Stephen's speech in chapter 7.

Chapter theme (my words): The church shares its work so the word of God keeps first place, and Spirit-filled servants become powerful witnesses. When the truth cannot be answered, it is lied about — but God puts His glory on the face of His servant.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 6:7

"△ The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and ☆ a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."

FIGURE · ONE WORD, TWO MINISTRIES



Luke uses the same word for serving food and for the ministry of the word; the apostles divide the work, not its dignity.

Who were the Hellenists and the Hebrews? Both were Jewish believers. Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora; Hebrews were Aramaic-speaking Jews of Judea (Guzik). The cultural gap made a small neglect feel like a big injustice. Henry calls it "not an open falling out, but a secret heart-burning," and Spurgeon warns that "A breach once made has a tendency to widen."

Were the apostles too proud to serve tables? No. They had been serving tables (the money came "at the apostles' feet," 4:35), and the same word *diakonia* names both jobs. The issue is calling and priority, not dignity. Sproul: "Pastors are to be ministers of the Word because that is our mandate." Guzik: "Practical service is spiritual service."

Were the seven the first deacons? Our teachers differ in emphasis. Guzik: "Nowhere in this chapter of Acts are these men called deacons," though "most consider they were the first to fulfill the office of deacon." Sproul: "This was how the diaconate was founded." Henry calls Stephen "a deacon in the church." I take it as the seed of the office in 1 Timothy 3:8–13, even if the title comes later.

Why Greek names? Guzik: they "were probably Hellenists themselves." The church put the remedy in the hands of the hurt group — a model of humility for any group or church in conflict.

What does the laying on of hands mean (v6)? The apostles prayed and publicly set the men apart for a task (Sproul). It confers recognition and commission, not magic; the men were already "full of the Spirit" (v3).

"Full of grace and power" or "faith and power" (v8)? NASB follows the older manuscripts (*charitos*, grace); KJV, Guzik and Sproul read "faith." Either way, Stephen is "full" in every direction (vv3, 5, 8), and Henry's line holds: "Those that are full of faith are full of power."

Was Saul in the synagogue? Possibly. Men "from Cilicia" (v9) argued with Stephen; Tarsus was in Cilicia (22:3), and Saul is at the stoning (7:58). Guzik: "The mention of Cilicia suggests this may have been Paul's synagogue." Luke doesn't say, so I hold it loosely.

Were the charges true? Twisted. Jesus did say "Destroy this temple" — of His body (John 2:19–21). Sproul: nearly everything the witnesses said was false, and the one true thing they twisted. Stephen taught that Jesus is greater than Moses, the temple and the Law (Guzik), not that God's Law was evil.

What was the angel-like face? Guzik and Sproul both think of Moses' shining face (Exodus 34). Sproul: "It was reflected glory, reflected by having been in the presence of God." Henry: "such an unaccountable mixture of mildness and majesty" — but it did not stop the stones.

Word study (Greek):

- **complaint — *gongysmos* (G1112):** grumbling; John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Phil 2:14; 1 Pet 4:9; LXX Exodus 16.
- **Hellenistic Jews — *Hellēnistēs* (G1675):** Greek-speaking Jews; 6:1; 9:29.
- **Hebrews — *Hebraios* (G1445):** Aramaic-speaking Jews of the homeland.
- **serving / ministry — *diakonia* (G1248):** food (v1) and the word (v4).
- **serve — *diakoneō* (G1247):** to wait on; Luke 22:27.
- **devote ourselves — *proskartereō* (G4342):** persist in; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4.
- **spreading — *auxanō* (G837):** the word grows (v7).
- **becoming obedient — *hypakouō* (G5219):** priests obeying the faith (v7).
- **grace — *charis* (G5485) / power — *dynamis* (G1411):** v8.
- **Freedmen — *Libertinos* (G3032):** freed slaves; only here.
- **secretly induced — *hypoballō* (G5260):** suborned; only here.
- **false — *pseudēs* (G5571):** false witnesses (v13).
- **angel — *angelos* (G32):** "the face of an angel" (v15).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Satan tries the dinner table** (Guzik).
2. **Grumbling is a wilderness word** — *gongysmos*.
3. **Tables and the word are both diakonia.**
4. **Prayer comes first** (v4; Sproul).
5. **Greek names for a Greek complaint** (Guzik).
6. **Unity is a means of blessing** (Spurgeon).

7. **Priests obeyed the faith** (Henry).
8. **Full, full, full** — Spirit, wisdom, faith, grace, power.
9. **Tried like his Master** (Matt 26:59–61).
10. **Reflected glory** (Sproul; Henry).

Cross-references: Exod 16:7–8; 18:17–23; 20:16; 34:29–35; Deut 19:15; Matt 26:59–61; Luke 21:15; 22:27; John 2:19–21; 7:12; 15:20; Acts 1:8, 14; 2:42; 4:35; 7:58; 8:4–5; 9:29; 21:8; 22:3; Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 3:7, 18; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:11–12; Phil 2:14; 1 Tim 3:8–13; 2 Tim 2:2; James 1:27; 1 Pet 4:9.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 6:15

"And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw △his face like the face of an angel."

FIGURE · TRIED LIKE HIS MASTER

THE SERVANT TRIED LIKE HIS MASTER

	JESUS · Matthew 26	STEPHEN · Acts 6
court	"the whole Council" (26:59)	"brought him before the Council" (v12)
witnesses	"many false witnesses" (26:60)	"false witnesses" (v13)
charge	"destroy the temple of God" (26:61)	"will destroy this place" (v14)
method	"trying to obtain false testimony"	"secretly induced men" (v11)
his face	"they spat in His face" (26:67)	"like the face of an angel" (v15)

Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" — "of the temple of His body" (John 2:19, 21).
Guzik: "It is a good thing to be accused of the same things Jesus was accused of."

Read across each row: Stephen's trial follows the pattern of Jesus' trial almost point for point.

Sin to confess — quiet grumbling. The complaint in verse 1 was real, but Henry calls it "a secret heart-burning." I know that kind of burn — the slow resentment when I think I've been overlooked. I confess it to God and, where it's fair, I speak it plainly to the right person instead of muttering. Grumbling is the wilderness word; I don't want to live there.

Example to follow — the apostles' humility and focus. They didn't defend themselves or form a committee (Guzik). They named the problem, kept their calling, and handed real authority to men from the hurt side. When there is conflict in my group, I want to listen first, fix what's wrong, and give the people who were hurt a seat at the table.

Command to obey — devote yourself to prayer and the word. For me as a teacher of men, verse 4 is personal. The tables will always call. If I neglect prayer and the word, I will have nothing to give. This week I will guard my mornings for prayer and the word before anything else.

Truth to face — ordinary service is spiritual work. The seven had to be full of the Spirit to serve food. The man who mops the floor, runs the van or cooks for the group is doing ministry. Some of the men I serve think they have nothing to give. Stephen started at the tables.

Promise to trust — the word keeps spreading. Even priests obeyed the faith (v7). No one is too far gone. Jesus promised "utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist" (Luke 21:15), and Stephen lived it.

Example to follow — Stephen's face. Lied about, dragged in, surrounded — and his face shone. Sproul: "reflected glory, reflected by having been in the presence of God." I can't manufacture that. I can only spend time with God and let Him put it there.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The complaint was real but quiet — a "secret heart-burning" (Henry). What grumbling am I carrying that I have never brought into the open in a healthy way? (6:1; Phil 2:14) *Satan loves to use an unintentional wrong (Guzik).*
2. Who are the "overlooked widows" around me — the people easy to miss in my church, unit or neighborhood — and what is one way I can see them this week? (6:1; James 1:27) *Pure religion visits widows in their distress.*
3. The apostles knew what only they could do and protected it. What is the main thing God has given me to do, and what am I letting crowd it out? (6:2–4) *Prayer and the ministry of the word (v4).*
4. The seven had to be "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" to serve food. Do I think of my ordinary service — cooking, cleaning, driving, fixing — as spiritual work? (6:3–6; Eph 4:11–12) *Practical service is spiritual service (Guzik).*
5. Stephen's enemies could not answer him, so they lied about him. How do I respond when I am misrepresented for following Jesus? (6:10–14; John 15:20) *It is a good thing to be accused of what Jesus was accused of (Guzik).*
6. Stephen's face reflected glory because he had been with God. What would it take for people to see Christ on my face, not just hear Him in my words? (6:15; 2 Cor 3:18) *Reflected glory, from being in the presence of God (Sproul).*

Worship. The Lord of the church sees the overlooked widow and fills ordinary men with His Spirit for ordinary work. His word keeps spreading and growing, reaching even the priests who had condemned Him. He gives His servants wisdom no one can resist, and when they are lied about, He puts His own glory on their faces.

Prayer. Lord, forgive my quiet grumbling and the times I have overlooked someone You see. Keep me devoted to prayer and to Your word. Fill me with Your Spirit and wisdom for the small jobs as much as the big ones. When I am misrepresented for Your name, keep my mouth honest and my face turned toward You, so that people see Your glory and not my anger. Amen.

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