**Acts of the Apostles
A Study of New Testament History**
**Lesson 6
Acts 6:1-15**

**Introduction:**

Up to this point in the history of the Lord's church persecution had been directed toward the apostles. That persecution had taken the form of threats and a beating. However, things were about to change.

Because of the immense popularity of the apostles, the high priest and the Sanhedrin were unable to persecute these men further without endangering their own safety. The people thronged around the twelve who were healing the sick and casting out evil spirits. Any further attempts by the council to arrest and execute the apostles would most likely touch off a riot that would bring even more Roman troops into t city of Jerusalem. No doubt, this would possibly escalate tensions among the people even more. Therefore, the council needed another way to send their message to the rapidly spreading number of disciples who claimed Jesus Christ as Lord. That opportunity would come when charges were brought against a man by the name of Stephen.

Stephen had been selected as one of seven men to take care of a situation concerning the care of widows among the growing number of disciples. Up to this point the apostles were given the task of administering the care of those in need. However as the number of disciples continued to expand, the apostles were not only distracted from their primary message of preaching the gospel, they were beginning to simply be overwhelmed.

Stephen not only helped care for the needs of widows, but like the other men among the seven, he was one upon whom the apostles had laid their hands. This is the first mention of the apostles laying hands on men to impart certain spiritual gifts. In Stephen's case, we're told he was *"full of faith and power"* and *"did great wonders and signs among the people."* (Acts 6:8).

**Memorization:**

*"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."* (Acts 6:3-4)

Key Events of Acts 6:

* Seven men selected to care for widows.
* Stephen is arrested, charged with blasphemy and brought before the council.

**Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: http://biblos.com/ and http://www.biblestudytools.com/ (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

**The Exposition:**

**I. Issue Concerning Widows (Acts 6:1-7)**

**A. Seven men chosen (Acts 6:1-6)**

1. What is the difference between "the Hebrews" and "the Hellenists," and why would the "Hebrews" neglect caring for "Hellenist" widows?

2. How did this pose a problem for the apostles?

3. What solution did the apostles recommend?

4. Who would be responsible for selecting the seven men?

5. What qualifications would these seven men need? Explain what these qualifications meant.

6. Who were the seven men?

7. What did the apostles do after the seven were selected? What does this imply?

**B. The disciples are greatly multiplied (Acts 6:7)**

1. What effect did the word of God have as it began to be spread?

**II. Renewed Persecution (Acts 6:8-15)**

**A. Stephen defends the faith (Acts 6:8-10)**

1. How is Stephen described, and what did he do?

2. Consult a Bible dictionary and explain what the "Synagogue of the Freedmen" was, and why those of that synagogue would dispute with Stephen.

3. Why were the members of the "Synagogue of the Freedmen" unable to answer Stephen? What does this mean?

**B. Stephen accused of blasphemy (Acts 6:11-15)**

1. What plans were made to silence Stephen?

2. What did the enemies of Stephen do to gain support for bringing Stephen before the council?

3. What did the false witnesses testify of?

4. How are the charges brought against Stephen related to the charges that had been brought against Jesus? Compare Acts 6:14 with Matthew 26:59-61 and Mark 14:57-58.

5. What did Jesus mean when He said His enemies could destroy "this temple" and He would raise it up again in three days? (See John 2:19-22).

6. How did Stephen appear to the members of the council as they looked upon him? What do you think this means?

**Application:**Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.