

Office of Deacon (#7 - Installation) – Acts 6:1-7

I. Introduction:

- A. As you may have surmised, we began this study of the Office of Deacon based on the fact that our church doesn't currently have any deacons.
 - 1. Amidst a number of questions swimming around in my mind, are these....
 - 2. **Should** we have deacons? Do we **need** deacons?
 - 3. And **does a Christian congregation have to have deacons** in order to be a scriptural church?
 - 4. These have lead to several other questions, one of which I will approach this evening.
 - 5. I say, "**approach**" rather than "**answer**," because I'm not fully convinced of its answer as yet.

II. How were the deacons of Acts 6 **INSTALLED** into their office? Were they "**ORDAINED**?"

- A. Fifty years ago, I was ordained, but I don't see much here to remind me of that Thanksgiving Day afternoon.
 - 1. The most recent ordination in which I participated took place four years ago this coming Monday.
 - 2. While there are some points of comparison with **Acts 6**, there was **much more done** that day than what we find here.
 - 3. Do we see in the Bible all which takes places in today's Baptist churches when it comes to ordinations?
 - 4. I am very tempted to pursue the idea of "**ordinations**" in general, but I must restrain myself at this point.
 - 5. We will very likely come back to the bigger issue some time in the weeks to come.
 - a. But our subject tonight is **not** the **ordination** of the **bishop**.
 - b. I am primarily interested in these deacons right now.
 - 6. But to be honest I have never seen or been a part of ordaining a deacon, so in some ways I am restricted.
 - 7. But **Edward Hiscox** in his "**New Directory for Baptist Churches**," and **J.M. Pendleton** in his "**Baptist Church Manual**," along with many others, tell us we should "**ordain**" our deacons.
- B. In that regard notice the word "**appoint**" in **verse 3** – "**Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may APPOINT over this business.**"
 - 1. We will come back to that word in a minute, but in the mean time, **verse 6** apparently tells us **how** the twelve "**appointed**" the seven to their office.
 - 2. **Verse 3** is the prelude and **verse 6** is the conclusion.
 - 3. The twelve asked for seven men, and after they were elected by the church, they were presented to the Apostles, who they then "**appointed**" to their office.
 - 4. "**Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.**"
 - 5. That is all we are told about the installation of these men here in this chapter.
 - 6. In **I Timothy 3**, where Paul gives us **his qualifications** for deacon, there is nothing said about their installation.
 - 7. And as far as I can find, in no other verse of the Bible do we have any more information on their ordination or installation.
- C. "**Appoint**" in **verse 3** is the word "**kathistemi**" (**kath-IS'-tay-mee**), and it is found **22 times** in the Greek Bible.
 - 1. **Only once** is it translated "**appoint**," and of course that is right here.
 - 2. Most of that time the word is translated "**to make**" and **6 times** it is specifically rendered "**make RULER.**"
 - a. For example, "**Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee RULER over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**"
 - b. Three times **Stephen** used this word in his defense before the Sanhedrin.
 - c. He said, the Lord gave Joseph "**favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he MADE HIM governor over Egypt and all his house.**"
 - d. And twice he said ... "**they refused [Moses], saying, Who MADE THEE a ruler and a judge?**"
 - 3. This word which speaks of "**making someone a ruler**" is translated "**appoint**" here.
 - 4. So **verse 3** could legitimately be translated, "**look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may make rulers over over this business.**"

- D. **BUT** – that word is **also** translated “**ordain**” in three verses.
1. **Titus 1:5** – “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ORDAIN** elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”
 2. **Hebrews 5:1** – “For every high priest taken from among men is **ORDAINED** for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”
 3. **Hebrew 8:3** – “For every high priest is **ORDAINED** to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.”
 4. The Old Testament priests, and particularly the High Priests, were “**ordained**” – “**appointed**” – “**made rulers**” to offer gifts and sacrifices
 5. I think we’d have to say they were “**ordained**” **BY GOD** to those ministries.
 6. And Paul told Titus to **set in order** and **ordain** elders in each of churches where he was ministering.
 7. With that word in the context of **Acts 6**, I am forced to admit that **these deacons WERE** “**ordained**” by the Apostles to their office.
 8. But was their “**ordination**” what we 21st century Baptists usually attribute to that word?
- E. The actual installation of these deacons was pretty simple, but with a special religious flourish.
1. The seven “**were set before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.**”
 2. Was this in a public service with 10,000 pairs of eyes on the procedure? No one really knows for sure.
 3. Was there a public quizzing of the seven to determine if they believed in the virgin birth or if they celebrated Christmas properly? It doesn’t appear so.
 4. Were a handful of preachers invited from Antioch, Samaria, Caesarea and Corinth? No, there were not, because there were none at this point in time.
 5. Did each of the twelve, individually lay his hands on each of the seven, each praying for two minutes over each of them?
 - a. If my math is correct – that would be 12 times 7, times 2 minutes for a total of nearly 3 hours.
 - b. I seriously doubt it went that way.
 6. Luke only tells us that after the apostles prayed, they laid their hands on them, and it was done.
 7. I can imagine all this taking place in several different ways, but none of it was overly flamboyant.

III. Based on what we find here, there are three elements to **THIS** particular ordination.

- A. **First** was **the election** by the church of these seven to their office.
1. By the way, there are some Baptists who say **that their election WAS** their **ordination**.
 2. I don’t agree. I think that it was **a part** of their ordination.
 3. **The second thing** was the Apostles’ **prayer**.
 4. In my research, I found lots of men making their assumptions about that – or those – prayers.
 5. Did they pray for Holy Spirit direction for themselves or for the deacons? For Humility? For Wisdom?
 6. It is pointless to try to assess or guess the content of that prayer.
- B. The **third element** of the ordination was – “**they laid their hands on them.**”
1. What is the meaning of that?
 2. Actually, that phrase, or variations of that phrase, are used quite commonly in the New Testament.
 3. Here are a couple examples to show you that it means to literally lay one’s hands on someone.
 4. In **Matthew 9** a “**certain ruler (came), and worshipped (the Lord), saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.**” Touch her and she shall live again.
 5. Ten chapters later we read “**Then were there brought unto (Christ) little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray...**”
 6. And then after Saul’s conversion in **Acts 9:17** – “**Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.**”
 7. **Acts 6** clearly tells us that in some way the twelve put their hands on the seven deacons.

- C. When I was ordained, the members of the council came by and put their hands on my head and either prayed over me, or whispered some word of encouragement. I don't remember a single word.
1. When we ordained Bro. Austin, as I was praying I put my hands on his bushy head of hair.
 2. But it is assumption to say that the twelve put their hands **on the HEADS** of the seven.
 3. We might assume so – it is logical – but the Bible doesn't say that in so many words.
- D. The more important question is – **for what reason** did they do that?
1. Again, I have been doing some research about **this installation** – and “**ordinations**” in general.
 2. I've found good men offering differing reasons for this laying on of hands.
 3. The three scriptures I just read, show that the laying on of hands, **actually imparted God's blessings** to people, and in some cases – **miraculously**.
 4. **Saul received his sight** when Ananias put his hands on him, and he was **filled with the Holy Spirit**.
 5. But remember **these seven already had 20/20 vision**, and they were **already filled with the Spirit**.
 6. The Apostles' hands didn't fall on them in order to impart physical healing – or the Spirit.
- E. With their Hebrew backgrounds, these Apostles may have been thinking of some Old Testament applications.
1. And most particularly they may have been thinking of **Numbers 27:18** –
 - a. *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;*
 - b. *And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.*
 - c. *And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.”*
 2. **This application of Moses' honor** to Joshua was **not** the transference of **miraculous gifts**, or the ability to **see the future**, or a **key** to the door of **Heaven**.
 3. Very simply, it was **to show Israel** that Joshua was **God's choice** as Moses' **successor**.
 4. But I have to admit, **Deuteronomy 34:9** adds, after Moses' death – *“Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; FOR Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.”*
- F. As I say, the seven were **already filled** with the Holy Ghost.
1. So I am going to agree with **A.T. Robertson** when he says,
 2. The laying on of hands *“was a **SYMBOL** of the impartation of the gifts and graces which they needed to qualify them for the office. It was of the nature of a prayer that God would bestow the necessary gifts, rather than a pledge that they were actually conferred.”*
 3. It was a symbol of the impartation of the necessary gifts and graces they needed, because they already possessed those gifts.
- G. I think, we have five ordained ministers of God among us this evening.
1. I can't speak for anyone but me, but I can assure you that, when I was ordained, there was **no miraculous power** passed from Forrest Keener or Elmer Leon Bynum to me.
 2. I received **no gift of perfect knowledge**, sparing me from any future studying the Bible.
 3. There was **no infinite wisdom** passed on to me making me a really good pastor.
 4. What took place that day was nothing more than those dozen men **symbolically said** they thought there was a **slight chance** that I might actually be of service to God.

- H. Going back to **Numbers 27 – verse 22** adds, “*And Moses did as the LORD commanded him:*
 1. *and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation:*
 2. *And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.*”
3. That was not an electrical charge. It was not any sort of spiritual impulse.
 4. It was instruction about his up-coming responsibilities.
- I. E.L. Bynum preached the charge at my ordination, just as Moses did to Joshua.
1. Was it you, Brother Justin, or was it Brent Spears who preached the charge to Austin?
 2. Generally among Baptists today, there is the preaching of a charge to the man being ordained to the gospel ministry, and sometimes there is a charge to the church as well.
 3. But do we read of any kind of charge here in **Acts 6?**
 4. There isn't one in my Bible, and yet I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the twelve told their deacons to look well to their responsibilities.

IV. Conclusion:

- A. What took place that day?
1. I assume, that the twelve prayed for God's blessings on these men and their future work for the Lord.
 2. Then in some simple fashion, they put their hands on them signifying to those members of the church, who were there at the time, that these men had Apostolic approval to serve the tables of the poor.
 3. Were they also transmitting to them their authority over these financial matters in that symbolical act?
 4. It would seem so.
- B. Is that precisely what takes place in the ordination of a bishop?
1. Not exactly, because the office is entirely different.
 2. Not only did Forrest Keener **NOT** give to me the **ability to speak in tongues** – “*glossolalia*” – or power to raise the dead, but he didn't confer any other special religious authority upon me.
 3. Remember, it is not the council which is ordaining the man, but church with the assistance and recommendation of the visiting, ordained brethren.
- C. **But this evening**, we are not thinking specifically about the ordination of a pastor.
1. We are only considering the ordination or installation of the deacons of the First Baptist Church in Jerusalem.
 2. **There WAS** an ordination of sorts which set these men apart for their important position as table servers.
 3. But more important than the ordination ceremony were the men themselves and the work to which they were called.