

Acts 6:1-7

Complaints into Growth.

A

1 Now in these days when the disciples **WERE INCREASING** in number, a **COMPLAINT** by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

B

2 And **the twelve** summoned

1

the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right

that we should give up preaching **the word of God TO SERVE** tables.

2

3 Therefore, brothers, pick out

3

from among you seven men of good repute, **full of the Spirit and of wisdom**,

4

whom we will appoint to this duty.

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

1

5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering,

2

and they chose Stephen,

3

a man **full of faith and of the Holy Spirit**,

and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of **Antioch**.

4

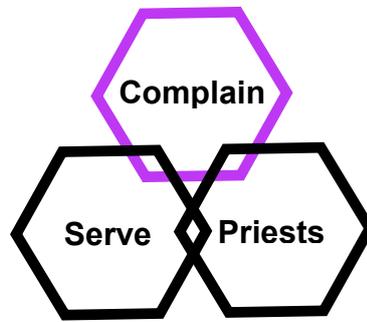
6 These they set before

B'

the **apostles**, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

A'

7 And **the word of God CONTINUED TO INCREASE**, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in **Jerusalem**, and a great many of the **PRIESTS** became obedient to the faith.



First Mention of God’s People making a complaint:
 Exodus 15:24 — In the wilderness, found no water: Marah, it was bitter, against Moses, just after God saved them from Egypt.
 Exodus 16 — “It is not against us but against the Lord [that you complain]”

The 7 Complaints of Numbers 11-21

11:1-3	11:4-35	12	13-14	16-17	20:1-3	21:4-9
Template	Against Manna	Against Moses	Going into the Promised Land	Against Aaron	Lacking Water	Snakes
A	B	C	D	C'	B'	A'
Complaining demonstrates lack of trust/faith in God and keeps us out of the promised land						

The key similarities between the matching sections are...

A/A' — Short, general, fire (“fiery” snake bites, Hebrew word), intercessory prayer.

B/B' — angry demand, food and water, provoke Moses, long for the security of Egypt.

C/C' — against leaders, from inside the family, calling reaffirmed by God.

D — want to reverse Exodus, have no faith, decide to appoint a new leader.

...Overall it highlights the heart and mind of the Israelites as one that is fickle, short-sighted, forgetful and impatient

Two related Greek words are used in the Septuagint (Greek translation c.2nd/3rd century BC.) that correspond to the word used in Acts 6 for “Complaint”. Their Strong’s Numbers are 1111 and 1112. Here’s the other places they are used in the bible...

1112 (Used in Acts 6:1)

— Ex 16:7, 16:8, 16:9, 16:12, 17:5, 17:10 — Is 58:9 (translated “wickedness”) — Jn 7:12 — Phil 2:14 — 1 Pt 4:9

1111 (Used Numbers 11:1)

Ex 17:3 — Nm 11:1, 14:27 (twice), 14:29, 16:41, 17:5 — Jgs 1:14 — Lam 3:39 — Ps 59:15, 106:25 — Is 29:24, 30:12 — Mt 20:11 — Lk 5:30 — Jn 6:41, 6:43, 6:61, 7:32 — 1 Cor 10:10

SIMILAR SIMILARITIES

These help us spot the intentional link between the two stories.

Acts 6:1-7	Numbers 11
Complaint in a community who has been saved and recently received the presence of God in their midst	Complaint in a community who has been saved (Exodus) and recently received the presence of God in their midst (tabernacle.)
About food	About food (God's blessing)
From a group of "others" who are part of the community	From a group of "others" who are part of the community
Complaint isn't told to their leaders	Complaint isn't told to their leaders
Solution through apostles	Solution through God's word to the Moses
Seven chosen to help the current leaders	Seventy gathered to help the current leader
God's Spirit in God's people	God's Spirit on God's people

SIMILAR DIFFERENCES

These help us discover the intentional point the author is trying to make.

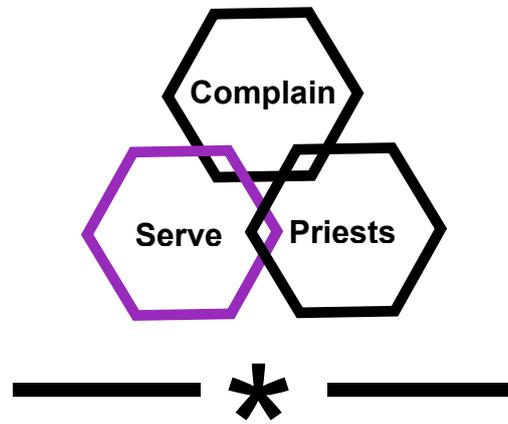
Acts 6:1-7	Numbers 11
Result: ...not judgement... more faith? Gospel spreads. Word of God .	Result: die with full mouths (can't cry out to God?) Journey but remain outside God's rest.
Complain because of the neglect of widows	Complain because of their own desires
The community gather the seven	Moses gathers the seventy
Gathered before the apostles	Gathered around the tabernacle
The Spirit already filled the seven	The Spirit on the Seventy (would that all the Lord's people were prophets)
Apostles summon, everyone gathered.	Moses hears and complains to God
Hands laid on the seven	"Is the Lord's hand shortened"
Apostles remain with the word	Two remain in the camp

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What am I complaining about at the moment?

Why am I complaining?

gather
EVERYONE



“brothers”
FAMILY

The tension between the neglect of the people vs the neglect of the word of God
NO COMPROMISE ON EITHER

Luke 10:38-42

TO SERVE:

“One thing is necessary”

Their focus is on Christ - the apostles have absorbed the teaching of Jesus.

These are the only two times this form of the Greek word is used in the NT

	Matching Pair	Who	Summary
1	Pleasing the full number	the community	Listen
2	Trust: looking to others for solutions and answers		Humble action
3	Full of the Spirit & faith is wisdom	the seven	Have Character
4	The “passion” of the seven. (They are passive)		Sacrifice

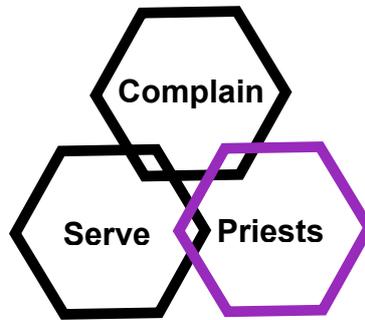
WE NEED TO
WE AIM FOR

These/whom (4) — the answer lies with others, no one looks to themselves to have the solution.

the names — all are Greek names, so the community seem to have picked men who were within the Hellenist group that were complaining originally.

Neglect vs devotion (the apostles extra speech outside of the step 1-4 pattern) — they’re undistracted.

WHERE IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD?



Acts 6 is a transition moment from the Jerusalem stories previously into the spreading of the Gospel beyond. (Possibly you can see this hinted at as Jerusalem and Antioch are the only two places mentioned in this passage.)

Or you could see it as a Stephen Origin Story — though possibly that’s only part of the picture here.

Acts 6:7 links with 2 Chr 30:24

Our dangerous complaint has been transformed in the Spirit-filled community into a vehicle for renewal and increased witness.

2 CHRONICLES 30-31

Chapter 30	
1	Sent to all Israel and Judah That they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem
3	Could not keep [passover] because the priests had not consecrated themselves in sufficient number
5	They decreed to make a proclamation
6	So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes as the King had commanded, saying “O people of Israel, return to the Lord... that he may turn again to the remnant of you...
7-9	Do not be like your fathers and your brothers who were faithless but yield yourselves to the Lord and come to his sanctuary which he has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God that his fierce anger may turn away from you. For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you if you return to him.
10-11	So the couriers went... but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them, however some humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem
12	The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the King and the princes commanded by the word of the Lord
13	And many people came together in Jerusalem
14	They set to work and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem

Chapter 30	
15	Slaughtered the passover lamb... and the priests and the levites were ashamed so that they consecrated themselves
18	Hezekiah had prayed for them saying, "May the good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God
20	And the Lord heard hezekiah and healed the people
21-22	And the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the feast... with great gladness and... praised the Lord day by day, singing with all their might to the Lord. and Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the Lord
23	The whole assembly agreed to keep the feast another seven days
24	And the priests consecrated themselves in great numbers
25	The whole assembly of Judah and the priests and the Levites and the whole assembly that came out of Israel and the sojourners who lived in Judah rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem for since the time of Solomon the son of david king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people and their voice was heard and their prayer came to his holy habitation in heaven
31:1	Now when all this was finished all Israel who were present went out to all the cities of Judah and broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh until they had destroyed them all.

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