

DOCTRINE OF APOSTLESHIP

April, 1989

I. Greek vocabulary.

A. The noun ἀπόστολος, apostolos (apostle), occurs 80x in the New Testament (NT).

1. It is a compound from ἀπο, apo (from), and στέλλω, stello (send).
2. The cognate verb is ἀποστέλλω, apostello: send out.
3. The noun ἀποστολή, apostole (apostleship) occurs 4x in the NT

B. The term apostle is used in two ways in the NT

1. It is used in the strict sense of the twelve men who had the actual gift of apostleship.
2. It is used of men who were directly associated with an apostle in their ministry but were not one of the twelve, Act.14:14, Gal.1:19.

II. The original twelve.

A. The roster includes these men that Jesus, Himself, chose from among His disciples, Mt.10:24; Mk.3:14; Lk.6:13-17.

1. Simon Peter, nicknamed "Peter" by Jesus in Mt.16:18.
2. Andrew, Peter's brother.
3. James, John's brother and the first apostle to be martyred.
4. John, called "the beloved" and the author of the fourth gospel.
5. Philip.
6. Bartholomew, who has been identified with Nathaniel of Cana.
7. Thomas.
8. Matthew, a tax collector and author of the first gospel.
9. James, second of two apostles with this name.
10. Thaddaeus, also known as Judas in Lk.6:16.
11. Simon, the Zealot.
12. Judas Iscariot, an unbeliever.

B. During Jesus' earthly ministry, they were apostles to Israel.

1. Jesus Himself was sent only to Israel, Mt.15:24.
2. He sent them out to evangelize the Jews as part of their training, Lk.9:1-10.
3. Later, they received a spiritual gift and became apostles to the Church, 1Cor.12:28.

III. Paul was Judas' replacement, not Matthias.

A. The selection of Matthias in the upper room on Pentecost failed to take into consideration the fact that an apostle had to be someone handpicked by the Lord Himself. Matthias had been with the Lord during His public ministry and was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ, but was not directly selected by Jesus, Act.1:15-26.

B. Paul received individual training in Arabia for two years, Gal.1:17.

C. Finally, there are only twelve names on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem, Rev.21:14.

IV. Characteristics of the apostles to the Church.

A. Apostleship is a spiritual gift given by the risen Christ to certain men, Eph.4:11.

B. Apostles possessed temporary and spectacular gifts like:

1. Tongues, 1Cor.14:18.
2. Healing, Act.5:12,15; 19:11,12.
3. Miracles, 2Cor.12:12.

C. They established the first churches and had jurisdiction over more than one congregation, 2Cor.11:28.

D. They wrote the NT canon of Scripture or were closely associated with those who wrote (Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews, James and Jude).

E. Those who figure predominantly in the NT are Paul, Peter, and John.

F. They were allowed to have wives and families, 1Cor.9:5.

V. Paul's apostleship.

- A. He considered himself to be the least deserving, 1Cor.15:9; cp. Rm.1:5.
- B. He did not consider himself to be in any way inferior to the most prominent apostles, 2Cor.11:5.
- C. He acknowledged Peter and the rest, Gal.1:17-19; 2:8, as Peter did him, 2Pet.3:15,16.
- D. He submitted his gospel to the apostles in Jerusalem, Gal.2:2.
- E. His primary target group was the gentiles and their leaders, Gal.2:7,8; Act.9:15.
- F. In certain ways, he excelled over the others.
 - 1. In sheer workload, 1Cor.15:8-10.
 - 2. In the exercise of the temporary gifts, 1Cor.14:18.
 - 3. In sufferings, Act.9:16; 1Tim.1:16.
 - 4. In revelation of doctrine, Eph.3:2-13 (books in the canon).

VI. Pseudo apostles in the NT

- A. Simon Magus attempted to buy with money an apostleship, Act.8:9-24.
- B. Certain individuals claimed to be Paul's equal at Corinth, but were cited as impostors, 2Cor.11:12-15.
- C. The Ephesian church removed those who made apostolic claims, Rev.2:2.
- D. There are those who make claims of apostleship today (the Pope, head of the Great Whore of Rev.17).

VII. Jesus is designated the "*Apostle and High Priest of our confession*", Heb.3:1. He proved Himself to be a faithful envoy of the One who sent Him.

VIII. Our attitude towards the apostles is stated in 2Pet.3:2ff; Jd.17-23.

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