

DOCTRINE OF APOSTLES

- I. Greek vocabulary.
 - A. ἀπόστολος (apostolos), 79X, noun, one who is sent on a mission with the authority of the one who sends him. A commissioned representative, a messenger, envoy or apostle.
 - B. ἀποστέλλω (apostello), 129X, verb, to send out or send forth, in relation to the sender, to send with a commission, send with authority.
 - C. ἀποστολή (apostole), 4X, noun, literally, a sending off, one sent off as a special envoy or messenger, apostleship.
 - D. This family is to be distinguished from πέμπω (pempo-to send) since the terms related to apostle focus on the authoritative commission behind the sending, while pempo word focuses on the basic act of sending.

- II. Definition and description.
 - A. It must be immediately noted that the term **apostle** is used in the New Testament in a technical and a non-technical sense.
 - B. Technically, the term is used to denote the twelve men originally selected by Jesus from His followers to occupy the office of apostle.
 - 1. During Jesus' earthly ministry, these men were apostles to Israel.
 - 2. Jesus Himself was sent only to Israel at the first advent. Matt. 15:24
 - 3. He instructed these men to limit their ministry to the Jews. Matt. 10:5-6
 - 4. As His commissioned representatives, they were to follow His instructions explicitly. Lk. 10:1-6
 - 5. After the suicide of Judas, the remaining eleven continued as apostles to Israel, with a further mandate that expanded their mission. Acts 1:7-8
 - 6. With the addition of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, the original number of twelve was restored. Acts 9:15, 15:12; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8; Rev. 21:14
 - C. In order to be an apostle in the technical sense in the Church age, one must have been selected by Jesus and an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ, and commissioned by the Lord Himself. ICor. 15:5,8-9; Gal. 1:1
 - D. Non-technically, the term is used to denote anyone sent out by another individual or church on a mission. Acts 14:14; Rom. 16:7; Gal. 1:19
 - E. As with any work of God, satanic counterfeits attempted to pass themselves off as bonafide apostles. IICor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2

- III. The twelve apostles.
 - A. The roster of the original twelve men that Jesus chose from among the general group of disciples who followed Him is recorded in Matt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:13-17
 - B. They include:
 - 1. Simon, nicknamed Peter by Jesus. Matt. 16:17-18
 - 2. Andrew, Peter's brother. Jn. 1:40
 - 3. John, called the beloved and the author of the fourth gospel. Jn. 13:23
 - 4. James, brother of John, the first apostle to suffer martyrdom. Acts 12:2
 - 5. Philip.
 - 6. Bartholomew, generally identified with Nathanael of Cana. Jn. 1:45

7. Thomas, aka doubting Thomas. Jn. 20:24-25
 8. Matthew, a tax collector, disliked by the Jews generally, and author of the first gospel.
 9. James, called James the less or small.
 10. Thaddaeus, also called Judas. Lk. 6:16
 11. Simon, a member of the radical zealot party.
 12. Judas Iscariot, an unbeliever. Lk. 6:16
- C. With the suicide of Judas, the remaining apostles attempted to elect a replacement, perhaps understanding that the Lord intended to have twelve apostles. Acts 1:21-26
1. They had no divine sanction for this action.
 2. Their attempt was based on a correct understanding of the fact that the office of one of those chosen by Jesus would be left vacant. Acts 1:15-20
 3. They enacted their own views of what was required for one to occupy the office of apostle; however, their views were not in accord with God's will. Acts 1:21-22
 4. Men cannot elect an apostle; that is something only done by the Lord Himself.
 5. Therefore, we hear no more of Matthias.
- D. Paul, not Matthias, was the replacement for Judas.
1. While Matthias had been with the Lord from the earliest days of His ministry, it should be evident that the Lord did not select him to be numbered among the twelve.
 2. There are two criteria necessary for one to occupy the office of apostle.
 - a. Must be an eyewitness of the resurrection.
 - b. Must be personally selected by Jesus Christ.
 3. While Matthias was qualified as an eyewitness of the resurrection, he was never selected by Jesus.
 4. Paul fulfills both qualifications and is the man Jesus Christ selected to fill the vacant office of Judas.
- E. Therefore, there are only twelve names on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:14

IV. Characteristics of Church Age apostles.

- A. The men selected by Jesus Christ to occupy this office were twelve in number and were provided as a foundation for the Church. Acts 1:25; Eph. 4:11
- B. Along with the Church Age **prophets**, they are viewed as the earliest and most important building blocks of God's plan for this dispensation. Eph. 2:20
- C. They were the recipients of the new doctrines for the Church Age, and they faithfully adhered to and communicated the doctrines to those that were positive. Eph. 3:5
- D. The apostles were the men that generally, although not exclusively, established the local churches in regions where they took the gospel. Acts 11:19-26, 14:21-23
- E. They possessed authority over a **canon**, a geographical area for which they were responsible. IICor. 10:13-15
- F. In their respective canons, they had authority over a number of local churches and were the ranking authorities until their deaths. Gal. 1:2; IPet. 1:1
 1. They were free to use apostolic representatives or trouble-shooters in various areas since it was impossible for them to be in more than one place. ITim. 1:3; IITim. 4:12; Titus 1:5
 2. While these men acted with apostolic sanction, it did not make them apostles in the technical sense.
- G. They possessed many of the temporary gifts, a blessing God provided in order to validate their authority and message. Acts 5:12,15, 19:11-12; IICor. 12:12

- H. It should be noted that their possession and practice of the temporary gifts (like tongues and healing) appears to have followed the same pattern as others who had these gifts during the transitional period at the beginning of the Church age. Phil. 2:25-27; IITim. 4:20
 - I. The apostles, or men who were closely associated with them, were responsible for writing much of the New Testament.
 - 1. Apostles who wrote scripture included Matthew, John, Paul, and Peter. *21 of the 27 New Testament books were written by apostles.*
 - 2. Those associated with apostles wrote the balance of the New Testament and include, Mark, Luke, James, and Jude.
- V. The apostleship of Paul.
- A. Paul was obviously the last apostle selected by Jesus Christ.
 - B. He considered himself as the least deserving of all men to be selected for this important position. ICor. 15:9; ITim. 1:12-13
 - C. However, he did not allow any false humility or inappropriate guilt to influence how he fulfilled his office; nor did he consider himself inferior to any of the other apostles in any way. IICor. 11:5-6
 - D. The legitimacy of his apostleship was openly acknowledged by the other apostles. Gal. 2:7-9; IIPet. 3:15-16
 - E. Any suggestion that there was some serious conflict between Paul and the other apostles is not substantiated by the Word of God.
 - 1. This thinking often arises out of the public rebuke that Paul administered to Peter when he came to Antioch. Gal. 2:11-14
 - 2. However, a careful study of Galatians and other epistles in the New Testament yields no such conclusion. Gal. 2:7-9; IIPet. 3:15-16
 - 3. There is no extant writing in which Paul denigrates Peter or any of the other living apostles; there is also no extant writing in which Paul is denigrated by any other apostle.
 - F. He was not arrogant, but submitted his doctrine and agenda to the other apostles in Jerusalem, who added nothing to his message. Gal. 2:2,6-10
 - G. His primary mission was determined by God, a mission to the Gentiles and their leaders. Acts 9:15; Rom. 11:13, 15:15-16; Gal. 1:15-16, 2:7-9; Eph. 3:8
 - H. The apostles recognized that they had been assigned a particular sphere of authority, which seems to have functioned in harmony with the sphere of others. Gal. 2:6b-7
 - I. Due to his positive volition and the abundant grace of God, Paul surpassed many of the other apostles in applications (although this is not a competition):
 - 1. In his willingness to work himself to exhaustion to fulfill his ministry. ICor. 15:10 cf. ICor. 4:12; Phil. 2:16; Col. 1:29; ITim. 4:10
 - 2. In the sufferings he endured. Acts 9:16; IICor. 11:23-33
 - 3. In the number of places he took the gospel. IICor. 10:14-16; Rom. 15:24,28
 - 4. In the revelations that God provided. IICor. 12:1-7; Eph. 3:1-10
- VI. Jesus is designated as **the Apostle and High Priest of our confession** since He proved Himself to be a totally faithful representative of the One who sent Him. Heb. 3:1