

THE APOSTLES

The Apostle

The word "Apostle" means the "sent one" or "the messenger"

Jesus the Apostle Heb 3:1.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;"

Sent by God to preach to Israel Luke 11:49

"Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:"

Sent by churches 2 Cor 8:23;

"Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ."

Phil 2:25.

"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants."

But the title is normally applied to a special group of men in the early Christian church.

The Origin of Title

The text of the Gospels indicates that Apostles were a specific group of men chosen by Jesus, to be with Him, to preach and to heal.

Matt 10:1ff;

"1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."

Mark 3:14ff

"14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:"

Mark 6:30-32

"30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.

31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves."

The Function of an Apostle.

The basic, primary function of the apostles was to be the witnesses for Christ, to witness His life, His death and His resurrection after His departure back to heaven. To be able to show that the life of Jesus was a fulfilment of prophecy.

Act 1:22; Act 2:32; Act 3:15; Act 13:31; Act 2:32; Act 2:36; Act 2:26; Rom 1:1-6

Qualification.

The main qualification is the divine calling, the commissioning by Christ. For the original disciples this was done while Christ was on the earth. For Matthias this commission is not so obvious,

Acts 1:22-26.

It is assumed that Matthias had been part of the disciples from the beginning:

Acts 1:22

and been involved with and witnessed the whole ministry of Jesus, especially His resurrection.

Paul insisted that he was commissioned by Christ: Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1.

Paul did not fulfil the conditions of Act 1:21f but the Damascus road experience makes him a resurrection witness and he could claim that he saw Jesus.

The Number of Apostles

The Gospel's always referred to "The Twelve," Paul uses in 1 Cor 15:5-11.

"And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."

James is also included in Gal 1:19.

"But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."

There are only twelve mentioned in Rev 21:14.

Apart from the twelve, Paul and James, others are called apostles:

Barnabas Acts 14:14;

Andronicus and Junias Rom 16:7;

Silas 1 Thess 2:6;

Some of the Corinthian church appeared to be calling themselves 'apostles' 2 cor 11:13.

The fact that Rev 21:14 only speaks of twelve apostles but there are many more who were able to claim that they are witnesses to the resurrection 1 Cor 15:5-7, this suggests that those twelve apostles were special in some way.

The Twelve Chosen

Matt 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-20; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:13

God had to create, as part of His plan of Salvation, "a holy nation, a peculiar or 'purchased' people" 1 Peter 2:9, and the twelve apostles were the beginning of this new "spiritual" nation Matt. 21:43.

Jesus spent a night in prayer before choosing these twelve men Luke 6:12. When He selected them, He had three purposes in mind:

- (1) To train them by personal example and teaching.
- (2) As part of training to send them out to preach the Gospel.
- (3) He also gave them authority to heal and cast out demons.

