

Doctrine of Apostleship

1. The word “*apostle*” refers to a special messenger of Jesus Christ; a person to whom Jesus delegated authority for certain tasks.
2. The word apostle is used of those twelve disciples whom Jesus sent out, two by two, during His ministry in Galilee to expand His own ministry of preaching and healing. It was on that occasion, evidently, that they were first called "apostles".
 - *Mark 3:14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach*
 - *Mark 6:30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.*
3. These same disciples, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were re-commissioned by Jesus after His resurrection to be His witnesses throughout the world.
 - *Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:*
 - *Luke 2:49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*
 - *Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*
4. After Jesus' ascension, the apostles brought their number to twelve by choosing Matthias.
 - *Acts 1:23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*
3. The word apostle is sometimes used in the New Testament in a general sense of "messenger." For instance, when delegates of Christian communities were charged with conveying those churches' contributions to a charitable fund, Paul described them as "*messengers [apostles] of the churches*".
 - *2 Corinthians 8:23 Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*

4. Jesus also used the word this way when He quoted the proverb, "*A servant is not greater than his master, nor he who is sent [literally, "an apostle"] greater than he who sent him*".
 - *John 13:16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*
5. Jesus Himself is called "*the Apostle... of our confession*" a reference to His function as God's special Messenger to the world.
 - *Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;*
6. The word apostle has a wider meaning in the letters of the apostle Paul. It includes people who, like himself, were not included in the Twelve, but who saw the risen Christ and were specially commissioned by Him.
7. Paul's claim to be an apostle was questioned by others. He based his apostleship, however on the direct call of the exalted Lord who appeared to him on the Damascus Road and on the Lord's blessing of his ministry in winning converts and establishing churches.
 - *1 Corinthians 15:10 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.*
8. Apparently, Paul also counted James, the Lord's brother, as an apostle.
 - *Galatians 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*
9. This James was not one of the Twelve; in fact, he was not a believer in Jesus before the Crucifixion.
 - *John 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.*
10. It was the resurrected Lord who 'appeared to James' and presumably commissioned him for his ministry.
 - *1 Corinthians 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*
11. When Paul says Jesus was seen not only by James but also by "all the apostles", he seems to be describing a wider group than "the Twelve" to whom Jesus appeared earlier.
 - *1 Corinthians 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*
 - *1 Corinthians 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:*

12. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11, apostles are listed along with prophets and other saints as part of the foundation of the household of God. In this strictly New Testament sense, apostles are confined to the first generation of Christians.
- *1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*
 - *Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*
13. At an early stage in the church's history it was agreed that apostles to the Jews and Gentiles should be divided into separate camps. Paul and Barnabas were to concentrate on the evangelization of Gentiles; Peter, John, and James (the Lord's brother) were to continue evangelizing Jews.
- *Galatians 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*
14. As pioneers in the work of making converts and planting churches, apostles were exposed to special dangers. When persecution erupted, they were the primary targets for attack. Paul, in particular, welcomed the suffering that he endured as an apostle because it was his way of participating in the suffering of Christ.
- *1 Corinthians 4:9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: 13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*
 - *Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*
 - *2 Corinthians 1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. 6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. 7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.*

15. The authority committed to the apostles by Christ was unique. It could not be transmitted to others.
16. The apostles could install elders or other leaders and teachers in the churches, and they could authorize them to assume special responsibilities; but apostolic authority could not be transferred.
17. The authority of the apostles has not come to us through their successors; it has come through their writings, which are contained in the *New Testament*.
18. In the church of Ephesus, in Revelation 2:2 the Lord commended the congregation because they had tested "*them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.*" Not only is it proper to test the credentials of someone trying to speak with authority, it is essential.
19. There were and are several specific tests to apply to validate the ministry of a true apostle.
 - An apostle is a man who has been appointed by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
 - ❖ **God the Son.** *Mark 3:14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach...Mark 6:30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.*
 - ❖ **God the Father.** *1 Corinthians 4:9-13 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.*
 - ❖ **God the Holy Spirit.** *1 Corinthians 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*
 - An apostle is a person who has been an eye witness of the resurrection. *1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? 2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*

- An apostle is a person who has been with Jesus or at least has been familiar with the ministry of Christ from beginning to end. *Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) 16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. John 15: 27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning*
 - An apostle is invested with unusual spiritual power to the extent that he can perform miracles. *Mark 3:14 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: Acts 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*
 - An apostle is one whose teachings do not contradict what has been taught by the other apostles or by what has been written in the *Scriptures*. *2 Peter 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. 15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*
20. Any person seeking to establish spiritual authority within the church must meet these biblical qualifications or be branded a liar.