

## **Doctrinal Studies**

### **Apostleship**

#### **I. Definition:**

##### **1. Biblical use**

- (1) The Word "apostle" is ἀπόστολος in the Greek, meaning: "an ambassador; one who is sent; a delegated authority.
- (2) ἀπόστολος is a compound from Apo=from and Stello=Send
- (3) The cognate verb is ἀποστελλω= to send out
- (4) An apostle of Jesus Christ was the highest official in the local churches, I Cor. 12:28
- (5) Apostleship was a Spiritual gift sovereignly bestowed by the Holy Spirit at the point of Salvation. (Except for the original apostles who were already saved and who received their Spiritual gift on the day of Pentecost) I Cor.12:11; Eph.4:11 and I Cor. 12:28

##### **2. Non-Biblical use**

- (1) In the classical Greek period (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.) ἀπόστολος was used to refer to the commander of a naval expedition. When the Athenians went to war, there were a number of men qualified to command the fleet. One of these was elected by lot and sent to the fleet to command it and he was called Apostolos.
- (2) During the Hellenistic period (323 B.C. and following) Apostolos was used to refer to a person commissioned and authorized by one of the gods.
- (3) In the Papyri of the koine period Apostolos was used to refer to a civil agent sent to transact official business.

#### **II. Classification: Two classes of Apostle in the New Testament:**

1. The Apostles of Jesus Christ to Israel, Luke 6:12-16. Apostles to Israel were appointed by Jesus Christ according to the will of God the Father. These men were authorized to announce to Israel that their Messiah was present; and they were endowed with miraculous powers, Luke 9:1,2 The original twelve:

- (1) The roster includes these men that Jesus, Himself, chose from among His disciples. He sent them out to evangelize the Jews as part of their training. Mt.10:24; Mk.3:14; Lk.6:13-17

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

- (2) During Jesus' earthly ministry, these men (above) were apostles to Israel. Later, they received a spiritual gift and became apostles to the Church. I Cor. 12:28.

##### **2. The Apostles of Jesus Christ to the Church**

These included the eleven disciples (above) (Acts 1:26); Paul (Rom.1:1); James the brother of Christ (Gal.2:19); Barnabas (Acts 14:14); Timothy and Silas (I Thess.2:6, 7).

#### **III. Qualifications:**

An apostle had to have the spiritual gift of Apostleship.

1. The gift was provided by Jesus Christ after His ascension into Heaven. Eph. 4:8-11.
2. The gift was imparted by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, I Cor.12:11; Acts 2.
3. The apostle had to have been an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord, Acts 1:22; I Cor. 9:1
4. An apostle had certain credentials such as being endowed with miraculous powers of miracles, Heb.2:4; 2 Cor.12:12.
5. An apostle had success in evangelism, I Cor.9:2; 2 Cor. 3:1-3; Gal. 2:7-9.

6. An apostle had the capacity to suffer patiently, 2 Cor. 12:12.

#### IV. Function:

1. Apostles received and communicated new revelation. Eph. 3:2-6
2. Apostles communicated the gospel effectively and people accepted Christ in response to their preaching. I Cor. 9:1; Gal. 2:7-9
3. Apostles helped organize local churches and appointed officers, Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5
4. Apostles trained new believers in Biblical truth. I Thess. 1:5 to 2:12.
5. Apostles had the authority to administer discipline to believers, Acts 5:1-10; I Tim. 1:20; I Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 13:2.
6. The apostle had authority over all local churches because he was the channel of New Testament revelation. Since the time of the apostles, no one has been given authority over more than one local church.
7. The apostle Paul was the most Grace-oriented apostle. He realized that he was the least deserving to be an apostle. I Cor. 15:9. He was the most productive because of His understanding and utilization of the Grace of God. I Cor. 15:10.
8. There were also false apostles who communicated improper and false information. 2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2.