

# Apostles

I was recently asked the question: “What is the difference between an “Apostle” and a “disciple? Do you think Christians today can claim the title of ‘Apostle’ today?”

No one (including the Pope) can claim to be an Apostle (capital A) and have the same power and authority as those originals who were appointed to lead Christ’s Church (Jews and Gentiles). We no longer need to follow a man to know what God wants us to do as Christians. **It is what prompted the Apostle Paul to write the following Scriptures:**

- (1) **Galatians 1:6-12:** “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to different gospel --- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the Gospel of Christ. But even if WE (APOSTLES) or an angel from Heaven should preach a gospel OTHER THAN THE ONE WE (APOSTLES) PREACHED to you (**like the Book of Mormon or the Koran**), **LET HIM BE ETERNALLY CONDEMNED!...(11)** I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, **I received it by REVELATION FROM JESUS CHRIST.**”
- (2) Remember what John said about those who claim to also have received new revelations from God in the Book of **Revelation 22:18,19:** “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them (AS IN NEW REVELATIONS), God will add to him the plagues described in this Book. And if anyone takes words away from this Book of Prophecy (SAYING THEY ARE NOW OUTDATED AND NO LONGER VAILD AS SCRIPTURE WE NEED TO OBEY TODAY), God will take away from him his share in the Tree of Life and in the Holy City, which are described in this Book.”
- (3) As the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians in **I Corinthians 4:6:** “**DO NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN.** Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.”

The Apostle Paul wanted us to know that we no longer need to follow men to know what God wants Christians to do and not do. We now have a written New Testament written by the original Apostles (which was the main job of an Apostle --- capital “A”). As the Apostle Paul make perfectly clear in these Scriptures: No one (not even a capital “A” Apostle) can change the New Testament Gospels that the original Apostles wrote down. The Apostle John added that anyone who does add new revelations, or takes away any revelations or Scriptures that the Apostles wrote down, would loose their place in Heaven --- or, as Paul warned: “...*be eternally condemned!*” **Our only safe-guard is to NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS ALREADY WRITTEN --- OUR ORIGINAL NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE!**

However, even in Paul's day, there have always been those who claim the title "Apostle." It is what prompted Paul to write *II Corinthians 11:3-15*: "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached** (because they have added new revelations to the original Gospels), **or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received** (because their spirit had nothing to do with baptism like the first 3,000 Christians in *Acts 2:38*), **or a different gospel** (like the Book of Mormon or the Koran) **from the one you (first Christians) accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those 'super apostles'** (The original 12 chosen to be Apostles to the Jews). *I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge* (Divine revelations given to him by Christ Himself). *We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.*

*Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the Gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. As surely as the Truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! AND I WILL KEEP ON DOING WHAT I AM DOING IN ORDER TO CUT THE GROUND FROM UNDER THOSE WHO WANT AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE CONSIDERED EQUAL WITH US (APOSTLES) IN THE THINGS THEY BOAST ABOUT (CLAIMING TO ALSO BE CAPITAL A APOSTLES LIKE PAUL).*

**FOR SUCH MEN ARE FALSE APOSTLES** (NOT TRUE CAPITAL A APOSTLES) *deceitful workmen, MASQUERADING AS APOSTLES OF CHRIST. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising then, if HIS SERVANTS MASQUERADE AS SERVANTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Their end will be what their actions deserve!*"

The word "apostle" is literally translated, "messenger" or "representative." If someone calls themselves a little a "apostle," because of the job they are doing for the Lord in spreading the message of the True Gospel of Jesus Christ; or, if they are representing a Church as their missionary or evangelist (and are not going beyond what is already written in the New Testament Scriptures) --- I have no problem with that. However, I prefer to call them a "Preacher," "Missionary," "Evangelist," "Pastor," or "Minister" (as in "servant of Christ") --- depending on how they are serving the Lord. **For more information, see my study on "Elders and Pastors."**

So, even though by the definition of the word "apostle" all Christians could classify as "one sent" or as a "messenger" or even a "representative" of a particular Church --- THERE IS A DIFFERENCE IN BEING A little "a" apostle, and a BIG "A" APOSTLE. **THERE IS A DEFINITE DISTINCTION BETWEEN AN "APOSTLE" AND A "DISCIPLE."**

- (1) *Acts 8 12-18* says Philip preached, baptized and converted many Christians who became disciples or followers of Christ (Christians); yet he could not give the special powers of the Holy Spirit to any of them, even though he baptized all of them in water, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:38*). All of Philip's converts had the Holy Spirit as the promised "gift;" but, he could not make the Holy Spirit "come upon" any of his new converts in special powers (tongues, healing, prophesying, etc.). Why? Because he was one of the "Seven Deacons" and an "Evangelist" (*Acts 6:5*), BUT NOT A CAPITAL "A" APOSTLE! He had to call down two capital A Apostles (Peter and John), who laid hands on those new Christians Philip baptized, in order to give those special powers to these new disciples.
- (2) *II Corinthians 8:23 Paul* makes a distinction between Titus and an Apostle.
- (3) *Acts 2:41-43* tells us that the first 3,000 Christians were definitely not equal to the Apostles.
- (4) *Acts 1:21-26* says that Barsabbas was qualified to be an Apostle, yet he was not chosen as one.
- (5) *I Corinthians 12:29* Paul explains that all Christians or disciples or followers of Christ are not Apostles, even though all Christians or disciples are "sent out" (which is the literal meaning of the word "apostle").
- (6) *Revelation 2:2, II Corinthians 11:13-15* tell us there will be many FALSE Apostles who claim to have the same power and authority as the originals.

#### **There are also QUALIFICATIONS to be a capital "A" APOSTLE**

- (1) *Acts 1:21-26* says they had to be a disciple (follower) of Jesus from His baptism through His death and resurrection. Paul (being the first Apostle to the Gentiles --- but not one of the Twelve --- is the only exception).
- (2) *Acts 1:2,3; 1:21-26; Romans 1:1, I Timothy 2:7, Ephesians 4:11* say an Apostle had to be personally appointed to the office by Jesus Himself (remember, Barsabbas and Mathias were both qualified, yet only Mathias was chosen by Christ).
- (3) *Acts 1:21-26, I Corinthians 9:1* says that an Apostle had to have seen the resurrected Lord.
- (4) *II Corinthians 12:12 and Acts 5:12* say an Apostle had to be able to perform signs, wonders and miracles. Remember, Jesus said in *Matthew 7:21-23* that many would claim to be able to do this, and He would not allow them into Heaven (calling them "evil-doers").
- (5) *Ephesians 3:3-5, II Peter 3:2, Romans 1:1* say Apostles had to be able to speak Divine revelations from Christ, became Scripture, or the New Testament Law. Remember, the Apostle Paul and John said NO ONE ELSE AFTER THEM COULD DO THIS!

#### **SO HOW DOES PAUL QUALIFY TO BE AN APOSTLE?**

- (1) Since Paul was not one of the Twelve Apostles, and he did not even follow Jesus until after His resurrection --- some doubt that he was a true Apostle (*Acts 1:21,22*). However, Paul was not chosen as an Apostle to the Jews, but

as the first Apostle to the Gentiles (non-Jews); and the Gentiles were not included as Christians until after the Day of Pentecost (*Acts 1,2*), and after Paul's conversion (*Acts 9*), when Peter was sent to Cornelius' household (*Acts 10,11*).

- (2) As Saul, Paul was struck blind by Jesus on the road to Damascus (*Acts 9*). He was then baptized, and became a Christian and disciple of Christ (*Acts 9:18,19*).
- (3) Paul then spent 3 years in Arabia and Damascus preaching the Gospel as taught to him by Christ Himself (*Galatians 1:17-19*) before he even met any of the 12 Apostles. During this time the Jews tried to kill him, but the Christians in Damascus helped him escape to Jerusalem (*Acts 9:22-26*). The disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him, except for Barnabas, who took him to the Twelve Apostles to prove to them he was qualified and chosen by Christ as His Apostle to the Gentiles (*Acts 9:15*), as Paul claimed (*I Timothy 2:7 & I Corinthians 9:1-6*).
- (4) Paul not only claimed to be an Apostle, but said he even labored harder than The Twelve (*I Corinthians 15:9,10*), which did not make him inferior to any of the Twelve Apostles (*II Corinthians 12:11*).
- (5) For some reason, Jesus saw that The Twelve could fulfill the job of taking the Gospel to the Jews, but he needed someone like Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (*Acts 9:15, Romans 1:13*). Peter was actually the first Apostle to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, but Paul was the first to be called "an Apostle to the Gentiles" according to *Acts 10:28-35, 44-48* and *Acts 11:15-18*.
- (6) REMEMBER, THE APOSTLE PETER WHO WAS THE LEADER OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, ENDORSED PAUL AS AN APOSTLE IN *II PETER 3:15-17!*

### **SO, HOW AND WHY ARE APOSTLES DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER CHRISTIAN OR DISCIPLE OF CHRIST?**

- (1) According to *Luke 6:13-16*, Jesus chose 12 men to lead His Church as "Messengers" or "Representatives" to be His keys in creating a New Testament Law to take the place of the Old Law with its 12 Tribes. These first disciples became Christ's Apostles as "ones sent" after His resurrection from the dead and return to Heaven. They were now to lead His Church with full power and authority of the Holy Spirit (*Luke 9:1-6*).
- (2) The reason for the change in name from "disciple" to "apostle," was because they were personally chosen to be Christ's spokesmen. What they said was Divine revelation from Christ (and therefore God) Himself. When a true Apostle spoke, it was as if Christ Himself spoke. They then had to be able to back those words up by doing what only Christ could do --- "SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES" (*II Corinthians 12:12* --- which included even raising the dead)! They were officially put in as Christ's successors and called Apostles at the Last Supper (*Luke 22:14*).
- (3) After Christ's resurrection, He spent 40 days appearing to and instructing other men that He also commissioned to be Apostles to the Gentiles (which included Paul, and His earthly brother James) --- *Acts 1:2-3*.

(4) **Among those chosen to be Apostles by Christ Himself: Peter**, his brother **Andrew**, **James** the son of Zebedee and his brother **John**, **Philip** (not Philip the Evangelist and one of the 7 Deacons), **Bartholomew** (also called Nathanael), **Thomas**, **Matthew**, **James** the son of Alphaeus, **Thaddaeus** (also called Judas), **Simon** the Zealot or Cananean, **Judas Iscariot** (who betrayed Jesus and hung himself --- *Matthew 27:5*), who was later replaced by **Mathias** (*Acts 1:21-26*). OTHERS CHOSEN DURING THE 40 DAYS AFTER CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, were: **Paul** (*Galatians 1:1*), **James the Lord's brother** (*Galatians 1:17-19*), **Andronicus and Junias** (*Romans 16:7*), and **Barnabas** (*Acts 14:14*). Some believe **Silas and Timothy** were also recognized as Apostles of Christ when you compare *I Thessalonians 1:1 & 2:7* with *I Timothy 5:22* and *Acts 8:18*. Also, **two unknown men** in *II Corinthians 8:23*, and **Epaphraditus**, according to *Philippians 2:25*.