

APOSTLES

By Mark E Moore, PhD

I. Capital "A" or small "a"? (Or can we have Apostles today on the order of Peter and Paul?)

Most often when the NT uses the word *apostle* it means the 12 disciples Jesus chose to be his closest followers. And, to be technical, it would refer to the 12, minus Judas, plus Matthias, plus Paul. Obviously, that makes 13. But keep in mind that Paul was a special case. (Though, some scholars hold that the church was presumptuous in obtaining Matthias. God had prepared Paul to take Judas' slot. However, to hold this position is certainly to go beyond anything that Luke suggests).

What would help us is to see that the NT uses the word *apostle* in two senses. It mostly refers to the 12 disciples plus Paul, upon whom the church is built (Eph 2:20). In this sense there are no *modern-day* apostles. These men are unique. However, the NT also uses the word *apostle* in a secondary sense. Since the word itself means "one sent out" it can sometimes refer to anyone sent out on some mission. In this sense the word approximates our word missionary.

The count in the NT could be as large as 22 or as small as 12 or even 11. Think of it this way: If I were to ask how many preachers there were in Joplin, you might start to count the number of churches there are. But that number would really be way too small. You may arrive at the correct number of men with the title "preacher," but you would fall far short of the number of people who announce the good news of Jesus. In the same way, there were 14 men in the NT who held the office (and title), of Apostle. However, there are several others who are called apostle by virtue of the job they did. It was not an office they held but the function they performed. That is to say that they were sent out as "commissioned" men from the church which they represented.

II. The Need for 12 Apostles

1. To judge the 12 tribes (Mt. 19:28/Luke 22:30). By choosing 12, Jesus was symbolically establishing a new nation under their leadership.
2. Their 12 names are written in heaven (Rev. 21: 14).
3. The 13th Apostle was to the Gentiles. This honor was bestowed upon Paul (1 Cor. 15:1–11; Rom. 11:13).

III. Standards for an Apostle:

1. Be a witness to Jesus from His baptism to the Ascension (Acts 1:21–22).
2. Witness to the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7–8).
3. Be chosen by the Lord (Acts 1:2; Luke 6:12–16; John 15:16).
4. Miraculous signs (2 Cor. 12:11–12).

In the *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (p. 9) by Lampe, six qualifications of an apostle are noted:

1. Commissioned directly by Christ
2. Being a witness of the resurrection
3. Special inspiration
4. Supreme authority
5. Accredited by miracles (NOTE: None of the other men in the Bible named as apostles ever worked miracles as far as the record goes, much less were they able to bestow these miraculous gifts as the apostles apparently could).
6. Unlimited commission to preach

IV. The Successors of the Apostles

While we don't want to establish some kind of unwarranted apostolic succession, the foundational torch of leadership in the book of Acts clearly passes from the apostles to the local elders of churches. The farther one reads in Acts the less emphasis is placed on the apostles as a group and more prominence is given to the elders. Even Paul, the Apostle, receives advice from the Jerusalem elders in regard to how he (Paul) can be well received by Jewish Christians.

V. Fate of the Apostles

Apostle	Place	Event	Date
Peter	Rome	Crucified upside down by Nero	65 A.D.
Paul	Rome	Beheaded by Nero	65 A.D.
James	Jerusalem	Beheaded by Herod Agrippa I	44 A.D.
Andrew	Edessa, Turkey	Crucified	No Date
Thomas	India	Four soldiers ran him through with spears	No Date
Philip	Heliopolis	Put to death by a Roman proconsul	54 A.D.
Matthew	Nadabah, Ethiopia	Stabbed to death	60 A.D.
Bartholomew	India	Killed	No Date
James, son of Alpheus	Jerusalem	Stoned and then clubbed to death	61 A.D.
Simon the Zealot	Britain	Killed for refusing to worship the sun god	74 A.D.
Matthias	Syria	Burned to death	No Date
John	Ephesus	Died a natural death after his exile on Patmos	95 A.D.
Judas, (or Thaddaeus or Labbaeus)		Executed by the Apostate nephew of King of Adgor of Syria	No Date

Miscellaneous Comments on the List of Apostles

1. The four lists of Apostles (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Acts 1:13), each give the names in a different order. However, each list can be divided into three sections which always begin with Peter, Philip and James.
2. It is likely that James and John, the sons of Zebedee were cousins of Jesus. McGarvey (p. 225) substantiates this idea.
3. There are several men with more than one name: Simon is also called Peter; Judas is also called Lebbaeus and Thaddaeus; Bartholomew is most likely the Nathanael of John 1; and Thomas (Aramaic) is called Didymus (Greek), both names meaning "Twin."
4. The latter James, Simon and Judas appear to be brothers and perhaps also cousins of Jesus through Joseph's brother (cf. Edersheim I:522).
5. Judas Iscariot was apparently the only Apostle not from Galilee. His town, Kerioth, was in Judea (Joshua 15:25).
6. The idea of Apostolic succession has never been substantiated (see McGarvey, p. 223 for details).
7. Jesus himself was an "Apostle" (Hebrews 3:1).

Matt 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
Simon (Peter)	Simon (Peter)	Simon (Peter)	Peter
Andrew (his brother)	James son of Zebedee	Andrew (his brother)	John
James son of Zebedee	John (Boanerges)	James	James
John (his brother)	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew (tax collector)	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Judas son of James	Judas son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	