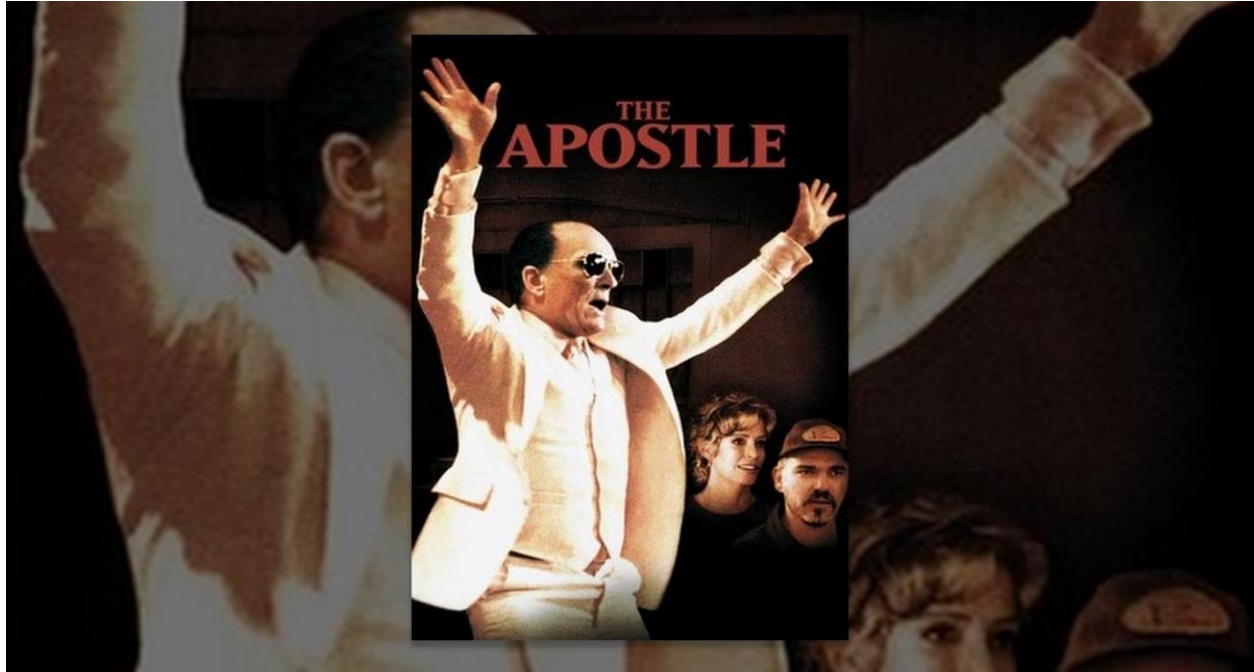


THERE ARE NO MODERN APOSTLES!

By David Lee Burris



Definition of an “Apostle” According to Denominationalists:

“Various theological streams and ecclesiastical traditions hold opposing views on apostleship. Some believe the gift was limited to the twelve disciples closest to Christ. Others contend that apostleship flourished during the foundational era of the church but is no longer active today. On the other end are those who believe modern apostles exist and do possess the same authority as the Apostles who penned the New Testament. Somewhere in the middle are those who affirm the gift's activity today but in a more generic capacity. The word literally means "sent one," a designation that may be applied to so very many believers. But the middle-ground viewpoint acknowledges there is a difference between being gifted as an apostle (little "a") and possessing the authority of an Apostle (capital "A").” – Essay Excerpt

The *church planting function* of apostleship may explain why Paul lists it the first among spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28). According to Dave Ferguson, we need apostolic leaders to start new missional projects because that is the catalyst which unleashes all the other gifts. ‘We're counting on apostles to do their thing so that everyone else can do theirs’.” – Essay Excerpt

“In a generic sense, an apostle is a ‘sent one’ or ‘one sent on a mission.’ The Greek word is *apostolos*. In a generic sense all Christians are ‘sent out on a mission’. *In that sense we are all apostles!*” – Essay Excerpt

“In a technical sense the term refers to the person who functions in the five-fold ministry or office of apostle. That’s what we are talking about here. But ideally, positions that oversee multiple congregations should be filled by those exhibiting an apostolic gifting—a history of extending God's kingdom by starting new churches, releasing spiritual gifts, and connecting leaders through the bonds of relationship.” – Essay Excerpt

A common approach is to define the apostle as the ‘*a pastor to pastors*’. The *paternal bond between apostles and pastors* underscores the source of apostolic authority. It is not organizational or institutional, but an authority rooted in personal experience and trust. William Beasley says, ‘Those with the gift of apostleship care deeply about people & pastors. They care so much they want to raise up more pastors.’ Terry King adds, ‘Just as every pastor needs an apostle, every apostle also needs pastors.’ An apostle is a Christian leader called and supernaturally gifted by God to open new spiritual or geographical territory for the gospel, lay foundations, equip believers, and serve as catalyst and coordinator for churches and ministries.” – *Mark Anderson*

“An apostle is a Christian leader, gifted, taught, commissioned and sent by God with the authority to establish the foundational government of the church within an assigned sphere of ministry by hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches and by setting things in order accordingly for the growth and maturity of the church.” – *Peter Wagner*

“An apostle is one who [is] called and sent by Christ to have the spiritual authority, character, gifts and abilities to successfully reach and establish people in Kingdom truth and order, especially through founding and overseeing local churches.” – *David Cannistraci*

“William Beasley also sees leaders who are apostolically gifted increasingly frustrated by church structures that inhibit their calling. ‘Many don't have a way of expressing their apostolic gift within their church system. They are forced to make a decision. Either create a way for the gift of God to be lived out, or continually suppress it.’ Of course, the best outcome is for [individual] churches and denominations to acknowledge the importance of the apostolic gift and create opportunities for these leaders.” – *Anderson Article*

What the Bible Says on the Subject: **YOU ARE NOT AN APOSTLE!**

This From Periodical Series:

In this study, we intend to establish what the biblical role of an apostle was, what his qualifications were, and what role was exclusively given to the apostles.

The Word Apostle

The word “apostle” is used 83 times in 80 verses of Scripture in the New Testament. The word is translated from apostolos which is defined as “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders” (Thayer 68). The word is derived from the verb apostello which has the etymological meaning of “to send.” The noun is used especially of “persons sent with commission” and reflects the Hebrew usage of shaluach that is used to describe someone who is sent with a commission. There are several uses of the word “apostle” in the New Testament that reflects this etymological sense, rather than its technical sense, as mentioned below. Barnabas is designated an apostle (Acts 14:4), some think that Andronicus and Junia are described as apostles (Rom. 16:7; a better explanation is that they are known and honored by the Twelve), and the word apostolos is used to describe “messengers” of churches (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25).

The term apostolos is used in a specific, technical definition to refer to “the twelve disciples whom Christ selected, out of the multitude of his adherents, to be his constant companions and the heralds to proclaim to men the kingdom of God” (Thayer 68).

The list of the apostles is given in four places: Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:13. From this comparison of the lists, we can identify the Twelve. That Jesus chose Twelve is no accident. This corresponds to the Twelve Tribes of Israel and is so used in the book of Revelation (21:14).

The Qualifications of the Apostles

The qualifications of the Apostles demonstrates that this office was not a perpetual office to be filled in each succeeding generation of the church. Here are the qualifications given in Scripture:

1. The apostles were hand chosen by the Lord Jesus. Jesus spent the night in prayer before selecting the Twelve (Luke 6:12). The next morning he personally chose from among the thousands of his disciples, these Twelve who became known as his apostles. When Paul defended his apostleship, he specifically argued that he also was hand-picked by Christ saying, “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)” (Gal. 1:1). He stated that he was “called to be an apostle” (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:1). The record in Acts 1 of the selection of Matthias emphasizes God’s choice of Matthias through the lot.

2. The apostles companied with Jesus during his earthly ministry. When the Twelve were originally selected, they were selected from among Jesus’ disciples and forsook all to follow Jesus (see Matt. 4:19-20; Mark 2:14). When Judas was replaced, one of the qualifications given for those to be considered as an apostle was this: “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 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” (Acts 1:21-22).

3. The apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. The second qualification given for an apostle was that he be a “witness with us of his resurrection” (Acts 1:22).

The qualifications of the apostles makes evident that the office of the apostle was not a perpetual office in the church. The concept that the apostles had powers that were passed down from one generation to another via unbroken chain of succession is shown to be false. There are no living apostles today, the concepts of Pentecostals, Catholics, Mormons, and any other religious group to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Function of the Twelve

What was the function of the Twelve? That they had a fundamental role in the early church is evident from several Scriptures. The church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:20). In listing the various roles that men have in the church, Paul began with the apostles (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). The New Jerusalem of Revelation is described as having twelve foundations on which are inscribed the names of the apostles (Rev. 21:14). What was their unique role and function:

1. They were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Jesus spoke to the Apostles just before his ascension saying, “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” (Acts 1:8). No one could be considered as a replacement for Judas unless he had witnessed the resurrection (Acts 1:22). The Apostles gave witness to the resurrection (Acts 4:33). To be qualified to be an apostle, one had to be an eyewitness of the resurrection; one of the functions of the apostle was to give his eyewitness testimony.

2. They were the mouthpiece of the Lord to reveal his new will. In Jesus’ final evening with the Twelve, he expressed his intention to send to them the Holy Spirit who would reveal to them God’s divine will:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26).

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning (John 15:26-27).

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come (John 16:12-13).

In their role as spokesmen for God, they were placed beside the prophets of the Old Testament (2 Pet. 3:2, 15-16; Eph. 3:3-5). What was revealed through them became known as the “apostles’ doctrine” and was the revelation given for the church (Acts 2:42). What they gave was the Lord’s commandments (1st Corinthians 14:37). Jesus said, “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). As agents of the Lord, his ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), what they spoke had all of the legislative, binding authority of the Lord himself. They were his ambassadors in the same sense as were the prophets of the Old Testament. One who resisted their inspired teaching resisted the teaching of the Lord.

This revelation was given “once for all” (Jude 3). The revelation given to mankind through the Apostles is not on-going. It is complete and final. There are no living Apostles revealing new revelation for this age, the claims of modern Roman Catholics and Mormons to the contrary notwithstanding.

3. They were qualified to confirm their newly revealed message with miracles. Luke records that “many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43; 5:12). This is the “great power” alluded to with which the Apostles gave their witness to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:33). These were the “signs of an apostle” that Paul spoke of (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Rom. 15:18-19). The miracles that the Apostles performed were God’s verification that their message was true. Mark said, “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4).

4. The Apostles were uniquely endowed with power to transfer miraculous gifts to other disciples through the laying on of their hands. Luke’s record of the conversion of the Samaritans proves this. The evangelist Philip left Jerusalem to go to Samaria where he performed miracles, confirming the message of his gospel. After several were converted, the Apostles sent Peter and John to check on the work at Samaria. The Scriptures record:

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money (Acts 8:14).

Simon the sorcerer saw what many people never see: "that through laying on of the apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost was given." This is confirmed by other Scriptures. Paul longed to travel to Rome "that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established" (Rom. 1:11). Timothy's gift was imparted to him by the laying on of Paul's hands (2nd Timothy 1:6); the Ephesians received gifts through the laying on of Paul's hands (Acts 19:6).

The Apostles' Role in the Church at Jerusalem

The role of the apostles in the local church at Jerusalem is not spelled out in explicit detail. That they had a prominent role is indicated by several things: (a) the benevolent funds were laid at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2; 6:6); (b) Barnabas' bringing Saul to the apostles when he wished to identify with the Jerusalem church (Acts 9:27); (c) the leadership role the apostles had in the selection of the seven to serve tables (Acts 6:1-6); (d) the prominence of the apostles in the Jerusalem conference, even though elders were in place (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 33; 16:4). Because of their role in revealing divine truth and their activity in the local church, naturally having had a leading role in the church at Jerusalem. As soon as elders were appointed, the oversight role of the local congregation at Jerusalem would have shifted to them (Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28).

Misunderstanding the Apostles' Role

Through the centuries of church history, various religious groups have misunderstood the role of the Apostles in one way or another.

The Roman Catholics have taught that Peter was the head of the apostles in asserting their claims about the papacy, but what is perhaps more important is their belief that some special spiritual powers were conveyed from one person to another through a chain of apostolic succession. The priest can administer baptism, the mass, and excommunication because of the power conveyed to him that ordinary men do not have.

Because of the misunderstandings that men have about the role of the Apostles, we need to continue this study to see some things that the Apostles did that were not unique to Apostles.

We have looked at the Apostles to see their function in the first century church. There are some things that were unique to them that cannot be repeated in another generation. Other things they did were models for men to imitate (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 4:9; 2 Thess. 3:9; etc.). Unless we can discriminate what these were, we shall not know what men are and are not to imitate.

Some Things Being An Apostle Did Not Do

Because of mistaken ideas about what being an apostle did and did not do, we need to notice some things that were not results of one's being an apostle.

1. Being an apostle did not keep one from sin. Peter's conduct at Antioch shows that conclusively. In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul reported his rebuke of Peter's hypocrisy in his treatment of the Gentiles, not to belittle Peter, but to confirm that the gospel he preached was approved by the Apostles. As an aside, however, this incident demonstrates that the Apostles fought the same battle with sin as do the rest of us. This battle with sin, described in Romans 7:14-25, did not cease when God called a person to be an Apostle.

2. Being an apostle did not give one authority over a brotherhood of churches. Some brethren appear to have the idea that the Apostles had authority over a brotherhood of churches (the church-hood) in a way that no one else does.

Their idea appears to be that the Apostles could give orders to a local church in another area of the country and that local church was obligated to submit to the authority of this officer of a brotherhood of churches, much like any local Catholic Church is obligated to submit to the authority of the pope.

Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 11:28 needs to be considered. The text reads, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). This expression states his mental anxiety about the churches; it does not define a role of an apostle as being a "pope" over all of the churches, or a "bishop" over an ecclesiastical diocese. That same concern is on the hearts of every Christian who witnesses the spread of error or trouble in local congregations.

I know these apostles were not presiding officers over a brotherhood of churches because of one simple fact: The universal church is not composed of a brotherhood of churches. The Apostles could not hold authority over a brotherhood of churches because there never was a brotherhood of churches in the first century.

Whenever a person does what the Apostles of the first century did in addressing the error in a church of which one is not a member (such as what Paul did at Corinth, the churches of Galatia, etc.), someone is quick to condemn their action saying, "But you're not an apostle." The full implication of this argument is that the Apostles could do this because they were officers over a brotherhood of churches in contrast to a local preacher who does not hold that office. That argument is wrong because the Apostles were not officers in a brotherhood of churches. There never was a brotherhood of churches in the New Testament.

The work of the Apostles was to give revelation. Aside from that, these men had no greater and no lesser authority over local churches than any other man. Whereas the Apostles could speak through inspiration to these churches, any other man can follow the Apostles' example in addressing churches, using the "apostles' doctrine" in addressing the needs of those churches.

3. Being an apostle did not give one authority to commit sin. We are being told that one is guilty of violating the autonomy of a local church whenever he teaches on errors existing in a local church of which he is not a member. If that is a sin for a person living in the twentieth century, it was a sin for a person living in the first century. And the Apostles did not have authority from God to commit sin just because they were apostles. Lying's just as much a sin when committed by an apostle as it is when committed by anyone else; hypocrisy is just as much a sin when committed by an apostle as it is when committed by anyone else (Gal. 2:11-14). In the same manner, violating the autonomy of the local church is just as much a sin when committed by an apostle as it is when it is committed by anyone else!

The truth of the matter is that some brethren have a mistaken view of what is meant by the autonomy of a local church. When New Testament examples are cited of an apostle doing the very thing that they are condemning in modern day practice as a violation of congregational autonomy, these brethren excuse what they judge to be sinful behavior on the grounds that an apostle did it. That reasoning is mistaken and absurd. The Apostles didn't have a free reign to commit sin because they were apostles.

Undermining Apostolic Examples

Through the years, brethren have understood that God reveals his will to mankind through direct command or statement, apostolic example, and necessary inference. Some of the uses of "you're not an apostle" argument effectively undermine the example of the apostles as a means of learning the revealed will of God. Let's remind ourselves of the evidences that the examples of the apostles are to be used to learn what is approved conduct before the Lord. The plain statement of Scripture emphasizes that their examples are to be imitated. Here are some statements that this is so.

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phil. 4:9).

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample (Phil. 3:14-17).

Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church (1 Cor. 4:16-17).

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:6-7).

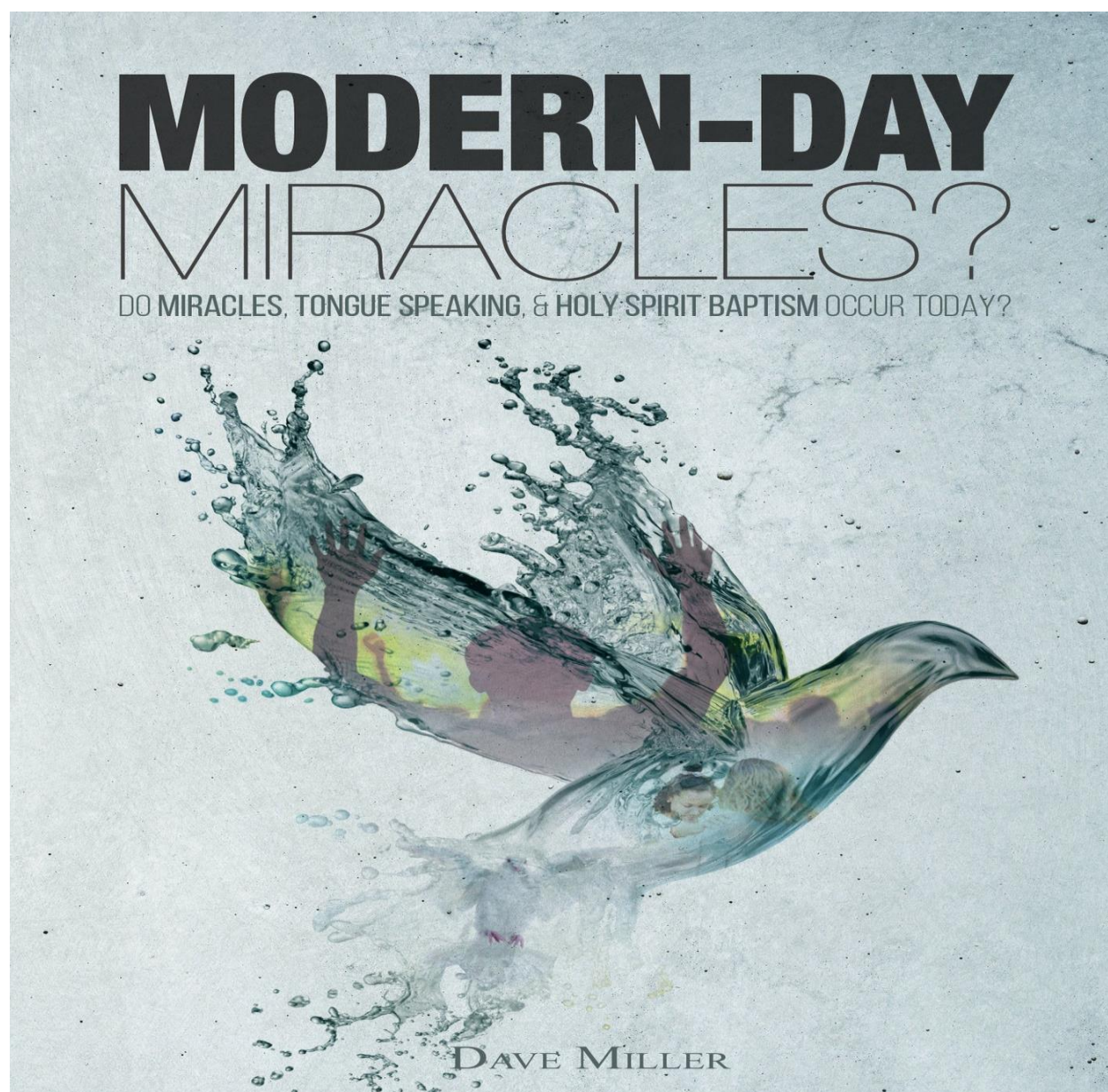
Note that these Scriptures reveal that one can learn how to conduct himself in the Lord by imitating what he had seen an apostle do (Phil. 4:9), by being a follower of an apostle (Phil. 3:17), and by imitating the apostles' "ways" (1 Cor. 4:17).

The argument "you're not an apostle" presupposes that the examples of the apostles cannot be followed, which is directly contrary to what these Scriptures state — that the examples of the apostles are to be used for our imitation.

We conclude that the examples of the conduct of the Apostles are to be imitated as much as possible, exception being that the apostles gave divine revelation and confirmed that revelation by miracles, wonders, and signs. Revelation is not on-going and miracles have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Jude 3). When this is understood as the limited sphere unique to apostles, prophets, and those possessing other miraculous gifts, what is left in the divine record of the conduct of the Apostles can be imitated and used as an example that men should follow.

The charge to preach the gospel still protects the autonomy of the local church, just as it did in Paul's day. When Paul instructed the church, yes, even commanded the church, to withdraw from the Corinthian fornicator, that congregation still exercised its autonomy in deciding whether or not to obey divinely revealed commandment. When preachers preach on subjects of relevance for churches facing problems today, the autonomy of the local church is not violated. Those saints still have their autonomous power to decide whether or not to obey the Lord's commandments. A person's and a church's autonomy is not violated by preaching to them. – *Truth Magazine*

Chapter From the Class Book
“MODERN-DAY MIRACLES?”
“Are There Modern-Day Apostles?”



Are There Modern-Day Apostles?

The incredible diversity of viewpoint that exists in religion today is startling and disconcerting. We are witnessing a breakdown of respect for authority in American culture, as well as a tremendous increase in personal opinion and feelings as the standard of authority. Consequently, we now have a veritable smorgasbord of doctrinal variety in religion. Such is the nature of pluralism. One is likely to see anything and everything perpetrated in the name of religion and/or Christianity. The only solution to such a situation is to reaffirm the inspiration and authority of the Bible. The Bible is the only written document on this planet that is the standard of authority in life and in religion (see Miller, 1996, pp. 430-446, 462-471).

THE DEFINITION OF AN APOSTLE

Such being the case, we must go to the Bible to determine God's will with regard to modern-day apostles. When we do so, we first learn that the word "apostle" comes from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means "one sent from or forth, a messenger, delegate" (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 99; Thayer, 1901, p. 68). The term is used in the New Testament in two distinct senses. It can refer to an individual who is sent by other humans to accomplish a particular mission or task. The term is so used to refer, for example, to Barnabas (Acts 14:14). He was an "apostle" in the sense that he accompanied Paul on an evangelistic trip. Jesus is said to be our "Apostle" in the sense that He was sent to atone for our sins (Hebrews 3:1).

The term "apostle" also is used in a second sense—what we might call an **official** sense. That is, "apostle" can refer to individuals who were officially and divinely selected to serve as Jesus' original representatives—"ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Jesus handpicked the original twelve apostles (Matthew 10:1-5; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-2). Of these original twelve, Judas betrayed the Lord as predicted by the Old Testament (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18-19; 18:1-5). Instead of repenting, he cinched his apostasy by committing suicide (Matthew 27:3-5; John 17:12). Consequently, a successor to Judas was selected by divine decree (Acts 1:16-26).

Only one other apostle in the official sense is alluded to in the New Testament—Paul. His appointment to apostleship was unique and unparalleled in that he was chosen for a specific first century task (Acts 9:15; 22:14-15; 26:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:8-9; Galatians 1:11-12, 15-16). Christ selected him to introduce the message of Christianity to the Gentile world (Romans 11:13; 15:16; Galatians 2:8; Ephesians 3:8). Paul was careful to document the fact that his apostleship was by divine appointment (e.g., Romans 1:5; 1 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1, 16).

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APOSTLE

When one assembles all the relevant New Testament data, at least three qualifications emerge as prerequisite to one becoming an apostle in the official sense (Hayden, 1894, p. 33, expands these credentials to seven in number). First, an apostle had to have seen the Lord and been an eyewitness of Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:22; 22:14; 1 Corinthians 9:1). Second, an apostle had to be specifically selected by the Lord or the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:5; Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:26; 9:15; 22:14-15, 21; 26:16). Third, an apostle was invested with miraculous power to the extent that he could perform miracles. The power to perform miracles included the capability to confer the ability to work miracles to other

individuals through the laying on of his hands (Mark 3:15; 16:17-20; Luke 9:1-2; John 14:12,26; 15:24-27; 16:13; Acts 2:43; 4:29-31,33; 5:12,15-16; 6:6; 8:14-18; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 1:11; Hebrews 2:3-4). Jesus referred to His bestowal of miraculous capability upon the apostles when He promised they would be “endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

THE WORK OF AN APOSTLE

The apostolic office was unquestionably a temporary office for the early church (though apostolic appointment was for life). Its essential purpose was twofold. First, apostles were commissioned by Jesus to launch the Christian religion (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48). This purpose was achieved by means of the initial presentation of the Gospel to the whole world (Colossians 1:23), and the establishment of the church of Christ (Acts 2). Second, apostles were largely responsible for making the New Testament available—first in oral form and, more specifically, in written form (1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:14; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:12-21; 3:15-16).

These two central tasks are set forth clearly in the New Testament. In Matthew 16, Jesus declared that He would build His church after His resurrection from hades (vs. 18). He then explained that it would be the apostles who would instigate initial entrance into Christ’s church (hence the significance of “keys”—vs. 19). This commencement of the Christian religion and the church of Christ would be achieved by means of the apostles “binding” and “loosing” the doctrinal tenets and principles of Christianity that Heaven had previously bound or loosed [the Greek uses the perfect passive and should be translated “will have been bound/loosed in Heaven” as in the NASB (cf. Matthew 18:18-20; John 20:22-23)]. Peter and the apostles articulated the terms of entrance into the kingdom of Christ for the first time on the Pentecost that followed Christ’s resurrection (Acts 2:14ff.).

In Ephesians 4, after summarizing Christianity in terms of seven core concepts (vss. 1-6), Paul described the initial sequence of events that recounted the advent of Christianity (vss. 7-16). Paul noted that: (1) after His crucifixion, Jesus descended into the Hadean realm; (2) He then was resurrected; (3) He ascended back to Heaven; (4) upon His ascension, He dispensed gifts; (5) the apostolic office was included in the reception of these miraculous capabilities; (6) the purpose of these gifts was to equip and edify the church; (7) the preparation provided to the infant church by these gifts was temporary (“till” is an adverb of time connoting **when** the miraculous gifts were to terminate), in that the same preparation soon would be available through the completed revelation, i.e., “the faith.” [By “completed revelation” we do not mean completed **canon**. We mean that all of God’s communication to humanity would have been revealed. See the New Testament discussion contrasting “mystery” with “made known” (Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:1-11). In the meantime, the process of producing copies of the various New Testament documents and circulating them far and wide would have been occurring rapidly and extensively from the very moment of their production by the inspired writers (cf. Colossians 4:16, 1 Timothy 5:18, where Luke 10:7 is already known and classified as “Scripture,” and 2 Peter 3:15-16, where Paul’s epistles are already circulated and recognized as “Scriptures”). Further, the reference to “the faith” in Ephesians 4:13 cannot refer to a time when all people or all Christians will achieve unity in faith. Such a circumstance will never occur. Paul was referring to the time when all people would have access to all of God’s communication to man, thus giving them the potential for attaining spiritual maturity (“a perfect man” vs. “children”). See [Miller](#), 2003].

Once all of the information necessary to the promotion of the Christian religion was revealed to the early church (through oral means made possible by the distribution of the gifts), the church would have the means available to grow and mature in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). While prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers [the words “pastors and teachers” share the same article in the Greek, and so should likely be construed to mean “pastor-teachers,” i.e., a single function in which pastors (those selected by the local congregation to serve as elders or shepherds) were endowed with the miraculous ability to teach inspired information not yet made available in written form] were part of this early development of Christianity (Ephesians 4:11), the office of an apostle was the primary means by which Christ accomplished the inauguration of His religion.

The apostles had the sole responsibility of executing the will of the Son of God in founding, organizing, and fully equipping the church of Christ on Earth, that she might fulfill her heaven-borne mission, until Jesus comes again (Hayden, p. 22). That is why Paul could say two chapters earlier that the household of God (i.e., the church) was built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20; cf. 3:5; Revelation 21:14). That is why he informed the Corinthian Christians:

God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:28-30).

The apostles are said to be “first” in the significance and criticality of their divinely appointed role. The apostles specifically described their unique role in the early church as entailing giving themselves to “the word of God” and “the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2,4).

THE DURATION OF AN APOSTLE

Once the church of Christ was established and Christianity was given its initial presentation (cf. Colossians 1:23), the apostolic office **faded from the scene** along with the age of miracles. As an eyewitness of Christ’s resurrection, Paul referred to himself in relation to the other apostles as “**last of all**” (1 Corinthians 15:8). Neither apostles nor miraculous gifts was needed any longer. They had served their temporary purpose (Mark 16:20; Acts 4:29-31; 13:12; 14:3; Romans 15:18-19; Hebrews 2:3-4; cf. Exodus 4:30). Miraculous gifts functioned as scaffolding while the church was under initial construction, and were removed once the structure had been completed (1 Corinthians 3:10; 13:11; Ephesians 4:13-14). The book we call the Bible is the totality of God’s written revelation to the human race. Consequently, people now have access to **everything they need** (2 Peter 1:3) to enter into a right relationship with God via Christianity and the church of Christ. The apostles “had no official successors. From the nature of their duties, there could be no succession” (Hayden, pp. 20-21). **Apostles, quite simply, are no longer needed!**

NO APOSTLES TODAY

Unfortunately, several groups that claim affiliation with the Christian religion allege to have apostles among them, including Catholicism, Mormonism, and some pentecostal groups. This claim is unbiblical. No person living today can meet the qualifications given in Scripture for being an apostle. No one living today has been an **eyewitness** of Christ’s resurrection. Christ has selected no one living today for the apostolic role. No one living today possesses the miraculous capabilities of an apostle. We should not be surprised that people would falsely **claim** to be apostles. Jesus warned that false prophets would come in sheep’s

clothing, but inwardly they would be ravaging wolves (Matthew 7:15). Paul described some of his opponents in these words:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Further warning was issued to the Galatian churches: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). Anyone claiming to be an apostle today who teaches anything **in addition** to the New Testament is clearly not an apostle of Christ!

Peter added his voice on the same subject: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). No wonder John admonished: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1; cf. Matthew 24:11,24). In the Revelation, the church at Ephesus was commended because they “tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Revelation 2:2).

Catholicism maintains that Peter was the supreme bishop, even over the other apostles, and that every pope since Peter is an apostolic successor to Peter. The pope is selected after literally hours and days of deliberation by cardinals in the Vatican. The only apostle in the Bible that was not handpicked by Christ in person was Matthias. Yet he was not selected by mere men deliberating and debating his potential. He was selected by the casting of lots—which was simply another way for Jesus to do the selecting (Acts 1:26; cf. Proverbs 16:33).

It is incredible to think that any human beings living today would presume to appoint apostles. In pinpointing the credentials of an apostle, Luke (Acts 1) made it abundantly evident that to qualify as an apostle a person would have to have **seen** the Lord and been an **eyewitness** of His resurrection. That is why Paul was careful to state: “Am I not an apostle? ...Have I not **seen the Lord**?” (1 Corinthians 9:1, emp. added). In recounting his conversion, he quoted Ananias as having said, “The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and **see the Just One**, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:14-15, emp. added). What alleged modern-day apostle could make such a claim?

The New Testament also makes clear the fact that an essential characteristic of an apostle was that he had been selected by Deity. When Jesus was on Earth, He handpicked the first twelve apostles. After His departure from Earth, the disciples cast lots to select a successor to Judas. Their method allowed no input from mere humans—except in the recognition that two men possessed all the qualifications necessary to be an apostle. Casting lots allowed **God** to do the selecting. Divine control in the selection process by casting lots was common in Old Testament history (see Leviticus 16:8; Numbers 26:55; 33:54; 34:13; Joshua 14:2; 18:6,10; 19:51; cf. Acts 13:19; 1 Samuel 14:42; Nehemiah 10:34; Psalm 16:5). Solomon claimed: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Proverbs 16:33). Indeed, Peter’s prayer on the occasion shows that the decision already had been made by the Lord before the actual casting of lots: “...show which of these two **You have chosen**” (Acts 1:24, emp. added). The summary statement regarding Matthias—“he was numbered with **the eleven** apostles” (Acts 1:26; cf. Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33)—gives way to a return to the expression “the twelve” (Acts 6:2; cf. Acts 2:14). The text states: “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have

chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship” (Acts 1:24-25). Paul also was handpicked by Jesus—to be a “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15). No human being on Earth today can claim he has been personally singled out and chosen by Jesus to be an apostle.

A third proof that no apostles exist on Earth today is the fact that New Testament apostles were empowered by God—not only to perform miracles—but also to **convey miraculous power to other people** who then could work miracles themselves. This characteristic is demonstrated in detailed fashion in Acts: “Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money” (Acts 8:18). The issue of modern-day apostles may be settled very quickly! To authenticate their claim to be apostles, they must be able both to perform miracles as well as confer miraculous power to others. The apostles of Jesus in the New Testament demonstrated their apostolic status without hesitation. Anyone today who claims to be an apostle should be willing to do the same. No such ability exists today.

ORIGINAL APOSTLES WERE SUFFICIENT

A fascinating passage in the New Testament sheds further light upon this notion of modern-day apostles. That passage is Matthew 19:28. There Jesus informed Peter and the other apostles: “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” A related passage is Luke 22:29-30 which says, “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as my Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

These verses are Christ’s figurative declarations describing the role of the twelve apostles in the establishment of the church and the dissemination of the gospel proclamation (cf. Bales, 1957, pp. 187-223). The “regeneration” refers to the Christian era, which began at Pentecost, during which time spiritual regeneration became possible through the blood of Christ (Titus 3:5). It is an equivalent expression with the “time of reformation” (Hebrews 9:10). The throne of Christ’s glory refers to His present location at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34-36; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:13; 8:1; 10:12-13). The “judging” done by the apostles refers to the rule that the apostles exerted while they were on Earth, setting in place the features of New Testament Christianity (Matthew 16:19; John 20:22-23). The “twelve thrones” refers to their complete authority from Christ to implement Christ’s will until the end of time—which they presently do today **through their authoritative writings—found only in the New Testament**. The “twelve tribes” is a figurative way to refer to the church—the spiritual Israel (Galatians 6:16; James 1:1; cf. Romans 2:28-30; Galatians 3:29).

Neither Christ nor the original apostles needs successors or representatives on Earth today. They continue to rule and reign over the kingdom through the work that they achieved in the first century, and that is preserved for all in the New Testament. Christ is **now** on His throne ruling and reigning. The apostles also are on the thrones assigned to them by Christ. To suggest that the apostles have modern-day successors is to discount and discredit the current rule of the apostles. Neither Christ nor the apostles has abdicated their authority or their current rule to any humans on Earth.

Additionally, the fact that Jesus declared that **all twelve apostles** would occupy thrones in the kingdom proves that Peter had no greater authority than the other apostles. The apostles were **equal** in their reception and wielding of the authority delegated to them by Christ. Yet the Catholic Church claims that the immediate successors to Peter were Linus (from A.D. 67 to 79), Cletus (from A.D. 79 to 91) and Clement (from A.D. 91 to 100). They agree that the apostle John would have still been alive throughout this period (see G.C. Brewer’s discussion

as quoted in Bales, pp. 208-210). The doctrine of the primacy of Peter means that the first three of the alleged successors of Peter would have exercised authority over the still-living apostle John—who had been handpicked by Christ Himself! The very John whom Jesus placed on one of the twelve thrones would have been **under** the authority, knowledge, and power of three popes who had not been selected to be among the original Twelve! (see also Hayden, pp. 22-33). Hayden aptly summarized the New Testament position regarding modern-day apostles:

The thirteen apostles chosen, ordained and endowed by the newly crowned Messiah faithfully and fully executed their commission. When they entered into everlasting rest, the church was established, with all needful ministries to edify, extend and perpetuate it throughout all coming centuries. Then the extraordinary, which was necessary to found a new institution, was succeeded by the ordinary, which is sufficient to teach, regulate and govern the subjects of Christ's kingdom according to the laws that went forth from Jerusalem. The revelation of God was completed. The word of faith is henceforth nigh every believer, even in his mouth and in his heart. The apostolic office ceased, and evangelists and pastors became the permanent teachers and superintendents of the church (pp. 33-34).

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THERE ARE NO MODERN APOSTLES!