

The Apostleship of Jesus Christ

1. The word "apostle" is *apostolos* in the Greek, meaning "an ambassador; one who is sent; a delegated authority."
2. The word was originally used for a high-ranking naval officer in classical Greek times.
 - During the classical Greek period of the 4th and 5th centuries BC, the term *apostolos* was used by Lysias and Demosthenes to refer to the commander of a naval expedition. When the Athenians went to war, there were a number of individuals who were able to command the fleet. One of these was elected by the casting of lots and sent to the fleet to command. He was called the *apostolos*.
 - During the Hellenistic period, c. 323 BC and following, the term *apostolos* was used to refer to a person commissioned and authorized by one of the gods.
 - In the Papyri of the koine (common) Greek period the term *apostolos* was used to refer to a civil agent sent to transact official business.
3. Spiritually, an apostle of Jesus Christ was the highest ranking official in the local churches.
 - *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.*
4. God the Father appointed Apostles of Jesus Christ in order to establish churches and disseminate the gospel.
 - *Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.*

5. A distinction can be made between the spiritual gift of being an apostle and the apostolic office.

- The spiritual gift was the divine enabling to function as an apostle. *Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.*
- The office of apostleship was the authority to function as an apostle. *Romans 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Acts 1:25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. Galatians 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles :)*

6. The Apostles of the *New Testament* ministered in a twofold direction.

- **The apostles of Jesus Christ ministered first to nation Israel.** *Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.*

These men were appointed by Jesus Christ according to the will of God the Father to minister to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

- **The apostles of Jesus Christ ministered to the Church.** The apostolic individuals called to minister to the church included the original eleven disciples (Acts 1:26), plus Paul (Rom. 1:1, etc.), James the brother of Christ (Gal. 2:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Timothy and Silas (1 Thess. 2:6,7 cf. 1:1).

7. In order to be an apostle to the church specific qualifications had to be met.

- **An apostle had to have the spiritual gift bestowed.** This gift was given by the resurrected Christ after His ascension into Heaven. *Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.*
- **An apostle had to receive not only the gift but the office by the sovereign decision of God the Father.** *1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.*

- **The apostle had to have been an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord.** *Acts 1:22 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. 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?*

8. The credentials of an Apostle were established in the following manner.

- **An apostle was endowed with miraculous powers of signs and wonders.** *Hebrews 2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? 2 Corinthians 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*
- **An apostle was able to witness effectually.** *1 Corinthians 9:2 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. 2 Corinthians 3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? 2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. 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.*
- **An apostle had the capacity to suffer patiently.** *2 Corinthians 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*

9. The responsibilities of an apostle included the following.

- **An apostle received and communicated new revelation.** *Ephesians 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

- **Apostles communicated the gospel effectively and with power from on high.** People accepted Christ in response to their preaching. *Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. 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? 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.*
- **Apostles helped organize local churches and appointed officers.** *Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*
- **Apostles instructed new believers in doctrine.** *1 Thessalonians 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. 6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. 9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: 2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. 3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: 4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. 5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: 6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. 10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: 11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and*

charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, 12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

- **Apostles had the authority to administer church discipline.**

- ❖ **Ananias and Sapphira.** *Acts 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.*

- ❖ **Hymenaeus and Alexander.** *1 Timothy 1:20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

- ❖ **Believers at Corinth.** *1 Corinthians 4:21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?*

- ❖ **Man who committed incest.** *2 Corinthians 13:2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:*

10. The apostle had authority over all local churches because he was the channel of *New Testament* revelation.

11. There is no apostolic succession. The highest authority in the local assembly today is the elder(s).

12. The principle for making anyone an apostle was grace. Paul realized this truth and confessed he was the least deserving to be an apostle.

- *1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

13. Because Satan is a counterfeit he has placed false to disseminate discord and false information in the church.

- *2 Corinthians 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*
- *Revelation 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:*

14. Jesus Christ is called an Apostle

- *Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.*

15. The credentials of Christ as an Apostle are clearly established.

- **Christ was sent from God.** *Matthew 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*
- **Christ established the church.** On Christ the church is built. *1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
- **Christ taught the apostles who taught the people.** *Matthew 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying.*
- **Christ ministered first to the house of Israel.** *Matthew 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*
- **Christ ministered to those outside the house of Israel.** *John 4:4 And he must needs go through Samaria.*
- **Christ was able to perform great miracles.** *Luke 6:17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;*
- **Christ taught with unusual insight, clarity and authority in order to impart to the people new ideas and doctrine.** *Mark 1:27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.*

- **Christ produced good results when He taught.** Many souls came into the kingdom of heaven. *Mark 12:37 ... And the common people heard him gladly..*
 - **Christ administered discipline.** *John 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. 17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*
 - **Christ had the capacity to suffer patiently.** *Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*
 - **Christ raised himself from the dead.** *John 10:18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*
16. In all points and in ever detail Christ is entitled to be recognized as the Apostle of “*our profession*” (*Heb. 3:1*).