

OFFICE OF APOSTLE

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There is so much to be said on this topic, so I will only address what I believe to be the most controversial or least understood parts of the “description” of an Apostle. I will allow the academic research in the 2 articles below to serve as the preponderance of information from that perspective.

“Missionaries are Apostles” - or vice versa... This is such a silly notion. I don't mean to sound like I am putting people of this opinion down, but its like saying that all cars have 4 wheels so all cars are 4 Wheel Drive. While every Apostle will have some missionary qualities, it becomes a matter of semantics. The Evangelist may never leave his/her hometown, but the unchurched and backslidden members of society are their mission field. We all, in a sense, have a mission field. 2 Corinthians 5:19 clearly says every believer has been given the word of reconciliation. So, then, since not all Apostles are missionaries, then neither would all missionaries be Apostles. Otherwise all believers and every Evangelist are both missionaries and Apostles as well.

“Apostles are church planters” - this too is a strangely over simplified view of a much more diverse function. Many Apostles will be church planters and break new ground, but not all. Apostles do carry a governmental call. But, God's government is vast and broad. It is beyond our simple delineation of a single possible aspect of the call of any person called to one of the Ephesians 4:11 “Offices”.

“If an Apostle is in the church, there is no need for the other offices” - People who say this misunderstand Hebrews 3:1 in which the writer (possibly Priscilla and not Paul) explains that Yeshua/Jesus was an Apostle. They see that Yeshua filled every need of the Body of Believers by serving in every capacity of Prophet, Evangelist, and Pastor-Teacher (yes in the Greek Pastor and Teacher are one and the same – please see our article on the Office of Pastor-Teacher); it's assumed that Apostles can all walk in all of the offices simultaneously. This is simply untrue. Ephesians 4:9-11 would seem to indicate that when Yeshua ascended, He divided His ministry among members of the Church-Bride. This would certainly follow suit with the shared authority example we see in the Trinity. No one member “lords over” any other and all are required to see the Church-Bride mature into the perfect eternal mate for Yeshua. This spiritual paradox causes much friction in the natural, because many called to leadership only see things through their calling's perspective. They neglect to realize there are other gifts at work in the Body of Believers and all are equal – even though there is a divine order for the church to operate in mentioned in 1Corinthians 12:28. This is not about the person occupying the office. This is about the gift to the church operating through the person. All too often we exalt one above another and then the church goes right back to be unbalanced. Lastly, on this note, apostles can and do often fill any of the 5-Fold offices as needed when a local assembly is lacking. The apostle can change from office to office and operate in the full authority of that office when “filling in”. It is not so they can have more authority. Because when they operate as a teacher, they must follow the order of authority of gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians 12:28. The gifts and offices are not about glory, recognition, or even authority of any person. It is to perfect the Body of Messiah so they can do the work of the ministry. Which is outlined in: John 6:28&29, Acts 10:38, and Mark 16:17.

“You know someone is an Apostle because they have signs, miracles, and wonders operating in their ministry” - This one is touchy... not because it is inflammatory or over simplified like the others; but because it holds truth since scripture supports it. However, this again points to semantics. Mark 16:17&18 (above) says *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”*. Good old fashioned logic reveals that casting out devils and speaking in tongues are signs of God's presence.

If that's not enough, Luke 11:19&20 records Yeshua saying *"And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."* Further, 1 Corinthians 14:22 says *"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."* So every believer works in signs. I'd definitely say that when Paul was bitten by a viper and didn't die, that is a wonder. I say this because the best description, I've ever heard, of what a wonder is, was so simple: you know a wonder has occurred because you wonder how that was possible. Lastly, Mike Bickle defines a miracle as being slightly different than a healing. He says a healing is often progressive. It may require multiple prayers to see the healing manifest. Or the person may be healed in progressive steps. He further describes that supernatural healing can be something healing faster than usual, or in ways that aren't possible or even that it is un-explainable by science. A miracle is an instantaneous healing of something that would otherwise be incurable or take time to heal. So if every believer will see people healed by laying on of hands, then this does not become an exclusive working of Apostles any more than signs and wonders, and as you can see scripture supports this.

In another article on our Teachings Page (Functions of Apostles and Prophets), the writer compares New Testament and Modern Apostles with some Old Testament Prophets. I'd like to quickly clarify before wrapping this up. I believe the author's onto something with his exegesis (study and breaking down of the topic). I believe he is correctly dividing the Word. I wish he'd gone just a bit further when clarifying the difference between modern Apostles and Prophets when using Old Testament Prophets as a parallel. We really see two kinds of Prophet in the Old Testament.

1. Leaders who prophesy the will/word of God (i.e. Moses, Joseph and Daniel)
2. Prophesiers of God's will/word and workers of miracles, signs and wonders (i.e. Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel)

I believe the first to be the model of modern-day Apostles and the second to model the modern-day Prophet. These are not mutually exclusive. You can see many activities in common with both examples. But there are distinct differences as well. My advice, is simple; seek God and ask Him which office a person operates in. He will show you how to recognize and discern the defining aspects of someone's ministry. Honestly, it really only matters so that the members of the "Offices" can stop stepping on one another's toes and get back to be intended business of perfecting the Church-Bride for doing their ministry. So I guess we could honestly say EVERYTHING is riding on this. Ephesians 4:13 says *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."* and Acts 3:20&21 *"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."* So if Yeshua is held back in heaven until the restoration of all things (Offices, Gifts, Sound Doctrine, Church Structure, etc) then we'd better all grow up enough to learn to work together and get rid of the "one man show" mentality which has invaded and is now dominant in the church worldwide. I don't know about all of you, but I am really ready for my eternal reward. But I will occupy until He comes and continue to do my part in restoring the things the Body of Messiah lacks until such time as the very last person He is waiting on receives Him, and the Church-Bride is ready to meet her Groom so we can all go home.

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APOSTLES: WHAT ARE THEY?

By Dr. Ron Cottle and Dr. John P. Kelly

There is much discussion on what the word ‘apostle’ means and how to describe an apostle. Some of the confusion is because apostles don’t all look or work alike. Some focus on world missions, some on the marketplace, and others on the local church or a network of churches. However, they all share at least three basic characteristics: **Apostles are Ambassadors, Generals-Governors, and Patriarchs.**

This series of teachings will begin with the Ambassador Apostle. The next two months will focus on Generals and Patriarchs. These teachings will become part of the ICA Prospectus.

APOSTLES ARE AMBASSADORS

One day Jesus called aside His twelve disciples and after He had given them authority, He commissioned them apostles: “When He had called unto Him his twelve disciples, He gave them authority...and the twelve apostles....” (Matthew 10:1-2).

A. Jesus Himself Chose the People and the Title

It was Jesus alone who chose the name “apostolos” for those whom He called, authorized, and sent out. Among the earliest uses of the term were the Greek historians who used it to describe an **admiral over a fleet of ships** sent out by his king to discover, explore, conquer, and establish his government in new territories. Jesus’ choice of the word reflects this meaning and stresses its emphasis on “**one sent from another**” or a fully authorized representative, ambassador of the sender. (Lyssichus, Or., 19:21; Demosthenes, Or., 18:107) So, **Apostles are fully authorized representatives or ambassadors of the one who sent them.**

Modern Day Apostles? Do They Exist Today?

Or are all who currently claim to be an apostle imposters?

To get started, let’s expand our thinking on the subject. How many people are specifically designated as apostles in the New Testament? To many it comes as a surprise that [25 individuals are mentioned as apostles](#) (<link) in the pages of the New Testament! Imagine—twenty five apostles! This eye-opener paves the way for the acceptance and recognition of modern day apostles. It shows there were more apostles after the original twelve that Jesus designated.

Yes, modern day apostles and prophets exist and function in churches today. We will see extensive Biblical evidence for this in a moment. But first, it might be good to dispel the most common reasons used to deny the fact that modern day apostles and prophets do exist. Click here for a definition and understanding of [“What is an apostle?”](#)

Reasons Why Some Deny the Existence of Modern Day Apostles

One fellow wrote that there are no modern day apostles. He repeated the tired, worn-out arguments of the traditional deniers who say modern day apostles cannot exist. He claimed

B. Apostles Were First Disciples

It is important to note that the people chosen and authorized to be apostles were already disciples—mathetes. That is, they were not just pupils learning facts from their teacher, or even students learning principles from a professor. They were disciples who were incarnating the character and essence (psuche) of their Master. Like Timothy with Paul, **they took on the isopsuchos—same soul or DNA of their Lord** (Philippians 2:20). Jesus led them to a mountain and there poured into them Himself. He did not release them until they were thoroughly filled with His vision and values. Only when they were ready did He release them for the task and turn His attention to “teach and preach in their cities.”

C. The Difference between Disciples and Apostles is the Impartation of Exsousia

What is the difference between committed disciples and commissioned apostles? Exsousia! This is not power as the KJV translates it. Rather it is “**the right to power**” or authority (Matthew 10:1-2). When one is sent out as an apostolos, **he is the full delegate and representative ambassador of his sender**. He carries in his person the full authority of the one who sent him.

D. Apostle equals Sheliach

Jesus did not think or speak Greek, but Aramaic-Hebrew. He took the Greek word apostolos because Greek was the universal language of the Roman Empire. But He filled it with the content of the Hebrew Sheliach. What then is a Sheliach? **He is one commissioned and authorized to fully represent his sender**. He represents in his person the one who commissioned him.

since Christ had died no one could any longer “see the Lord.” He also stated that we don’t need modern day apostles any more because the Scriptures have been written and the canon is closed. He believed that all modern day apostles are imposters, false leaders of the blind.

Let’s examine one of these arguments—the thought that no modern day apostles exist because of the “requirement” that every apostle must see the Lord.

This false concept is based on 1 Cor 9:1 where Paul asks, “Am I not an apostle?” and “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” While Paul is clearly attempting to furbish his credentials, he is not laying out a qualification that every apostle must see the Lord. If that were the case, Timothy could not be an apostle. Paul hooked up with Timothy in Galatia in about 49 or 50 AD. Christ was crucified in Jerusalem sometime around 30 AD. Young Timothy may not have even been born by the time Christ was crucified! Yet he is named as an apostle in First Thessalonians 1:1 when coupled with 2:6. Obviously, when Paul spoke of “seeing the Lord,” he was not laying out a requirement or saying that every apostle must have seen Jesus in the flesh.

Further, what does it mean to “see the Lord?” There is no time in the Bible where physically saw Jesus in the flesh. Yet Christ did appear to Paul in visions or a trance on four occasions. Does “see

Eliezer, the Syrian slave whom Abraham commissioned to bring a wife for Isaac, was the first Sheliach mentioned in scripture (Genesis 24:2ff and 15:2). He was already an elder and servant (zaken and ebed) in Abraham's house. As such, he was selected and appointed by Abraham himself to be his emissary. He placed his hand "beneath Abraham's thigh" to take an **oath of loyalty and faithfulness**. Only after this did Abraham send him out. While on his mission, **he was as Abraham himself** as he negotiated for Rebekah to be Isaac's wife.

So, while **Greek apostolos gives us the form** of the New Testament apostle, it is the **Hebrew Sheliach that provides the content**. A Sheliach-Apostolos is the full representative of his sender. As the Rabbis said: "The Sheliach of a man is as the man himself" (Beraita 5:5). Gerhard Kittel says: "The Sheliach (of Jesus) is as good as his Sender in all he says and does in the execution of his mission" (K., TDNT, 1:415).

The ancients called this plenipotentiary representation—fully empowered. **This is the true meaning of "representative government."** Kittel adds "The emissary of the King is as the King Himself" (K., TDNT, 1:416).

Summary: An Apostle is an Ambassador of the One who sent him.

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Apostles are Generals and Governors

By Dr. Ron Cottle

Growing out of the basic identity presented in Section One, there are two important expressions. The first is the apostle as general or governor. In 2 Corinthians

the Lord" include visions and revelatory experiences? Apparently so, and if this is the case, the bar is rather low. I have seen the Lord in a vision, yet I am certainly not an apostle.

Here's another reason some leaders deny the existence of modern day apostles. This reason is at least partially legitimate. God began restoring modern day apostles to the church about the time World War Two ended. A few of these early pioneers got into excesses and errors so badly that stable church leaders thought, "This can't be of God!" And so they denied even the legitimate existence of apostles that the ascended Christ appointed (Eph 4:11-13).

Biblical Evidence for the Existence of Modern Day Apostles

Now let's look at a number of Biblical references that show God's plan is for modern day apostles and prophets to continue to function in the church.

Christ gave gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) after he ascended into heaven (Eph 4:11-13). These gifted people could not have been among the original twelve of Peter, James, and John! Rather, they are ascension-gift ministers given to the Church Age. They are members of the five fold ministry and include modern day apostles.

10:4 Paul says:

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty....”

Warfare in this verse is *strateia* and it is “military service.” We are at war and God has provided equipment (*hopla*) that is powerful and fit for demolishing enemy fortifications erected against us. All this equipment is most effective under the command of a full representative of the King—an apostle-Sheliach on assignment and under orders. In the NT this person is a *strategos*, warrior-strategist, a general or governor in his assigned sphere.

As His representatives, God gives apostles commissions and goals; as apostles we devise the strategy to accomplish them. Some translations of *strategos* in the NT are: Praetor/Governor; chief magistrate or captain of the Temple—both are Caesar’s representatives over either a territory or a temple. This person served as an officer of the government of Rome and was commissioned by Caesar to be “in charge” and responsible only to the government. If he served faithfully, he had the entire might of the Roman Empire behind him. If he served unfaithfully or abusively, he was subject to recall or banishment by Caesar but never by the subjects of his assignment. See Luke 22:4, 52; Acts 4:1; 5:24, 26; Acts 16:20, 22, 35, 36, 38.

A *strategos* was appointed by Imperial authority as its official, authorized representative. As such, he was “in charge and responsible” to the Emperor for the legal operation of the Provincial government or the Temple government, whichever was his sphere of assignment.

In Nehemiah 2:5, Nehemiah asked the king to send him (Shalach) as his authorized representative-ambassador and “man in charge” to rebuild Jerusalem. He was asking to be an apostle-Sheliach on mission. In 2:6 the Word says, “So it pleased the King and he

Apostles are given by Christ for the equipping of the saints for the work of service. Are the saints (Christians) fully equipped? No way. Have we all attained to the unity of the faith? Not yet! We still need modern day apostles to equip and unify church members. [See a one minute video](#) on the subject by one of the modern day apostles that I have interviewed.

In Ephesians 2:20-22 the Scripture declares the church is built upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.” Christ was the cornerstone then just as He is today. Apostles and prophets were the foundation then, just as modern day apostles and prophets are today.

This truth is underscored by the fact that God has given a primary (foundational) place in the church to apostles and prophets. Paul states that God has appointed in the church “first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” (I Cor 12:28). While some want apostles to disappear, there is never a call for teachers or administrators to cease to exist. Apostles remain in God’s plan until He comes again.

Paul wrote I Corinthians about 55 r 56 AD, at least 20 years after the crucifixion and resurrection. This could in no way refer to the original twelve

sent (Shalach) me.” Letters were given to others already in the field and on assignment by the King so that they might recognize and assist Nehemiah in his mission.

When he arrived, he took charge and became Governor (Pechad—overseer or Bishop) over Artaxerxes’ work in all Jerusalem and Judea. The other rulers in the region dealt with him as with a head of state. Here we have a strong example of what an apostle really is. Nehemiah was a strategos, an apostle-Sheliach to Artaxerxes to establish and maintain governmental order. Apostles today are God’s representatives commissioned to maintain His government in their assigned spheres. The apostle does not necessarily run a church or micromanage its departments and activities. But he exercises the authority necessary to keep the ministry of his assignment true to its Kingdom purposes.

I saw this work first-hand in China recently. We helped to start a university there. The communist government of China appointed one of their own leaders, a communist party member, to serve as president of the university. He has ultimate authority over the 20,000 students, the faculty, the Board of Directors, the 300 acres and 50 major buildings, the founder-chancellor, and his staff. He speaks for the government on all matters of policy and strategic planning. He does not interfere with the daily administration and instruction of the university except to keep them directed on a path approved by the government. He is the strategos, an authorized representative of the government sent to maintain order. That is what an apostle of God is: God’s appointed, anointed, authorized ambassador to maintain right government (shaphat) in his sphere of ministry.

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apostles. There needs to be no doubt for anyone with an open mind that the gift of modern day apostles is given to the Church Age.

Paul offers further insight. “By referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets (Eph 3:4-5).” Paul is saying there is a revelation that has been given now to his generation that was not given to earlier generations. It was not given to men of the Old Testament Era. Rather, it was a fresh revelation and was received by men in the current New Testament Church Age. (What was the insight to which Paul referred? It was the startling, even unthinkable idea to Jews that Gentiles would become part and parcel of the Body of Christ and become equal heirs of the kingdom.)

I’m thankful to Dr. Jim Feeney, the gifted Pentecostal Bible teacher, who showed me insight in Ephesians 3:4-5. Dr. Feeney offers more evidence for the ministry of modern day apostles and prophets at:

<http://www.jimfeeney.org/apostlesandprophets>.