

Apostle - Apostolos (Greek Word Study)

The 1828 edition of Webster's Dictionary defines apostle as follows:

APOS'TLE, noun [Latin apostalus; Gr. to send away, to sent.] A person deputed to execute some important business; but appropriately, a disciple of Christ commissioned to preach the gospel. Twelve persons were selected by Christ for this purpose; and Judas, one of the number, proving an apostate, his place was supplied by Matthias. Acts 1:2.

Apostles (652)(**apostolos** from **apo** = from + **stello** = send forth) means one sent forth from by another, often with a special commission to represent another and to accomplish his work. It can be a delegate, commissioner, ambassador sent out on a mission or orders or commission and with the authority of the one who sent him. The Biblical apostles had special authority and power given by God and when they died that was the end of the special office of an apostle. In other words, contrary to what some men teach there is no Biblical mandate for "apostolic succession."

Apostle is used in two ways in the Scripture - (1) to designate an official office as in this passage (2) Generically to refer to anyone who is one sent with a message.

Apostolos - 80x in 79v - [Click here](#)

Apostolos referred to someone who was officially commissioned to a position or task, such as an envoy. Secular Greek writer **Demosthenes** gives a word picture of "**apostolos**" noting that it was used to describe a cargo ship (sometimes called "apostolic") sent out with a specific shipment to accomplish a mission. In secular Greek **apostolos** was used of an admiral of a fleet sent out by the king on special assignment.

In the ancient world a **apostle** was the personal representative of the king, functioning as an ambassador with the king's authority and provided with credentials to prove he was the king's envoy. **Apostolos** was a technical word designating an individual sent from someone else with the sender's commission, the necessary credentials, the sender's authority and the implicit responsibility to accomplish a mission or assignment.

The English word "**ambassador**" is a good translation of **apostolos** because an **ambassador** is "an official envoy of high rank appointed by one of higher rank and authority in the government to represent and transact its business at the seat of government of some other power."

SENT ONES

To reemphasize the word **apostle** as Paul uses it does not merely refer to one who has been sent with a message to announce, but to the one who is a divinely appointed representative with an official status who is provided with the credentials of his office.

In its broadest sense, **apostle** can refer to all believers, because every believer is sent into the world as a witness for Christ. But the term is primarily used as a specific and unique title for the thirteen men (the Twelve, with Matthias replacing Judas, and Paul) whom Christ personally chose and commissioned to authoritatively proclaim the gospel and lead the early church. The thirteen apostles not only were all called directly by Jesus but all were witnesses of His resurrection, Paul having encountered Him on the Damascus Road after His ascension. Those thirteen apostles were given direct revelation of God's Word to proclaim authoritatively, the gift of healing, and the power to cast out demons (Mt 10:1). By these signs their teaching authority was verified (cf. 2Co 12:12). Their teachings became the foundation of the church (Ep 2:20-note), and their authority extended beyond local bodies of believers to the entire believing world. In the present context Paul clearly uses **apostle** in its more common specialized or restricted meaning.

Beloved, are we not all "SENT ONES" in a practical sense? Indeed, As far as your neighbors are concerned, YOU are Christ's ambassador, whether you like it or not. And who is your neighbor? Whoever is near (the root meaning of the word neighbor! See neighbor = plesion) We have a charge to proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Pe 2:9-10-note) We to live in such a way before the fallen world that we "sanctify Christ as Lord in (our) hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks (us) to give an account for the hope that is in (us), yet with gentleness and reverence." (1Pe 3:15-note) Let our watchword be "Here I am Lord. Send me!" (Isa 6:8-note, cp 1Cor 1:17) Take courage, for you do not have to do it on your own...just follow the template of the faithful brethren and "filled with the Holy Spirit, (begin) to speak the Word of God (the Gospel) with boldness." (Acts 4:31, cp Acts 1:8-note, Acts 9:28, 14:3, 18:26, 19:8, Eph 6:20, 1Th 2:2) Here are some quotes that address the idea of "sent ones" One is reminded of the story of the old preacher who had a good grasp of these fundamental principles and even more so a grasp of and relationship with the Lord Himself. On one occasion he had to listen to a brash young preacher, very sure of himself, who displayed little evidence of the life and power of God in his preaching. When the message was over, he went over to the confident

youth and said, "WAS YOU SENT, or DID YOU JUST WENT?"

- None are allowed to go for God but those who are sent by him. - Matthew Henry
- The Christian worker must be sent; he must not elect to go. - Oswald Chambers
- It is not what we do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through us. God doesn't want our success, he wants us. He doesn't demand our achievements; he demands our obedience. - Charles Colson
- God will not thank thee for doing that which he did not set thee about. - William Gurnall
- Whatever is laudable in our works proceeds from the grace of God. - John Calvin
- Our efficiency without God's sufficiency is only a deficiency. - Vance Havner

Paul thought of himself as an ambassador of the King of kings, sent by Him to the Gentiles with credentials (miracles he performed) and the commission, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:17, 18)

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Unger's Bible Dictionary - The Jews, it is said, called the collector of the half shekel, which every Israelite paid annually to the Temple, an **apostle**; also those who carried about encyclical letters from their rulers." ([The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Octavius Winslow - The apostle Paul felt it a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as a drudgery—but he entered upon it with intense delight. Yet while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him. The fuller a vessel becomes—the deeper it sinks in the water. Idlers may indulge a fond conceit of their abilities, because they are untried; but the earnest worker soon learns his own weakness. If you seek humility—try hard work; if you would know your nothingness, attempt some great thing for Jesus. If you would feel how utterly powerless you are apart from the living God—attempt especially the great work of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ—and you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak unworthy thing you are. ([Morning and Evening - March 2 Evening](#))

Spurgeon commenting on 1Cor 15:9 - When he looked upon the mercies that God gave to him he always recollected how little he deserved; and when he found himself preaching, oh! with what pathos did he preach to the ungodly, for he could always close up: — "But I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ might show forth all long-suffering as a pattern to them that believe." Have I a persecutor here? Let him know that his sin is a most damnable sin that will sink him lower into hell than any other; but even for him there is mercy, and abundant pardon; for Paul says he obtained mercy even though he persecuted the church of God.

APOSTLE PAUL

Paul was a man with a mission having been commissioned by Christ Himself, Whose will was made known in (Acts 9:15, 22:14, 15, 21, 26:16, 17,18). Paul further explained that he was "an **apostle** (not sent from [men nor through](#) the [agency](#) of [man](#), but [through Jesus Christ](#) and [God](#) the [Father](#), Who [raised](#) Him from the [dead](#) . (Gal 1:1).

Vance Havner says Paul was:

- A Jew by birth.
- A Greek by speech.
- A Roman by citizenship.

- A lawyer by training.
- A tentmaker by trade.
- An apostle by the grace of God.

Paul was commissioned as Christ's **chosen instrument** (Acts 9:15) and ambassador to the Gentiles with a message of reconciliation (Ro 5:11-note, 2Co 5:18,19), a message that he "neither received... from man, nor was... taught, but ... through a revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal 1:12).

In his salutation to the Romans Paul added that "**through (Jesus Christ our Lord)** we have **received grace** and **apostleship** to **bring about** the **obedience** of **faith among all** the **Gentiles** for His **name's sake**." (Ro 1:5-note)

And so we see that Paul was endowed with the "**apostolic**" **authority** and power to convey the Gospel of his Lord. Paul belongs to Christ, has been commissioned and sent by Him, and acts as His authorized representative.

See also:

- [Romans 1:1 The Credentials of Paul the Apostle - Part 1](#)
- [Romans 1:2-7 The Credentials of Paul the Apostle - Part 2](#)

Related Resources on Apostle:

- [Apostles -Torrey's Topic](#)
- [English Dictionary Definitions of Apostle](#)
- [Apostles - Nave's Topical Bible](#)
- [Apostle - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Apostle - American Tract Society Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Apostle - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Apostles - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Apostles - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Apostle - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Apostle - Watson's Biblical & Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Apostle - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Apostle and Apostleship - The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia](#)
- [Apostle - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)

In his book "**Conformed to His Image**" **Oswald Chambers** writes about the "Memory of Sin in the Saint"...

No aspect of Christian life and service is in more need of revision than our attitude to the memory of sin in the saint. When the Apostle Paul said "forgetting those things which are behind," he was talking not about sin, but about his spiritual attainment. Paul never forgot what he had been; it comes out repeatedly in the Epistles—"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle" (1Corinthians 15:9); "unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given" (Ephesians 3:8); ". . . sinners, of whom I am chief" (1Timothy 1:15). And these are the utterances of a ripe, glorious servant of God.

If one wants a touchstone for the depth of true spiritual Christianity, one will surely find it in this matter of the memory of sin.

There are those who exhibit a Pharisaic holiness, they thank God with an arrogant offensiveness that they are "not as other men are"; they have forgotten the horrible pit and miry clay from whence they were taken, and their feet set upon a rock through the might of the Atonement. (Chambers, O. Conformed to His image. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott)

TORREY'S TOPIC APOSTLE

Christ pre-eminently called "The Apostle" -Hebrews 3:1

Ordained by Christ -Mark 3:14; John 15:16

Received their title from Christ -Luke 6:13

CALLED BY

God -1Co 1:1; 12:28; Ga 1:1,15,16

Christ -Mt 10:1; Mk 3:13; Ac 20:24; Ro 1:5

The Holy Spirit -Ac 20:24; Ro 1:5

Were unlearned men -Acts 4:13

Selected from obscure stations -Mt 4:18

Sent first to the house of Israel -Mt 10:5,6; Lk 24:47; Acts 13:46

Sent to preach the gospel to all nations -Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; 2Ti 1:11

Christ always present with -Mt 28:20

Warned against a timid profession of Christ -Mt 10:27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33

The Holy Spirit given to -John 20:22; Acts 2:1, 2, 3,4; 9:17

Guided by the Spirit into all truth -Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13

Instructed by the Spirit to answer adversaries -Mt 10:19,20; Lk 12:11,12

Specially devoted to the office of the ministry -Acts 6:4; 20:27

Humility urged upon -Mt 20:26,27; Mk 9:33, 34, 35, 36, 37; Lk 22:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

Self-denial urged upon -Matthew 10:37, 38, 39

Mutual love urged upon -John 15:17

Equal authority given to each of -Mt 16:19; 18:18; 2Co 11:5

Were not of the world -Jn 15:19; 17:16

Were hated by the world -Mt 10:22; 24:9; Jn 15:18

Persecutions and sufferings of -Mt 10:16,18; Lk 21:16; Jn 15:20; 16:2

Saw Christ in the flesh -Luke 1:2; Ac 1:22; 1Co 9:1; 1Jn 1:1

Witnesses of the resurrection and ascension of Christ -Lk 24:33-41,51; Ac 1:2-9; 10:40,41; 1Co 15:8

Empowered to work miracles -Matthew 10:1,8; Mark 16:20; Luke 9:1; Acts 2:43

APOSTOLOS: NEW TESTAMENT USES

Apostolos- 80x in 79v - NAS translations - apostle(19), apostles(52), apostles'(5), messenger(1), messengers(1), is sent(1).

Matthew 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Mark 3:14 And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach,

Mark 6:30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.

Luke 6:13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

Luke 9:10 When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida.

Luke 11:49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,

Luke 17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

Luke 22:14 When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him.

Luke 24:10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

John 13:16 "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

Acts 1:2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven **apostles**.

Comment: In Acts 1:21, 22 the Apostle Peter delineates the necessary qualifications of this latter group: "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us--beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us--one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

18 They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.

29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

Acts 6:6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Acts 8:1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

Acts 11:1 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

Acts 14:4 But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out

Acts 15:2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

23 and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

Acts 16:4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

Romans 1:1-note Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an **apostle**, set apart for the gospel of God,

Paul is an **apostle** by calling, a divinely initiated calling, not an apostle by human seeking. The New English Bible's rendering "apostle by God's call," does a good job of catching the force of the Greek. The apostle was a man who had seen the risen Messiah (Acts 9:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22) and had been appointed by Him to plant the flag of faith in every community to which His master led him. He was His emissary, God's ambassador (Eph 6:20-note of the role of saints today 2 Cor 5:20) and he spoke with God's authority. Thus, in Paul's words there is the implicit claim that he is the authoritative representative of Jesus Christ, divinely called to his task. Paul's call, as Abraham's (Ge 12:1, Hebrews 11:8-note), was an **invitation** that came from heaven.

Barnhouse adds that "The secret of Paul's greatness is indicated in the order of these two words. He was first a bonds slave, utterly surrendered to the Lord, and then he was a sent one...thus he was willing to follow the Word of God and be not only the bonds slave of Jesus Christ but the apostle to the Gentiles."

Paul's obedience to his apostleship was a natural overflow of his submission as a bondservant to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In (Acts 22:10) we are told that the first words out of his mouth were, "What shall I do, Lord?" Then, in recounting the events of his conversion and commission by the Lord Jesus to King Agrippa, Paul said, "Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." (Acts 26:19, 20)

Romans 11:13-note But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

Romans 16:7-note Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

1 Corinthians 4:9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

5 Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

1 Corinthians 15:7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

9-note For I am **the least of the apostles**, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

PAUL'S PROGRESS IN HUMILITY:

CHRIST INCREASING - SELF DECREASING

Apostle > Saint > Sinner

Approximate Date
of Writing

Paul's Self Assessment
Over Time

55AD	1Cor 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle , because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.
61AD	Eph 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints (literally = " <i>less than the least of all saints</i> "), this grace was given (<i>Why was it given? What was Paul to do?</i>), to preach (= <i>The purpose of God's gift of grace</i>) to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,
63-66AD	1Ti 1:15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am (Note: not " <i>was</i> " but " <i>am</i> " foremost!) foremost of all .

2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:

2 Corinthians 8:23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:5 For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

2 Corinthians 12:11 I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

Galatians 1:1-note Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Ephesians 1:1-note Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 2:20-note having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

Ephesians 3:5-note 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 in the Spirit;

Ephesians 4:11-note And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

Philippians 2:25-note But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

Colossians 1:1-note Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

1 Thessalonians 2:6-note nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

1 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,

1 Timothy 2:7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

2 Timothy 1:1-note Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

Titus 1:1-note Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

Hebrews 3:1-note Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

1 Peter 1:1-note Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

2 Peter 1:1 -note Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 3:2-note that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

Jude 1:17-note But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Revelation 2:2-note 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

Revelation 18:20-note "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her."

Revelation 21:14-note And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
