

Marks of a True Apostle: Appointed by Jesus

Scripture: Luke 6:13; Acts 9:15

Code: B131203

Lots of people today claim to be apostles—to wield the same authority and power as the leaders of the New Testament church. To properly evaluate those claims, we're looking at the biblical requirements for apostleship and measuring the credentials of these modern apostles against those of the men the Lord used to found and establish His church.

The Greek noun *apostolos*—from which we get the word apostle—is derived from the verb *apostellō*, which means “to send off on a commission to do something as one’s personal representative, with credentials furnished.” [1][Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 22] We could translate *apostolos* as “envoy” or “ambassador,” someone who goes on a mission bearing credentials of the one who sent him.

An apostle in the New Testament was one sent to carry the gospel to sinners, and several individuals in the early church—both major and minor characters—were called apostles. Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), Andronicus and Junius (Romans 16:7) and James the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19) all bore the title, though they were not among the twelve chosen by our Lord. They are what 2 Corinthians 8:23 calls “messengers [apostles] of the churches.”

In that broad sense, believers today are able to accomplish apostolic *work* through evangelism and service to the church. But that’s not what many modern church leaders mean when they lay claim to the apostolic *office*. Instead, modern apostles are claiming authority, privilege, and power that belonged only to men specifically *appointed by Jesus*.

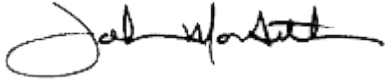
In its more restricted and common New Testament usage, *apostle* refers to “an apostle of Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 1:1). Those apostles included the original twelve (with the deletion of Judas and the addition of Matthias after Judas’s defection) and Paul. In contrast to the apostles of the churches, these men were commissioned by Christ Himself. They were chosen by Him (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 9:15) and learned the gospel from Him, not other men (cf. Galatians 1:11-12).

In Mark 3:14, we read that “He [Jesus] appointed twelve,” who are then named in verses 16-19. As we saw last time, the apostles were chosen by God long before they were ever born. But in life, they were hand selected by God incarnate. As Jesus said in John 15:16, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit.”

That same mindset drove Paul to describe his own work as “the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:24). He also echoed that sentiment in Romans 1:4-5, recognizing Christ as the source of his apostleship.

New Testament apostles were not only chosen by God, they were appointed by Jesus—called out from the crowd and set aside for specific work on behalf of the Savior.

It's a wonder then that so many men and women today claim the authority and power of the apostolic office when they so clearly lack the necessary credentials which accompanied that office in Scripture. As we further examine the marks of a true apostle, we'll see that their vain claims hold no water. That's where we will pick it up next time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John MacArthur', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

(Adapted from [*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Timothy*](#))

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).