

# Eight

## Apostles



### The Problems

The problems that arise when attempting to understand the ministry of apostles lie in the many prejudices that have been perpetuated against the continuation of this ministry. Problems also arise from the many unscriptural practices that flow from a superficial reading of the relevant Scriptures. Some of these misconceptions are:

- Apostles run denominations.
- Apostles receive supernatural extra-biblical revelations as Paul did.
- Apostles have authority that supersedes that of Scripture.

- Apostles succeed one another (a continuous line since Peter in some cases).
- Apostles are the highest authority in the church.
- Apostles are inward (“churchward”) focused while evangelists look outward<sup>395</sup>.

Most of these views are based on a failure to distinguish between different “classes” or “orders” of apostles as revealed in the New Testament.

## The Term “Apostle”

*Thayer’s* says the word means: “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders.”<sup>396</sup>

Kittel says: “Always signified is the person sent with full authority... *apostolos* denotes one who is legally charged to represent the person and cause of another.”<sup>397</sup> Apostles are simply those who are sent out with a particular mission. From this concept we get the word “missionary.” There are three important components that need to be defined in order to fully understand a particular apostle. There is the sender, the sent one, and the mission or purpose. Defining these three components in each case will greatly assist to understand the differences between the various orders of apostles.

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395 For more on the modern errors of the New Apostolic Reformation please see *The Restorationist View* of chapter 7 of this book.

396 Thayer. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Under “apostle.”

397 Kittel. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. p70.

## Jesus

The first and most important of the named apostles is Jesus Christ: “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him.”<sup>398</sup> Jesus was sent by the Father<sup>399</sup> to seek and to save that which was lost<sup>400</sup> and to build His church.<sup>401</sup> He fully represents the Father and acts with the full blessing and authority of God Himself.

## The Twelve

The twelve Apostles (also called “the apostles of the Lamb”)<sup>402</sup> were unique and of a closed number – twelve. Revelation 21:14 speaks about the special place their names occupy in the foundations of the New Jerusalem. Not only did they occupy a special place in the ministry of the Lord Jesus and in the establishment of the church, but the Lord Jesus envisioned a special purpose for them in the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>403</sup> The Twelve were first called “apostles”<sup>404</sup> and “the twelve apostles”<sup>405</sup> quite early in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. After the fall of Judas they are called “the eleven” for a short while.<sup>406</sup> These twelve men were commissioned by the Lord Jesus to “preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”<sup>407</sup>

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398 Hebrews 3:1,2.

399 John 20:21.

400 Luke 19:10.

401 Matthew 16:18.

402 Revelation 21:14.

403 Luke 22:29,30.

404 Luke 6:13.

405 Matthew 10:2.

406 Matthew 28:16, Mark 16:14, Luke 24:9,33.

407 Matthew 10:7,8, Luke 9:2.

The disciples were sent by Jesus Himself and their first commission was clearly defined. A little while later Jesus sent out the seventy, but notably these are not called “apostles” even though they received a similar mission as that of the Twelve.<sup>408</sup> After the Ascension He commissioned the Twelve again in the upper room.<sup>409</sup>

## **The Replacement of Judas Iscariot**

During the 10 days between the Ascension and the day of Pentecost, the disciples discovered that the Old Testament spoke about Judas’ falling away and that his place was to be taken by another.<sup>410</sup> Peter sets one qualification for this man. He was to have been with the eleven and the Lord from His baptism to His ascension.<sup>411</sup> It is important to note that having been a witness to the Resurrection was not a separate qualification, it would have been part of the journey from the Jordan to the Mount of Olives. His election was that he may “be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection”<sup>412</sup> – future tense not past tense.

There are those who feel that the selection of Matthias was a mistake and that Paul should in fact have been (was) the twelfth Apostle. This is based on Paul’s statements that he had also seen the Lord “as one borne out of due time.”<sup>413</sup> This is said to be Paul’s claim that he had fulfilled the requirement set in the upper room. Paul, however, did not fulfil the requirement, as he was not part of the group that had been with Jesus for the three and a half years. There is also not a single Scripture that says that Paul should be part of the Twelve, and he explicitly sets himself

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408 Luke 10:1.

409 John 20:21.

410 Psalm 109:8, Acts 1:20.

411 Acts 1:22.

412 Ibid.

413 1Corinthians 15:8, 2Corinthians 12:1-6.

apart from them<sup>414</sup> and works separately from (but not against) them.<sup>415</sup>

There is also no evidence that the selection of Matthias was out of order, as he is clearly numbered with the eleven to make twelve: “the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”<sup>416</sup> In recording Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, Luke says: “Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice.”<sup>417</sup> Clearly Matthias is fully absorbed in the number of the Apostles. The verse immediately following the election of Matthias tells about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:26 & 2:1). It appears that God had thus placed His approval on the selection of Matthias.

## **Paul**

It is clear from the above that Paul was not part of the Twelve and so we need to examine his ministry more carefully in order to understand where he fits into the whole picture.

### **Paul’s Commission**

Paul specifically traces his commission back to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>418</sup>

- Galatians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father....”
- Ephesians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.”

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414 Galatians 1:17.

415 Romans 15:20, 2Corinthians 10:15, Galatians 2:7-9.

416 Acts 1:26.

417 Acts 2:14.

418 Acts 20:24, Galatians 1:1.

- 1Timothy 1:1: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Unlike the commission of the Twelve, Paul’s commission by the Lord did not happen publicly, nor was Jesus still on earth at the time. And except for Ananias<sup>419</sup> there were no witnesses to it. This does not make it less valid than that of the Twelve, but it is clearly different.

In practice he was commissioned by the church at Antioch where he and Barnabas had, up to that time, been functioning as either prophets or teachers.<sup>420</sup> These two were sent out by the other leaders of the church at Antioch under the direction of the Holy Spirit.<sup>421</sup> It was only after Paul and Barnabas had embarked on their first mission journey that Luke refers to them as “apostles.”<sup>422</sup> At this stage no distinction is drawn between Paul and Barnabas, as both are referred to as “the apostles.”

From that moment on there is evidently no question in Paul’s mind – or in the minds of those to whom he ministered – that he was indeed an Apostle. His position as an apostle came under attack by some of the Corinthians, especially by those who were divisive. He has no hesitation to defend himself and his apostleship to the Corinthians. In 2Corinthians 12:11 he sets himself on a par with the most eminent of the (twelve) Apostles: “for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.”

## **Paul’s Ministry**

It is evident from the paragraphs above that Paul could not be one of the Twelve, or an addition to them (a thirteenth), as their number was closed. At no time do we see Paul including himself among the Twelve in the day-to-day operation of the church, nor

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419 Acts 9:15-16.

420 Acts 13:1.

421 Acts 13:2,4.

422 Acts 14:4,14.

did they feel the need to include him. He clearly operates as an Apostle, separate and distinct from the Twelve. He speaks of those who were apostles before him<sup>423</sup> and of himself as an apostle to the Gentiles.<sup>424</sup> It is clear from the accounts of Paul's ministry that he was uniquely equipped, prepared, and called to spread the Gospel among the Gentiles. Peter also had a limited work among the Gentiles but not to the same extent and focus as Paul.

Although the Scriptures say very little about Paul's responsibility of writing much of the New Testament, it is evident that God had uniquely prepared him for this very important task of writing the Epistles, which later would form the backbone of the New Testament. Peter attests to the fact that Paul's writings are equal to Scripture, which at that time consisted of the Old Testament.

...[A]s also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also *the rest of the Scriptures*.<sup>425</sup>

For this purpose Paul received instruction at the hands of the glorified Christ<sup>426</sup> and revelation which is unparalleled. Here is his testimony:

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught [it], but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>427</sup>

Paul then continued to show that he was not in touch with the Twelve, but that he received his doctrine by direct revelation. When at the council of Jerusalem,<sup>428</sup> he compared notes with the other Apostles. It was determined that his message was not only

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423 Galatians 1:17.

424 Romans 11:1, Galatians 1:15, Galatians 2:7.

425 2Peter 3:15,16. (Emphasis added).

426 1Corinthians 11:23.

427 Galatians 1:11,12.

428 Acts 15.

the same as that of the Twelve, it was also complete and they could add nothing to it.<sup>429</sup> Furthermore, Paul went on to show the Galatians that Peter's practice around the issues of legalism was flawed (possibly revealing a slight flaw in his theology), and thus the need for Paul to correct Peter publicly.<sup>430</sup> Paul had certain truths more sharply in focus than Peter who had sat at Jesus' feet. The mechanics of how Paul received this revelation is not important to this discussion. The fact is that he received revelation which was comparable to, if not more comprehensive than, that of Peter.

It has to be emphasized that Paul was unique in his calling, preparation and ministry. No other apostle – not in the New Testament, nor since – can be compared with Paul. He was especially unique in that he received revelation and wrote much of the Canon of the New Testament. Among the Twelve there were many who did not receive this kind of revelation and consequently their writings or teachings are not part of the Canon. The suggestion that modern apostles should receive similar revelations to Paul, and that their teachings are as authoritative as that of Paul,<sup>431</sup> has no biblical support.

They (the apostles) had an obvious consciousness that it was being given to them to finally complete the divine revelation for this dispensation (2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2; 2 Peter 1:15; Revelation 22:18-19): and any supposed additional revelation today, on which a man would claim the apostolic office, is rightly to be regarded with the utmost suspicion; as an almost certain mark of error and deception.<sup>432</sup>

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429 Galatians 1:11-2:9.

430 Galatians 2:11ff.

431 Coppin, Ezra M. *The Relevance of the Ascension Gifts in the Life of the Church*. California Graduate School of Theology. 1985. p167.

432 Gee, Donald. *The Ministry Gifts of Christ*. Assemblies of God Publishing House. 1930. Nottingham. p34.



## Paul and the Resurrected Christ

In 1Corinthians 15:8 Paul speaks of having seen the resurrected Christ. Some use this passage as proof of Paul's apostleship. Some even use it to prove that he was one of the Twelve (instead of Matthias). This is based on the apparent similarity between 1Corinthians 15:8 and Acts 1:21. Note that the requirements for Judas' replacement were:

Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.<sup>433</sup>

Paul simply claims to have seen the resurrected Christ, not that he had been with Him during His earthly ministry. By no stretch of the imagination does Paul qualify as one who walked with the Lord Jesus from the baptism of John. He therefore does not qualify as one of the Twelve, or even as a thirteenth.

Paul proves his apostleship to the Corinthians by two things. First, that he had been their father in the faith.<sup>434</sup> Second, that he performed signs, wonders and mighty deeds.<sup>435</sup>

If 1Corinthians 15:8-10 is read in the context of the verses preceding and succeeding it, it becomes evident that the point that Paul is making here is not his apostleship, but his credentials as a witness to the Resurrection – and that he has the right to teach authoritatively on this subject. If witnessing the resurrected Christ is the basis of apostleship, then there were another 500 apostles besides Paul and the Twelve!<sup>436</sup>

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433 Acts 1:21.

434 1Corinthians 4:15.

435 2Corinthians 12:12.

436 1Corinthians 15:6.

## The Apostles of the Ascended Christ

Ephesians 4:8 says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.” Ephesians further emphasizes the timing of the giving of the gifts by specifying that the Ascension of our Lord was preceded by his descending into the lower parts of the earth. The apostles appointed/chosen/given in Ephesians 4:11 are clearly given *after* the Ascension of the Lord Jesus. This would then indicate a difference between the Twelve, who were so named before, and other apostles who were given after the Ascension. We may refer to these as the apostles of the ascended Christ. Paul would thus be one of those apostles that were given after the Ascension.

## Others Who Were Called Apostles in the New Testament

In addition to Paul and the Twelve, a number of other men were named and functioned as apostles. These are:

- Barnabas – “But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this....”<sup>437</sup>
- James the Lord’s brother – “But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.”<sup>438</sup> (Note: This James was not one of the Twelve.)
- Epaphroditus – “Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger (*Apostolos*) and the one who ministered to my need.”<sup>439</sup>

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437 Acts 14:14.

438 Galatians 1:19.

439 Philippians 2:25. Young is the only translator who correctly translates as *apostle*, what is *messenger* in most other translations. The word in the Greek is *Apostolos* (Strong’s # 652).

- Apollos – Although 1Corinthians 3:22, 1Corinthians 4:9 do not call Apollos an apostle explicitly, it is implied in the context.
- Timothy & Silas. In Thessalonians 1:1 the letter is written by Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy. In this letter, as in all of Paul’s letters, he carefully differentiates between “I” and “we.”<sup>440</sup> However in 1Thessalonians 2:6 he says: “Nor did *we* seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as *apostles* of Christ.” Paul thus refers to himself, Timothy and Silvanus as apostles.<sup>441</sup>
- Andronicus and Junias – Romans 16:7: “...[S]alute Andronicus and Junias, my kindred, and my fellow-captives, who are of note among the apostles,” Commentators are divided on this verse.<sup>442</sup> Some say that these two had a good reputation with the apostles, while others say that of all the apostles, these were important. The face-value interpretation of this verse speaks of the second. These two people were noteworthy as (prominent) apostles. The second problem is that the King James Version, *New King James Version* and Weymouth translate the second person’s name as Junia, which is female. The *American Standard*, Darby, LSG French, Luther’s German, *New International Version*, *New English Bible*

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440 1Thessalonians 2:18, 3:5, 4:9, 4:13, 5:1, 5:23, 5:27.

441 Note that this is not the “Royal we,” which concept was introduced many years later by Queen Victoria when speaking of herself and not wishing to exclude Albert.

442 FF Bruce and Jamieson, Fausset & Brown and *The New Bible Dictionary* state that they are undecided. FL Godet and HCG Moule say Junias must have been male. Matthew Henry, Thayer and the *New Bible Commentary* make the case for the female form.

and Young translate it as Junias – male. The preferred Greek texts all have the name as male (ΙΟΥΝΙΑΣ).<sup>443</sup>

The above references clearly show that there were men, other than Paul and the Twelve, who were recognized as apostles. Although they were apostles in the sense of having been sent out, they were different in the author of their commission, in the scope of their ministry, and in the duration and impact of their ministries.

The Twelve and Paul were commissioned by the Lord Jesus Himself. All other apostles were commissioned by the churches. But this does not detract from the fact that the gift still finds its source in the Head of the Church. The subsequent apostles differed in scope, in the sense that they laid foundations for local churches. Paul and the Twelve laid foundations for the Universal Church. In the same way the duration of their impact differed in that the Twelve and Paul still have an effect on the Church today, mainly through their writings. The other apostles only impacted their churches for one or two generations. Thus, although all apostles were sent out with the specific responsibility to lay foundations, they did not all have the same function or measure.

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443 Aland, B, Aland, K, Black, M, Martini, C M, Metzger, B M, & Wikgren, A. *The Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament* 27th/UBS 4th Edition. United Bible Societies: Federal Republic of Germany. 1993, 1979. (Electronic).  
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 Stephanus. *Stephen's 1550 Textus Receptus*. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA. 1995. (Electronic).

## Apostles After the First Century

Church history abounds with examples of men who followed in the footsteps of the New Testament apostles, functioning much like them. The only difference is that these are normally called missionaries. We shall examine a few examples.

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) traveled extensively in Great Britain, North America, The West Indies, Europe, New Zealand and Australia.<sup>444</sup> Wherever he went he preached and established churches. In spite of a major split among his followers, and his doctrinal and personal idiosyncrasies, at the end of his life “he left behind him some fifteen hundred churches... who looked to him as their founder and their guide.”<sup>445</sup> W.B. Neatby spoke of him as “...the apostle of tireless energy.”<sup>446</sup> These comments are especially pertinent as they come from a movement that denies the continuation of apostles beyond the book of Acts. Even a superficial study of Darby’s life and work reveals a ministry which very clearly epitomized that of an apostle.

In 1915 William F.P. Burton headed into the jungles of the Congo. Here he worked among people who had never before heard the Gospel. At the end of 45 years of ministry he had established 985 churches, all of them fully self-supporting and staffed by indigenous leaders, all of whom he had converted and disciplined.<sup>447</sup>

These are but two of many examples. Countless books have been written about hundreds of men who similarly preached the Gospel to unreached peoples, taught them and established churches. Donald Gee says:

With diffidence we might suggest such names as Augustine, Columba, Luther, Knox, Fox, Wesley, Carey, Hudson Taylor, Judson, Muller, and others. Admittedly they may not fulfil all that

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444 Coad. *A History of the Brethren Movement*. p209.

445 Ibid p107.

446 Neatby WB. *History of the Plymouth Brethren*, p78. in Coad p 106.

447 Whittaker, Colin. *Seven Pentecostal Pioneers*. Marshalls. Basingstoke. 1983. pp146-179.

which we consider justifies their recognition as “apostles,” but the extent and result of their labors have been truly “apostolic.”<sup>448</sup>

Missionaries are the apostolic ministry in action. Not all missionaries are apostles because many of them are involved in administration, medical work or education. Those who establish churches, train leaders and then move on to new ground are apostles indeed – whatever title we may give them. Lightfoot confirms that: “The apostle... was essentially, as his name denotes, a missionary, moving about from place to place, founding and confirming new brotherhoods.”<sup>449</sup>

## The Work of an Apostle

There are four basic aspects which are fundamental to the work of an apostle. There may be many other things he would do in the normal course of his duties, but these four must occupy the bulk of his time:

- First, an apostle is sent out to preach the gospel.<sup>450</sup>
- Second, he establishes assemblies.<sup>451</sup> (The difference between the evangelist and the apostle is essentially that the one only preaches the Gospel while the other takes the next step and establishes a local church.)
- Third, he confirms and establishes the churches through follow-up visits.<sup>452</sup>
- Fourth, he appoints elders to oversee the local churches.<sup>453</sup>

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448 Gee. *The Ministry Gifts of Christ*. p37.

449 Lightfoot. *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*. p196.

450 Mark 16:15, Acts 16:10, Romans 15:19,20, etc.

451 1Corinthians 3:10, Acts 19:8-10, Acts 18:1-11.

452 Acts 14:21,22.

453 Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5.

MacArthur gives a very good description of the work of an Apostle, but because of his Cessationist view calls them evangelists. And yet he is clearly describing the work of apostles:

In the early church an evangelist was a church planter who went to an area where there were no Christians, won some people to Christ, and established a congregation. Usually he would stay with that congregation for as long as a year, maybe even longer, until he had taught them sufficiently. When some of the people had matured, he would then appoint elders in that city to care for the church and teach it. Then he would move to another place and do the same thing all over again.<sup>454</sup>

## Apostolic Succession

Most denominations who recognize apostles will have some form of apostolic succession. By this we mean that apostles are replaced by new apostles as the older ones die. Some like the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches will trace this line of succession back to Peter or the Twelve. Some of these groups will boast of this line, while others try to deny that they believe or practice any form of succession. This practice is especially prevalent when apostles are in charge of denominations. There is however no reference in the New Testament to any form of apostolic succession. Yes, the message has to be passed from one generation to the next,<sup>455</sup> but a relationship and personal gift cannot be bequeathed.

Paul sets a clear example of the process in his dealings with the Ephesian elders. Paul had established the church at Ephesus<sup>456</sup> and, because of the relatively long time (three years) he had spent there, he must have had very good personal relationships with many of the believers in that church. Yet, when he passed by on

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454 MacArthur. *The Master's Plan for the Church*. p84.

455 2Timothy 2:2.

456 Acts 19.

his way to Jerusalem he stopped at Miletus and called for the *elders*.<sup>457</sup> It is important to note that at this point his relationship was no longer with the believers personally but with the elders, and that he does not call for the church but only for the elders. Also note that his request carried a certain authority and that it was obeyed without hesitation.

Paul then proceeds to explain that this would be the last time they would see him<sup>458</sup> and gives final instructions for the continued care of the church. Note that he makes no provision for a successor. He does not point to Timothy, in whom he had much confidence, and who would minister in Ephesus at a later date. Nor does he nominate Barnabas or one of the Twelve. The responsibility for the church's ongoing care and protection had passed fully onto the shoulders of the local elders:

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember....<sup>459</sup>

If the Lord Jesus Christ or Paul had any intention to have apostolic succession established in the church, we would have seen it implemented here. Paul knew that he was to be removed from the scene – he was not taken by surprise and the only provision he makes is for the instruction of local elders.

Roland Allen alludes to the same principle:

With the appointment of elders the churches were complete. They were fully equipped. They very soon became familiar with all the orders of ministry both permanent and charis-

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457 Acts 20:17.

458 Acts 20:25.

459 Acts 20:28-31.



matic. They no longer depended necessarily upon St Paul. If he went away, or if he died, the churches remained.<sup>460</sup>

## Apostolic Infallibility

From the *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the Pope to the many apostles who claim direct revelations, and thus infallibility, a common thread runs by which these despots control their organizations. Again we have to say that the Scriptures teach no such thing. It is interesting to note that Peter was rebuked publicly by Paul,<sup>461</sup> and Peter confessed that he found Paul's teachings hard to understand.<sup>462</sup> If anyone should have been equipped with this power, it was Peter. Yet he clearly made mistakes and had limited insight. It is therefore somewhat ridiculous for those who claim to follow in Peter's footsteps to suggest they have what even Peter did not possess.

## The Apostolic Office

It is a common position that apostles are officers in denominations who hold that office in all situations.<sup>463</sup> This is not supported by the New Testament where an apostle can only be such by virtue of a fatherly relationship with particular churches.<sup>464</sup> Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church, where some of the believers

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460 Allen. *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* p111.  
Wagner. *The New Apostolic Churches*. p20.

461 Galatians 2:11.

462 2Peter 3:16.

463 Sumrall, Lester. *The Gifts and Ministries of the Holy Spirit*. Harrison House. Tulsa. 1982. p205.  
Nee, Watchman. *The Normal Christian Church Life*. Living Stream Ministry. Anaheim. 1994. p10.

464 Gee. *The Ministry Gifts of Christ*. p33.

seemed to gravitate to other apostles, provides us with some lucid teaching on this matter.

In 1Corinthians 3, Paul admonishes the Corinthians because of their schismatic attitudes. Some were following Paul, while others preferred Peter or Apollos. In this context he seeks to prove his apostleship by three points. He speaks of having planted while others watered.<sup>465</sup> He reminds them that he had laid the foundation and that only one foundation can be laid. All others who come after the foundation layer are builders on that foundation.<sup>466</sup> By both these illustrations he emphasizes his foundational (apostolic) role. From this platform he then says: “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”<sup>467</sup> He concludes that there can only be one planter, foundation layer, or father to the Corinthians – thus only one apostle. Among the waterers, builders or instructors were Peter and Apollos – both apostles in their own right. This is very interesting as Paul is in effect saying that Peter is an apostle in Jerusalem but not in Corinth. Later in the Epistle he applies the converse of this argument to himself: “If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”<sup>468</sup> In other words Paul may not be an apostle in Jerusalem, but he *is* to the Corinthian church.

This clearly defines the concept of “one church, one apostle.” No one could ever take Paul’s place as an apostle to the Corinthians. They would only ever have one apostle – Paul. All others would be instructors, those who water and those who build on his foundation. The idea of an apostle taking authority over a church he has not established is clearly being refuted in these passages. This mitigates against the trend of latter-day apostles bringing churches they had not established under their authority, and then ruling over these churches as a form of archbishop.

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465 1Corinthians 3:6.

466 1Corinthians 3:10.

467 1Corinthians 4:15.

468 1Corinthians 9:2.

## Apostles Look Out, Elders Look In

Apostles are sent out. And, as clearly illustrated by Paul's ministry, they remain on the move as they continually plant new churches, visiting those they have established from time to time until elders are appointed. Once elders are appointed, the apostle moves on to new territory. The very essence of his ministry demands that he be on the move, always looking for new opportunities to preach the Gospel and establish new assemblies. Paul stresses the fact that he is determined to only work in new fields: "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation."<sup>469</sup>

Elders are inward focussed and have no responsibilities beyond the local fellowship. Their total focus is the care, protection, feeding and guidance of their flock. Although there were a number of churches within close proximity of Ephesus, Paul does not instruct the Ephesian elders to extend themselves to Smyrna or to Laodicea.

These two principles highlight the mistake of modern "apostles" who have no interest in the preaching of the Gospel to virgin territory, but rather rule as sovereigns over large collections of churches they have managed to amass.<sup>470</sup> From their position of authority they spend their time looking inward at their "kingdom." Rather than being tied down with shepherding duties, they should be released to go into all the world to preach the Gospel and to make disciples.

## Apostolic Teams

It appears that Paul never worked alone, but always took other men with him who could minister to him, assist him in the work. These men, in turn, were being trained by Paul. It is very important to note that these teams were dynamic – they changed all the time. At different times in the journey, men would be left behind

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469 Romans 15:20.

470 Wagner. *The New Apostolic Churches*. p174.

or dispatched to some other field while others would join the party.

These teams were never static and they were not another name for a committee or governing body. Some denominations have what they call apostolic teams,<sup>471</sup> but this is just another name for the controlling body of the denomination. None of the New Testament apostles ever worked like that, and the concept is as foreign to New Testament church life as the concept of a Pope.

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471 Wagner. *The New Apostolic Churches*. pp106, 175, 178.