

## RECEIVING APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

### A ORIGIN OF THE TERM "APOSTLE"

Apostolos. As a noun is first found in maritime language: a cargo ship or fleet sent out. All its uses have two things in common:

- an express commission
- being sent overseas.

"We are forced by the perplexing multitude of attempts at a solution (to the problem re: the origin of the term) to the conclusion that the darkness that lies over the beginnings of the primitive Christian apostolate can no longer be illuminated with certainty".

*(Précised notes from Colin Brown: Dictionary of NT. Theology)*

#### 1 **Apostello** Verb: "to send out"

Secular Greek: to send forth, with emphasis on the sender, thus carrying the idea of authorization, as in the case of official envoys and divinely sent teachers.

LXX (OT) in Judaism – more than 700 instances – sent with a commissioning, again the emphasis is on the sender. Is 6:8; Gen 24:1

#### 2 **Apostolos** Noun: "Apostle"

Classical Greek and Hellenism – In older Greek, the term is nautical: a freighter or naval force. Hence it does not become a term for "envoy" as in NT which is thus an unusual usage of the word.

Judaism – In Greek Judaism, the term rarely occurs as the Jews were not a seafaring people. Josephus uses it once for envoys sent to Rome (involving a journey by sea (apostolos) – but with some influence of apostello). There is some link with the later institution of salu(a)h: a commissioning for a specific task, stressing authorization (the sent represents the sender) – such as Paul had on the journey to Damascus. Acts 9:1

#### 3 **New Testament use**

The NT use contains no trace of the common non-biblical use for the act of sending; it always signifies the person sent with full authority. The link with salu(a)h is made explicit in John 13:16.

- It can refer to the commissioned representative of a congregation as in 2 Cor 8:23 or Phil 2:25.
- It denotes the bearers of the NT message: first the 12 (Acts 1:26) then the first Christian missionaries (Acts 14:4, 14) – A wider circle (1 Cor 15:7). The Apostle is properly an apostle of Jesus Christ (rather than sent by a local congregation) hence the emphasis on a meeting with the risen Lord to be personally commissioned. Apostles, then, are not officials of the church, but officers of Christ for its upbuilding, and in this sense they are comparable to the OT prophets. (Eph 2:20, 3:5)

*(Précised notes from Kittel: Theological Dictionary of NT)*

It seems the word "apostle" carried both the concept of being sent (under authority of another) and being translocal.

## B. NEW TESTAMENT APOSTLES

### 1 Jesus

Heb 3:1 Consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Sent by the Father.

### 2 The twelve apostles of the Lamb

Rev 21:14 Sent by the Lord Jesus. Matt 28:16-20

### 3 The equipping apostles

Sent by the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Eph 4:8,11; Acts 13:2.

It is not certain whether all of the following could be included as equipping apostles, but they are clearly extra to the 12 and none of them except Paul was a scripture writer. It is also worth noting that the gospels of Luke and Mark, plus the book of Acts and probably Hebrews, were written by men other than the twelve.

- a) BARNABAS Acts 14:4,14
- b) EPAPHRODITUS Phil 2:25 Fellow-worker, fellow-soldier, brother.
- c) SILAS 1 Thess 2:6
- d) TIMOTHY 1 Thess 2:6 True son, "We sent Timothy our brother and fellow-worker in the gospel"
- e) TITUS 2 Cor 8:23 Partner and fellow-worker, true son
- f) PAUL Rom 1:1; Acts 14:4,14
- g) BROTHER? 2 Cor 8:23,18 Fame in the things of the gospel
- h) ANDRONICUS Rom 16:7 Outstanding apostle and relative
- i) JUNIAS Rom 16:7 Outstanding apostle and relative
- j) JAMES Gal 1:19 The Lord's brother.

J.B. Lightfoot in his commentary on Galatians says that the word apostle "is not used as to lend any countenance to the idea that it is in any way restricted to the twelve."

## C. PAUL'S LETTERS TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS

These seem to be apostolic letters to junior apostles giving them instructions on how to successfully build. How to maintain and teach sound doctrine and put right what is lacking.

## D. THE SCOPE OF PAUL'S APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Paul's apostolic ministry was not restricted to evangelism and the proper laying of the foundation of Christ but also the ongoing daily pressure of concern for all the churches.  
2 Cor 11:28.

The following areas of concern were clearly included in Paul's apostolic portfolio as a master builder:

- 1      **That Jesus Christ was the only foundation for building**  
Everything was to be "In Christ"
- 2      **He built theologically** 1 Tim 1:10
- 3      **He built evangelistically** Rom 1:16
- 4      **He built patriarchally** 1 Cor 4:15; 1 Tim 1:2
- 5      **He built relationally** Rom 12:4,5; Col 3:12-14
- 6      **He built supernaturally** Acts 15:12; 2 Cor 12:12
- 7      **He built pastorally** Col 1:28-29
- 8      **He built servingly** 1 Thess 2:6-9
- 9      **He built prayerfully** Eph 3:14-21
- 10     **He built prophetically** 2 Cor 12:1-7
- 11     **He built governmentally** 2 Cor 13:10
- 12     **He built dangerously**  
He took chances with using a young man like Timothy
- 13     **He built corporately** Eph 4:16

## E. THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY TO APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

There are over 700 fellowships in our family of churches everyone of them receives apostolic and prophetic input to some degree or other.

Everything healthy belongs to something larger.

Internal Integrity vs. External Integration.

Sixteen helpful things resulting from apostolic and prophetic input:

- 1 **Saves you from taking short cuts in appointing new leaders:**
  - Do they have your family genes?
  - Do they have a gift of ruling?
  - Are they owners or stewards?
  - Are they teachable?
  
- 2 **Saves you from expediency in appointing elders**  
Does his character match his gifting?
  
- 3 **Saves you from making rash decisions**
  
- 4 **Saves you from wearing out the saints with too much activity**  
"I am come that you might have meetings and have them more abundantly." Some activities need to be cut.
  
- 5 **Helps you maintain sound doctrine and a balanced diet**
  
- 6 **Helps you maintain biblical standards of holiness**
  
- 7 **Keeps you to an outward focus**  
Too much church building; not enough seeking the kingdom.
  
- 8 **Helps prevent major church splits**
  
- 9 **Helps deal with the problem of a "square peg in a round hole"**  
i.e. a prophet trying to be a pastor.
  
- 10 **Challenges you to have a prophetic vision for the church:**
  - to define it
  - to prepare for its implementation
  - to divide it up into it's various departments, each with it's own vision.
  - to carefully select those who should govern the part
  - to start preparing leaders for the future: "the future belongs to those who have prepared for it."

- 11 **Helps you guard the spiritual environment of the church:**
  - gossip
  - broken or strained relationships
  - social/practical displacing the spiritual
- 12 **Helps you not to run away from your problems**
- 13 **Helps you to be disciplined in delegating**
- 14 **Challenges you to move in the supernatural and take risks**
- 15 **Ensures room is made for all the Ephesian 4 gifts**
- 16 **Ensures good foundations are laid in church plants**

#### **F. THE NEED FOR APOSTOLIC FATHERS**

There is a great need for spiritual fathers. Paul said we don't have many.

##### **SEVEN ADVANTAGES:**

- 1 **They are not easily threatened by their spiritual children**
- 2 **They tend to be more magnanimous than other leaders, unless they have a strong prophetic life-flow**

Thomas Myerscough regarding Willy Burton: "He's a difficult young man, but he will go a long way."
- 3 **They keep a broad perspective**

They refrain from getting bogged down in minor issues.
- 4 **They make more room for individuality**

They want to see all their spiritual children reach their full potential in Christ. They see the great value in diversity.
- 5 **They give identity by approbation, encouragement and correction**
- 6 **They operate from a higher level of faith**
- 7 **They find it easier to inter-relate with other spiritual fathers and their spiritual families**

## **G. CONTEMPORARY APOSTOLIC MINISTRY**

- 1 **Reviews with a team**
- 2 **Impacts a town/city**
- 3 **Opens doors for translocal expertise**
- 4 **Postures God's people towards unity**  
Interacting with other groups.
- 5 **Challenges man-made traditions that produce hardened inflexible wineskins**
- 6 **Assembles a strategy that is suitable to the situation**
- 7 **Plants churches**
- 8 **Discovers and harnesses prophets and the other ministries**

## **H. THE APOSTLE'S PRIME VISION: TO BRING GLORY TO GOD IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS**

- 1 The glory of his inheritance in the saints. Eph 1:18
- 2 God's dwelling place in the Spirit. Eph 2:19-22
- 3 Bringing many sons to glory. Heb 2:10
- 4 To see the body of Christ grow to the measure of the stature that belongs to fulness of Christ. Eph 4:13
- 5 To bring to light what is the administration .... in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accord with the eternal purpose. Eph 3:9-11
- 6 God's ultimate purpose was to fill the whole earth with pure, humble, serving sons who were to rule the entire earth under God's authority. They would be the Father's family, the Son's body and bride, and the Holy Spirit's temple. Eph 3:14; 4:15-16; 2:22

Barney Coombs  
May 2000

## **"An Apostle" by W.F.P. Burton**

*When as a little boy I was taken to church there was a coloured window in the end of the building, showing the twelve apostles. They were dressed in most elaborately decorated robes, and carried croziers, orbs, lambs and other unnatural symbols in their hands, while round their heads were great halos, something like Lancashire cheeses. I sat looking at that window, Sunday after Sunday, until I really thought that apostles were like that – but they were not. It was sheer imagination.*

*Let me give you a Bible picture of an apostle: He is a weak little chap, with a poor voice (2 Cor 10:10), a gaolbird (Acts 16:23). He looks under-nourished and his clothing is disreputable (1 Cor 4:11). He is a tramp of no fixed abode, and has been abused and falsely accused (1 Cor 4:9-13). If you look at his hands they are stained and cracked by the hard work of softening skins, and sewing them into tents, for that is his livelihood (Acts 18:3). At times he is very ill, even despairing of life (2 Cor 1:8-11; Gal 4:13;*

*2 Cor 11:30). Perhaps these infirmities may have come from the terrible sufferings which he had undergone (2 Cor 11:23-28).*

*That picture has not much in common with the twelve complacent old gentlemen looking benignly at one from the church window, has it!*