



Apostleship, Spiritual Gift

The spiritual gift of Apostleship was a temporary gift and had the highest authority ever delegated by God in the Church Age. Many of those given this gift by God the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost are the authors of the New Testament epistles who taught and wrote the mystery doctrines that were not revealed in the Old Testament Scripture. All writers of the New Testament were either apostles or someone closely associated with an apostle such as Mark and Luke. These apostles wrote in the New Testament prophecy details of the future dispensations which will follow the Church Age, both the Tribulation and the Millennium. Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:11.

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past," (Romans 16:25, NASB)

"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." (1 Corinthians 12:28, NASB)

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers," (Ephesians 4:11, NASB)

"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." (1 Corinthians 12:11, NASB)

The word "Apostle" is derived from the Attic Greek word ἀπόστολος (apostolos) and means admiral, supreme commander, or one with highest rank. The spiritual gift of Apostleship was designed for two purposes. One was the formation of the canon of Scripture, the New Testament. The other purpose was leadership in the pre-canon period of the Church Age. This leadership involved training of pastors, establishing local churches, and teaching the mystery doctrines of the Church Age until the canon of Scripture was completed.

Apostles to Israel and Apostles to the Church

The Bible distinguished between the 12 Apostles to Israel and the 12 Apostles to the Church. The 12 Apostles to Israel were appointed by Jesus Christ during His time on earth. The 12 Apostles to Israel functioned in this role for about three years. Matt. 10:2-4.

"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; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him." (Matthew 10:2-4, NASB)

These 12 were; Simon (also called Peter), Andrew his brother, James and John (also called the sons of Zebedee), Philip, Bartholomew (also called Nathaniel), Doubting Thomas (also called Didymus), Matthew (also called Levi), James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus (also called Jude), Simon the Zealot (also called Simon the Canaanite), and Judas Iscariot.

Peter was not appointed an apostle to the Church in Matthew 16:18-19. The disciples were appointed Apostles to Israel at that time, not to the Church. Matt. 10:5-7.

"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind



on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”“ (Matthew 16:18-19, NASB)

“These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” (Matthew 10:5-7, NASB)

There was only one of the 12 Apostles to Israel who was not later given the gift of Apostle to the Church on the Day of Pentecost. That one was Judas Iscariot. The remaining 11 apostles to Israel were given the spiritual gift of Apostle to the Church after our Lord’s resurrection and session. Eph. 4:8.

"Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."" (Ephesians 4:8, NASB)

Paul (previously known as Saul of Tarsus) was later appointed one of the 12 Apostles to the Church. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:9; Col. 1:1. Paul replaced Judas Iscariot according to 1 Corinthians 15:7-10. The temporary spiritual gift of Apostleship functioned until the completed canon of Scripture in 96 AD.

“Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,” (Romans 1:1, NASB)

“For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Corinthians 15:9, NASB)

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,” (Colossians 1:1, NASB)

"then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 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." (1 Corinthians 15:7-10, NASB)

The spiritual gift of Apostleship gave the 12 absolute authority over all of the local churches extant during the apostleship period from the start of the Church Age in 30 AD until the completion of the canon of the New Testament in 96 to 100 AD. In the post-canon period of the Church Age, all local churches were autonomous under the authority of one pastor-teacher.

A key requirement to be appointed an Apostle to the Church was that the apostle was an eye witness to the resurrected Christ. 1 Cor. 9:1; 1 Cor. 15:8-9.

“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?” (1 Corinthians 9:1, NASB)

“and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Corinthians 15:8-9, NASB)

Paul saw the resurrected Christ on the Damascus Road. Acts 9:3-6; Acts 22:6-11; Acts 26:13-18. Then He appeared to Paul again in Arabia. He again appeared to Paul in the temple. Acts 9:26-30; Acts 22:17-21. Finally, He appeared to Paul in prison in Acts 23:11. So Paul saw the resurrected Christ on four different occasions.

"As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are



persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." (Acts 9:3-6, NASB)

"But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also." (Acts 23:11, NASB)

Spiritual Gift of Apostleship in the Book of Galatians

The first spiritual gift we find mentioned in Galatians is Apostleship. The major functions of spiritual gifts in Galatians would center on the features of the gift of Apostleship. The spiritual gift of Apostleship would include the direct revelation of the content of Bible doctrine in the writing down of the content of Scripture. This is not true of any existing gift today.

The spiritual gift of Apostleship would include authority over more than one church as the Epistle is written to the "churches of Galatia." This too is nonexistent today in a bona fide way. The spiritual gift of Apostleship included the function of trouble-shooting as Paul did in dealing with isolating and solving a particular problem in the churches of Galatia.

The spiritual gift of Apostleship included the function of "shepherding" as he applies and teaches doctrine on spirituality, growth, maturity, and divine good production. The spiritual gift of Apostleship also included the function of "evangelizing" and is indicated by reference to this type of preaching in Galatians 1. The spiritual gift of Apostleship included for Paul a "specific niche" in which and to whom the major part of his ministry would relate. He was an Apostle to the Gentiles and Peter was the Apostle to the Jews.

Galatians verifies the principle that there is an interdependent ministry of one spiritual gift to another spiritual gift on the same level. Paul had a ministry to Peter, although they were both apostles. In Galatians, Paul make it clear that spiritual gift production is not dependent on human good excellence or reputation. Paul also made it clear that divine good production is possible without human verification of your spiritual gift.

In Galatians, Paul felt it important to clarify his spiritual gift function and ministry to his peers, especially at Jerusalem. Peter, James, and John recognized clearly the function of Paul's spiritual gift of Apostleship. This is the concept of others recognizing your spiritual gift.

Galatians also makes it clear that the possession of a spiritual gift even on the level of an apostle does not keep one from falling. Paul remained true in Galatians, but Peter crumbled. Both had the spiritual gift of Apostleship. Paul did not make the spiritual gift an issue with the Galatian people such as he did with the Corinthians. Believers who are stacked up in legalism need Bible doctrine first so they can grow spiritually before they should think about divine good production.

Although Paul was an apostle by spiritual gift, he continually held forth the common bond of relationship he had with the people. He stated that he was as they were. Paul's spiritual gift of Apostle was many things, but largely he applied it as a communicator in Galatians. The exercise of his spiritual gift did not guarantee that people would utilize all his Bible doctrine content or follow his authority. This was made clear by the fact of their departure from the grace principle.

Spiritual gift production is always naturally desired to be preserved and all who communicate Bible doctrine jealously guard their fruit and message content. They respond decisively when anyone tampers with it. The possession of a spiritual gift does not remove human frailties or problems. This is made clear by the reference to Paul's infirmities. The proper exercise of the spiritual gift finds Jesus Christ as



the one being glorified and not the spiritual gift or the one possessing it.

Apostles Had Other Spiritual Gifts

An apostle also had the gift of Miracles. Paul did not have the gift of Healing at the end of his life. It was removed from him before he died some ten years before in 57 AD. Phil. 2:27; 2 Tim. 4:20.

“For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.” (Philippians 2:27, NASB)

“Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.” (2 Timothy 4:20, NASB)

Their use of miracles was necessary to sustain their apostolic authority. Acts 5:15; Acts 16:16-18; Acts 28:8-9. No human being can perform miracles at will today. 2 Cor. 12:12.

“to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.” (Acts 5:15, NASB)

“And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.” (Acts 28:8-9, NASB)

“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.” (2 Corinthians 12:12, NASB)

Early Church Missionaries Called Apostles

There were a number of missionaries in the early Church given delegated authority by the 12 Apostles to the Church. They had tremendous powers, but they were delegated powers. They were also called apostles, but did not have the spiritual gift of Apostleship.

These early Church missionaries had lesser spiritual gifts such as pastor-teacher, prophecy, and evangelism and had the authority to establish local churches much like foreign missionaries do today. A missionary team should go to a country to form churches in that country. This requires evangelism, recognizing those men with the spiritual gifts of communication, and then training those men so that eventually local churches are established.

These early Church missionaries included men like Barnabas, James the Lord's half-brother, Apollos, Silas (Silvanus), Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Andronicus and Junias. They are called apostles in the sense of being missionaries, but did not have the spiritual gift of Apostleship. They had the delegated authority to establish churches, analogous to colonies which were founded in different parts of the Roman world, some as far as India and China.

Barnabas was a missionary apostle. He had the authority to go out and form churches, recognize men with the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher, train them, appoint them to certain local churches, and then to move on. Acts 14:14; Gal. 2:9.

“But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out” (Acts 14:14, NASB)

“and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” (Galatians 2:9, NASB)



James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, was a missionary apostle. He was the writer of the book of James. 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19.

"then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;" (1 Corinthians 15:7, NASB)

"But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother." (Galatians 1:19, NASB)

Apollos was a missionary apostle and was Paul's delegate to Corinth and appeared to also be an apostle in 1 Corinthians 4:6 and 1 Corinthians 4:9.

"Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other." (1 Corinthians 4:6, NASB)

"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 4:9, NASB)

Silvanus and Timothy also were missionary apostles. Silvanus had a great ministry in witnessing and in the field of music. Timothy did not often use his grace authority. 1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:6.

"Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." (1 Thessalonians 1:1, NASB)

"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 Thessalonians 2:6, NASB)

Other missionary apostles included Titus, Epaphroditus, Andronicus and Junias. These men did not have the spiritual gift of Apostleship, but they did have delegated authority to fulfill the missionary principle through the establishment of local churches in different parts of the Roman world. 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; Rom. 16:7.

"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 8:23, NASB)

"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;" (Philippians 2:25, NASB)

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

Cessation of the Gift of Apostleship

There is no perpetuation of the spiritual gift of Apostleship. No sons became apostles. The temporary gift of Apostleship died with the Apostle John. After his death, there were no more apostles. John is the last of the apostles and died sometime between 96 and 100 AD, probably around 98 or 99 AD. John finished writing the Book of the Revelation on the Isle of Patmos in 96 AD. He then was released from his banishment on the Isle of Patmos and returned to Asia Minor. John probably returned to the area of Ephesus as there was a heretic by the name of Cerrinthus making inroads with his false doctrine in the Church of Ephesus and he had to contend with that. Later on, a group of apostates became carried away in their false doctrine, emotional behavior, and demon doctrine such that they took John and boiled him in oil. John survived this attempted murder. They couldn't kill him. This is a great example that you are not going to die until it's God's time for you to die. When he finally did die, he was the last apostle and it was the end of the gift of Apostleship.



The gift of Apostleship was absolute authority over all the local churches in the Pre-canon period of the Church Age. Now, a similar but more limited type of authority is delegated to the minister of the local church by the Word of God and is resident in the pastor-teacher of one local church. Following the completion of the written Canon of Scripture, for the remainder of the Church Age, every local church is autonomous, self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting.

If God wanted apostolic succession throughout the Church Age, He would have made it very clear through His Word that this was a permanent spiritual gift. He did not. The New Testament says nothing about the gift of Apostleship going beyond the 12 apostles. When they died, that gift died with them. Once the Canon of Scripture was complete with the writing of the Book of the Revelation, the spiritual gift of Apostleship was withdrawn.