

**Do we have apostles in our  
Church today?**

- **OUTLINE**
- **1. What is an apostle?**
- **2. What is the difference between a disciple and apostle?"**
- **3. What is the different between Apostles and Missionaries.**
- **4. What is the difference between an Apostle and an Evangelist?**
- **5. Do we have apostles in our Church today?**
- **6. Discussion**

# **1. What is an apostle?**

- The English word “apostle” is derived from the Greek *apostello*, “to send forth.”
- The Greek word for “apostle” literally means “one who is sent” and can refer to an emissary or anyone sent on a mission.
- While hardly used in the Old Testament, it is found at least 80 times in the New Testament.
- An apostle is one who is “sent” by God to preach the Gospel to the nations.
- An apostle is given the authority of the one who sent him.
- Twelve disciples were directly selected by the Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry and accompanied throughout his travels through Galilee.
- The disciples are enumerated in Mark and Luke and include Judas.
- About two years before the crucifixion, and shortly before the Sermon on the Mount they were designated by Him as his messengers [literally "sent away"] or apostles in Greek.

- The **apostles** in the New Testament were **disciples** who were understood to be specifically sent out by Jesus to extend his **mission** throughout the world!
  - All of the apostles were disciples—they were among the many believers in Jesus—but only a select group of disciples were chosen as the Twelve Apostles ([Matthew 10:1–4](#); [Mark 3:14](#); [Acts 26:14–18](#)).
  - This included the original twelve disciples (although Judas Iscariot eventually reversed his loyalties and rejected and betrayed Christ.)
  - That there is a select group of twelve apostles is seen in the foundations of the walls of the New Jerusalem: twelve foundations, each inscribed with a name of an apostle ([Revelation 21:14](#)).
- Though not one of Jesus' disciples, Saul of Tarsus, renamed Paul, formerly a persecutor of Christians who was converted when he had a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus, is also named an "apostle," because of his divine commission from Jesus.

- The term apostle was also used in the New Testament to describe an individual who was commissioned and sent by a community or church to preach the gospel.
- Other men who are named “apostles” in the New Testament—although not members of the Twelve—include Matthias ([Acts 1:26](#)), Barnabas ([Acts 14:14](#)), Apollos ([1 Corinthians 4:6–9](#)), Timothy and Silas ([1 Thessalonians 1:1](#), [2:6](#)), Epaphroditus ([Philippians 2:25](#)), and two unnamed apostles ([2 Corinthians 8:23](#), possibly already included in the previous list).
- These men were “sent ones” in that they were chosen for specific work on behalf of the church, but they were not part of the Twelve who were hand-picked by Jesus.
- Note that Jesus is also called an “apostle” in [Hebrews 3:1](#), indicating that He was sent by and had the authority of His Father.

- [Ephesians 4:11–16](#) speaks of apostles along with other church leaders whose role was to equip the believers for works of service. The main distinction of apostles appears to have been regarding their authority.
- The apostles' teaching forms the foundation for the truths of our faith ([Acts 2:42](#); [Ephesians 2:20](#)).
- The [qualifications](#) for being an apostle included having been with Christ during His ministry, having personally witnessed Jesus after His resurrection, and having been empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform miracles or signs ([Acts 1:21–22](#); [10:41](#); [2 Corinthians 12:12](#)).
- Paul was an exception to part of the qualifications. Although he did not accompany Jesus on His earthly journeys, Jesus made a special appearance to him on the road to Damascus and set him apart as an apostle to the Gentiles ([Acts 26:14–18](#)). This is why Paul compared his place among the other apostles as “one born at the wrong time” ([1 Corinthians 15:8](#)).

- An **apostle** is sent to deliver or spread those teachings to others. The word "**apostle**" has two meanings, the larger meaning **of** a messenger and the narrow meaning to denote the twelve people directly linked to Jesus Christ.



**2. What is the difference  
between a disciple and apostle?**

- **Question: "What is the difference between a disciple and apostle?"**

**Answer:** In Christianity the words “apostle” and “disciple” are often interchanged, but in truth refer to different realities.

- Every “apostle” was a disciple, but not every “disciple” was an apostle.
- Every person who believes in Jesus is called His disciple. [Matthew 28:19–20](#) records Jesus saying, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- Every person who believes in Jesus as his or her Savior is a disciple of Jesus.
- However, only a select group of early believers were chosen as apostles and given authority to perform signs and share the revelations found in the New Testament.

- The word “disciple” is derived from the Latin *discipulus*, meaning a “student” or “pupil.”
- Similar to the word “apostle,” it is used almost exclusively in the New Testament. It typically denotes the many “students” who surrounded Jesus and eagerly learned from his many teachings.
- The Greek word for “disciple” simply refers to a learner and is used throughout the New Testament to refer to people who believed in Jesus ([Luke 14:26–33](#)).
- For example, [Acts 6:1](#) says, “In those days when the number of disciples was increasing.” The word *disciples* simply means “believers” or “Christians” in this context.
- In this context a disciple of Jesus is not necessarily someone who is “sent” to preach the Gospel to the world, but is a person who is constantly learning what it means to be a Christian.
- While at first the words can be easily confused, after learning their definitions, the distinction is clear.

### **3. What is the different between Apostles and Missionaries.**

- We said earlier that all apostles were disciples but all disciples are not apostles.
- But all the apostles were missionaries.
- This is the role taken up by many today, who in some churches are called apostles but in other churches they're called missionaries.
- In my view, probably due to what I have witnessed, missionaries are specifically sent with authority by a church or Mission Board
- Their purpose goes beyond preaching the gospel.
- They are also expected to start churches and eventually move on leaving local people in charge as pastors, elders, teachers, etc.
- They often stay in communication with these churches and correct doctrine or deal with bigger internal issues that may arise the local church cannot or doesn't know how to handle.

- Apostles, like all Christians, are called directly for the lifelong mission or purpose of telling the gospel message that is in most cases much more similar to that of an elder or bishop that exercises authority and corrects doctrine in a local church.
- They may or may not have ever established a new church. They may have authority over a single church, multiple churches or an entire sub-denomination.
- Missionaries, on the other hand, are those who are sent on a mission with full authority as a commissioned representative of a congregation or Missionary organization, who not only preaches and teaches the gospel message, but is a person who has the special task of founding and establishing churches.
- God calls His missionaries, equips them, anoints them for service, just as he calls all of his servants.

**4 What is the difference between an Apostle and an Evangelist?**

- Evangelists are anyone who proclaims the gospel; anyone who brings or announces the good news of the gospel of christ!
- This role is seen in a few forms. There are traveling or itinerant preachers who go from church to church or town to town and preach. Those usually don't stay for a very long time. (c.f 3 John)
- It could also be someone that preaches around their town on street corners who would point people interested to an already established local church.
- They can also be someone who fulfills only the preaching role in a local church and are not involved directly in many/any pastoral functions; many of the very large churches have this situation.
- Billy Graham was an example of an Evangelist.
- Matthew and John were both Apostles and Evangelists.
- It has been said that “Evangelists help churches grow up, primarily through direct mission and church planting. while apostles help churches grow out.”



**5. Do we have apostles in our  
Church today?**

- **There are no apostles, in the special Biblical sense of the word, alive in this world today, as defined in the Gospels.**
- **There were only twelve apostles, and they had a special task in the founding of the church.**
- **The word *apostle*, however, is still used by some Christian groups in reference to a missionary or entrepreneurial leader in a general sense.**
- **But these people do not meet the same qualifications as the twelve apostles in the Bible.**
- **The only Christian Churches that I've known of to have an office of apostle(s) are within the Pentecostal denomination.**
- **The role varies quite a bit from church to church or from one sub-denomination to another.**

- They are some who say that apostles did not end with the early church but continued throughout the church age as well as evangelists, pastors and teachers, and, yes, prophets too, and that all of these callings will continue throughout the Church age until we all, as Christ's Church, are made perfect together with Him when we meet Him in the air.
- They cite Ephesians 4:11-13 to support this view
- And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
- Personally. I do not agree with this view since the verb "gave" is in the past tense, and since the NT seems to teach very clearly that there are only two offices in the church ie
  - DEACON
  - PASTOR TEACHER/ELDER

# Discussion

- Conclusions drawn from the Bible about the role of the apostle need to be accurate to what the Bible says without assumptions, presumptions, adding in what is not there, nor taking away what is said therein.
- Often denominational biases have contributed to confusion on many topics.
- Many church denominations count on that their polity is all accurately drawn from the Bible.
- With such presumed upon to be a correct basis for church government any inaccuracies about clerical roles will be reflected elsewhere in other teachings.
- Such can found common place regarding conclusions made about the role of the apostle. Herein, we exhort that a fresh reexamination of the Holy Scriptures be conducted.
- **Why do we seek titles in the contemporary church?**
- **These titles just in my view confuse issues and people.**
- **Individuals should seek to find out what is the role that God has given them to perform in the contemporary church, and effect those roles without worrying about titles.**
- **Some very gifted believers perform several functions equally well.**