

The Apostles

Introduction:

Our lives are filled with emotional ups and downs. Events transpire that are discouraging and there are events that make us happy. Through time, we are learning how to exist and function in our society. What governs an individual's actions during these ups and downs of life will also determine one's character ("The combination of qualities or features that distinguishes one person, group, or thing from another"[AHD 259]). For example, when Esau was dealt a situation, he allowed it to embitter him (Heb. 12:17ff). When Joseph was dealt a seemingly unfavorable situation, he made the most of it and learned valuable lessons. An encouraging lesson one may learn from the Book of Hebrews is that we have the lives of other faithful saints in days gone by to turn to in times of life's ups and downs (Heb. 11). One such example for Christians today is the apostles of Jesus Christ. These men suffered for the cause of Christ (I Cor. 4:9ff; II Cor. 4:7ff) because they believed in the reality of man's resurrection and eternal abode (Acts 26:21-23). This lesson shall examine the apostles who serve as our modern day examples (I Cor. 11:1).

I. Who Were the Apostles?

- A. The apostles were hand picked to serve as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Lk. 6:12; Gal. 1:1; etc.).
- B. The apostles' words were the commandments of God (I Cor. 14:37).
- C. They were actual witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (Acts 1:22). Here, the word "*must*" (*dei*) is used to illustrate binding necessity just as the same word is used of the qualifications of elders at I Tim. 3:2. This being so, there are no modern day apostles. The Lord does not need to appear in the resurrected state to others today because divine revelation is complete (I Cor. 13:9; Jude 3).
- D. Here is a list of the NT Apostles:

The Apostles			
Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13; 22:1ff
Peter	Peter	Peter	Peter
Andrew	James and John, the	Andrew	Andrew
James	sons of Zebedee	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Philip
Philip	Philip	Philip	Thomas
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew
Thomas	Thomas	Thomas	Mattew
Matthew	Matthew	Matthew	James, son of
James, son of	James, son of	James, son of	Alphaeus
Alphaeus	Alphaeus	Alphaeus	Simon
Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon the Zealot	Zelotes
Simon the Cananaen	Simon the Cananaen	Judas, son of James	Judas, brother of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot
			Matthias
			Paul

II. Defining an Apostle:

A. The word “apostle” means “a messenger, ambassador, envoy” (LS 107).

1. As ‘messengers’ the apostles bring eye witness testimony of the resurrected Jesus (Acts 4:33; I Cor. 15:1-8). They took the things that Jesus taught them and brought this message to the world (Jn. 15:26-27; 16:13-15; Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:3ff; I Cor. 14:37). Jesus said, “*He that hears you hears me; and he that despises you despises me; and he that despises you despises Him who sent me*” (Lk. 10:16). Clearly the apostles spoke not their own ideas but they spoke by divine revelation (Ezek. 11:5 compared to Eph. 3:1-3).
2. As ‘ambassadors’ the apostles were representatives of Jesus (II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20).
3. As an ‘envoy’ they were on a mission authorized by God (preaching the saving message of the gospel; Rom. 1:13-16) and verified in miracles (Mk. 16:20; I Thess. 1:5; Heb. 2:3-4; cf. example in Acts 8:4ff). Their message was the gospel that had the power to save men’s souls from condemnation (II Thess. 1:8).

B. A defining of the apostles would not be complete without illustrating the **effects** of their preaching. Jesus had told the apostles that the world would hate them for exposing sin (Jn. 15:18ff). When the apostles brought the gospel message to various regions of the world they were sometimes mocked (Acts 17:30-32), rejected (Acts 18:5-6), shamefully treated (I Cor. 4:9ff; I Thess. 2:2), and even physically abused (II Cor. 11:22ff). Though such shameful treatment often occurred, we must remember that it was by the fearless preaching that the early church was established (Acts 2:38ff). There were man who did obey the gospel message and bring the apostles great joy (Acts 4:1-4).

C. Another defining point of the apostles was the **manner** in which they preached. The objective was always to expose sin (Eph. 5:11) and promote repentance (II Cor. 7:8ff). This type of preaching is termed, “*preaching truth in love*” (Eph. 4:15). Said style of preaching was designed not only to bring one to Christ but to nurture the new Christian as a parent would a child for their growth (I Thess. 2:7-12). Paul considered his converts as figurative children (I Cor. 4:14-15). As a father nourishes a child and cares for their wellbeing there will be times of correction and chastening (I Cor. 4:21; I Tim. 4:1-5). There would be proper times for hard correcting words (I Cor. 4:21) and times for gentle words (Gal. 6:1; II Cor. 10:1).

III. Following the Example of the Apostles:

A. The apostles serve as examples for all Christians (cf. I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9).

B. Apostles confirm the revelation they spoke with miracles. No man can today can speak NEW revelation and neither can one perform miracles to confirm this new revelation. Following the examples of the apostles does not mean that one can perform miraculous deeds and speak new revelation, it means living as they lived!

Conclusion:

Some tell us that we cannot do as the apostles did because they were inspired of God. This is true from one point of view, and that is, I cannot speak new divine revelation nor can I perform miracles to confirm this new revelation. God’s word is complete and He does not need me to create new doctrine. We can; however, do all else that the apostles did. My preaching, character, life, and attitude toward brethren who live faithfully and those who live in sin must parallel the lives of these men (Phil. 4:9). When, therefore, I want to know how to conduct myself as a true Christian today I can simply open my Bible and read of Jesus and the apostles and pattern my life after theirs. When I preach, I can simply turn to the lives of the apostles for an example. When I suffer persecution, I can turn to the apostles and realize that this is a part of teaching truth.