

The Foundation of the Apostles

Intro: Did you know that Satan has “deacons”? “His (Gk. <diakonos>) also transform themselves into (Gk. <diakonos>) of righteousness — **2 Cor. 11:15**

But when we talk about “deacons” we almost always mean “deacons *of the church.*” (The translators usually render the word as “ministers” or “servants” and transliterate as “deacons” only in the context of servants *of the church.* It’s not really their job to make those distinctions for us, and I think they do us a disservice in some cases, but that’s a rant for another day.) We just need to be aware that the word can be used in more than one way.

And so it is with “apostles.” **Apo-** (away from, forth) **stellein** (to send) = **one sent forth.**

The question is, “**Sent by whom?**”

By the churches: (*trans. messenger*) Companions of Titus were “chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift”, **2 Corinthians 8:23**; Epaphroditus, **Philippians 2:25**

By the Holy Spirit: Barnabas and Saul: “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ ... So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit...” **Acts 13:2, 4** (So they’re called “apostles” in **14:14.**)

By the Father: “Jesus Christ whom You have sent,” **John 17:3**; “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,” **Hebrews 3:1**

By Jesus: The 12, **Matthew 10:2ff**, **Revelation 21:14**; etc.

“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” — **John 17:18**

“Go ... and make disciples of all the nations....” — **Matthew 28:19**

The list also includes Matthias and Paul. Paul was hand picked by Jesus: “**He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name....**” — **Acts 9:15**

False apostles: They’ve been around since the beginning of the church.

2 Corinthians 11:12 But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. 13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

The church in Ephesus had been told that the Lord “Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.” — **Ephesians 4:11-12**

and they were praised by the Lord in this way:

“6 You hate the deeds of [evil men, GC], which I also hate,” and “2 You cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars.” — **Revelation 2:6, 2**

How can we tell whether a person claiming to be an “apostle” was sent by Jesus?

Qualifications. Acts 1:21-22 (Walked with Jesus from his baptism to His ascension.)

But when Christ chose Paul, He made an exception: Paul was “born out of due time” when Christ appeared to him “last of all”, **1 Cor. 15:8**

So to be fair, Jesus *may* have chosen others after Paul wrote that. **How *else* would we know?**

Signs! Just like the prophets of old, the apostles had divine help to perform miracles to identify themselves as God's messengers:

2 Corinthians 12:11 In nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

Paul also came with **love**.

2 Cor. 11:4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! ... 9 I kept myself from being [financially, GC] burdensome to you, and so I will keep *myself*. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! ... 20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours *you*, if one takes *from you*, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. 21 To *our* shame I say that we were too weak for that!

2 Corinthians 11 is a great chapter where Paul goes head to head against false teachers who were false apostles, Satan's "deacons" and false "diakonos" of Christ.

22 Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am* I. 23 Are they [Greek, <diakonos>] of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more. — **2 Cor. 11:22-23**

And another part of the **example** of all the apostles (according to uninspired accounts) is that they all were **martyred** for their faith (except John, who was imprisoned more than once for the faith in the Bible record).

The Role Jesus' Apostles Played: Reveal the mind of God.

John 14:26 - the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will **teach** you all things, and **bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you**.

They preached and wrote years after their time with Jesus, but they did not rely on their own memory. (Imagine if it were otherwise: Jesus sends them to "**make disciples... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.**" (Matthew 28:19-20) They have an "uh-oh!" moment—"Wait. What did he say about divorce and remarriage?!?")

John 16:13-15 - The Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all truth... and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine.

Out-takes from 1 Cor. 2:6-16: "We speak wisdom, we speak the wisdom of God, God has revealed to us through His Spirit, we have received... the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, we have the mind of Christ."

Out-takes from Ephesians 3:1-6: "by revelation He made known to me the mystery, when you read you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets"

As they worked to establish and develop churches (e.g., events in the book of Acts), they wrote letters to churches and individuals which comprise most of the New Testament (22/27 books).

That's foundational! The apostles of Jesus are part of the foundation of the church.

Eph. 2:19 We are “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, **22** in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

Where would we be without the apostles? Without the apostles' teachings, our understanding of certain topics would be limited or absent. Just page through Acts to Revelation:

- The spread of the gospel; the start of the church
- The transition from a church with “Jews only” (as in Acts 2 - 7) to the one planned from eternity (Eph. 3: and promised to Abraham which welcomes people of faith from all nations
- The choosing of the apostle, Paul (written in a book not by him, by the way)
- The persecutions endured by Jesus' followers
- Teachings on specific sins such as homosexuality, dissensions, sorcery
- How grace and faith and action work together to save us
- When and how to observe the Lord's Supper
- How to respond to sin in the church
- How to manage your influence
- The nature of the church
- How to organize the church
- The work of the church
- The roles of men and women in the church and in the home
- The work of preachers and elders and their relationship to the church
- Miraculous spiritual gifts
- The end of the world and our change at the resurrection
- The New versus the Old Covenant
- Spiritual battles in heavenly places
- Lots of specific false teachings; the great apostasy
- Anti-christs

Modern apostles:

“An ‘apostle’ is an ordained leader ... in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. [“Mormon church”, GC] Apostles are chosen through inspiration by the President of the Church, sustained by the general membership of the Church, and ordained by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles by the laying on of hands. ... These Twelve are to judge the Twelve tribes of Israel and the other twelve disciples whom the resurrected Jesus chose during his ministry in the Western Hemisphere about A.D. 34 (1 Ne. 12:9-10; Morm. 3:18-19; cf. D&C 29:12). ... These latter twelve disciples -as distinguished from Jesus' twelve apostles in Palestine- are to judge their own people who are descended from the house of Israel (3 Ne. 27:27). Fourth, during his visit in the Western Hemisphere, the risen Jesus established the position of the Twelve in his church when he chose and instructed them carefully in his gospel (3 Ne. 11:18 - 12:1; cf. 13:25-34; 15:11-16:20; 18:36-37; 27:13-21). ... (Jesus) commissioned those twelve disciples to “go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken” (3 Ne. 11:41).

Modern revelation adds further information. The apostolic office and authority were restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by Peter, James, and John.... [By

implication, the 12 in the West didn't continue their office and authority, GC] (D&C 27:12; see also Melchizedek Priesthood: Restoration of Melchizedek Priesthood). As early as June 1829, ... Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer... were instructed concerning the kinds of men to be chosen as apostles and were commissioned to select the first Twelve in the modern era (D&C 18:26-38). (Encyclopedia of Mormonism [1992], 1:59-60, retrieved 3/17/2018).

Summary: That church recognizes the Palestinian 12, differentiates them from "the other 12" in the western hemisphere, and says the office and authority were restored "in the modern era" by 3 of the "eastern" 12.

Modern apostles

- 1) are too late, (There's nothing left to reveal - 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:3)
- 2) have no signs, and
- 3) pervert the gospel.

Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. — **Galatians 1:8**

Two Extreme Views of the Apostles:

1) Some exalt the apostles.

Nowadays, we have "apostolic churches." An internet search for "church of the apostles" will show you endless pages of results for congregations all over the US, and in almost every town you can find a church named for one of Jesus' apostles. In fact, people have been honoring the apostles

The original "church of the Holy Apostles" was [a cathedral, GC] "dedicated to the [Twelve Apostles of Jesus](#)" in about 330 by the Roman emperor [Constantine the Great](#), the founder of Constantinople, the new capital of the [Roman Empire](#). ... It was the Emperor's intention to gather [relics](#) of all the Apostles in the church.... [But he only obtained the skulls, GC] of [Andrew, Luke](#) and [Timothy](#) Its treasury also held relics [bones and stuff, GC] of Saint [John Chrysostom](#) [the "golden mouth"; we would say "silver tongued", a big-name preacher] and other [Church Fathers](#), saints and martyrs. Over the years the church acquired huge amounts of gold, silver and gems donated by the faithful [and eventually plundered by the not-so-faithful, GC]. (Wikipedia, Church of the Holy Apostles, retrieved 3/17/2018)

But the church does not belong to the apostles!

**(The apostles did not die for us, and we were not baptized in their name. 1 Cor. 1)
(And the church is not about "stuff"!)**

Refer back to **Galatians 1:8**, and you'll see that the apostles' authority was only to *spread* the word and they sure had no right to *change* it! Even "two or three" who "agree(d) on earth concerning anything that they ask" could not change the revelation of the gospel.

In their commission from Jesus, Jesus said "all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth," and He instructed them to teach the disciples "to observe all things that I have commanded you." (**Matthew 28:18-20**) They had no right to change the commandments.

The apostles' authority was limited.

Some see the apostles as having authority in themselves, and which they could pass on to others. Reference the Mormons' modern-era apostles and similarly the Catholic doctrine of apostolic authority and succession. Jesus gave them no such authority; *that power was His!*

Their authority does not transfer by virtue of their spirituality.

He gave them "the keys to the kingdom" (**Matthew 16:19** - I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever

you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” See also **18:18-19**.) Peter, in particular “opened the door” to the kingdom by being prominent when the gospel was first preached to the Jews (Acts 2) and then being the first to preach to non-Jews. (Acts 10)

If their authority could have been transferred to others, then the solution for confronting false teachers would have been to get more apostles on the scene or simply be present where the trouble was coming from. But in **Acts 20**, with the church in Ephesus facing just such a future (“savage wolves will come in among you.... 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things”), Paul said,

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. 32 “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance....

He commended *them* to God and His word and told *them* to watch out!

The power was in the Word!

2) **On the other extreme, some try to dismiss the apostles.** We know that, while the words of the apostles were inspired, breathed out by God, **their lives followed their own decisions.**

Peter sinned and was rebuked publicly. **Galatians 2:11-21**

Paul had to keep himself under control lest even he be disqualified. **1 Cor. 9:27**

Jesus gave the apostles authority over demons, but at least once they failed to drive them out. (**Matthew 17:14-21**)

When people cannot respond to an idea, they often resort to attacking or **discrediting the messenger.** For example, they don't like limits being placed on women's role in the church, so they say stuff like, “*Paul hated women. That's why he didn't let women be preachers. In fact, Paul never married. In fact (say some), he was actually gay.*” Pitiful and unfounded.

Their authority does not go away because of their humanity.

Illustration: Have you ever picked blackberries? You skip over the ones that aren't ripe enough or are too entangled in the thorns, and just get the ripe ones you can reach. It's the same with most fruits. This idea is called “cherry picking”, and when it comes to religion, it has people sitting in judgment over the apostles.

Acts 2:42 [The early church] continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

We must follow what they taught.

(That's how to honor them and one way to honor the Holy Spirit!)

Jesus said to His apostles,

Luke 22:29 “I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed *one* upon Me, 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

The apostles will judge us!

Take aways:

- We have every right to test people's claims. Modern apostles are not sent by Jesus.
- Jesus' apostles revealed the mind of God; as such, their teachings form part of the foundation of the church.
- Their authority derives from the inspired teachings they gave.
- We must show them due respect by following their teachings.
- Their teachings apply to all our relationships, family, church, etc.