

# Does the Role of an Apostle Continue in our Day?

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By Peter Salemi

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***Many today in the Church of God claim that Herbert W. Armstrong was “God’s Apostle.” Many who claim to be his successor are claiming the same thing. Are these claims true? Or did the office of Apostle cease after the death of the Apostle John?***

It’s unfortunate that in the latter years of his Life Herbert W Armstrong claimed these divine titles for himself the way he did. This was the beginning of the end for that church. By the end of his life, the “Church of God” did not resemble the church that Jesus built, but looked like the church of HWA! Keith Hunt a former member on his website writes, “It is sad to have to report that IDOLATRY is still very rampant in different religious groups. The Mormons have their Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. The Jehovah Witnesses have their William Russel. The Seventh Day Adventists have their Ellen G. White. The Roman Catholics have their Pope, and so it goes with other organizations of religion.

“While I am somewhat familiar with the above idolatry with the above groups, I am VERY first-hand familiar with groups that have broken off from the Worldwide Church of God, founded by Herbert W. Armstrong. I was a member of the WCG from 1961 to 1972. I have associated with various off-shoot groups from the WCG since 1979, hoping that each one would see the cultic idolatry that Herbert Armstrong produced in the WCG. Some, such as the Church of God International, and The Christian Biblical Church of God, and many local independent Church of God groups that had their history in the WCG, *HAVE acknowledged the cultic idolatry of Herbert Armstrong as it developed in the 1970s, have denounced it, and have REPENTED of it.*

“But sad to say a number of the larger off-shoots of the WCG that arose in the 1990s HAVE NOT admitted the truth of the matter concerning the latter years of Herbert Armstrong. Such groups are the very fanatical Gerald Flurry’s Philadelphia Church of God, and the less fanatical Rod Meredith’s Living Church of God, and the United Church of God, An International Association [& the very fanatical David C. Pack Restored COG]

“All of the above FOUR groups (and there are others), Living Church of God, Philadelphia Church of God, Church of the Great God, and The United Church of God, believe they are the rightful continuation of the work of Herbert W. Armstrong. *None of them to my knowledge, admit that Herbert Armstrong apostatized himself in the last years of his life, and led the WCG into being a CULT.*

“I have NO evidence from my recent few visits with the United Church of God that *the plain truth of how Herbert Armstrong conducted himself and things he taught, and teachings of the WCG in the last years of his life, have been acknowledge for what they and he was - clearly fanatical vanity and idolatry, as well as some serious teachings of ERROR, especially concerning Church Government.*

“THE MINISTRY OF THOSE FOUR OFF-SHOOT GROUPS OF THE OLD WCG (and others that it may apply to also) NEED TO REPENT OF THE IDOLATRY THEY HAVE TAUGHT AND ARE STILL TEACHING, CONCERNING THE LATTER LIFE OF HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG. THEY NEED TO STOP COVERING IT UP, TURNING THEIR MINDS FROM IT, AND IN SO DOING PERPETUATING TO THEIR MEMBERSHIP THAT ALL WAS PERFECTLY WELL, SPIRITUALLY AND DOCTRINALLY FINE, UNDER THE

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### LEADERSHIP OF HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG IN THE LAST 10 TO 15 YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

“The truth of the matter, the PLAIN TRUTH, is that from, especially from after the death of Herbert Armstrong’s wife Loma, in 1967 (I was part of the WCG then, until 1972), *the Worldwide Church of God became progressively more and more cultic in its teaching, until at about the middle 1970s it was a full blow CULT and one of the abusive church organizations...*” (The Idolatry with HWA, emphasis his and mine). In the beginning this was not the case. Mr. Armstrong taught the true doctrines of the Bible, and just said he was an Evangelist. An Evangelist means one who preaches the Gospel, which he was. Then near the close of the 60’s, and definitely in the 70’s Armstrongism was in full swing, and this is what we take issue with.

### Claims of HWA being God’s Apostle

Was HWA God’s Apostle? I believe he was a minister, called by God to do the work of God, as all other ministers are; But to put him into the rank of an Apostle? Can that be substantiated from the pages of the Bible?

First notice the claims made by HWA, and his followers then and now. In February, 1980 in the Good News Magazine, in the article “How Many Apostles were There?” By Leroy Neff, he writes, “Just as proofs in the life of Paul set him forth as an apostle of Jesus Christ, *in our time another has also been used by God in a powerful way. Through him, the Worldwide Church of God was established. Through him, the doctrines of God were restored to the Body of Christ. Through him, directly or indirectly, all of us in the Church have come to the knowledge of the truth, repentance and baptism. Through him, demons have been cast out and many have been healed — even of cancer. Isn’t that the fruit, the seal of apostleship?*”

“*It is eminently clear, and has been for some time, that Jesus Christ and God the Father have specially sent forth Herbert W. Armstrong with a commission, and his fruits have shown that he is an apostle: For many years, Mr. Armstrong did not claim that he was fulfilling the office. Probably he did not need to, as the Church recognized him as an apostle whether or not he took that title. But in recent years, he has consistently said that he is an apostle.*” (emphasis added).

Notice, in the beginning he did not claim he was an Apostle, but eventually because people kept telling him he was, he believed it and preached it. Notice all these things of doctrines and healing were done “Through him.” Not Christ or the Father, but him. It is Christ that builds the church (Matthew 16:18). It is Christ who heals. As the Apostle Peter said after healing the lame man, “And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, **as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?**”

“The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus... **And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know:** yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” (Acts 3:12-13, 16). This was the problem with the Worldwide Church of God, they “left thy first love” (Rev 2:4), therefore, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place,” (Rev 2:5). Now that church ceases to exist.

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Here are some co-worker letters that went out during that time HWA that say, “Naturally, it is incumbent on me as **God’s Apostle**, to protect His ‘sheepfold’ He has placed under my care.” (July 31, 1978 Dear Brethren letter)

“And please state in your letter, in your own words, that this money is your endorsement *of my apostleship*, and the money is to be used for defending God’s Work as I, **Christ’s Apostle**, deem best.” (January 14, 1979 Dear Brethren letter)

“God calls the Church to back up **His apostle** and get His message to the world...” (March 19, 1981 Dear Brethren letter)

Today these Armstrong followers still claim that HWA is God’s Apostle.

Notice Flurry’s co-worker letter, “*Mr. Armstrong was an apostle*. So if there’s someone doing the work of ‘the voice’ again, is it possible that this man, too, is an apostle?”

“Here, they are both working on the same level, essentially doing the same job, except that we must warn most of God’s Church as well. Mr. Armstrong restored all things (Matthew 17: 11).

“Then we came along and had to re-restore all things. ‘The voice’ in Isaiah 40 is actually in two parts, or two eras, if you look at it closely. There was the voice of Mr. Armstrong, and then our voice crying out to God’s sinning Church and the world. *If the voice preceding ours was an apostle, is it logical-we just want the truth of God, that’s all-that the voice following him would also be an apostle?* The voice really has cried out in many ways, on television and magazines and booklets. If you check the list of the booklets I have written with new revelation, you have one small book and 41 booklets with new revelation from God. The voice is crying out today. Jesus Christ is about to return to this Earth! *Isn’t it logical to think God would have another apostle crying out to this world before the greatest event to ever occur in the universe?*” (Nov 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010, emphasis added). Flurry believes that HWA was an apostle and uses this belief to justify himself and his office as an apostle as well, believing that he is HWA’S successor.

David C. Pack, another Armstrongism group, says in his sermon 21<sup>st</sup> century Apostle that, “Why would...listing apostles first not include me? Would Christ expect me to ignore that? ...The responsibilities Christ expects me to do...While ***I have apostolic authority... Mr. Armstrong was a Apostle. Yes brethren I hold that office. I do...*** If the highest office in Restored Church of God is not an apostle, then I was not sent by Christ.” (Emphasis added). Clearly these people believe what they believe, but can it be substantiated from the Bible? Are these people Apostles? Were The Biblical evidence tells us something totally different!

### What is an Apostle?

What is the definition of an Apostle? In the Greek the word is “apostolos” (Strong’s #652). It means, “(1) a delegate, messenger, *one sent forth* with orders

1a) *specifically* applied to the twelve apostles of Christ

1b) in a *broader sense* applied to other eminent Christian teachers

1b1) of Barnabas

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1b2) of Timothy and Silvanus” (Thayer’s Definitions, emphasis added).

There are two basic applications to this word as the above source says—one specifically applied to the Apostles, the Twelve, and the other in a *broader sense* to others, as people “sent” by the church for a special purpose.

Wayne Grudem in his book Systematic Theology makes this clear, “The word *apostle* can be used in a *broad or narrow sense*. In a broad sense it just means ‘messenger’ or ‘pioneer missionary.’ But in a narrow sense, the *most common sense in the New Testament, it refers to a specific office, ‘apostle of Jesus Christ.’* These Apostles had *unique authority to found and govern the early church, and they could speak and write words of God.* Many of their written words became New Testament scriptures.” (p.911, emphasis his and mine). In the most broad, general sense, any person who might be sent by God through the Church for a particular work, whether of leadership or not (cf. Phil. 2:25), can be classified under the term “apostle.” This broad meaning is derived from the correlation between the noun “apostle” and the Greek verb that means “to send.” Hence, in this very broad sense, there is no difficulty with the concept that any Christian, in principle, can be called an apostle. For example, any person could be sent by a church to the mission field, and, in a *broad, non-technical sense*, this person in an “apostle” of God. The broad, non-technical meaning (i.e., one who is “sent” for a task) is used only three times (John 13:16; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). (*The words “Apostolos” and “pempo” (Strong’s #3992) are used interchangeably in John 13:16 and used in Philippians 2:25.*)

Another time it refers to Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1).

The remaining three occurrences (Rom. 16:7; Acts 14:4; 14) some say present exegetical difficulties that make it difficult to determine with certainty if they are employed in the technical or non-technical sense. Barnabas however looking at the context, “Barnabas is called an apostle because he was *sent forth by the church on a particular message* (Acts 13:3; compare Acts 14:26), *not because he had been chosen to the special work of the apostleship*” (Barnes Notes, emphasis added). So Barnabas in this context and Paul were sent by the church on a special mission (the broad sense of the term is emphasized here Acts 14:27) and He was not an Apostle of the same rank as Paul in the *technical* sense.

Romans 16:7 says these people were “among the apostles” and were not Apostles themselves.

### **The “Apostles” of Jesus Christ**

In the New Testament, however, the technical and restricted sense of the term is by far the most common. It refers only to the select group of the Apostles of Christ. The word normally translated “Apostle” (and its variations as noun and verb) is found 80 times in the Greek New Testament. It has the restricted and technical meaning of the word in no less than 73 of those instances.

There is no controversy about the broader, non-technical sense of the Word. It could be applied in reference to any person *sent by the Church to a specific task* – although it is arguably *unwise* to do so, since it is likely to generate confusion (*because the New Testament uses it in the*

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*technical sense in the overwhelming majority of the instances*). This is the meaning that we are focusing on in this booklet, for it is this meaning that the Armstrongism people use for the belief that HWA was an Apostle, and it is this meaning that the successors of HWA use to justify their office as well.

### **Qualifications to be an Apostle**

What are the qualifications of an Apostle? And why was it so unique in the first century? There was a reason why God made it *unique* in those days, and that age will never happen again.

#### **1) The Apostle had to be an eyewitness of the risen Jesus**

“Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the *apostles whom he had chosen*:

“*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion* by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:” (Acts 1:2-3).

Being an eyewitness was one of the requirements for the appointment of the one to be installed as the twelfth apostle in the place of Judas Iscariot: “Wherefore of these men which have *companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, “*Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*” (Acts 1:21-22). It was a “must” for one to be an Apostle; one had to be an eyewitness of his resurrection.

Similarly: “And with great power gave the *apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*: and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4:33).

#### **2) The Apostle had to be specifically selected and commissioned directly by Jesus Christ.**

“And he *ordained* twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send [“Apostello”] them forth to preach,” (Mark 3:14). (see also Matthew 10:5; Luke 6:13).

Given such requirement, when the apostles felt Judas Iscariot’s office as one of the 12 apostles (the number being typological of the 12 tribes of Israel) should be filled, they naturally sought not only God’s wisdom, but also his direct revelation and appointment:

“Wherefore of these men which have *companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*,

“*Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*

“And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

“And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

“That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

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“And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” (Acts 1:21-26).

When Jesus was on Earth, He handpicked the first twelve apostles. After His departure from Earth, the disciples cast lots to select a successor to Judas. *Their method allowed no input from mere humans—except in the recognition that two men possessed all the qualifications necessary to be an apostle.* Casting lots allowed God to do the selecting. Divine control in the selection process by casting lots was common in Old Testament history (see Leviticus 16:8; Numbers 26:55; 33:54; 34:13; Joshua 14:2; 18:6,10; 19:51; cf. Acts 13:19; 1 Samuel 14:42; Nehemiah 10:34; Psalm 16:5). Solomon claimed: “The lot is cast into the lap, *but its every decision is from the Lord*” (Proverbs 16:33). Indeed, Peter’s prayer on the occasion shows that the decision already had been made by the Lord before the actual casting of lots: “...show which of these two *You* have chosen” (Acts 1:24, emp. added). The summary statement regarding Matthias—“he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26; cf. Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33)—gives way to a return to the expression “the twelve” (Acts 6:2; cf. Acts 2:14). The text states: “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two *You* have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship” (Acts 1:24-25).

### **3) The Apostles were given the Holy Spirit not only to produce miracles, but also to receive supernatural revelations and prophecies that became Holy Scripture.**

**(A)** An apostle was invested with miraculous power to the extent that he could perform miracles. The power to perform miracles included the capability to confer the ability to work miracles to other individuals through the laying on of his hands (Mark 3:15; 16:17-20; Luke 9:1-2; John 14:12, 26; 15:24-27; 16:13; Acts 1:1-8; 2:43; 4:29-31, 33; 5:12,15-16; 6:6; 8:14-18; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 1:11; Hebrews 2:3-4). Jesus referred to His bestowal of miraculous capability upon the apostles when He promised they would be “endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). This enables them to back up their *testimony of the risen Christ* with supernatural signs and wonders. Read Mt. 10:1; 2 Cor. 12:11-12. These signs and wonders were connected with the Apostles because they supported their divinely inspired witness, even as new periods of divine revelation had been generally accompanied by such miraculous signs in past redemptive history (Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Daniel, etc.).

**(B)** The gift of the Holy Spirit given to them was not only to perform miracles, but to produce scripture. To understand properly the role of the apostles, it is essential to recognize that the New Testament was written by them and their close associates. To them it was given, by the Holy Spirit, the ability to precisely remember the words and teachings of Jesus (as well as to receive direct revelation after his ascension), and to teach and record them in a unified doctrinal whole without error.

Jesus told them, “These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you. “But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, *he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,* whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:25-26).

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Because of this, the apostles explicitly considered their own writings as being on the same level of inspiration and authority as the Old Testament Scriptures. They were aware that the documents they were producing were inspired by God as Scripture, and were to be received by the churches as such. This can be seen in the following examples:

“That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of *the commandment of us the apostles* of the Lord and Saviour.” (2 Peter 3:2).

“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Corinth 14:37).

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, *ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thess 2:13).

“As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:16).

The word translated “Scriptures” in 2 Peter 3:16 occurs 51 times in the Greek New Testament, and refers specifically to the Old Testament (i.e., not just to any writing, but to the Word of God) in every occurrence. Clearly, Peter was referring to the epistles of Paul as being Scripture in the same sense as the Word of God in the Old Testament. Given the care and importance the sacred Scriptures had for all faithful in the first century, Peter was not likely to make such statement in a careless manner. It was evident to him and to the Church that God was providing his words for the New Covenant through the ministry of the apostles.

By virtue of the apostolic office, the apostles had the authority to not only receive direct revelation of the Word of God, but also to teach it to the Church. That a document had been written by an apostle *or an apostles’ authorized associate* was the first and foremost criterion for it to be considered as eligible to be included as part of the New Testament Scriptures.

That being the case, one might wonder how documents such as the gospels of Mark and Luke, the book of Acts, the epistle to the Hebrews, and the epistle of Jude, were eventually considered as part of the New Testament canon. After all, Mark, Luke, and Jude were not apostles, and there is no certainty as to who is the author of Hebrews. ***Indeed, those books were received by the primitive Church because their writers were close associates of the apostles, and were writing under their supervision and presenting their doctrine.*** The biblical and historical evidence is that Luke was under the supervision of Paul, and Mark under Peter. Jude was one of Jesus’ brothers. As to the epistle to the Hebrews, some (in fact, the majority) received it as being written by Paul; others, even if not certain, recognized that its teachings clearly and directly reflected the apostolic doctrine.

The apostolic office cannot be understood apart from its function as the channel through which God was pleased to provide the New Covenant writings to his people. The apostles were directly commissioned by Jesus to preach, teach, and write his inspired Word to the Church. Nobody had

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the authority to claim divine inspiration for his writings if he was not an apostle or one of his associates that were *supervised* by the Apostles. Similarly, nobody, in the subsequent history of the Church, has ever had the right to include his or her writings as part of the Bible, since the canon of Scripture was closed with the death of the last living apostle – John.

Yet isn't that what the Armstrong people claim today? They claim Mystery of the Ages is the most important book since the Bible. Malachi's Message is put on the same level as scripture. The Little book is an addition to the Bible. Not to mention other so-called Apostles like Joseph Smith and Muhammad all claiming their books are additions to the Bible (more on this below).

So the apostles were largely responsible for making the New Testament available—first in oral form and, more specifically, in written form (1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:14; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:12-21; 3:15-16).

### **Did the Apostle Paul meet the Qualifications of an Apostle?**

What of Saul who became Paul. Was he an Apostle?

In Paul's Letters Paul opened his letters by introducing himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1 ). Paul's apostleship is a calling (Romans 1:1 ) by God's will not man's (1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1 ).

Human authority had nothing to do with his apostleship, for it came through Jesus Christ and God the Father (Galatians 1:1), through the “commandment of God our Savior” (1 Timothy 1:1). Elsewhere, Paul defended his authority and position as an apostle, equal with other apostles. He was the apostle for the Gentiles with a heart for the Jews (Romans 11:13-14). The existence and ministry of the Corinthian church sealed Paul's apostleship, showing he had done the work of an apostle.

He was also qualified because he had seen the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1-2) Paul said he was the least of all apostles because he persecuted the church and was the last to see the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 15:6-11). Still, he considered himself “not in the least inferior to these super-apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5, NRSV).

Those who opposed Paul's claim to apostleship simply sought to be his equal but in reality were “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13, NRSV). Paul had performed the signs and miracles which were “the signs of a true apostle” (2 Corinthians 12:12), along with his life of patient endurance, preaching, and suffering for Christ. Paul claimed he did not have to go to Jerusalem to other apostles to get his apostolic mission and authority (Galatians 1:17). He did meet Peter and James, eventually, but the church at Jerusalem glorified because of Paul's ministry of evangelistic preaching (Galatians 1:18-24). Ultimately Paul proved his apostleship not by asserting personal authority or demanding praise from other people. Rather, he tenderly ministered among the churches (1 Thessalonians 2:5-8).

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Lastly Paul was writing Epistles that were considered scripture as noted above in 2 Peter 3:16-17.

Paul meets the qualifications of an Apostle, the same ranks as the twelve.

Paul says his apostleship was unique. Paul's situation was not the norm, as he himself explains in 1 Corinthians 15:8-9. He saw himself as a one-of-a-kind anomaly, "And last of all he was seen of me also, *as of one born out of due time*.

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Why was Paul unique? For the simple reason, Paul was an Apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7). The Original 12 Apostles were to go the "Jew first" (John 4: 22; Rom 1:16). They were also sent to the "House of Israel" (Matthew 10:6). Jesus specifically told them, "***Go not into the way of the Gentiles***, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:" (Matthew 10:5). That was reserved for the Apostle Paul!

### **What was the work of the Apostles?**

So what was the Apostle commission in the first century? The apostolic office was unquestionably a temporary office for the early church (though apostolic appointment was for life). Its essential purpose was twofold:

First, the commission to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations. The original Apostles sent to Israel and Judah, and Paul to the gentiles (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48). This purpose was achieved by means of the initial presentation of the Gospel to the whole world (Colossians 1:23).

Second the establishment of the Church for its converts to grow in grace and knowledge, and for the Apostles to establish and confirm the churches (Acts 14:22; 15:41; 2 Peter 3:18). In this task of establishing the church, the doctrines of the Apostles at this time were written down for the church so the church had the commandments of God as well as the Old Testament to ground them in truth.

In Matthew 16, Jesus declared that He would build His church after His resurrection (vs. 18). He then explained that it would be the apostles who would give them the knowledge of the Kingdom of God and the true doctrines (hence the significance of "keys"—vs. 19). This commencement of the Christian religion and the church of Christ would be achieved by means of the apostles "binding" and "loosing" the doctrinal tenets and principles of Christianity.

During the time after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the process of producing copies of the various New Testament documents and circulating them far and wide would have been occurring rapidly and extensively from the very moment of their production by the inspired writers (cf. Colossians 4:16, 1 Timothy 5:18, where Luke 10:7 is already known and classified as "Scripture," and 2 Peter 3:15-16, where Paul's epistles are already circulated and recognized as "Scriptures").

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The apostles had the sole responsibility of executing the will of the Son of God in founding, organizing, and fully equipping the church of Christ on Earth, that she might fulfill her heaven-borne mission, until Jesus comes again (Church Polity, Hayden, p. 22). That is why Paul could say that the household of God (i.e., the church) was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20; cf. 3:5; Revelation 21:14). A building was being formed, and the *Apostles role was to establish it*. Since (following the construction metaphor) the foundation stage precedes the superstructure, it is appropriate to infer that the apostles were given to the church for its beginning stages. As Grudem writes, “God’s purpose in the history of redemption seems to have been to *give apostles only at the beginning of the church age* (see Eph. 2:20)” (Systematic Theology, 911, n. 9). The foundations were set, the church established, miracles and signs were performed, and the scriptures were written, and that was the purpose of the Apostles, and the end of the Apostolic Age. Does the Bible say there will be no more Apostles after this? Yes it does!

### Paul the “Last” of the Apostles

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And that he [Jesus] was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: “After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. “After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. “And *last of all* he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” (1 Corinth 15:5-8). First, notice that the Apostles were clearly named separately from the other 500.

James is not the brother of John, but Jesus’ Brother (Gal 1:19). This James was in charge of the Jerusalem Church where the Jerusalem conference took place (Acts 15). James is called an Apostle. Most likely, because James the brother John, “The ‘James’ intended is undoubtedly the only James then living, who was known to the whole Christian Church, namely, ‘the Lord’s brother,’ the author of the Epistle, and the Bishop of Jerusalem (Gal 2:9; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:18). *James the son of Zebedee had by this time been martyred* [Acts 12:2], and James the son of Alphaeus was never much more than a name to the Church in general.” (The Pulpit Commentary, emphasis added)

“But one thing is sufficiently evident, from what is here said, that this James, of whom the apostle speaks, was still alive; for the apostle’s manner of speaking justifies this conclusion [that is was James the Lord’s Brother].” (Clarkes Commentary).

Since James was called an Apostle. In the context of Acts 15, 1 Corinthians 15 and Galatians the first chapter it’s obvious that James being called an Apostle is in the strict sense of the word, and not the general or broad sense. James the brother of John was killed by Herod early in the forming of the New Testament Church.

Due to it still being in its *infancy*, to keep the Apostles at 12 in number, to call James an Apostle, and for him to be in charge of the church, having so much responsibility, one can conclude that how they picked Matthias to take the place of Judas, by casting lots, is most likely the same way

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they picked James to be an Apostle, for he had the same qualifications as the others, being in the upper room (Acts 1:14).

James witnesses Christ, “Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.” (Acts 1:22), as Paul said he showed himself to James.

He wrote scripture, his Epistle. He meets the qualifications for being an Apostle.

But Paul said, “And *last of all* he was seen of me also.” The word “last” is “eschatos” (Strong’s #2078). It means:

- 1) extreme
  - 1a) last in time or in place
  - 1b) last in a series of places
  - 1c) last in a temporal succession
- 2) the last
  - 2a) last, referring to time
  - 2b) of space, the uttermost part, the end, of the earth
  - 2c) of rank, grade of worth, last, i.e. lowest (Thayer’s Greek Definitions).

Vines says, “ ‘*last, utmost, extreme,*’ is used (a) of place, e.g., Luke 14:9,10, ‘lowest;’ Acts 1:8; 13:47, ‘uttermost part;’ (b) of rank, e.g., Mark 9:35; (c) *of time, relating either to persons or things,* e.g., Matt. 5:26, ‘the last (farthing),’ RV (AV, ‘uttermost’);” (Expository Words, p.353, emphasis added). Clearly from this word we understand that the appearance of Jesus to Paul was the *absolute last time* that Jesus made his appearance as the risen Christ to anyone.

Barnes writes, “After all the other times in which he appeared to people; after he had ascended to heaven. This passage proves that the apostle Paul saw the same Lord Jesus, the same ‘body’ which had been seen by the others, or else his assertion would be no proof that he was risen from the dead.” After this Jesus was only seen in visions like the Apostle John.

Clarke’s Commentary concludes, “It seems that it was essential to *the character of a primitive apostle* that he had seen and conversed with Christ; and it is evident, from the history of Saul’s conversion, Acts 9:4-7 (note), *that Jesus Christ did appear to him; and he pleaded this ever after as a proof of his call to the apostleship.* And it does not appear that, after this time, **Jesus ever did make any personal discovery of himself to anyone.**” (emphasis added).

One of the qualifications for an Apostle was to see the risen Christ. Paul clearly states he was the last apostle to be commissioned by Jesus. *His description of Jesus’ appearance to him is given in connection with his apostleship.* Since he makes his statement under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is not possible that he was mistaken. Like Paul and the other apostles, subsequent apostles would have had to be eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus and be commissioned directly by him (see above) to receive and teach direct revelation. The absolute last time Jesus appeared to anyone like that was the Apostle Paul. **Therefore there cannot be anymore Apostles!**

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Grudem says:

“It seems quite certain that there were *none* appointed *after* Paul. When Paul lists the resurrection appearances of Christ, he emphasizes the unusual way in which Christ appeared to him, and *connects* that with the statement that this was the ‘*last*’ appearance of all, and that he himself is indeed ‘the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle’” (Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 910, emphasis added).

He later adds:

“Someone may object that Christ could appear to someone today and appoint that person as an apostle. *But the foundational nature of the office of apostle* (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14) and the fact *that Paul views himself as the last one whom Christ appeared to and appointed as an apostle* (‘last of all, as to one untimely born,’ 1 Cor. 15:8), **indicate that this will not happen** (Systematic Theology, p.911, n. 9, emphasis added). Paul is the last. He was unique and Jesus appeared to him as the others as one born out of due time, but it was for him to be appointed to be an apostle to the gentiles. After this, that is it! There are no more Apostles!

### The New Testament Canon Closed

Added to the apostolic era being closed are the New Testament scriptures. As noted above, the Apostles were appointed to receive direct revelations from God, and write them down, and they became scripture on par with the Old Testament. *Being an Apostle is no longer possible, since the canon of Scripture has been closed.* There is not more Bible!

There is a prophecy in Isaiah that substantiates this fact. Isaiah said that his ministry was a sign to Israel of the future. He was a type of Jesus and the disciples, “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are for signs and for wonders in Israel* from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.” (8:18). These are the very words of Jesus (Hebrews 2:13).

The K&D Commentary says, “They subserved the purpose of signs and types in connection with the history of salvation. ‘*Signs and types:*’ *’oth* (sign) was an omen or prognostic (σημείον) in word and deed, which pointed to and was the pledge of something future (whether it were in itself miraculous or natural); *mopheth* was either something miraculous (τέρας) pointing back to a supernatural cause, or a type (τύπος, *prodigium* = *porridigium*) which pointed beyond itself to something future and concealed, literally twisted round, i.e., out of the ordinary course, paradoxical, striking, standing out (Arab. *aft, ift, res mira*, δεινόν τι), from תפף (related to תפף, תפף) = מאפת, like מוסר = מאסר. *His children were signs and enigmatical symbols of the future, and that from Jehovah of hosts who dwelt on Zion.* In accordance with His counsel (to which the עץ in מץ points), He had selected these signs and types: He who could bring to pass the future, which they set forth, as surely as He was Jehovah of hosts, and who would bring it to pass as surely as He had chosen Mount Zion for the scene of His gracious presence upon earth. Shear-yashub and Mahershalal were indeed no less symbols of future wrath than of future grace; but the name of the father (*Yeshu'hâhu*) was an assurance that all the future would issue from Jehovah's salvation, and end in the same. Isaiah and his children were figures and emblems of redemption, opening a way for itself through judgment. *The Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 2:13)*

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*quotes these words as the distinct words of Jesus, because the spirit of Jesus was in Isaiah - the spirit of Jesus, which in the midst of this holy family, bound together as it was only to the bands of 'the shadow,' pointed forward to that church of the New Testament which would be found together by the bands of the true substance. Isaiah, his children, and his wife, who is called 'the prophetess; (nebi'ah) not only because she was the wife of the prophet but because she herself possessed the gift of prophecy, and all the believing disciples gathered round this family - these together formed the stock of the church of the Messianic future, on the foundation and soil of the existing massa perditā of Israel.'* (emphasis added).

The JFB Commentary says, "Isaiah typically, in Isa 8:17, Isa 8:18, *personates Messiah, who is at once 'Father' and 'Son,' Isaiah and Immanuel, 'Child' and 'Mighty God,'* and is therefore called here a 'wonder,' as in Isa 9:6, 'Wonderful.' Hence in Heb 2:13, *believers are called His 'children';* but in Isa 8:11, Isa 8:12, His 'brethren.' On 'the Lord hath given me,' see John 6:37, John 6:39; John 10:29; John 17:12." (emphasis added). So Isaiah and his children were symbols of the future Messiah, Jesus, and his disciples.

Notice verses 16 and 20, "**Bind up** the testimony, **seal the law** among my disciples... *To the law and to the testimony:* if they speak not according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them.*" The church of God, "...keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17). Among the disciples of Jesus, they are to "bind" and "seal" the law and testimony. The JFB Commentary writes, "**Bind up ... seal...** this he is now to *seal up*, not merely in order that nothing may be added to, or taken from it, **as being complete**, but to imply that it relates to distant events, and is therefore to be a *sealed and not understood* testimony (Isa 6:9, Isa 6:10), except in part among **God's 'disciples,' that is, those who 'sanctify the Lord'** by obedient trust (Psalm 25:14). Subsequent revelations would *afterwards clear up what now was dark.*" (emphasis added). That is what the New Testament is, the Old Testament revealed! And the Bible is SEALED! No more Bible! This was the work of the Apostle-To receive direct revelations from God, and to become scripture. This was "among" the disciples of Jesus. Afterwards it would be sealed. So with the closing of the Canon among the Apostles, there would be no more Apostles, their work and purpose ended!

Nobody had the authority to claim divine inspiration for his writings if he was not an apostle or one of his associates. *Similarly, nobody, in the subsequent history of the Church, has ever had the right to include his or her writings as part of the Bible, since the canon of Scripture was closed with the death of the last living apostle – John.* Think of it, if the apostolic office was to be extended throughout the history of the Church, *any apostle, at any time, by virtue of his office, could expect the Church to receive his writings as direct revelation from God, inspired documents to be annexed to the Bible.* All Christians, of course, would be bound to receive it and submit to it as the inspired Word of God. Since this is impossible, it is prima facie impossible that there could be any apostles after the apostolic age, let alone today. Yet today, some of the churches of God say that HWA Mystery of the Ages and their own writings like Flurry's Malachi's Message are on par with scripture, why? Because they claim to be Apostles! This is contrary to scripture!

The canon of Scripture is closed, God having both inspired and preserved his Word for two thousand years – hence it is not possible that there could be any apostles after the completion of

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that canon. Their main purpose, viz., of mediating the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles through the authoritative words of the incarnate God given directly to them, had already been fulfilled. No one could claim apostleship, who had not received authority for the writing of inspired Scripture, either directly from Jesus, or by one of his apostles. This is confirmed not only by the biblical evidence, but also in the history of the canonization of the Scriptures. The Church would not recognize writings as being Scripture if they were not produced by an apostle or one authorized associate. The early Church recognized that only the apostles were commissioned to bring God's inspired Word in connection with the New Covenant. *Since the early Church also recognized that there were no apostles after Paul, it would not include any subsequent writings in the canon of Scripture.*

The Purpose for the New Testament today, "In place of living apostles present in the church to teach and govern it, *we have instead the writings of the apostles in the books of the New Testament.* Those New Testament Scriptures fulfill for the church today the absolutely authoritative teaching and governing functions which were fulfilled by the apostles themselves during the early years of the church" (Systematic Theology, Grudem.p. 911 emphasis added).

The doctrine of a closed canon is, therefore, largely predicated on the fact that the apostles were unique and are no longer here. After all, if there were still apostles in the church today, with the same authority as the New Testament apostles, how could we definitively claim that the canon is closed?

But since there are no longer apostles in the church today, *and since new inscripturated revelation must be accompanied by apostolic authority and approval, it is not possible to have new inscripturated revelation today.*

The closing of the canon and the non-continuation of apostles are two concepts that necessarily *go hand-in-hand.* "The New Testament apostles had a unique kind of authority in the early church: authority to speak and write words which were 'words of God' in an absolute sense. To disbelieve or disobey them was to disbelieve or disobey God. The apostles, therefore, had the authority to write words which became words of Scripture. *This fact in itself should suggest to us that there was something unique about the office of apostle, and that we would not expect it to continue today, for no one today can add words to the Bible and have them be counted as God's very words or as part of Scripture.*" (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 905–906, emphasis added).

### **No Successors**

Another vital point to make is that there is no record of the Apostles appointing personal successors for themselves. Nor did they leave to the church the new qualifications which would have been needed for the proper recognition of such future Apostles. When Paul was near death as he wrote 2Timothy, he evidently viewed Timothy to be his personal successor as much as anyone. Yet he *did not* call him an Apostle, and evidently did not view him as being in the future an Apostolic human author of divine revelation. Rather Paul charged Timothy to "retain the standard of sound words" which he had heard from the Apostle Paul, to guard "the treasure which" had "been entrusted to" him, and to "entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach

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others also” “the things which” Timothy had “heard from” Paul “in the presence of many witnesses” (2 Tim. 1:13-14; 2:2). In fact Grudem writes, “Paul’s pattern of address in his letters always jealously guards the title ‘apostle’ to himself, *never allowing it to be applied to Timothy or others of his travelling companions* (note 2 Corinth 1:1; Col 1:1 ‘Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ... and Timothy *our* brother;’ and then Phil 1:1: ‘Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ,’). So Timothy, as an important role as he had, *should not rightly be considered one of the Apostles*” (ibid, p.910, emphasis added). Paul told Timothy to “guard” what he has learned, and *nothing* was said about what he should do about new revelations. Paul knew that the Apostles revelations from God was complete, nothing would be added afterwards.

During the Apostolic age again only two were *replaced* Judas and James the brother of John. But this was due to the fact that Judas wickedly removed himself from the Apostolate before the Apostles were really able to begin their major function as witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. James was replaced by the Lord’s Brother James because the church was still in its infancy and needed to be established.

Since the First Century A.D., there has been no one who has been able to legitimately qualify as a personal witness of the resurrected Christ who was personally called by Christ to be His Apostle. Therefore, the Apostolate was historically unique and *unrepeatable because of its biblical qualifications*, for these qualifications were never replaced or changed in the Scriptures, so there cannot be successors to the Apostles.

The book we call the Bible is the totality of God’s written revelation to the human race. Consequently, people now have access to everything they need (2 Peter 1:3) to enter into a right relationship with God via Christianity and the church of Christ. The apostles “had no official successors. From the nature of their duties, there could be no succession” (Church Polity, W.L. Hayden, pp. 20-21). Apostles, quite simply, are no longer needed!

### **So who are the Apostles?**

To conclude now, who are the Apostles sent by Jesus? As previously mentioned, there were originally 12 apostles. Their number was typological of the leadership of the twelve tribes of Israel in the New Covenant. Besides the 12, only two people are explicitly mentioned as apostles in the New Testament: Paul and James (the brother of Jesus and the leader of the church in Jerusalem, cf. Gal. 1:19; 2:9). Paul clearly states that the risen Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7); the apostles’ recognition of James’ leadership in Jerusalem on the same level as theirs is evidence that they understood James to have been directly appointed by Jesus. As shown above, the apostles considered this criterion as necessary for the apostolic office.

John describes the glorified Church of God having the apostles as its foundation: “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, *and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*” (Rev 21:14).

The Twelve are: “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee [replaced by James the Lord’s Brother], and John his brother;

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“Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

“Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him [replaced by Matthias]” (Matthew 10:2-4).

Paul an Apostle to the Gentiles “born out of due time.” These are the Apostles, and there are no successors, the Apostolic era is over!

### **So what do we have?**

So what did God leave us? First as noted above, the authority and the instructions of the Apostles in the New Testament. Their teachings are still alive in the church of God today through their writings.

The Apostolic era is now a closed chapter. It cannot recur, just as we cannot make the Gospel message a new proclamation all over again. Pentecost was never intended to be an ongoing phenomenon: it occurred in the first century AD (although the evidence is strong that the Lord undoubtedly allowed some of the miracles of the apostolic ministry to still occasionally occur as the dynamic gospel proclamation reached new parts of the world with the Name of Christ for the very first time). Through a sheer lack of biblical understanding, some charismatic preachers teach that you and I can be part of the apostolic ministry in our day - we cannot be. Pentecost has now passed. The first century apostolic ministry has now passed.

W.L. Hayden writes, “Then the extraordinary [Apostles ministry], which was necessary *to found a new institution, was succeeded by the ordinary*, which is sufficient to teach, regulate and govern the subjects of Christ’s kingdom according to the laws that went forth from Jerusalem. The revelation of God was completed. The word of faith is henceforth nigh every believer, even in his mouth and in his heart. *The apostolic office ceased, and evangelists and pastors became the permanent teachers and superintendents of the church*” (Church Polity, pp. 33-34, emphasis added).

Ephesians 4 is a chapter that many use to justify “God’s end time Apostle” doctrine. First of all, the expression “God’s end time Apostle” is not in the Bible.

Now Ephesians 4 says that after Jesus Ascended into heaven, “*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.*” (4:11-13).

Notice it says “He gave some.” In the Greek it’s “*kai autos edōken*” Grudem says, “Ephesians 4:11 talks about a *onetime* event in the past (note the aorist *kai edōken* ‘and he gave’), when Christ ascended into Heaven (vv.8-10) and then at Pentecost poured out the initial giftings on the church, giving the church Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors-teachers (or pastors and teachers). Whether or not Christ would later give more people for each of these offices *cannot be*

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*decided from this verse alone, but must be decided based on other New Testament teachings on the nature of these offices and whether they were expected to continue.* In fact, we see that there were many prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers established by Christ throughout all the early churches, but there was *only one more Apostle given after the initial time* (Paul ‘last of all’ in the unusual circumstances on the Damascus Road)” (Systematic Theology, p.911 footnote, emphasis his and mine).

So the Apostle Paul was speaking of what was established at the time of Pentecost, not for the future. We must comb through the New Testament to see which offices still continue today.

The offices of Apostles and Prophets have ceased. The office of Prophet has ceased with the close of the New Testament. We have all the prophecies of the end time in the Bible, *we do not need anymore.* God’s book the Bible is complete, the prophecies are complete. Prophesying in the New Testament does *not* just mean predicting future events. It can also mean, “(speak and exhort under inspiration) (Prov 29:18; Acts 13:1; 1Thess 5:20), whether as to future events, that is, strict *prophecy*, or *explaining obscure parts of Scripture, especially the prophetic Scriptures or illustrating and setting forth questions of Christian doctrine and practice. Our modern preaching is the successor of prophecy*, but without the inspiration. Desire zealously this (prophecy) *more than any other spiritual gift;*” (JFB Commentary, emphasis added). So it can also mean inspired preaching, or God revealing the meaning of scriptures and *prophecies already in the bible by the Holy Spirit.* This type of prophesying is still part of the church, *but* the role of a prophet, prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, John etc... has *ceased* in the church of God.

What of Pastors, Elders, Teachers, Evangelists and Preachers? As quoted above, “the extraordinary [Apostles ministry], which was necessary *to found a new institution, was succeeded by the ordinary,*” The ordinary being, “ ‘pastors and teachers’ *are the ordinary ministers of a flock,* including, probably, superintending bishops, presbyters (1Tim 3:2, end; Titus 1:9), and deacons. Evangelists were itinerant missionary-preachers, as Philip the deacon (Acts 21:8); ‘pastors and teachers’ (2Tim 4:5) were stationary. The evangelist founded the Church; the teacher built it up in the faith, speaking sometimes in the Spirit, at other times from his own resources.” (JFB Commentary, emphasis added).

### **The Offices in the Church**

As the above source says, “*The apostolic office ceased, and evangelists and pastors became the permanent teachers and superintendents of the church*” (Church Polity, pp. 33-34, emphasis added).

These offices, the original writers in the usage of the word “overseer” in the original letters was to refer, not to a position of authority, but rather to ministry function, and the fact that the terms “elder,” “overseer,” and “shepherd” are all synonymous terms referring to the function of those appointed is abundantly evident in two particular passages of Scripture. The first is in the Twentieth Chapter of the Book of Acts, beginning with verse 17, in which the Apostle Paul has called together “the ELDERS of the church” at Ephesus, which he had founded, and over which he had apostolic oversight, and admonished them, “Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you OVERSEERS, to SHEPHERD the church

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of God...” (v. 28). Here we see the three terms of elders, over-seers, and shepherd being attributed to the same individuals, the latter two of which, overseers and shepherds, spoke explicitly of their function in the capacity as the first, elders.

The second proof text is the first three verses of First Peter, Chapter 5, in which Peter as an apostle (an elder who has oversight over other elders by virtue of esteem) addresses the elders of the various churches with this exhortation: “Therefore I exhort the ELDERS among you, as your fellow elder...SHEPHERD the flock of God among you, exercising OVERSIGHT....” Again, the same three terms are mentioned here, attributing the functions of shepherding and oversight to the elders collectively.

Hence, we see from these two passages that this usage of the word “episkopos” is that all elders have two primary functions: to shepherd the flock of God, and to provide spiritual oversight (look after the spiritual well-being) of the flock allotted to their charge by God. It is referring to the *function* of Fivefold Ministers (who, incidentally, are all Shepherds, not just the pastors), rather than establishing an *authoritarian position of ascendancy and domination over fellow believers* as so commonly but wrongly purported by so many today. In fact, the third verse of the previously mentioned passage, while specifically instructing the elders to shepherd the flock of God, exercising spiritual oversight, explicitly enjoined them *against* “Neither as being LORDS over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” The Analytical-Literal Translation says, “nor as **domineering** over the [ones] allotted to your care, but being examples to the flock.”

Jesus told them, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles *exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*

“**But it shall not be so among you:** but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28).

Paul even said ministers, “*Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy:*” (2 Corinth 1:24). This is what a true minister must act like, this is true leadership.

Now Jesus said his church would always be on this earth (Matthew 16:18). The Apostles plainly said that the Elders, pastors teachers, Evangelists are to shepherd the church and feed it. Paul said, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation....Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: *for they watch for your souls*, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.” (Heb 13:7, 17). These rulers are, “pastors of churches are subordinate governors; who rule well when they rule not in an arbitrary way, according to their own wills, but according to the laws of Christ, with all faithfulness, prudence, and diligence. The word may be rendered ‘guides’ or ‘leaders’; for such point out the way of peace, life, and salvation to men, and direct them to Christ; and guide them into the understanding of the Scriptures, and the truths of the Gospel; and lead them in the paths of faith and holiness, and are examples to them. The Greek word, here used, is what the Jews call Christian bishops by; and ηγεμονια, is, by Maimonides (w), said to be

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the same as פקידות, ‘a bishopric’: to ‘remember’ them is to know, own, acknowledge, and respect them as their governors; to obey them, and submit to them; to treasure up in memory their doctrines and exhortations; to be mindful of them at the throne of grace, to pray for them; and to take care of their maintenance and outward supply of life:” (Gill’s Commentary; see also Barnes Notes). So the pastors, teachers, Bishops, overseers are meant.

Jesus said to “watch” till he comes (Rev 3:3; 1 Peter 4:7). So this office of pastor, teacher, and bishop etc...is to be established *till Jesus comes again*.

Evangelists are to be here till the second coming as well. And evangelist is one who preaches the Gospel. And Jesus said, “And this *gospel* of the kingdom *shall be preached* in all the world for a witness unto all nations; *and then shall the end come.*” (Matthew 24:14). So this office must be here till the second coming of Jesus.

Back to Ephesians 4:13. It says “gifts” are given, “***Till*** we all come in the unity of the faith...” The preparation provided to the infant church by these gifts was temporary (“till” is an adverb of time connoting when the miraculous gifts were to *terminate*), in that the same preparation soon would be available through the completed revelation, i.e., “the faith,” meaning that all of God’s communication to humanity would have been revealed and the Bible complete. In the meantime, the process of producing copies of the various New Testament documents and circulating them far and wide would have been occurring rapidly and extensively from the very moment of their production by the inspired writers. Further, the reference to “the faith” in Ephesians 4:13 cannot refer to a time when all Christians will achieve unity in faith. Such a circumstance will never occur. Paul was referring to the time when all people would have access to all of God’s communication to man, thus giving them the potential for attaining spiritual maturity (“a perfect man” vs. “children”). Notice the context, “...and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That *we henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:” (vv.13-15). It’s about knowledge, doctrine and spirituality-God’s communication to man, complete and unified in the Bible.

So Ephesians 4 means, “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...” These offices were given ***till*** the Bible is complete, then the offices that were to continue, Evangelist, pastors teachers, Bishops and Elders were to *become the permanent teachers and superintendents of the church, and to continue the work of the church of God of preaching the Gospel and feeding the church of God till he comes*.

Now what of 1 Corinthians 12:28? “And God *hath set some* in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Yes God “set” or “appointed” these positions in the church *during that time*. But nowhere does it say that these positions will continue. The positions of

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Apostle and prophet were to cease at the close of the canon. Their purpose is accomplished, the only positions that are left are the elder's, teachers, pastors evangelists.

### **“Ranks” in the Church of God**

When it comes to the pastors, teachers and evangelists, these are not ranks, but *functions* in the church.

God is responsible for setting various functions within His church as Paul said. It is not the lay membership or the men themselves who created the functions and set them in His church.

He had set, first, the 12 equal apostles! Together with the Old and New Testament prophets, they formed the foundation of the “church, with Christ as the chief corner stone.”

Secondly, the prophets were acknowledged as serving God's people by either the inspired foretelling of events, or by inspired preaching. The orderly exercise of their gifts for inspired preaching is defined in 1 Corinthians 14: “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sits by, let the first hold his peace. For you [prophets] may all prophesy [preach, or foretelling events at that time] one by one [one after another, in orderly fashion], that all may learn. . . For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:29-33). The role of prophet foretelling future events has ceased, the inspired preaching however still continues in the church of God today mainly by the Evangelist.

An ordained minister of Jesus Christ who is shepherding a flock is a pastor. “Pastor” is not a rank between “evangelist” and “elder,” but is a *function*, an *assignment* or *responsibility* to “feed the flock.” When Peter wrote to the other elders, he exhorted them to “feed the flock of God which is among you,” and even referred to himself as an elder (1 Peter 5:1), as did the apostle John (2 John 1, 3 John 1).

Since an older, more mature man who is ordained is called an “elder” (1 Timothy 5:17), we see that the term “elder” was never intended to connote “rank,” such as an ordained person inferior to pastors and evangelists but above deacons. Since apostles are also elders, and pastors of churches are elders, and there were those who were not required to preach, but were to be “apt to teach,” we see the term “elder” is a descriptive word used of older, more mature ministers universally. It can apply to older, ordained men.

The very first time the word “elder” is used in the Christian church is found in Acts 11:30: “Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

The Greek word used is “*presbuteros*”, (Strong's #4245) from which “presbytery” comes.

Luke uses this word to include the apostles, even as Peter and John both referred to themselves as “elders.”

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The elders who met with the apostles (Acts 15:6) were older, mature men who were no doubt elders even prior to their conversion, and the term naturally found its way into the new Christian church, which recognized their age, maturity and wisdom.

They were given the honor of sitting with the apostles in considering the question of circumcision. When the decision was finally made, the elders were included. “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, and the whole church” (Acts 15:22). Although some Apostles were elders, there is a distinction made with other elders, because only the 12 and Paul were Apostles.

When the decrees were sent out, they wrote, “The apostles and elders and brethren send greetings...” (Acts 15:23).

It is obvious that elder was not a rank in the ministry, since it included apostles and other ministers with other functions.

Whether people were ordained “to the office of elder,” or whether men who were already elders were ordained, should be studied. Paul wrote to Titus, “For this cause I left you, in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” (1:5).

Paul was not instructing Titus to ordain men of whatever age or maturity to the “office” of an “elder”! He is instructing him to ordain elders -men of maturity, experience and wisdom-to the ministry. These men were already elders, in the sense that, in any given local congregation, there would have been older, more mature, wiser and more experienced men, men of stature in their community and with the respect of the others in the congregation who were “elders.” These men were to be ordained to the ministry.

Then, depending on function, not depending on “rank,” they became either “bishops” (or “overseers”) of several churches, “pastors” (or teachers) of an individual flock, or, failing any specific pastoral responsibilities, simply ordained men who were referred to as “elders.”

That elders and “bishops” of the flock are one and the same is made very clear in God’s Word. Notice this. “And from Miletus he [Paul] sent to Ephesus, and called the elders [presbuteros] of the church” (Acts 20:17).

Read the warnings Paul issued to these ordained leaders of the big church in Ephesus in the succeeding verses. Finally, Paul says, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [episkopos, elsewhere translated “bishops”] to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

These “elders” (presbuteros) were all ordained ministers and were considered the spiritual elders of the Ephesian church. But their function, or their office, in the church was that of episkopos, a bishop or “overseer” of the church.

This was no pyramid structure of “pecking order” or “rank” in the ministry, but a group of spirit-filled, spirit led equals, dedicated to the common cause of preaching the great, exciting, fabulous

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truth that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was alive, that through Him we can have our filthy sins washed away, that He can save our lives from destruction.

An older, more experienced man may not be able to preach or to be sent out in the broad sense of the term, before the general public. He has not been given that gift. But he is to be respected as an “elder,” and honored by the other ministers, not looked down upon because of inferior speaking ability. The early church had to feel their way along, with the help of Christ directly, appointing men to fulfill various responsibilities as those needs became evident.

### **The Diakonate Ordained**

At first, there was no need for the diakonate. But, by reading Acts 6, we see the development of, the need and then the provision of officials to satisfy that need.

Read the whole chapter. The widows were being neglected, and, as was covered extensively earlier, the entire group of new “disciples” chose out from among themselves seven men with the required qualifications. Those seven were ordained by the 12.

When these men were ordained, they were “appointed over” what was called “this business,” or this *function*, of seeing to the physical needs of widows. But the ordination of such men as Philip and Stephen was not to a specific “rank,” and it was not a “limited” ordination, in the sense of locking these men into some purely “physical” office.

These men were not ordained merely to become parking lot attendants for those wealthy enough to drive chariots, to set up chairs, wait on tables and assist elderly ladies up and down stairs.

Notice that both Philip and Stephen began to preach. God added the spiritual gifts to the qualifications already present in these men who were ordained to the diakonate. The diakonos is not limited to one ordained to assist in physical ministrations only, but is used in a broad sense to include the ministry.

The word is even used of Jesus Christ (see Romans 15:8, “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister [*diakonos*] of the circumcision for the truth of God”).

*Diakonos* means minister or servant. It had no limitations concerning function. One appointed to minister to another might serve in many different ways. That method of service, or area of responsibility, could be defined by other descriptions (helps, guidance, teachers, etc.), but one who was among the *diakonate* was really a minister.

The word *diakonos* appears eight times in the Gospels and is translated “servant” six times and “minister” twice (see Matthew 20:26 and Mark 10:43). It appears 22 times in Paul’s writings and is translated “minister” nearly every time, except in Romans 16:1 (“servant”), and in Philippians 1:1,1 Timothy 3:8 and 3:12 (“deacon”).

The word *diakonos* certainly connotes an ordained *function* in the church, either that of a minister, or servant in some other fashion, but it was never limited to physical function alone.

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Timothy is referred to as a diakonos and the word in one form is used as the “service rendered” by a diakonos and is even translated “ministration” or “relief,” in one instance.

By the time of Paul’s Pastoral Epistles, it becomes evident that Paul prefers using the term diakonos to refer to an office or function that was that of episkopos or “bishop.”

Read 1 Timothy 3. First, Paul described the qualifications for those functioning as “bishops,” or “overseers,” of the flock. Next, he discussed those who must “first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon [diakonos], being found blameless” (1 Timothy 3:10).

The bishops, or overseers, could have been pastors in *function*, or, if not designated as the pastor of a local congregation, merely an “elder,” an ordained minister (episkopos) who carried the wisdom and understanding of maturity and spiritual growth, and the needs of the church have varied, and the functions have necessarily had to vary.

Several important points should be noted here.

1. An *apostle* was “one sent” to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to a large area. As such, it was a calling and a commission to do God’s work. These were a small group ordained by Jesus for a special calling to set the foundations for the church, and write scripture. This office has now ended with the close of the canon.
2. *Prophets* were either inspired foretellers of events (such as Agabus) this office has now ceased.
3. *Evangelists* were ministers who preached to the unbelievers, while prophets (inspired preachers) apparently preached mostly to the believers. These were also powerful preachers who could preach and teach within the church (1 Corinthians 14). An “evangelist” was a minister who had been given the special gifts of inspired preaching of the gospel.
4. *Pastors* were shepherds of the flock. They could have come from the episkopos or the diakonate. Paul began using the term episkopos to connote a “bishop” who could be over one, or several, churches. Deacons worked under the pastors and served in various ways-not limited to “physical” duties only.
5. *Teachers* were those who were “apt to teach.” Paul had linked the description of “pastors and teachers” together, as if the function was performed by the same man.
6. *Elders* usually meant an older person physically as well as more mature spiritually, and, though used in reference to the entire ministry, including some of the apostles, were later used by Paul to connote those among the congregation who were already elders and who should now be ordained in recognition of such.
7. *Deacons* were servants of the church who could help in many ways not limited whatsoever by “rank,” but only by the gifts of God’s Spirit. Philip, though one of the diakonate, became an

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evangelist, not through a subsequent ordination to “higher rank,” but by the *added* power of God’s Holy Spirit and God’s special gifts.

8. *Deaconesses* were the wives of the diakonate (as Priscilla) and served in the church among the women.

There was a vast difference in the organization of God’s true church as it began, and the various forms and organizations of branches of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century church.

Doctrinal questions were solved in open forums, including the presence of the “elders” and even local lay members as well as apostles (read Acts 15).

One apostle could openly disagree with another apostle without fear of retaliation or being “put out.” Paul rebuked Peter. Paul and Barnabas disagreed over a personnel choice and split up in anger, yet the work got done and neither tried to “put out” the other (Acts 15:39, 40).

The evangelists, such as Timothy, Titus, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, and others, usually labored under the instructions and authority of the apostles. The classic example of this is found in Paul’s encouraging and instructional correspondence with young Timothy. This continues today by the instructions of the Apostles *in the Bible*, and nowhere else.

Pastors of churches were ordained from among the elders of the congregations, and were called “bishops” or “overseers” (episkopos) as well as “elders”(prebuteros) (Acts 20:17).

Yes, there was structure in the church, but these aspects of the ministry emphasized *service* more than command; gentle encouragement more than rebuke; being “helpers of their joy” more than policemen over their faith; visiting, counseling, anointing, encouraging more than criticizing or condemning; seeking those who were straying rather than threatening the weak with excommunication; building up faith, not instilling fear.

Never did the ministry of Jesus Christ assume it was responsible *to administer the penalties for sin like a government*.

The ministry of the church was seen as a lifetime calling, a profession which God placed upon a person. It was God who “set some in the church,” not any man.

### **The Churches one Ultimate Leader**

Who truly is the leader and Apostle of the church of God? The Bible says Jesus Christ! “...Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” (Ephesians 5:23; see also Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18). Jesus is in charge of the Church and is its savior, *no one else saves us*, only Jesus, and is its true leader, and builder (see Matthew 16:18). We in the church of God must get our instructions from Jesus *in the Bible*.

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Also Jesus is God's Apostle to the church of God. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider *the Apostle* and High Priest of *our profession*, Christ Jesus;" (Heb 3:1).

"These Hebrew Christians had confessed Jesus as *their* Apostle and High Priest." (Robertson's Word Pictures, emphasis added).

"Jesus was the Apostle of the Father, and has given to mankind the new covenant;" (Clarke's Commentary).

"Further, the Jews applied the word - שליח *shaliyach* - 'apostle,' to the minister of the *synagogue*; to him who presided over its affairs, and who had the general charge of the services there; and in this sense it might be applied by way of eminence to Moses as being the general director and controller of the religious affairs of the nation, and as 'sent' for that purpose. The object of Paul is to show that the Lord Jesus in the Christian system - *as the great apostle sent from God - sustained a rank and office similar to this, but superior in dignity and authority.*" (Barnes's Notes, emphasis added). Jesus is God's Apostle to the church of God and is in charge. He left instructions to the church in the Bible, in which the church must follow.

### **"Chief Apostle" idea Mocked by Paul**

In the New Testament one can notice that the Apostles when they used this title of "Apostle," they never said, especially Peter, that they were "The Apostle," but "an Apostle." (see 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 2:1; Ephesians 1:1, and the beginning of all the letters of Paul).

It is interesting to see that in the New Testament that the whole idea of "Chief Apostle" is *mocked* by the Apostle Paul.

In 2 Corinthians 11:5 Paul says, "For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." The concept of "Chief Apostle" was *not* in the church of God. This doctrine comes from the *false Apostles*, when you consider the *context* of the chapter, as JFB Commentary says, "This sense is proved by the fact that the *context contains no comparison between him and the apostles*, but only between him and the *false teachers*; 2Cor 11:6 also alludes to these, and *not* to the apostles; compare also the parallel phrase, 'false apostles' (see on 2Cor 11:13 and see on 2Cor 12:11) [Alford]." (emphasis added, see also Vincent Word Studies). In these passages the Apostle Paul mocked the whole idea of "chief Apostle" and called people who preached this "false Apostles."

When Paul spoke of this idea of the "chiefest Apostles" it was "a stroke of sarcasm." (People's New Testament). Or as Gill's commentary puts it, "he jeeringly calls them." Paul mocked the whole idea of a "Chief Apostle." Only Jesus is the "head" of the church and "Chief Shepherd" of the flock of God (see Ephesians 5:23; 1 Peter 5:4).

Eventually this idea of "Chief Apostle" evolved into the Primacy of Peter, and the seat of the Pope in Rome. Herbert W Armstrong took this idea which started with the false Apostles, and

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brought it into the church to prove to the church of God the doctrine of “Chief Apostle” and that he was the Apostle to the church of God.

What about what Jesus said, “And *whosoever will be chief among you*, let him be your servant: ” (Matthew 20:26)? Is he speaking of ranks to be established in the church? No!

The context is clear. Jesus said, “...Ye know that the *princes* of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are *great* exercise authority upon them. ” (v.25) He is speaking of “princes” and those who are “great.” He is speaking of those who are great in society, and rulers in society exercise authority over people in their society. Jesus said it won't be like that in the church of God, Notice, “But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ” (v.26). Jesus is saying those who are great or the rulers in society *who are in the church*, will not exercise dominion over the people in the church just because they have high positions in society. They will minister and serve like everyone else. Notice Jesus said, “but whosoever will be great *among* you [not “*over*” you], let him be your minister” These are people of great stature among, or within the church of God. Just because they have high positions in society, does not mean they will have dominion over the church of God. So *ranks* in the church is not the subject.

### What of Healing?

Modern-day preachers erroneously describe themselves as “apostles” (although they were not personal witnesses to the earthly ministry of Jesus), and claim that they too can work signs and wonders. They claim it is all a matter of faith and that if you “believe” enough you too can have your miracle (thereby indicating their serious misunderstanding of biblical doctrine).

Following the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of the apostles was also spectacular and often stunning; it had to be, for it was God’s intention for the name of Jesus to become famous very *quickly*. We sometimes forget that they operated in a world of many diverse religious claims. Therefore, God empowered them (Matthew 10:1; Luke 10:17-20), to have a ministry of miracles which would stun many people and cause the name of Jesus to acquire fame far more quickly than would otherwise have been the case.

But this was a ministry for a *particular time*, indeed, even the New Testament writers usually referred to the miraculous ‘signs of an apostle’ in the past tense (note Hebrews 2:3-4, for instance) - this tends to show us that they themselves knew that it was a spectacular ministry for a special time, and as the apostles began to pass from the scene, that particular ministry would cease.

These “Apostles” today that claim to heal and say it’s one of the “signs”, everything I have seen of modern-day ‘healing evangelists’ causes me to be unconvinced that any of them have been granted particular gifts of healing - this does not surprise me since the *fullest manifestation of this Gift has now passed*. After all, why look for what the New Testament refers to as ‘the signs of an apostle’ in an age in which the apostles have long since departed?

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But (it could be asked), are not some sick people still healed in a sudden and possibly dynamic way? but I tend to put that down to the faith of the sick person, or to the faith of the person praying for the sick person, or to the faith of a group of people involved in such prayers (see James 5:14) - but that in itself still does not necessarily mean that the 'Gift of Healing' has - in our day - been granted to any one person or to any one ministry! If it had been, this would surely grab the attention of even this skeptical world; just think of it: every child and adult with 'down's syndrome' dramatically healed, every blind person receiving sight, every cancer sufferer instantly healed! Every amputee finding a new arm or leg miraculously reappearing! Yes, I really mean 'every' - not just claims by a tiny minority who attend 'healing meetings.'

I have heard of the desperate sadness and depression of hundreds of mentally and physically handicapped persons leaving typical large charismatic healing meetings. These people had been told that they would be healed "as long as you have the faith" and since no healing occurred then people who had thought themselves to be rich in faith, leave in a doubly depressed state. *Truth is: they had fallen victims to some pretty poor biblical teaching.* This teaching blames the failure for God to heal on a lack of faith - but this is entirely wrong. *If such people lacked faith they almost certainly would not have attended the healing meeting in the first place!* No - The problem is that the theology is wrong in the first place.

There is no doubt in my mind that the overwhelming majority do not receive supernatural healing in our age simply because the extensive presence of that particular Gift *only accompanied the apostolic age.* The New Testament seems to frankly tell us that, so why can't we just believe it?

The major reason why these self appointed Apostles have failed is because they have not understood that our Lord, and the apostles, *never promised that the stunning and miraculous would always be the "norm" for the New Testament Church of God!* Please note 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. God is perfectly capable of working in a quieter way among believers. Paul is quite clear that our Lord alone decides which Gifts of the Spirit go where; "Pleading (and screaming) down the gifts" will make no difference! The testimony of the record of Scripture itself is also often ignored by these naive people; indeed Scripture clearly indicates that the abundantly miraculous only accompanied certain vital stages in God's Plan - most notably, of course, the ministries of Jesus and the apostles. At other times our Lord prefers to work with people through the laws of nature which He Himself so carefully designed and now upholds. Moreover, the New Testament indicates that 'miraculous signs' are in God's hands and cannot be demanded by the people. Jesus rejected the Pharisees plea for a miraculous sign (Matthew 12:39-40).

But can the sick still be healed? Of course they can!! But this is now a matter of prayer and faith, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:  
"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James 5:14-15).

Now, it is true that, in John 14:12 Jesus also said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these will he do, because I go

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to My Father.” (NKJV) However, does this comment necessarily refer to the spectacular apostolic signs? Let us briefly consider that.

The evidence is strong that this remark was directed towards - not only the original apostles - but to those who would spread the name of Christ to the nations rather than being applicable to every Christian of every age. That is, the comment was aimed primarily to those around Jesus who would take the gospel out, mainly to the Mediterranean world following Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension. This was much more (in a sense) than Jesus could have accomplished in His brief earthly ministry. However, the comment could also have relevance to those who would work to complete the New Testament canon, as well as for those who would tirelessly work to interpret the Bible into many, many languages. Our conclusion should be that the “signs of an apostle” (miraculous signs and wonders) were for another day which has now passed. While certain of these signs could recur (during periods of revival, for example), they should not be expected to be the normal Christian experience during this time.

### **Does HWA pass the requirements?**

Regarding Herbert W. Armstrong (and he is always claimed to be a specific “end-time apostle” sent by God by all the Armstrongist-type groups), let us boldly ask the following questions:

- 1) Had Mr. Armstrong seen and observed Jesus “in the flesh” during his lifetime? No!
- 2) Had he been a personal witness to the ministry of Jesus, and did he personally witness Christ’s sacrifice, resurrection and ascension? No!
- 3) Can anybody claim that Herbert W. Armstrong was empowered to perform miracles as testimony to his apostleship? The above Scriptures are especially clear that true apostles would be granted this power, indeed this power was the sign of an apostle – see Acts 2:43; Acts 5:12-16; Acts 14:3 and most particularly 2 Corinthians 12:12. The Apostles proved it to the world, *it was not confined to their own group making claims*, the world knew, not just them. So again, HWA fails this test as well.

It seems that a large part of the proof of the apostleship of HWA or any claiming to be an Apostle is the very fact *that they claim it!!* Hmmm! Am I missing something here? Is this making any sense? If, from tomorrow morning, a few of us started to claim to be “end-time apostles” should this – in any way or sense at all – be taken as very good evidence that we were indeed “end-time apostles”? (*Especially in view of the fact that we only get the knowledge of “apostle” from the New Testament and – as we have seen – New Testament teaching itself seems to strongly indicate that since Jesus walked this earth almost 2,000 years ago and the apostles were part of that ministry, apostleship is now impossible!*) No; I suggest that if a few of us started to claim apostleship from tomorrow morning that would only tend to indicate that we were suffering from delusional problems.

In fact, why would any claim to be an apostle at all since the New Testament shows that pastors, ministers, teachers and even evangelists can reasonably be expected to be found in our day? Why “apostle”? The answer, of course, is either total self-deception or sheer vanity - and, more likely,

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a mixture of both; if enough sincere and religious people can be convinced that one is truly an apostle then one places oneself on a very high plane of spirituality/religiosity - one is specifically “sent by God” and people better make sure that they believe and obey you!

### **God’s Warning**

Jesus when speaking of the Ephesians church said, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say *they are apostles, and are not*, and hast found them liars:” (Rev 2:2). People claimed to be Apostles, Jesus said they are “liars.”

Why did they claim this?

Vanity. Ego. Greed. Desire for recognition, for vindication-a completely carnal, self-centered, pompous desire within different ones to have the limelight, to be the “leader,” to be “in authority.” That is what you see in God’s church today! Vain egotistical people taking over the church appointing themselves as Apostles!

Jesus said they are “liars”-they failed the test. So will all who claim it today, the Apostolic age is over, anyone who claims it is a liar.

The Apostle Paul warned, “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” (2 Corinth 11:13). There are false Apostles out there like the ones mentioned in this booklet. Continually trying to justify their position in the church as an Apostle, claiming their literature is on par with scripture. But none can stand up to the qualifications of an Apostle-it’s impossible to do so in this day and age.