

Questions and Answers on Modern Supernatural Apostolic Ministry

Written by Roger Sapp. Revised 2006

Why do some churches teach that the ministry of the apostle and miracles ended in the first Century?

Since the Reformation, God has been restoring New Testament truths one by one. The Reformers rediscovered justification by faith and other biblical truths during their lives. However, they did not rediscover truths such as healing, miracles, and the ministry of the apostle. In fact, in reaction to the superstitions and abuses of the medieval Roman Catholic Church, the Reformers taught against miracles. The writings of the Reformers reflect their ignorance and sometimes hostility toward these important New Testament truths. Many modern Protestant churches reflect the limited understanding of the Reformers. These churches have continued to teach the cessation of miracles and the ministry of the apostle to our day. Confusion has increased as churches have built additional doctrinal schemes upon this faulty foundation.

Much of this confusion about apostles comes from a modern doctrine popular today among some (but not all) theological conservatives called Dispensationalism. This doctrine has been propagated in the United States since about the mid-1800's, and has been popularized by the widespread use of the commentary notes of the Scofield Reference Bible. Some modern teachers believe that Dispensationalist doctrines were originally taught primarily as a reaction to the false Mormon teaching that Joseph Smith was a prophet. Some of its tenets are

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accepted by nearly all Baptist churches, some Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, and a variety of other churches. There are many godly persons who were taught and possibly teach Dispensationalism. Dispensationalism is not entirely wrong and that makes it all the more deceptive to the Church. What it says about God's willingness to save us from sin is correct. However, it is wrong in many of its expressions concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, and some of its expressions about eschatology. It is very wrong in its pronouncements about the ministry of the apostle.

What is Dispensationalism?

Dispensationalism is a way of viewing the Scriptures and the history of the Church. Dispensationalism properly divides biblical history into specific dispensations, or eras, of the work of God. It properly notes that God has worked differently in various dispensations. However, where it begins to go astray is that it arbitrarily divides the Church age into dispensations. For instance, without scriptural authority to do so, it states that after Acts 10, God no longer gives the Holy Spirit the same way He did previously. In effect, the passages about the Holy Spirit given before Acts 10 are negated in this scheme and are no longer considered good for doctrine.

One popular way Dispensationalism divides the church age into arbitrary dispensations is through the passage on the seven Churches in Asia in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation. Dispensationalism imposes these seven churches on the last 1900 plus years of the Church Age, making each church represent a particular part of

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Church history. Of course, this leaves the negative Church of Laodicea for the last part of the Church age, just before the Second Coming of Christ. So those who hold this view believe that the Church will be primarily lukewarm and apostate at the coming of Christ like the Laodicean church. This view affects how these Dispensational Christians treat those who don't agree with them. They are expecting apostasy from those around them and react accordingly by rejecting believers from other "camps" with little provocation. There is nothing in these passages in Revelation that gives authority to apply them in this scheme. In fact, the fruit of such an application seems rather negative, producing an expectation of apostasy, weakness, and failure in the Church in the last days.

The Church age is only one dispensation, not several. What God did in the first century He will do now. However, God's conditions remain the same. Faith must be evident. Dispensationalism teaches the Church not to expect or believe that God will work as He did in the New Testament, and it effectively prevents faith to receive God's manifold blessings.

Other serious theological conservatives are often rejected by Dispensationalists. It seems that many Dispensationalists consider only other Dispensationalists to be conservative. The truth, however, is that through their doctrine Dispensationalists are able to dismiss large portions of Scripture as not relevant for today in a manner similar to liberal theology. The only real difference between liberal theology and Dispensational theology is that they disagree on whether the first-century supernatural phenomena revealed by the New Testament ever

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happened. The Dispensationalist believes that the New Testament is accurate, while the liberal does not. However, both agree that it is not happening today. Therefore the Dispensationalist, much like the liberal, undermines the Scriptures and faith. (Of course, the Dispensationalist does allow for conversion; but so do many liberals. Liberals simply debate the nature of the conversion.)

Conservatives who reject Dispensationalism can therefore be considered more conservative than any Dispensationalist, for they cannot reject anything in the New Testament as irrelevant.

What the New Testament reveals is relevant for today. It cannot be dismissed for any reason. A true conservative must submit his doctrine to the correction of the New Testament and not correct the New Testament with his doctrines.

Wasn't the reason for miracles and healing to establish the Church and the Scriptures?

No. It can be shown historically that this is false. Miracles and healing continued throughout the Church age. This doctrine of the "cessation of miracles" comes from doctrinal systems built on the erroneous idea that *extraordinary supernatural means were used to establish the Church in the first century, and those extraordinary supernatural means are no longer needed.* Thus, these doctrines teach that God's will for today is not really revealed by the New Testament, since it is a document of another dispensation. Christian leaders who believe this

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doctrine would never state it in that manner, but this is what the outcome of their teaching implies. Various passages and entire New Testament books are rejected as not being applicable or are cut up as being only partially instructive for today. The New Testament, according to these doctrines, is only interpreted correctly if we understand their teaching.

Some prominent Pentecostals have borrowed these erroneous ideas in regard to the ministries of the apostle and prophet while rejecting it in regard to miracles and healing today. They teach that apostles and prophets today, if they exist, are not the same as the apostles and prophets revealed in the New Testament. This is an inconsistent theology that says that the functions of apostles and prophets are not the same as they were during the New Testament age, but still accepts the evangelist and pastor as being the same.

The actual reasons for miracles and healing today are clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Miracles and healing validate the gospel. Miracles and healing reveal the goodness and grace of God. Miracles and healing are signs of the resurrection to come. Miracles and healing are Jesus being made manifest in His Church.

Aren't the ministries of the apostle and prophet foundational? Since the foundation has been laid, they are no longer needed.

This is another extra-biblical doctrine that has been borrowed from heavily by Pentecostals and Charismatics. The idea behind the question is this: "God used

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extraordinary means to establish the Church and the canon of Scripture, and these means are no longer necessary.” In this case the extraordinary means are apostles and prophets. The question assumes what is meant by the “foundation” is *the apostolic doctrine contained in the New Testament*, which has already been laid by the first apostles and prophets. However, it is clear that the writers of the New Testament were not calling the New Testament the “foundation,” since it had not yet been completely written. The 27 books were not yet in a collected form at that time.

The word *foundation* is used fairly often in Scripture in various ways. It is used literally, as a building’s foundation, and figuratively, in reference to laying or building a foundation by teaching or preaching Jesus and the Good News; but it is not used in reference to the documents of the New Testament.¹ It is *never used* in reference to the apostolic doctrine contained in Scripture. It is used to refer to obedience to Jesus’ words in the Gospels and to Paul’s preaching of the gospel.

This requires some clear thinking. There are those who have not seen clearly that there is a distinction between the New Testament and the gospel. The gospel, the message about Jesus Christ, is older than the New Testament. The New Testament contains the gospel in written form, but it also contains things that cannot be said to be the gospel. For instance, the Book of Acts contains a historical account of Paul’s travels. These cannot be said to be the

¹Matthew 7:25; Luke 6:48-49, 14:29; Acts 16:26; Romans 15:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10-12; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Timothy 3:15, 6:19; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 1:10, 6:1, 11:10; Revelation 21:14, 21:19.

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gospel. Some of Paul's letters address Church problems. These cannot be said to be the gospel, even though they are clearly related. It is possible therefore to preach the New Testament and not preach the gospel of Christ, which is evident from the sad state of the Church in some locales. The foundation therefore is not the New Testament, but it is the gospel that lays Jesus as the Cornerstone of the Church.

The preaching and teaching of the gospel, which reveals Jesus as the Cornerstone and builds on that foundation, must happen in each generation. Apostles and prophets are instrumental in getting the foundation laid in each generation and will be particularly instrumental in this role in the last generation before the coming of the Lord. They will become prominent again just before the coming of the Lord. They began the Church age in prominence, and the Church age will not end without their prominence again. Scripture is complete and foundations must be laid from it. However, Scripture is not the foundation, but rather Jesus Himself is our foundation.

Some have suggested that apostolic and prophetic ministries are different now since the foundation has already been laid. The idea that prophets and apostles must now build on a foundation that was laid in the New Testament era seems to me to be a very dangerous idea. It sounds suspiciously like apostles and prophets must now add something to the New Testament doctrine, since only the foundation has been laid. In other words, it implies apostles and prophets now are building something that the original apostles could not have foreseen, since then only had the foundation. This is another way of saying that the

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New Testament is incomplete and inadequate for today's needs. This belief will lead to serious error since it will not allow the New Testament to judge what is being built today. It also reduces these ministries from their scriptural authority to something less. The foundation revealed by the New Testament must be laid by faithful preaching and teaching and supernatural ministry in each generation and in each person's life.

What is the effect of rejection of apostles and prophets on the local church?

Rejection of these ministries effectively robs the Church of many of its best ministries and most of its spiritual power. Normally those who reject apostles and prophets are suspicious of practically anything supernatural occurring in the church, with the exception of being converted to Christ. Often the prophetic and apostolic ministries God has equipped with gifts of revelation, healing, and miracles are viewed with serious suspicion. Unbelief about these ministries effectively robs God of showing His extravagant grace and prevents Him from being glorified in healing and miracles. Countless Christians have died prematurely or suffered needlessly because of their rejection of God's choice prophetic and apostolic servants and the message and gifts they can bring.

I have heard that these miraculous ministries are from the devil. How can I be sure that they are from God?

We must evaluate them from the Scripture. Unfortunately, some unscriptural teaching causes believers to reject any ministry that appears similar to a supernatural New

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Testament ministry as being “of the devil.” This teaching produces churches very unlike those the New Testament reveals. It produces churches of supposedly correct doctrine, words, and explanations, but without any supernatural power like the New Testament Church. When persons trained in a church like this encounter an anointed New Testament ministry, they are often afraid of it, even though it is often more similar to the ministry revealed in the New Testament than the ministry they are accustomed to. We must not reject a ministry simply because it is supernatural. We must evaluate it on the basis of Scripture and the fruit that it produces. Is the ministry glorifying Christ? Are the ministers themselves Christ-like in character? Are people being saved, strengthened, confirmed, and encouraged by the ministry?

Wasn't Matthias wrongly selected by man and Paul selected by God to replace Judas?

Some will argue that Matthias was selected by man and not by God. However, there is nothing in Acts 1 or in any other passage that suggests that Matthias' selection ever was questioned by the apostles. Certainly Luke, who records these events for us many years after Pentecost, would have revealed the error if the Church leadership had determined Matthias' selection to be a mistake. However, this is not the case. Acts 1 is entirely positive in tone about Matthias, without one suggestion that his selection was a mistake. This selection was done prayerfully and by casting lots, which ensured that the selection was done by God.

Selection by lot has troubled some in the modern age, as it

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seems like gambling. The pagan philosophy behind gambling believes that chance or luck controls the universe. However, the apostles did not hold to a false world view that would allow chance to operate. They believed in a God who actually controlled the universe. They had prayed and expected God to make His choice--and He did. In the Old Testament there are many examples of God indicating His choice by this method.² To question selection by lot is to question numerous examples of Old Testament servants of God using this method of selection--including God's choice of Saul as the first king of Israel. This selection by lot was supervised by none other than one of the greatest prophets of Israel, Samuel.

Nothing in Scriptures, Church history, the writings of the fathers, or anyone prior to the modern age has suggested that using this method was a mistake. So what is the motivation to find fault with Matthias? It is an important point of some doctrinal systems that there are only 12 apostles and they must make allowances for Paul. So these systems must discredit Matthias in order to fit Paul into their doctrinal scheme. However, it seems apparent that Paul himself did not hold this view, since he is our primary source of information about the other apostles called after Jesus' Ascension. Additionally, there is nothing in the writings of the Church fathers to substantiate that Matthias was ever rejected or seen in a negative sense.³

²Leviticus 16:8; Joshua 18:6,8,10; 1 Chronicles 24:31, 25:8; Nehemiah 10:34, 11:1; John 1:7.

³pg. 254, Lockyer.

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Wasn't Paul a special exception to the "rule of apostles"?

No. In Acts 13:1-2, we see Paul and Barnabas being called together as apostles, and they are listed together as apostles in Acts 14:14. Luke must have thought Barnabas and Paul's calls as apostles to be at least equal. Paul himself does not indicate any sort of special call. He puts himself on par with Barnabas in First Corinthians 9:6-7. In the New Testament Paul's apostleship is intimately connected to Barnabas' apostleship. Luke's account of the call of Barnabas and Paul in Acts 13 places Barnabas and Paul on the same level, and may even suggest Barnabas' prominence. It is evident from earlier passages that the Church had no problem accepting Barnabas, but had clear problems with Paul, both early in his Christian experience and later in his ministry.

The word order is also significant. Paul is placed after Barnabas in both passages, suggesting Barnabas' prominence in this stage of the Church's development. It is noteworthy that this prominence did not continue, at least as the biblical record shows. After Paul and Barnabas' disagreement and separation over John Mark, the Book of Acts never mentions Barnabas again, and certainly from the evidence of the biblical account and history, over the next few decades, Paul became the more prominent. Dispensationalism cannot make room for Paul and then arbitrarily forget Barnabas. However, this is exactly what it attempts.

There are those within the Church today who teach that Paul was somehow a special exception to the rule of

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apostles. This is a very illogical idea; it is saying that *an exception to a rule establishes the rule*. Quite the contrary is true: If you can find a clear exception to the rule, then the rule must be wrong as stated. If Paul is the exception to the rule that there were only 12 apostles and God never intended for there to be more, then the rule must be wrong. It is very wrong, for as we survey the New Testament, we find more than 20 apostles. These doctrinal systems want us to limit the number of apostles to 12 or a special 13 because Paul is undeniable an apostle. And though we note that Paul was greatly used in many profound ways, he is certainly only one of many apostles.

Paul himself tells us in Ephesians 4:7-11 that after the Ascension Jesus Christ gave gifts to men. He then lists five ministry gifts. We also note that the word *apostles* is plural in this passage. For these doctrinal systems, this constitutes another problem to deal with. According to their doctrine, there can be only one apostle called after the Ascension, and that must be Paul. So why would Paul use the plural in this passage if he were the only apostle called after the Ascension? In fact, why would he include apostles at all, since he would be the last? Obviously there would be additional apostles (plural) called after the Ascension beside himself. In fact, most passages that identify other apostles are found in Paul's writings. He evidently believed that there were others beyond the original 12 and himself. If he did not believe in other apostles, why would he use the same Greek word *apostolos* to describe both himself and them? These doctrinal systems must be wrong about apostles.

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Wasn't Paul sent by God and the other apostles sent by the Churches?

*Paul, an **apostle--sent** not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead (Galatians 1:1).*

Dispensationalism suggests that this verse indicates a difference between Paul and other apostles because Paul indicates that he was sent by God and not by man. This is a faulty thought about apostles. The correct thought is, "All apostles are sent by God and not by man." The Church simply acknowledges the sending. This is in accord with the basic definition of *apostle*. Paul is not a different class of apostle. He is not a member of the 12 apostles of the Lamb, and he is not superior to the apostles of the churches, as some teacher suggest.

Paul is not distinguishing himself above other apostles; rather he is simply defending his call to apostleship. He does this frequently in his letters. Historically, we know that he was under considerable attack from within the Church concerning his apostleship. Paul fought against others wanting to give him an inferior status. Now there are those in the Church who want to give him a superior status. Neither is correct.

Paul is in no way indicating a superior call to other apostles, such as Matthias. If we were to ask Paul if he believed other apostles such as Matthias, Apollos, and Barnabas were sent by God and not by man, without doubt, Paul would have affirmed their divine missions as well.

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In First Thessalonians 1:1 and 2:6, Paul makes no distinction between himself, Silas, and Timothy. They were all apostles. There was no doubt to their differing maturity levels and of Paul's leadership among them, but still he makes no differentiation on the basis of their call to apostleship. They may have been inexperienced apostles in relation to Paul, but they were apostles nevertheless. We note also that he refers to all three of them as apostles of Christ, again contradicting the erroneous teaching that some are apostles of the Lamb and some are inferior apostles of the churches. This is clearly not what Paul believed. He place all apostles, whether called before or after the Ascension, on the same level. All apostles are apostles of Christ and are also apostles of the churches. In Paul's thinking there is no distinction. Dispensationalism and some Pentecostal teaching try to discount and dismiss these apostles since they do not fit into their theological scheme. It would seem that it would be better to adjust our theology to the Word of God rather than trying to find a way to adjust the Scriptures.

These apostles are dismissed as inferior in some way because they are apostles of the churches, as if Paul's phrase creates a secondary class of apostles. The truth is that all apostles are apostles of the churches. Paul and Barnabas were apostles of the church at Antioch. The 12 Apostles were apostles of the Church at Jerusalem. We also note the positive language of Paul's description of all these apostles outside Jerusalem. They apparently were held in admiration by Paul, who described them as an "honor to Christ."

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Isn't Paul's superiority to the other apostles proven by the fact that nearly half of the New Testament was written by him?

The fact that approximately half the New Testament was written by Paul is very persuasive evidence of the opinion of God about this man. As already noted, there are those who would elevate Paul and provide him a superior status based on his usefulness to God in writing so many New Testament books. However, Paul's superiority to other apostles is not proved on this basis. Peter wrote two books of the New Testament, and Luke also wrote two. Luke's books, his Gospel and Acts are much longer and constitute a greater percentage of the New Testament than Peter's books. Yet, to conclude that Luke is equal or superior in authority to Peter on the basis of writing more New Testament verses is foolish. There is no New Testament reference that indicates that Luke was an apostle at all. In similar fashion, Barnabas has no New Testament book, yet Mark has one. To conclude from this that Barnabas was inferior to Mark is contrary to the testimony of Scripture, since it tells us that Barnabas was an apostle.

Likewise, the Old Testament prophetic books serve as an example. To conclude by the length of a particular prophetic book that a prophet was greater or lesser is not logic. In fact, some of the more powerful miracle-working prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, wrote no Old Testament books at all.

Paul's usefulness to God as a writer of Scripture only testifies to his usefulness to God as a writer of Scripture, not to his superiority to other apostles called after the

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Ascension. Paul himself argues for his *equality* with other apostles, not superiority.

Perhaps turning to another example of this illogical thinking will help us to better understand Paul's role. For example, the descriptions of the Old Testament prophetic books as Major Prophets and Minor Prophets have caused some to erroneously conclude that is an evaluation of the greatness of the ministry of a particular prophet. It is actually only a grouping of books by their relative lengths. The Major Prophets are the longer books. The Minor Prophets are the shorter books. Some very outstanding prophets in the Scriptures wrote no books at all. In this list of great but non-writing prophets we must include Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, and John the Baptist. There are many others. We cannot properly conclude that since these prophets did not write any books, they were somehow lesser prophets than Isaiah or Jeremiah. Such an argument is less than logical and certainly has no basis in Scripture. Yet this is the argument that is made for Paul's superiority over other apostles. It is an argument that Paul himself would never make.

God greatly used Paul, but he was only one of many apostolic servants of God revealed in the New Testament. The other apostles are not inferior because of Paul's usefulness as a writer of Scripture. His writings, however, provide us with most of our general information about the ministry of the apostle as well as a great deal of specific information about Paul's apostleship. For this we must give thanks to God for using His servant Paul so excellently as a writer of Scripture.

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Does the existence of modern apostles mean that more Scripture is being written?

Absolutely not. The canon of Scripture is complete. The writing of Scripture is not an apostolic function and never was. If it were an apostolic function, then we should see all apostles in the New Testament writing Scripture. It is an obvious fact that only a few of the apostles revealed in Scripture wrote Scripture. In fact, some of the New Testament is written by persons whom the Bible does not call apostles, such as Mark and Luke. Hopefully, apostles in our day will be writing divinely inspired books, but they will not write Scripture. All revelation, written or otherwise, must be judged and humbly amended and corrected on the basis of Scripture. God help us to humble ourselves before His Word.

Aren't modern apostles less in authority and power than those of the first century?

No. If they are truly apostles, they are what the New Testament says about them. There are many who believe theoretically in a modern expression of apostles. However, many also teach a much-reduced role for the apostle than the he Scriptures reveal. A good number of these teachers will cite bad experiences with those claiming to be apostles. Fear of extremes is not a good reason to deny or reduce this ministry against scriptural authority. Examining the Scriptures in detail is the answer. The false apostle can be separated easily from the true apostle if one knows what the Scriptures say about this ministry. We must be willing to apply the characteristics in Scripture to those who claim apostleship. This will reveal the true

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apostle from the false apostle and protect the Church. It is clear that any individual claiming apostleship and not having an ongoing function in deliverance from evil spirits, healing and miracles is not an apostle at all. The capacity to reorganize the Body of Christ around you for your own benefit is not an apostolic characteristic. However, the capacity to bring the gospel with power to change lives is certainly a sign that an individual might be an apostle.

Many of those who want to reduce the role of the apostle today borrow heavily from Dispensationalism while rejecting this doctrine's teaching on the Holy Spirit. Some popular Charismatic teachers build doctrinal systems built on "revelations" and "visitations" of the Lord that relegate apostles to a role reduced much from what the Scriptures reveal. Some of these doctrinal systems create classes of apostles and cause a reduced functioning of the apostle in this age. This teaching regarding apostolic classes comes, not from Scripture, but from the claims of a well-respected minister concerning a personal visitation from Jesus. This popular teacher says that Jesus taught him about the apostles for this age.

This is what this teacher says that Jesus taught him about apostles in summary form: All apostles are divided into four classes. Jesus Himself is the first class of apostles. The apostles of the Lamb are the second class of apostles. The rest of the apostles in the New Testament, including Paul, fall into a third class of apostles. The fourth class includes all modern apostles. Each class has less authority, anointing, and function than the previous class, according to this teaching.

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There are several serious problems with this teaching when compared with the New Testament. There are several serious exceptions that invalidate this scheme. The first exception here is the ministry of James, the Lord's Brother. In this teaching James is in the third class of apostles, yet throughout the Book of Acts he is the authority at the church of Jerusalem. If this doctrinal scheme were correct, we would expect to see one of the apostles of the Lamb (second class) exercising leadership. Instead we find one of the apostles who was called after the Ascension (third class) leading the church in Jerusalem. This is a contradiction to this doctrinal scheme. Apparently the church in Jerusalem was not aware of this teaching. Another contradiction is also readily apparent. To say that Paul was less in authority than the apostles of the Lamb is neither scriptural nor historical, yet in this scheme Paul is a third class apostle with less authority. There were certainly a few of the original 12 apostles who were not as anointed as Paul or as useful to God. For instance, history and tradition records that the apostle Philip (not to be confused with the evangelist Philip) was rather undistinguished as an apostle. However, in this scheme, Philip would have been second class and Paul third class. This makes little sense, historically or logically.

The fourth class in this scheme includes all modern apostles. According to this teaching there are no apostles today who function in the same quality of anointing as the previous three classes. This teaching, in effect, says there are no apostles to whom the church must submit as they did in the New Testament era. It effectively negates God's Word about the authority of apostles by creating a different kind of apostle today, one who is not revealed in the

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Scriptures. The implication is that if this “low class” kind of apostle is not revealed, then we do not have to acknowledge what God’s Word says about them since the instructions regarding apostles do not include them. This is a highly dangerous “revelation.” This way of approaching the Scriptures will lead to disregard for the Scriptures and encourage rebellion against modern apostles. In fact, no resemblance can be found between the scriptural apostle and the kind of apostle that this scheme reveals.

This teaching places us in a kind of doctrinal limbo if we accept that God’s Word for apostles as it is written is not true for today and must be modified by a revelation. We must then create a new doctrine to account for modern apostles which will be false and damage God’s plan for the Church. It will also create problems for God’s true apostles functioning on earth today. We cannot allow “visitations” or “revelations” that explain away God’s Word and ultimately tell us we cannot trust what God has recorded. This is difficult to do when a teacher is highly respected, yet we must remain faithful to God’s Word, not man’s. What the Word of God says about apostles is true and remains true for today.

It is difficult to argue with “revelations” and “visitations” from the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly if the source is well-respected. However, if the outcome of the teaching ultimately says something that God’s Word does not, or contradicts what God’s Word says, then we must stand firm in the Scriptures. Anyone who says something on the basis of a personal revelation or visitation that God’s Word does not, or attempts to adjust our understanding on that

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basis, has in effect placed his revelation or visitation above God's Word. Such a visitation or revelation then becomes the filter from which we come to understand (or rather, misunderstand) God's Word. Much cultic error has been perpetuated by such methods of interpretation. The great deceptions coming in the last days of this age will demand that we have a more careful and precise interpretation of Scriptures to avoid error.

Aren't apostles of today really missionaries?

Yes and no. It is more than possible that some modern missionaries are apostles, but it is clear that not all are apostles. Such persons are due our admiration for their commitment to the purposes of God, but most simply do not meet the majority of the criteria for apostolic ministry set forth in God's Word. Even though many might succeed in planting local churches, most operate with little evidence of a regular flow of miracles and healing, nor do they have independent confirmation of their calls as apostles.

Isn't apostleship over when the mission is completed?

No. Some doctrinal systems simply want to reduce the apostle to a temporary ministry of someone who has been sent with a message by God. They tell us that as soon as the message has been given then the calling of apostle is over. Although that is what the underlying Greek word *apostolos* means, this is not the full meaning of what the New Testament describes as apostles. In the New Testament it was never a temporary ministry. Peter, Paul, and the others never ceased being apostles once they were

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sent by God.

It is inconsistent theology to state that this is a temporary ministry when it is listed with other permanent ministries. For instance, apostles are listed in First Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Every other ministry listed there is of a permanent nature, so it is clearly inconsistent to say that the apostle is temporary. Although the Greek word is sometimes used for the temporary sending of an emissary, it is never used in that sense in reference to the 12 disciples or the other apostles of the early Church. Presentation of this idea is simply another modern attempt to reduce the apostle from his scriptural authority as revealed in the New Testament. This plays right into the enemy's desire to prevent apostles from assuming their God-given ministries.

Why are there so few apostles functioning today?

There are probably more apostles functioning and in preparation than any of us realize. However, they will remain relatively unknown or hidden until the proper time for revealing. Many barriers must be overcome before this ministry can be fully restored to the Church. There will be those who oppose restoration for a variety of reasons. There will be those who say, "The old wine is better," and choose to remain in their traditions. There will be those who will cling to the traditional bishop rather than make room for the apostle. There will be those who will be fearful of abuse and will look for abuses to justify their opinions. On the other hand, there will be many more who will hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church and will make room for this ministry. There will be many painful lessons for the Church until it learns to separate the true

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apostle from the false. Yet the Church has no option but to go through these things and expect full restoration of this ministry. The Bride must be prepared for the Bridegroom's coming; this will not happen until the apostle is fully restored in the Church.

Wasn't Peter the leader of all the apostles?

No. It doesn't appear that Peter ever held that particular distinction. He was definitely an important and influential apostle and considered by Paul to be a pillar of the church. However, careful study of the New Testament, particularly the Books of Acts and Galatians, reveals that James, the Lord's Brother, was the apparent leader of the church at Jerusalem and the other apostles located in that area.

Paul and Luke did not make any distinction between the earlier 12 Apostles and this later apostle, James, in their writings. From the testimony of the New Testament we don't know how James became the leader, but there is no question that he did. This reveals another flaw in Dispensational theology and in the teaching of those who would like to create classes of apostles. If Dispensational theology were correct about there being only 12 apostles, with Paul replacing Judas, it only follows that we should see one of those 12 men take over leadership in Jerusalem. It is apparent that this theology is not correct. All apostles, those called by Jesus prior to His crucifixion and resurrection and those called by the Holy Spirit after His Ascension, were considered equal in call, if not equal in authority. In Scripture an apostle called after the Ascension is in authority in Jerusalem even over the remaining apostles of the Lamb. For those who would like

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a theology of classes of apostles, James becomes a serious contradiction. James, the brother of Jesus, is not an apostle of the Lamb, yet these first apostles seem to have recognized his authority over them.

Is *apostolic succession* working in the ministry of apostles today?

There is no “apostolic succession” in the sense used by the Roman Catholic Church. However, there are young apostles being trained in the ministries of older apostles. It is possible that at the death of an older apostle God could set a younger apostle to continue the ministry. There might even be a time of transition where both function together in ministry. It is possible that this younger apostle might even be his natural son. In each case, the individual apostles and the elders must hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

How much danger is there is giving “kingly” authority to an apostle?

Yes. We remind that all ministry exists to serve and not to be served. There are serious dangers if we are hasty or unwilling to seriously evaluate each apostolic claim. Every believer must be willing to submit to every other believer and this includes apostles and elders. We must respond to what God reveals about apostles in His Word and make room for them to function but not to abuse. In many traditional churches, unscriptural top-down, hierarchal authority already functions with other titles, such as *bishop*, and without any evidence of apostleship. That is exceedingly dangerous and has been disastrous throughout

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the history of the Church. We must only allow those who have a tested ministry of apostleship to assume this title and we must be wary of any man or woman who seeks to make us his servant.

Beyond this, the Church must always be subject to the authority of Scripture. No apostle has any authority to invalidate or contradict Scripture. Should he ask someone to do something that is clearly forbidden by Scripture, that individual must obey God and not the apostle. He is not free to ask others to compromise their consciences or their integrity in any way. He must guard their freedom to find the will of God for themselves. He may only rule as a shepherd and by the consent of those who recognize his apostleship. His authority comes through God's revelation of his call to them. Should they not recognize his apostleship and submit themselves to it, he must still love them and minister to them at whatever level they will allow. His exercise of authority operates through a sincere love for the people God has given him and a desire to fulfill the will of God. He must not resort to fleshly methods of manipulation; rather he must patiently trust the Holy Spirit to instruct, correct, and lead the people of God. His leadership must be as a shepherd-king. Should he become a tyrant, the church at large and other apostles and elders of the Church must bring correction according to the pattern revealed in Scripture in Matthew Chapter 18.

Doesn't an individual have to see the Lord like the original Twelve and Paul in order to be an apostle?

This idea comes from the Dispensational view of First Corinthians 9:1-2. There Paul makes this statement in

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argument that he should have the same rights as other apostles: “Am I not an apostle? Have I not see the Lord?...”

The Dispensationalist, still holding to the doctrine of only 12 apostles and Paul replacing Judas, fits Paul into his scheme because of his vision of Christ on the road to Damascus. In their scheme Paul becomes an eyewitness like the other 12 Apostles. However, in the context of the passage, Paul is comparing himself with the 12 Apostles and defending his rights to be treated as an apostle (he also includes Barnabas). He is not making it a condition of apostleship to “see the Lord,” but telling them that he is no less an apostle than the Twelve. We have no evidence that the other apostles named by Scripture saw the Lord physically or in a vision like Paul. Paul did not seem to consider it a requirement for their apostleship since he never mentions it again in his New Testament writings.

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