

# Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."  
Isaiah 40:31*



November 24, 2013

## The Apostles

When Jesus left this earth, He entrusted His work to a small handful of men who had been carefully groomed for the mission. We are still benefiting from the work of these men today.

*"And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles" (Lk. 6:13).*

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While Jesus was upon this earth, He had many disciples, but only a small handful that were designated "apostles." What was unique about these men that set them apart from the other disciples?

The word "apostle" means "one who is sent." The word is sometimes used in a general sense to describe anyone who is sent on a mission, but we are more familiar with that small group whom Jesus designated as His personal emissaries, beginning with the original Twelve and ending with Paul.

None of the men who occupied the role of apostle actively sought it, nor were they recruited by other men. Rather, they were personally chosen by Jesus Himself (Jn. 15:16). In Paul's case, that choice was a dramatic event that changed his life (1 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:12). Indeed, one of the qualifications of an apostle was having witnessed the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 9:1).

As ambassadors of Christ, the primary task of the apostles was to reveal and teach the word of God (Eph. 3:5; Ac. 5:42; Ac. 6:2-4). This preaching and teaching of the word was accompanied by an extraordinary range of miraculous powers (Ac. 2:43; 4:33; 5:12). These "signs of an apostles" validated the message they taught (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). While other disciples had this or that miraculous gift, only the apostles had the full complement of gifts and the ability to bestow these gifts on others (Ac. 8:14-18; 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

The apostles were the unquestioned leaders of the early church. It was the apostles to whom the disciples looked for guidance, instruction, and leadership (Ac. 2:42; 2 Pet. 3:2). That's why Paul describes the church as being built "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20). Their work, now recorded in the New Testament, serves as the foundation upon which everything else rests.

This exalted position might make most men haughty, but in fact, being chosen as an apostle proved to be a

death sentence for most of these men. Their lives were dedicated to a cause much higher than themselves, and sacrifice and suffering was their way of life.

Even in the first century, there were those who, conveniently ignoring the sacrificial element, sought to maneuver themselves into a position where they could enjoy the prestige of apostleship. These "false apostles" (2 Cor. 11:13) did a lot of damage in their day, as false prophets have always done.

Do we still have apostles today? Catholics, Mormons, and others insist that we do. However, the very fact that so many conflicting religious bodies claim apostolic authority tells us right away that *somebody* is not telling the truth. Furthermore, the fact that no one today has seen the resurrected Lord, nor is performing the kind of miracles we read about in the New Testament, confirms that the only apostles we still have today are *false* apostles.

But the real apostles are still working among us, as we read and follow their revelation in the New Testament. For that, we can be grateful.

– David King