

God's Messengers

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In some theologies, the word “apostle” is sometimes used of special people who some say can do no wrong, specifically the 12 apostles. The meaning of the word apostle means “sent one.” In other words, they are messengers for God. God has a special mission for them. The way the word “apostle” is used is misleading. God still has messengers today; theology has stolen the meaning and made it into a title instead of how God wants to use some of His people to serve others.

Yeshua (Jesus) sends out 12, then 70, and also Shaul (Paul) says that he is “sent out,” an apostle. Also, Shaul says that being sent is a common gift ministry in Ephesians 4:11 NKJV: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” There were and are many apostles and different types of ministries for serving God. Shaul is giving a short list in Ephesians 4. Rabbis often give brief lists to help us; there are also other ministries as well as those listed. I cover rabbinic lists as another topic in understanding the Bible.

Do these ministries exist in the Old Testament; I say yes. Are there teachers and pastors in the Old Testament? Yes, we call them rabbis. Are there prophets in the OT? Yes, there were even schools for prophetic people (Elisha had a school, see 2 Kings 4:38-44). Are there evangelists (those who proclaim God's good news)? Yes, I believe some were no doubt commissioned by God to give His good news – God was always reaching out to man. Were there apostles (sent ones) in the Old Testament portion, of course. Moshe (Moses) was sent to free Israel from Egypt and there were many more “sent ones.” Because people are not relating the New Testament writings to the Tanakh (Old Testament), they often think that something new is being shared in the New Testament portion and that is not true. Also, because theologians have given a false definition to the word apostle there is a lack of understanding of the word apostle.

It is obvious that being sent is a common ministry and the only 12 apostle concept is fiction. Some theologians base authenticity of the New Testament portion scriptures on these 12 apostles yet not all writers of the New Testament portion were one of the 12 apostles. Not only that, there are some religious groups that make claims to authenticity based on the 12 apostle doctrine. They say their “priests” are made priests by those who have been ordained in a sustained line of people from the 12 apostles. Their claim is based on wrong theology and there is no doubt some pride that is motivating them.

Because of the stigma attached to the word apostle (those that can do no wrong and have special insight about God – which is the wrong definition), those who tell people they are apostles are probably just doing it out of pride. In the Tanakh (Old Testament), there are many examples of people who are sent by God (and it was often not an easy task), take Jonah for example. He was sent to the people of Nineveh to tell them to repent and to warn them. Besides those sent out by Yeshua, Shaul also sites other apostles besides himself. “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles” Romans 16:7 NKJV.

Why did Shaul say there were people who had specific ministries and functions? He explains that we need them: “Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah.” Eph. 4:12 CJB. In this New Testament age, God has not left us without those to help us understand who He is and help us to grow up spiritually. God has not changed, He gave us people who are supposed to understand the Bible properly. There are many words in the Bible that need to be examined and understood with a more authentic biblical meaning.