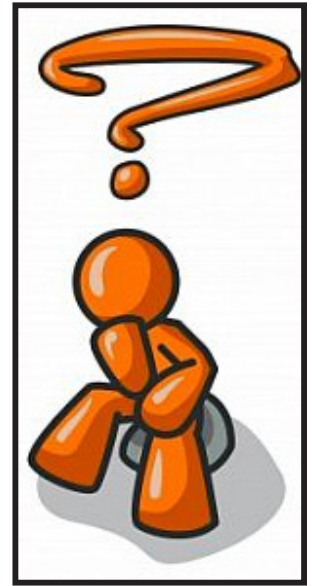


What About ... Apostles?

By REBECCA S. MAY

C. Peter Wagner, in his paper “The New Apostolic Reformation,” described what he called a “New Authority Structure” in the church today. He said, “In my judgment, views of leadership authority constitute the most radical changes from traditional Christianity. We are seeing a transition from bureaucratic authority to personal authority, from legal structure to relational structure, ... from rational leadership to charismatic leadership.” With respect to local church leadership, Wagner made this comparison: “In traditional Christianity, the pastors are regarded as employees of the church. The new apostolic pastors are the leaders of the church.”

According to Wagner, “It is a question of trust. The apostolic congregations trust their pastor. Traditional congregations trust boards and committees. An important dimension of what we are seeing ... is the reaffirmation, not only of the New Testament gift of apostle, but also of the office of apostle.” Wagner thus concluded, “A basic theological presupposition in new apostolic, as contrasted to traditional churches, is that supernatural power tends to open the way for applying truth, rather than vice versa” (© Chapter 14, excerpted from “The New Apostolic Churches”).



The gift of apostleship (Ephesians 4:11) was given to specific men who were physically chosen by Christ. *And He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles* (Luke 6:13). These twelve men, named as apostles by Christ, were given authority over the church (1 Thessalonians 2:6). They were given the leading of the Spirit for the purpose of writing the Scriptures (John 14:25-26). And they were given the ability to do miracles (Acts 2:43; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

Apostles, that is, true apostles, were named by the Lord, in the presence of the Lord in order to prevent false apostles from claiming authority in the church. After Judas betrayed Christ, the apostles had specific requirements with respect to who would replace Judas. Peter said, “*Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection* (Acts 1:21-22).

Matthias was chosen as Judas’ replacement because he had walked with Christ among the other apostles, and witnessed the resurrected Christ.

When Paul came on the scene, claiming he was *called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God* (1 Corinthians 1:1), the other apostles, initially, doubted his claim to apostleship. Paul was able to convince them that Jesus Himself appeared to him to not only call Paul *as an apostle* but *to set [him] apart for the gospel of God* (Romans 1:1). Paul said, *Am I not an apos-*

tle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? (1 Corinthians 9:1). Peter confirmed Paul’s apostleship as one who *according to the wisdom given to him*, wrote as an apostle, the *commandment of the Lord and Savior*. Paul’s writings, therefore, were considered by Peter to be equal with *the rest of the Scriptures* (2 Peter 3:12, 15-16).

There are no true apostles today because:

1. True apostles were called by Christ (Luke 6:13; Acts 9:1-10). Apostles weren’t called by visions or dreams. They were personally and physically chosen by Jesus Christ (contrast Ananias’ encounter with Christ to the Apostle Paul’s in Acts 9).
2. True apostles witnessed the resurrected Christ—the defining criteria for substantiating both Paul’s and Matthias’ apostleship (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 9:1).
3. True apostles were confirmed by the eleven (the twelve original apostles minus Judas), who walked with Jesus, *beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us* (Acts 1:21-26; 2 Peter 3:12, 15-16).

There cannot be true apostles today because in order for someone to claim apostleship:

- They must be able to do a miracle.
- They must have been physically called by Jesus to that office (not by a vision or dream).
- They must be confirmed by the apostles who walked with Christ—the original 11—who are now all dead.

Therefore, there are no true apostles today. There are, today, only *false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ* (2 Corinthians 11:13).