

The status of apostle is carefully guarded in the early Church. This is seen in the care taken by the church in Jerusalem before they recognized Paul's apostleship (see Galatians 2:1-10). . . . The term "apostle" may be applied with certainty to the Twelve and Paul only. Even Barnabas is questionable, and the others are even less certain.

The term "apostle" cannot be equated with "missionary". There were many nonapostolic missionaries in the early Church. . . .

The term "apostle" is used in the sense of "representative". As representatives of Christ, the apostles had great authority in the early Church. This authority was evident not only by authoritative statements and actions but also by the need for the apostles to lay hands on specific groups of unique converts such as those in Samaria.

Apostles performed miracles, signs, and wonders. This was evident in all who were definitely apostles. There is no information regarding the questionable individuals such as James, Andronicus, and Junia. It may be stated categorically that the apostles performed miracles with any thrust of the gospel into new territory. Paul states (2 Corinthians 12:12) that performance of miracles is proof of apostleship. To be recognized as an apostle one must, along with other qualifications, be able to perform miracles.

Apostles were witnesses of the resurrected Lord. Although some try to dispute this, 1 Corinthians 9:1-2 is clear. Acts 1:22-26 states clearly that the twelve apostles were witnesses of the resurrection. This aspect of apostleship is further implied by the fact that all who can definitely be considered as apostles did see the resurrected Lord. . . .

### C. Discerning of Spirits

1 Corinthians 12:8, 10 -- "To one there is given through the Spirit . . . , to another distinguishing between spirits"

Sanders (p. 120) states:

This is the ability to discriminate between different kinds of spirits, to distinguish the spurious from the true, the spirit of truth from the spirit of error. So long as there was no written New Testament, this gift was of special importance, for it enabled the possessor to distinguish between the psychic and the physical, the divine and the demonic, false teaching from the true.

The Spirit enables him to tell whether the professed gifts were really from Him and supernatural, or were merely strange though natural, or even diabolical. The exhortation of John to "test the spirits" had this in view, and is still very relevant today when there is so much that is false yet persuasive in the form of cults and heresies.