



BIBLE TALK

Mike King

Question: Why did Paul call himself and “apostle” since the New Testament speaks of twelve apostles?

Answer: True it is the number **twelve** is common in the scriptures and used in regards to the apostles (Matt. 10:2-4; Lk. 6:13; Acts 1:21-26). Seven is also common and used in making reference to the number of deacons (Acts 6:1-5), but we do not normally lock that number in as required for today. We know that Judas was replaced by Mathias and that Paul is referred to as an “apostle” (Rom. 1:1).

The word “apostle” means **one sent forth**. The broader use of the term, following the day of Pentecost and the establishment of the church, is seen not only in its application to Paul but also to Barnabas **and others**. In his salutation to the saints in Rome, Paul wrote: Salute Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, **who are of note among the apostles**, who also have been in Christ before me” (Rom. 16:7; See also, Acts 14:14). It is obvious that the original number was not adhered to. Someone might object that in the Revelation there is reference to “*the twelve apostles of the Lamb*,” it should be noted that this appears in a highly figurative setting where the language throughout is symbolic. The walls of the city have twelve foundations, the elect are sealed from the twelve tribes, and there are twelve thousand from each tribe. Quite obviously these designations are not to be literally construed.

What appears to be absolutely decisive of the matter is the reference of Paul to “false apostles” who had been active in the church in Corinth. If the word **apostle** embraced no others but the original twelve and Paul, the claim to the apostleship by these pretenders would have been self-condemning (2 Cor. 11:13).

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