

Apostolos

- A. *Apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) has the following cognates:
1. *apostole* (ἄποστολή) (noun), “apostleship, office of an apostle.”
 2. *exapostello* (ἐξαποπέλλω) (verb), “to authoritatively send forth, to authoritatively send away.”
 3. *sunapostello* (συναποπέλλω) (verb), “to send with, to send in company with someone.”
 4. *stellomai* (στέλλομαι) (verb), “to set, to place, to send, to get ready, to furl a sail, to restrict.”
 5. *pseudoapostolos* (ψευδάδελφος) (noun), “false brother.”
 6. *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) (noun), “messenger, one who holds the office of apostle.”
- B. Classical Usage
1. This Attic Greek word which was used extensively in Athens in the 5th century B.C. literally means “one who is sent.”
 2. It was used for admiral or general officer chosen by the consul to command a fleet or to command an army in a military expedition (generally against Sparta in the Peloponnesian Wars).
 3. It was also used for a very unusual person who is chosen to command a band of Greek colonists in order to establish a settlement in some other part of the world (Corsica, Italy, Sicily, Western Turkey, Black Sea).
 4. To be an *apostolos* was the greatest responsibility given to an Athenian.
 5. *Apostolos* is derived from the verb *apostello* first as a verbal adjective and then as a noun.
 6. The verb *apostello* (Sophocles onward) is a compound word composed of:
 - a. The verb *stello*, “to put up, to make ready.”
 - b. The preposition *apo*, “from, away, back.”
 7. As we have noted in the exegesis of Philippians 2:19 (XV.D) *apostello* emphasizes the fact of an authorization and/or commission, *pempo* stresses more closely the sending itself.
 8. It means to send (both persons and things), send away, to chase away, to send off.
 9. The noun *apostolos* is first found in maritime language since the Greeks were a seafaring people and it was also used of military expeditions.
 10. It would be used by the Greeks to designate a cargo ship, a freighter, transport ship, or the fleet sent out (Demosthenes).
 11. Later it denoted a commander of a naval expedition, or a band of colonists sent overseas.
 12. In the papyri it can mean an invoice, or even a passport.
 13. Only in 2 passages in Herodotus does *apostolos* mean envoy or emissary as a single person (1.21; 5.38).
 14. Josephus uses the word for a group sent on a mission (the Jews sent to Rome, Antiquities 17.11.1 (300)).
 15. All its usages have 2 ideas in common:
 - a. an express commission
 - b. being sent overseas
 16. Thus the root meaning in the case of the noun is narrowed down.
 17. It was probably only later in gnostic circles that *apostolos* came to convey the oriental concept of emissaries as mediators of divine revelation.
 18. There, according to the system in question it could be used in the singular for a heavenly saviour, or in the plural for a number of saving persons or spiritual men.
 19. The word usually denotes an authorized messenger.
 20. Liddel and Scott list the following classical meanings for the word (page 220):
 - a. messenger, ambassador, envoy
 - b. commander of a naval force
 - c. naval squadron or expedition
 - d. colony
 - e. packet, order for dispatch
 - f. export license
 - g. cargo dispatched by order
- C. LXX Usage
1. The noun *apostolos* appears only once in the LXX (1 Kgs. 14:6) [LXX 3 Kgs. 14:6].
 2. It is used to translate the Hebrew passive participle form of *shalah* (שָׁלַח), which is *shaluach*.
 3. *Shalach* literally means the one sent.
 4. The verbs *apostello* and *exapostello* appear no less than 700 times.
 5. They regularly translate *shalach*, which means send (with emphasis on the authority of the messenger).

6. The same case applies to the passive participle form of *shalah* which is *shaluach* (*apostolos* 1 Kgs.
 7. This authorization, however, never concerns a position or an office but a certain, limited task.
 8. It is interesting to note that *shaluach* is applied to only 1 of the prophets-Isaiah (cf. Isa. 6:8).
 9. The translators rightly realized that the Hebrew verb does not describe the sending so much as its essential purpose, the authorization of the messenger (cf. Jos. 1:16; 1 Kgs. 5:9 (23); 20:9; 21:11; 2 Kgs. 19:4; Jer. 34:3 [LXX 27:3]).
 10. There is no question of the sending in 1 Kings 14:6, but of the commissioning and empowering of the prophet Ahijah with a hard message for Jeroboam's wife, who was coming to consult him.
 11. The LXX, following the Hebrew text, uses *apostello* and its cognates to denote not the institutional appointment of someone to an office, but the authorization of him to fulfill a particular function or a task which is normally defined.
 12. This explains why the verb rather than the noun is used almost exclusively.
 13. If the sending is linked with a task in the use of *apostello*, it follows that attention is always focused on one who sends.
 14. In other words, the stress falls on the one who gives his authority to the one whom he sends and whom he takes into his service.
- D. Intertestamental Period
1. In Greek Judaism the term *apostolos* was not widely used.
 2. We do not find the word employed by Philo.
 3. The term occurs only twice in Josephus where he used the word in connection with a delegation of Jewish messengers to Rome:
 - a. Antiquities 17.11.1
 - b. Antiquities 1.146
 4. The *shaluach* in Judaism was a messenger who was furnished with authority to act on behalf of someone else, thus the authority of the *shaluach* exceeded that of a simple messenger.
 5. He did not perform his orders mechanically but rather he could act independently and possessed the authority of his sender!
 6. This was the case even if he abused this authority and thus his decisions could not be revoked.
 7. He could perform the following:
 - a. conduct business transactions (he had the power of attorney)
 - b. represented the bridegroom at his wedding
 - c. could perform legal functions including divorce
 8. The role of the *shaluach* in Judaism of the intertestamental period is defined by a statement found in the Mishnah, "a man's representative is like the man himself" (Berachoth 5.5).
- E. NT Usage
1. The noun *apostolos* appears 81 times in the NT.
 2. In striking contrast with classical Greek, *apostolos* is used in the NT only in the general sense of messenger, and particularly as the fixed designation of a definite office, the office of apostleship.
 3. As we noted in the classical, LXX and in its use in Judaism *apostolos* designates an authorized messenger or one who is commissioned by legitimate authority.
 4. It is significant that with a few exceptions this word in the NT designates one who has received a commission from the Lord Jesus Christ and has been authorized to represent Him before the churches throughout the Roman Empire as His messenger.
 5. It is critical to understand that the *apostolos* never receives his authority from men but from the Lord Jesus Christ.
 6. This is critical to understand its usage in Philippians 2:25 where it is used of Epaphroditus.
 7. The authorized messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ has 2 different manifestations:
 - a. spiritual gift of apostleship
 - b. spiritual gift of pastor-teacher
 8. The word is used once of the humanity of Christ in hypostatic union in Hebrews 3:1.
 9. Therefore, the word designates the following in the NT:
 - a. spiritual gift of apostleship (Mt. 10:2; Mk. 6:30; Lk. 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10; Jn. 13:16; Acts 1:2, 26; 2:37, 42, 43; 4:33-37; 5:2, 12, 18, 29, 34, 40; 6:6; 8:1, 14, 18; 9:27; 11:1;; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23, 33; 16:4; Rm. 1:1; 11:13; 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:1; 4:9; 9:1-5; 12:28-29; 15:7, 9; 2 Cor. 1:1; 11:5; 12:11-12; Gl. 1:1, 17, 19; Eph. 1:1; 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Col. 1:1;; 1 Tm. 1:1; 2:7; 2 Tm. 1:1, 11; 1 Pt. 1:1; 2 Pt. 1:1; 3:2; Jude 17; Rv. 18:20; 21:14).

- b. spiritual gift of pastor-teacher (14:4, 14; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phlp. 2:25; 1 Th. 2:6; Rv. 2:2).
 - c. Christ's office of prophet (Heb. 3:1).
10. Colonial apostles were used for pioneer missionaries before the canon of Scripture was completed and certain men were called apostolos because they were sent by an apostle as missionaries to some other place.
 - a. Barnabas (Acts 14:14; Gal. 2:9)
 - b. James: "Colonial" apostle or pioneer missionary (1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19)
 - c. Apollos (1 Cor. 4:5-9)
 - d. Silvanus (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6)
 - e. Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6)
 - f. Titus (2 Cor. 8:23)
 - g. Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:23)
 - h. Andronicus & Junias (Rom. 16:7)
 11. All these people were sent out by "apostles" and were under apostolic authority and therefore, they were only called apostles in that sense.
 12. They were going out to find colonies called local churches throughout the world.
 13. These men did not have the spiritual gift of apostleship, but they did have delegated authority to fulfill the indigenous missionary principle through the establishment of local churches in different parts of the Roman world.
 14. For example, Titus had the authority to establish churches in Crete hence, he had delegated authority from the apostle Paul, but did not possess the spiritual gift of apostleship.
 15. The 12 men who had gift of apostleship also, had the office of apostle.
 - a. Simon Peter
 - b. Andrew
 - c. James
 - d. John
 - e. Philip
 - f. Bartholomew
 - g. Thomas
 - h. Matthew
 - i. Simon the Canaanite
 - j. James: the son of Alphaeus, not the lessor
 - k. Thaddaeus: called Jude
 - l. Saul of Tarsus: Paul
 16. Apostleship is the unique and temporary spiritual gift which held maximum authority in the Church and was sovereignly delegated by the Lord Jesus Christ.
 17. They had the authority to delegate power and certain functions to others who were classified as colonial apostles or delegated apostles.
 18. Colonial apostles had lesser spiritual gift:
 - a. Pastor-Teacher
 - b. Prophet
 - c. Evangelist
 19. Colonial apostles had authority to establish churches and could be called pioneer missionaries.
 20. These men did not have the spiritual gift of apostleship.
- F. Philippians 2:25 Usage
1. The word is used here to designate the fact that Epaphroditus is the Philippian's pastor-teacher.
 2. He has received his authority from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.
 3. The context does not indicate that Epaphroditus received his authority from the Philippians.
 4. There is no precedence in the NT that the word was used of an individual who received his authority from men and the context here does not indicate that the word's usage in Philippians 2:25 should be considered an exception to the rule!
 5. Therefore, this term does not denote that Epaphroditus is an authorized messenger of the Philippians but rather it denotes that he has been authorized and assigned to the Philippians by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to represent Him as His messenger to the Philippians in order to communicate the mystery doctrine of the church age to them.

6. Paul specifically employs this term to denote the spiritual authority that Epaphroditus has been given by the Lord as their pastor-teacher or spiritual commander, thus it serves to remind the Philippians of Epaphroditus' spiritual authority since a division has arisen between Euodia and Syntyche.
7. The anarthrous construction of the noun also supports this interpretation of the word in our passage.