

Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? 37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. -1 Corinthians 14:36-37

I. Paul an Apostle (1 Cor. 1:1, 16:21)

"Apostle" refers to a "sent one" or "messenger" of Jesus Christ.¹

♦ What Kind of Apostle is Paul (1 Cor. 15:3-9)?

A foundation-laying, eyewitness to Jesus Christ, who was directly commissioned by him to relay the gospel.

Apostles mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15: Cephas and the Twelve. In the Gospel of John, Jesus states that the Twelve would be divinely inspired to remember and convey what he taught (John 14:26). James is mentioned, and finally, Paul describes himself as "one untimely born" and "last." His authority is grounded in a revelation of Jesus and is confirmed by the Twelve (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 2:9). It appears that this is a closed group, in Paul's thought, for two reasons:

1. The qualification of these people is that they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection.
2. Paul's uses of the phrase "*last of all*" to imply that no one else will be added to this group.

♦ Apostles Today?

There is a difference in kind between the apostleship Paul describes for himself and a more general apostleship that will continue beyond this unique group. Paul's apostleship is unique in authority to lay the foundations of the church and to authorize the writing of scriptures (Eph. 2:19-22).

II. Who Wrote the New Testament?

Matthew: Authored Matthew (one of the Twelve). **John Mark:** Authored Mark. He was Peter's translator. **Peter** (one of the Twelve) wrote 1 & 2 Peter. **Luke the Physician:** Authored Luke & Acts. He was a companion of Paul. **John:** Authored John, 1-3 John, and Revelation (potentially one of the Twelve or John the Elder an eyewitness). **Paul:** Authored Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and potentially Hebrews. **James, the brother of Jesus:** wrote James (recognized by the Twelve). **Jude, brother of Jesus:** wrote the Epistle of Jude.

III. The Nature of Scripture

Men were moved by the Holy Spirit to write (2 Pet. 1:16-21; 3:2). The Bible contains *dictation* and *inspiration*. It is meant to be received by believers as God's word (1 The. 2:13).

♦ Powerful Historical Testimony

1 Corinthians is one of the earliest attestation to the gospel of Jesus. It was written in the early 50s AD and independently corroborates the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark,

¹ Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000)

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Luke, and John. Further, Paul's own testimony is compelling evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. The New Testament comes from multiple independent authors who bear witness to the one Lord Jesus Christ.

◆ **The Doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone)**

This doctrine says that the Bible is the only *infallible* rule of faith for the Church. It is our divine corrective. Embracing this doctrine means we cannot conflate modern apostles with the foundation-layers of the Church.

IV. Three Aspects of Paul's Theology from Acts 9:1-20

It can even be argued that Paul's theology as a whole was simply an unfolding of the significance of the initial christophany.²

◆ **Christ is "the Lord" God of Israel**

"Who are you, Lord?" is a question that undergirds Paul's entire theology of Christ. Jesus shares in the very identity of *YHWH*, Israel's God: (1 Cor. 1:2; 2:8; 2:16; 4:4-5; 6:13-14, 17; 8:6; 10:21-22; 12:3; 16:22-23. See also: Joel 2:32/Romans 10: Isaiah 45:22/Phil 2; Exd. 6:4/1Cor. 8:6)

◆ **The Body of Christ**

Jesus did not say to Paul, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting my people?" He said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (1 Cor. 6:15-17; 8:11-13; 12:27; 10:16-17; 11:29)

◆ **The Revelation of Sufferings**

God spoke about Paul, "I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." For believers, suffering becomes a redemptive act that brings others to Christ. (1 Cor. 6:7; 2 Cor. 1:6; also Phi. 1:29; 3:10; Rom. 8:17; Col. 1:24)

V. Background and Setting

1 Corinthians is Paul's second letter in response to the Corinthians reply to his first (5:9). He was very much a missionary who planted churches among the unreached. He was the one who started the Church in Corinth (1 Cor. 3:6; 4:15; Acts 18:1-11).³ At the time of Paul's writing, Greek Corinth was one of the most prominent cities in the Roman Empire, a port city central to commerce and home to numerous ethnicities, philosophers, and pagan temples.

In this box, write down something the Spirit may be highlighting to you from this message:

² Payne, J. D., *Apostolic Imagination: Recovering a Biblical Vision for the Church's Mission Today*, 55.

³ The NIV Zondervan Study Bible, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).