

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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WHAT DOES APOSTELLO MEAN?

Even those who know nothing of New Testament Greek will have the feeling that the word *apostello* is somewhat familiar. And they are right for this is the verb from which comes the adjective *apostolos* which is so often used as a substantive in the New Testament and is usually translated "apostle."

In seeking the true understanding of the thirty-three unique and important years of which the book of Acts is the history, there is no word more important than the Greek verb *apostello*. This history is "The Acts of the Apostles," and if this word is misunderstood, everything in the Acts period will be thrown out of line. And it is not enough for the student to have some simple definition of this word. He must master it, get inside of it, know all that there is to know concerning it.

This word has been sorely neglected; its true meaning has been clouded; it has been stultified by weak translations and renderings which are mere transliterations. Much truth has been lost because of this. Consideration of a few occurrences will show the importance of this word.

***I am not sent (*apostello*) but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
Matt. 15 :24.**

*** I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also for
therefore am I sent (*apostello*). Luke 4:43.**

*** There was a man sent (*apostello*) from God. John 1 :6.**

*** And He shall send (*apostello*) Jesus Christ.**

Acts 3 :20.

*** The word which God sent (*apostello*) unto the children of Israel. Acts 10:36.**

*** Men and brethren, sons of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent (*apostello*). Acts 13: 26.**

***How shall they preach except they be sent (*apostello*).**

Rom. 10:15.

*** For Christ sent (*apostello*) me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. 1 Cor. 1 :17.**

*** The Father sent (*apostello*) the Son to be the Savior of the World. 1 John 4:14.**

A review of these nine passages will show that great and important truths are expressed by this word, and this should exercise our minds to understand this verb as fully as it can be understood.

The word *apostello* is found 133 times in the New Testament. See *Englishman's Greek Concordance*, page 76, for a complete list. It is translated *send* 114 times, *send forth* 15, *send away* 4, *send out* 2, *put in* 1, and *set* 1 time. Thus it can be seen that the word *send* is used as a translation in all but two occurrences. To some this might seem to settle its meaning, but it does not. The word *send* as a translation of *apostello* is weak, misleading, and inadequate. It dims the glory of this important word. It holds down much of the truth that the Spirit of God is revealing.

The Greek word that means "to send" is *pempo*. This is found 81 times in the New Testament and is translated "send" in all but two of these. This is the word that can be used of causing to go in any manner. A man's wife now and then will send him to the store or post office. The ancient Greek would use the word *pempo* to describe an act such as this, but never the word *apostello*. A study of the 81 occurrences of *pempo* will bring the realization that this term has to do with what might be described as a physical sending, a causing to go. Any ideas expressed in the passages that are beyond this would have to come from the context, as nothing more than a physical sending is inherent in this word.

The inadequacy of the King James translator's treatment of the words *apostello* and *apostolos* is seen in the fact that the word *apostle* shows no relationship to the word *sent*. What reader of the English Bible would know

that these are father and son? For example in English we have *do* and from this we get *doer* and *doing*, from *play* we get *player* and *playing*, and from *give* we get *giver* and *giving*. Thus the relationship between these words is obvious. But there is no obvious connection between the words *send* and *apostle*. *Apostello* is the parent and *apostolos* is the offspring, and the relationship between these two words should not be obscured. Any rendering that does this is misleading and inadequate.

In one case the translator did preserve the relationship. In John 13:16 *apostolos* is translated "he that is sent". Between "send" and "he that is sent" the relationship is plain. However, *apostello* and *apostolos* mean far more than "sent" and "a sent one".

Many lexicons follow the example of the King James Version and define *apostello* as meaning "to send forth" or "to send away from, while the sender remains behind," but some lexicographers have dared to abandon this superficial definition, realizing that those who are the recipients of this action are not always sent from one place to another.

While the lexicons have been consulted, especially Kittel's, no attempt will be made to establish the meaning of this word through them. The meaning of any word in any language is determined by the use of it. It is possible to discover the meaning of any word if it can be seen in a dozen clear sentences. We find the word *apostello* in 133 sentences and the substantive that is derived from it (*apostolos*) in eighty-one. If the meaning cannot be determined from these occurrences, then there is no way of determining the meaning of any word in any language. Even a dictionary cannot define a word. It can merely report the usage of a word by careful and capable writers. In defining *apostello* it will be our purpose to do it from the usage made of it by the inspired writers of the New Testament. When all occurrences are examined the following facts stand out.

Apostello means to commission, in the sense of authorizing and instructing someone to perform a definite task. The ideas of authority and authorizing are always basic in it. A commission can be very simple involving a very small task, or it can be very complex involving great service and responsibilities.

It has been said that the office of Notary Public is the least a man can have under our government. Nevertheless, a Notary Public has been commissioned; he has a commission and is a commissioned one. He is authorized to take acknowledgments of legal papers, which he does under the seal of his office, usually adding a note that his commission expires on a certain date in order to show that it is an active one. The Greeks would use the word *apostello* to describe the action of the governor that authorized such, and the word *apostolos* to describe the result—a commissioned one.

The word *apostello* never has to do with the appointment of anyone to an office. It has to do with a service that is to be performed by one authorized. Thus its real meaning is to commission with authority. However, this definition applies only when it is used in connection with men or angels. When it is used in connection with animals or inanimate things it takes on a more limited meaning. When so used it means to authorize, that is, to make freely available. Both meanings of this word are seen in the following passage, where the first reference is to men and the second is to animals.

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent (*apostello*) Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: bosc them and bring them unto Me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send (*apostello*) them. Matt. 21:1-3.

Thus two of His disciples are commissioned for what seemed to be a very small task, and for a short time they were commissioned ones (*apostles*). If anyone questioned their right to take these animals they are to say, "The Lord has need of them" and the owner would authorize the use of these; that is, he would make them freely available.

Thus we see that to grant or allow by proper authority is the meaning of *apostello* when it is used of animals or inanimate things. This usage is found nine times in the New Testament, and in these passages *apostello* should read as follows:

- * **Matt. 21: 3 - straightway he will *authorize* them**
- * **Mark 4:29 - immediately he *authorizes* the sickle Mark 11: 3 - straightway he will *authorize* it**

- * **John 9:7** - which is by interpretation, *authorized*
- * **Acts 10:36** - the word He *authorizes* to the sons of Israel
- Acts 11 :30** - *authorizing* it to the elders
- * **Acts 13 :26** - the word of this salvation *authorized*
- * **Acts 28:28** - is *authorized* to the nations
- * **Rev. 1: 1** - He *authorized* and signified it

A third meaning of *apostello*, which is a derived meaning, is to dismiss, to send away, to banish. But this is always an authoritative dismissal or banishment. This is found in five places: Mark 5: 10; Mark 12:3,4, 6; John 18:24.

We can now summarize our findings. Commission, authorization, and direction are the ideas inherent in the word *apostello* when applied to men or to angels. The idea of authorization in the sense of making freely available becomes paramount when it is used of animals or inanimate things. The word *apostolos* should never be hardened into an office to which men are appointed. The word denotes a commission and authorization that is limited in time and is concerned only with the business at hand, not with the status of a person discharging it. A personal commission is the sole ground of being a commissioned one (an apostle). None of those who was commissioned by Jesus Christ ever felt he had attained to an office of indelible or life-time character.

In the house of Cornelius, Peter declared that the word which proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ had been authorized to the sons of Israel (Acts 10: 36). In Acts 13: 26 Paul emphatically declares that it was to the sons of Abraham and the God-fearing men among them that "the word of this salvation" had been made freely available. Paul was authorized to speak to the Gentiles, but only after it was proclaimed to Israel first. See Rom. 1:16. In Acts 28:28 Paul announces that "the salvation-bringing *message* of God had been made freely available (authorized) to the nations," with the further guarantee that it will get through to them. These words indicate one great and important feature in the dispensational change that took place at Acts 28:28. It became freely available to all when God inspired John to write a record of the Son of God . that is without priority or discrimination of any kind.

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