

The Apostles as Elders of the Universal Church and the Authority of the New Testament

Many scholars argue that the second-century church had no direct access to the apostles. Is this correct? What did second-century church father Papias mean when he referred to the Elders - were they the apostles, or second-generation followers of Jesus? This talk will examine the relationship between the apostles and the next generation of church fathers.

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I. The Eusebian Paradigm: Elders as Disciple of Apostles

A. Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.3-5

B. Irenaeus, *AH* 33.3-4

II. Examining Papias' Reference to the Elders

A. Three distinctions

B. Linguistic considerations

C. Conclusion

III. Other References to the Apostles as Elders of the Church

A. 1 Peter 5:1

B. 2 John 1; 3 John 1

C. Ignatius of Antioch

D. Coptic Canons of Athanasius

E. Revelation 4:4

IV. Significance for our Access to Apostolic Evidence

A. Closing the gap

B. Apostolic “backbone” of normative tradition

Suggested Readings:

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.

Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* V.33.

Letters of Ignatius of Antioch

G. M. Lee, “Presbyters and Apostles,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 62 (1971), 122.