

Were Andronicus and Junia Apostles?

From my observation, most Bible-believing Christians automatically believe what they are told from the pulpit. However, if the Bible to them is the infallible word of God, they should check out what they're being taught to confirm, like the Berean's, what the facts are.

In the case of our question, it is a correct and appropriate response to check if such an assertion that Andronicus and Junia were apostles in the 1st church is in fact an accurate statement.

What one discovers when they undertake this investigation is that there is no foundation for such a factual statement as: "Andronicus and Junia were apostles in the 1st church". Why? There is no incontrovertible record in the NT making this a statement with absolute certainty.

Here is the only reference to these 2 people, and it's also the only reference in regards to their believed apostleship:

Romans 16:7 (NKJV) – Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

A study of the various translations of this verse reveals a wide variety of interpretations. These translations, created by experts in the Greek language, show that the phrase "who are of note among the apostles" is ambiguous because it can be translated in numerous ways, giving a variety of meanings. Here are some of the translations of οἵτινες εἰσὶν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις from the Greek NT¹:

Translated As	By Bible Translation
who are of note among the apostles	KJV, NKJV, ASV, YLT, Darby
they are men of note among the apostles	RSV
They are well known to the apostles	ESV, GNB
They are outstanding among the apostles	HCSB, NASB, NIV
are prominent among the apostles	ISV, NRSV
They are very important apostles	NCV
They are highly respected among the apostles	NLT

The usual version quoted to indicate that they were apostles is: 'of note among the apostles', which is ambiguous.

That's like saying: 'Laurence is known among the teachers in the ACT'

- ▶ It's ambiguous
- ▶ It has a double meaning

The 2 meanings are:

1. Laurence is known among the teachers in the ACT as a teacher
2. Laurence is known among the teachers in the ACT as a trainer of teachers

See the difference?

Both of these meaning are true for myself, but #1 infers that I am a teacher because 'I am know among the teachers in the ACT' links me in the reader's mind with teachers and subconsciously suggests that I am a teacher. However, #2 is also true, but it doesn't arise from the reading of the statement because more information would be required to get this meaning out of it.

1 – SOURCE: Matt Slick "Was Junia in Romans 16:7 a female apostle in authority?" (carm.org/junia-apostle)

This is why readers of ‘are of note among the apostles’ automatically, but erroneously, confer apostleship on the 2 people mentioned. They read it into the statement by inference.

This is poor exegesis.

So, to conclude:

- (i) There is no direct NT reference that Andronicus and Junia actually were apostles in the 1st church.
- (ii) The translation of ‘of note among the apostles’ by expert Greek scholars show that the Greek can be translated in a variety of ways, showing that it’s meaning is somewhat fluid.
- (iii) The translation of it as ‘are well known to the apostles’ is just as valid as any of the others, and indicates that they weren’t apostles.
- (iv) The perceptive that they were apostles comes by inference from the ambiguity of the phrase in the many of the translations.

Was Junia a Female Apostle?

Having reached a conclusion that there is no factual evidence that Andronicus and Junia actually were apostles in the 1st church, it now begs the question: “Is there any proof that Junia was a female apostle?”

ANSWER: No.

I have shown already that Junia may not have been an apostle at all. No more needs to be said on that theme.

Junia may have been female, but there is some debate about this. Matt Slick notes:

*“Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament gives the interlinear parsing of Junia as "noun, feminine, singular, accusative.". On the other hand, when the same word is analyzed in Gramcord (a Biblical language analysis program attached to that same interlinear), it shows both Masculine and Feminine parsing. So, which is it?
It is difficult to determine since evidence seems to support both options.”²*

From another perspective, biblically, a female apostle is contrary to the masculine convention of the 1st church:

1. The original apostles were all men.
2. Paul and the additionally named apostles in the NT were all men.
3. The city leaders of the local churches, called elders and overseers, were all very mature men.

So, from a Bible-believer’s perspective then, **there is no basis for declaring that Junia was a female apostle.**

It following then, that **there is no precedence, biblically, for there to be female apostles under the New Covenant.**

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