

YOUTH



LEVEL 9

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 2



The Apostles of Christ

# THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST

The word *apostle* is a familiar one to all of us. Some of you could probably name most, if not all 12, of the original apostles. But how much do you really know about them?

What is an apostle? Who were the men who became the apostles and how were they chosen? Were the apostles given a specific job? And if so, how did they accomplish it?

We will discover the answers to these questions in the pages of this lesson as we learn the exciting story of the apostles' lives. If you have your Bible and a pen or pencil, you are ready to continue. If not, get them before you go on.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST INTRODUCES HIS DISCIPLES TO CHRIST

The story of the apostles really begins at the start of Jesus Christ's public ministry. It begins with the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.

Let's read Mark's account of the baptism. Turn to Mark 1:9-11 and fill in the missing words from these verses: "And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ like a \_\_\_\_\_ upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, this is my \_\_\_\_\_, in whom I am well pleased."

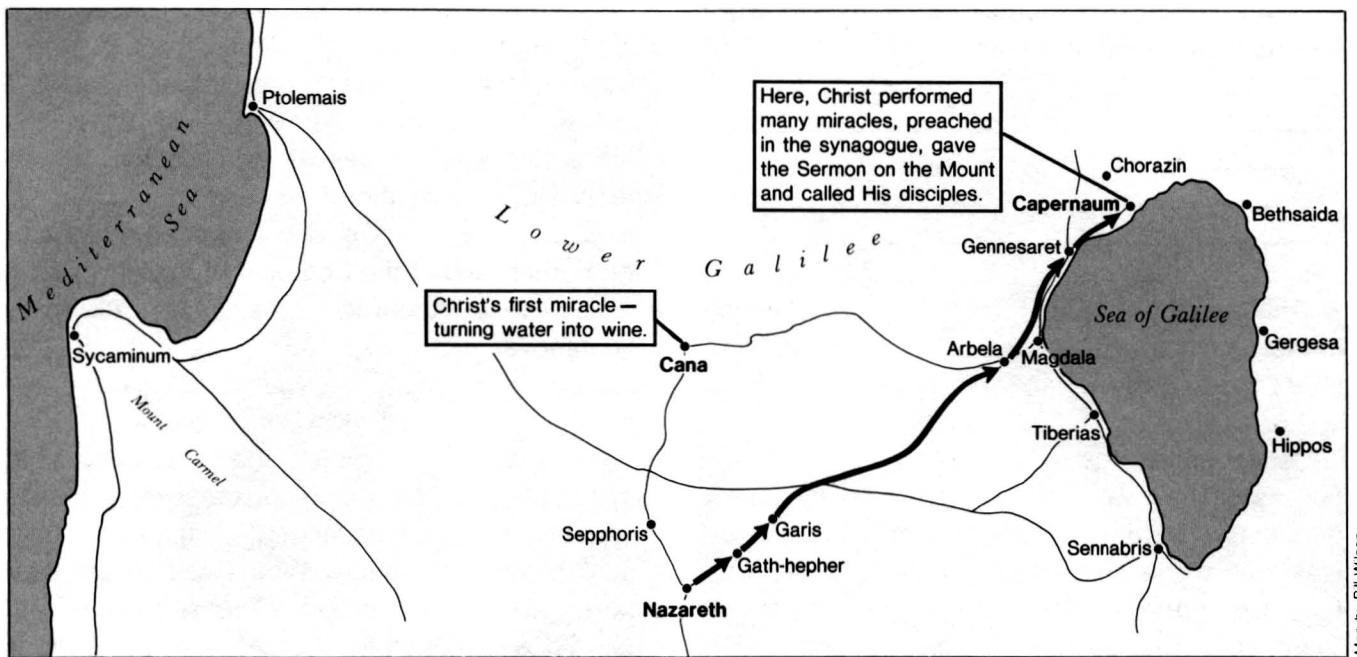
Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. There He fasted 40 days and was tempted by Satan.

Meanwhile, John began to spread the word to his disciples that he had seen the Messiah. The apostle John recorded his words (John 1:32-34): "I saw the \_\_\_\_\_ from heaven like a \_\_\_\_\_ and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the \_\_\_\_\_, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that this is the Son of God."

After the 40 days and His overcoming of Satan, Jesus came to Bethany where John was baptizing. John was with two of his disciples when he saw Jesus walking down the street. Excited, John turned to his disciples. "This is the Messiah, the man I've been telling you about!" Immediately, these two disciples of John went to meet Jesus, and He invited them to come to His home.

Andrew, one of the two disciples, had a brother named Simon. Andrew ran to find Simon and brought him to Jesus. Jesus' first words to Simon are significant. Read John's account (John 1:42) and fill in the blanks: "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art \_\_\_\_\_ the son of Jona: thou shalt be called \_\_\_\_\_, which is by interpretation, \_\_\_\_\_." Jesus was referring to the new name that He would later give to Simon. But more about that a little later in the lesson.

Andrew and Simon were fishermen. They were partners with another pair of brothers, James and John. Together, these four men ran a



Christ journeyed from Nazareth to Capernaum where he called the disciples.

Map by Bill Wilson

commercial fishing business. The next time we hear of Andrew and Simon is when they were called by Jesus to be His disciples.

### JESUS CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

Jesus had left Galilee to preach in Judea, but was now returned to Galilee. He was teaching by the Sea of Galilee, where Simon and his partners had been fishing. A huge crowd was gathered on the shore, and Jesus taught them from Simon's boat.

When Jesus was finished speaking, He told Simon to lower the nets for a load of fish. Simon scratched his head. "If you say so, we'll put out the nets," he said with a puzzled look. "But we fished here all night and didn't catch anything."

Let's turn to Luke, chapter 5, to see what happened. Begin in verse 6: "And when they had this done (let down their nets) they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both ships so that they began to sink."

Then Simon fell to his knees. The four fishermen were both amazed and thoroughly frightened by this astounding miracle. Their boats had never held so many fish!

Why did Jesus want to capture their attention this way? Turn to Mark's record of this event for the answer (Mark 1:17-18): "And Jesus said unto them, Come ye \_\_\_\_\_, and I will make you to become \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. And straightway they \_\_\_\_\_ their \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ him." Jesus was calling them to be His disciples!

Luke tells the story of another man whom Jesus called. Matthew (also called Levi) was a publican, or tax collector. Jesus, seeing Matthew at work at the place of the toll, said, "Follow me." And what did Matthew do (Luke 5:28)? "... he \_\_\_\_\_, rose up, and \_\_\_\_\_ him."

Like the other disciples, Matthew did not seek out Jesus; he was chosen *by* Jesus. Remember, Jesus said: Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). Simon and his partners did not choose Jesus either. They chose to be fishermen. But Jesus called them, and they *forsook all* to follow Him.

### THE TWELVE ARE CHOSEN

Not long after Matthew's calling, Jesus gathered His disciples together privately. After a night of prayer, He specially selected 12 of them. Find



the list of the 12 in Luke (Luke 6:14-16) and write their names on the lines below.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Another list is found in Acts 1:13. Whose name is missing? \_\_\_\_\_. Who was later chosen to replace him? (Acts 1:16-26) \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus called these 12 men for a fantastic purpose. They were to be instructed by Jesus personally. During His 3½-year ministry, Jesus was with these men almost continually. He was teaching and training them to be His apostles!

For 3½ years, the disciples heard Jesus proclaim the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God. While Jesus taught the huge crowds attracted by His many healings and other miracles, He was also teaching the disciples. After Jesus' resurrection, He gave the apostles additional final teaching and training.

### THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matthew records Christ's instructions to the apostles after His crucifixion and resurrection.

These 11 men (Judas disqualified himself) had been taught intimately by Jesus for 3½ years. They had seen the many spectacular miracles.

Turn to Matthew 28:19-20 and fill in the missing words of Jesus' commission to His apostles: "Go ye therefore, and \_\_\_\_\_ all \_\_\_\_\_, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: \_\_\_\_\_ them to \_\_\_\_\_ all things whatsoever \_\_\_\_\_ you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Let's stop for a moment and understand what an apostle is. The word *apostle* simply means "one sent forth, a messenger." And a messenger must have a message. What was to be their message? It was the same message they had heard Jesus preach for 3½ years — the Gospel, the Good News of God's coming government on earth.

But the apostles had not yet received God's Spirit to help them carry out their commission. Christ told them to wait together in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Notice Christ's last words to the apostles (Acts 1:8): "But ye shall receive \_\_\_\_\_, after that the Holy Spirit is \_\_\_\_\_ you: and ye shall be \_\_\_\_\_ unto \_\_\_\_\_ in all



Mr. Armstrong fulfills the Great Commission by preaching the gospel message to the world.



Y.E.S. Photo



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Fishermen tending their nets much the same as Simon, Andrew, James and John did over 1900 years ago.

Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

### THE CHIEF APOSTLE

Did Jesus appoint one of the apostles to take the lead after His death? And if so, which apostle? The Bible says He did. And his name was Peter! Let’s look at some of the evidence of this fact found in the Bible.

First, whose name heads each of the four complete lists of the apostles? (Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13)

Remember, Jesus had told Simon his name would be changed to Cephias. *Cephias* means a “stone or small rock” in the Aramaic language. The Greek word *Petros* means the same thing and is translated “Peter” in English.

Peter’s obvious leadership role is emphasized several other times. Christ’s words to Peter in Matthew 16 (verses 18-19) are especially important: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art \_\_\_\_\_, and upon \_\_\_\_\_ I will \_\_\_\_\_ my \_\_\_\_\_; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the

\_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ of heaven:  
and whatsoever thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_ on  
\_\_\_\_\_ shall be \_\_\_\_\_ in  
\_\_\_\_\_ and whatsoever thou shalt  
\_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ shall be  
\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.”

When Jesus said: “Upon this rock I will build my church,” He was referring to Himself. The word “rock” used here comes from the Greek word *petra*, not *petros*, as in Peter’s name. *Petra* means a big rock, like El Capitan in Yosemite, or Gibraltar in Spain.

That massive, immovable rock, Christ, is the *foundation* of the Church (Eph. 2:20). But to Peter, a small rock, was given the responsibility to later be the human leader of the Church.

What kind of leader was Peter? How did he fulfill his responsibility? You will find out as we now continue the story of the apostles’ lives.

### PETER AND JOHN THREATENED

As Jesus had instructed, the apostles and the other disciples waited together in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit. Altogether, there were about 120 gathered there. Jesus had preached the Gospel for 3½ years to countless thousands,

but only 120 really believed!

On the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, their waiting was rewarded. The arrival of the Holy Spirit came in a miraculous manner which has never been repeated.

Acts 2:2-4 contains the eyewitness account: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Many devout Jews from various nations were in Jerusalem for Pentecost, and news of this supernatural display reached them quickly. They were astounded! Although these Jews were from many nations of different languages, each heard the 120 speak in his own language. What an awesome miracle! Each man heard his own native tongue spoken by all 120 disciples (Acts 2:6-11).

Soon a crowd numbering in the thousands was marveling at what it had seen and heard. When Peter stood to speak, you can be sure he had their undivided attention. This was an opportunity



Y.E.S. Photo

Petra means a big rock, like El Capitan, pictured here.

to begin fulfilling the great commission. Filled with God's Spirit for the first time, Peter delivered a powerful sermon, emphasizing that Jesus is the Savior.

The audience was held spellbound. "What shall we do?" they asked. Read Peter's answer in Acts 2:38 and fill in the missing words: "Then Peter said unto them, \_\_\_\_\_ and be \_\_\_\_\_ everyone of you in the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_ of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." God added about 3,000 baptized members to the Church that day!

Soon after this, Peter was given another opportunity to spread the Gospel widely. Peter and John were walking to the temple. At the temple gate they were stopped by a pitiful voice saying, "Alms. Please, alms."

Looking down, they saw a crippled man begging for money. What was Peter to do? Let's turn to Acts 3:6 and see. Complete the quote from Peter: "Then Peter said, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have I none: but \_\_\_\_\_ as I \_\_\_\_\_ give I thee: In the name of \_\_\_\_\_ of Nazareth \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."

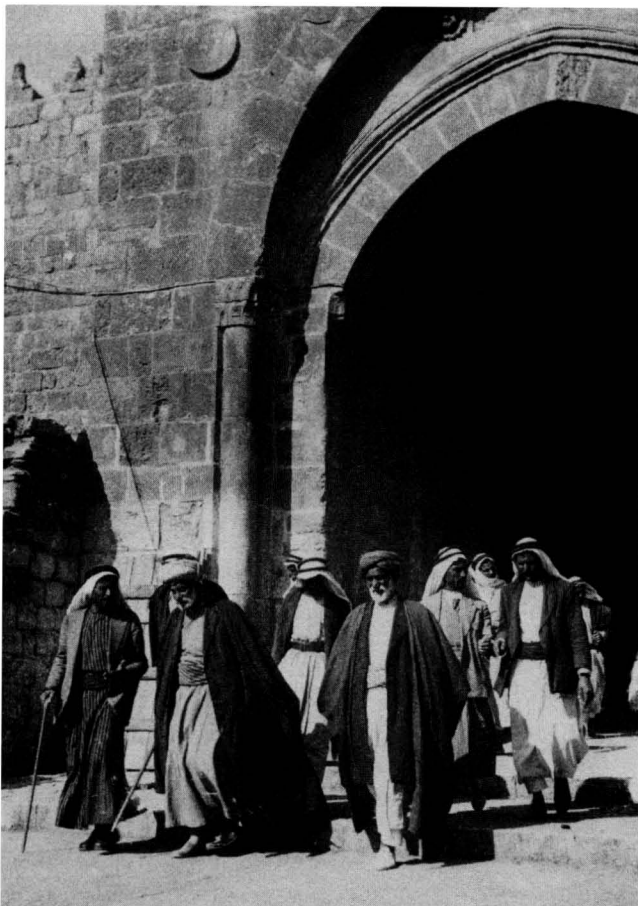
And the man jumped to his feet, running and leaping and praising God! Word of this spectacular healing spread like wildfire. You see, this man was well known by nearly everyone. Crippled from birth, he had been begging at the temple gate every day for many years.

Again God had granted a miracle for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel. A vast crowd materialized rapidly. Peter then preached another moving sermon. That day God added an additional 2,000 members to His Church.

But the priests and Sadducees were highly displeased by what they saw because they were afraid of the Roman government. The Romans set a governor over Palestine and the Roman soldiers were ever present. The Jews were under the rule of the Roman Empire, but certain lower level government jobs were given to Jews themselves. These well-paying, influential jobs were granted to the Pharisees and Sadducees.

These Jewish leaders completely misunderstood Jesus' message while He was on earth. He spoke of a coming world government, one that would take over all nations. They thought Jesus was talking about overthrowing the present Roman government, right then, in His human lifetime. But Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, yet to be established at His second coming.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were afraid that they would be accused of disloyalty to the Roman government if they did not oppose Jesus. They felt both threatened and alarmed by Jesus. Threatened, because they did not want to lose their jobs or their religious sway over the people. And alarmed because they were fearful of being executed as traitors. And so that is why the Jewish religious leaders also persecuted Peter and John. They were against anyone who preached Jesus' message. Especially anyone who also worked great miracles which they could neither duplicate or explain away (Acts 4:14).



Y.E.S. Photo

The religious leaders in New Testament times persecuted the true Christians.

The priests, captains of the temple, and Sadducees immediately arrested Peter and John and threw them into prison.

The next morning the two were brought before a hostile council headed by the high priest. "I command you to stop preaching in the name of this man Jesus," declared the high priest. He glared at Peter and John. "You know that we have the power to carry out our threats," he said. "Look at what happened to your leader, Jesus!"

Severely warned, the two apostles were released. But the threats of the high priest weighed heavily on their minds. They had just faced a great deal of danger in the clutches of some very determined adversaries. Immediately, they went to the brethren to relate how God had helped them. The brethren prayed for Peter's and John's continued boldness (Acts 4:31) and safety. That is one of the main purposes of the Church — to back up the apostles with their prayers.

The Church is like a well-organized team. Each member plays a part in fulfilling the Great Commission. But the role of the lay members is not to preach the Gospel. That is the job of the apostles and evangelists. The lay members play a support role. By their prayers, encouragement, tithes and offerings, they help accomplish the Work of God. But back to our story.

What did the Church now do? Acts 4:31 tells what happened then: "And when they had \_\_\_\_\_, the place was \_\_\_\_\_ where they were assembled together; and they were \_\_\_\_\_ with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_." The whole Church lifted up their voices to God in prayer and received encouragement from God.

Reassured by God, the apostles were unafraid to go on preaching the Gospel. And God continued to back them up with great signs and wonders. One particular warning sign from God was what happened to Ananias and Sapphira.

## ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

In the face of this first persecution, the Church drew together and united as one. Many of those



who owned land or houses sold them to help those who were in need.

A certain man and wife in the Church, named Ananias and Sapphira, also sold some land. Ananias made a show of bringing all the money to the apostles. But it was only playacting. The couple had secretly kept back a large part of the money.

Ananias and Sapphira wanted to give the appearance of being generous and having a giving attitude. Peter indicated they didn't have to give it all (verse 4), but they *lied* about giving all. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, discerned they were lying. "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land?" he demanded (Acts 5:3).

Notice what happened then! Turn to (Acts 5:5: "And Ananias \_\_\_\_\_ these words \_\_\_\_\_, and gave up the ghost: and \_\_\_\_\_ came on all them that heard these things."

Three hours later, Sapphira came to Peter,

unaware that her husband was dead. "Tell me if you sold the land for so much?" Peter asked, hoping she would confess. She said, "Yes, for so much," and lied also.

Peter spoke again. "Why did you agree together to lie against God? The men who buried your husband shall bury you as well." Immediately, Sapphira fell down dead.

News of the astonishing miracles performed through the apostles spread swiftly. Many people saw the miracles and believed the Gospel. The numbers of the Church swelled.

God worked through Peter in an especially mighty way. Many who wanted to be healed were laid in the streets he walked through, hoping that the mere shadow of his body might pass over them.

### THE APOSTLES IMPRISONED

The popularity of the apostles only added fuel to the flame of discontent that burned within the Jewish leaders. They were fast losing their influence over the people as a result of the



Many people of Judea lived in houses that had flat roofs like this one.





Y.E.S. Photo

The Roman government used buildings like this temple during their rule in Palestine.

apostles' miracles and teaching. Besides, what if news of the apostles' teaching reached the ears of the government? Surely they, the Pharisees and Sadducees, would be held responsible.

As the Pharisees saw it, their only hope was to silence the apostles. So they had them arrested and thrown into prison. The apostles knew that God would not forget them, but still they were totally unprepared for the strange events of that night. Only the prisoners seemed to realize what was happening.

Late that night, an angel suddenly appeared in their cell! Before they could get over their surprise, they were being led out of the prison.

Oddly, the prison guard did not see them!

As the angel had instructed, the apostles went to the temple early in the morning to teach.

Later that morning the council for the Pharisees came together. The high priest sent for the prisoners, but they were nowhere to be found! The prison keeper was mystified. The doors were locked, the guards were securely in

place, but the cell was empty.

Word finally came that the apostles were teaching again in the temple. Now the officers of the temple were faced with a real problem: how to arrest the apostles without stirring up the people! The temple officers were afraid of being stoned by the people. Fortunately for them, the apostles agreed to go peaceably.

"Didn't I give you a direct order to stop teaching in Jesus' name?" demanded the high priest. Peter's answer, found in Acts 5:29, is an important one: "We ought to \_\_\_\_\_, rather than \_\_\_\_\_."

Notice the rest of Peter's answer (verses 30-31): "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ on a \_\_\_\_\_. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Peter's words so terribly angered the council that the apostles' very lives were now in danger.

The Pharisees and Sadducees did not like to be reminded of their guilt regarding Jesus. For you see, they knew Jesus was sent from God. Remember that Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees, came to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God" (John 3:2).

They debated how best to kill the apostles. Only one member of the council spoke up in their defense. Gamaliel, a lawyer of great reputation, narrowly saved the apostles' lives.

Gamaliel's advice was amazingly simple. Complete his quote found in Acts 5:38-39: "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this \_\_\_\_\_ or this \_\_\_\_\_ be of \_\_\_\_\_, it will \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_: But if it be of \_\_\_\_\_, ye cannot \_\_\_\_\_ it: lest haply ye be found even to \_\_\_\_\_ God."

The council agreed to release the 12 only after giving them a terrible beating and warning them again that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. But the apostles rejoiced in this trial! Jesus told them they would be persecuted. It was a sign that they were doing right. They continued to fulfill their commission, preaching in the temple daily.

### THE CHURCH IS SCATTERED

The persecution against the Church of God gradually grew worse. One Pharisee, named Saul, was especially vicious against the Church. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

A number of the Church members were killed for their beliefs. The persecution was so great that the Church was scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Eventually Saul was converted and the persecution temporarily eased. The complete story of Saul is reserved for later lessons.

The Bible tells us that Peter visited the Church areas throughout Judea and Samaria, teaching the brethren. In his travels, Peter came to the city of Lydda where he performed a miraculous healing of a crippled man.

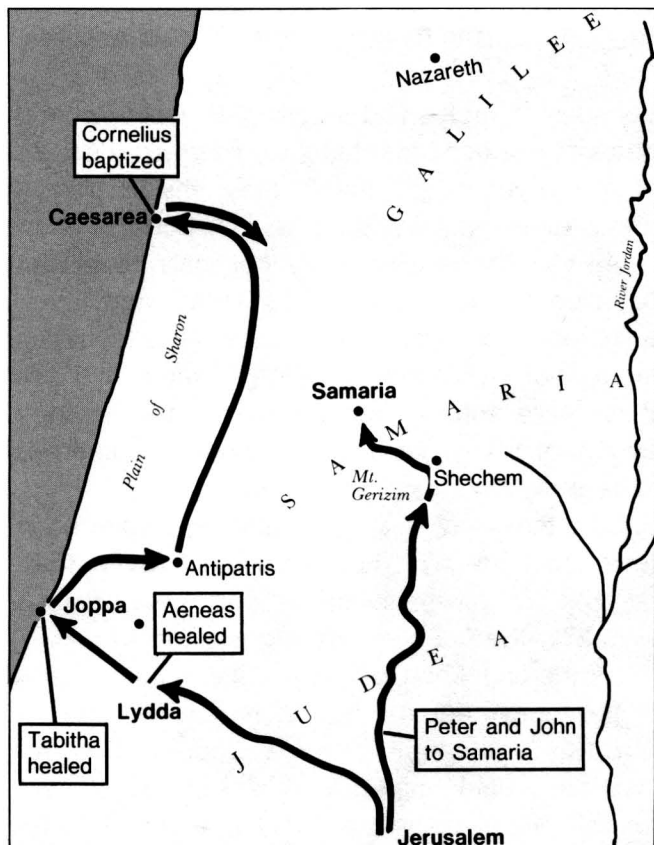
In the nearby city of Joppa, a woman in the

Church named Tabitha died. Immediately, the disciples there sent for Peter. When he arrived, the place was in an uproar, everyone crying and moaning over the death of this woman. Peter made them all leave the room.

What Peter did then required tremendous faith. Let's turn to Acts 9:40 and see what happened: "But Peter put them all forth, and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_; and turning him to the body said, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up." What a shocking surprise to those who had seen this woman lying dead just moments before!

News of this astonishing miracle filled the city. Wherever Peter went, people flocked to see him. As in Lydda, Peter used this opportunity to preach the Gospel.

Peter stayed in Joppa for some time. Remember Peter's vision from Lesson No. 1, where God told him that the gentiles were also being called? That vision occurred while he was in Joppa.



Peter traveled from Jerusalem at various times to visit the scattered churches.

## **SAVAGE PERSECUTION!**

Peter went to Jerusalem shortly before the Days of Unleavened Bread. He went to bring news of his experiences with Cornelius and the other newly converted gentiles. It was about this time that severe persecution set in again.

The governor of Palestine was Herod Agrippa I. Now Herod was extremely anxious to be popular with his subjects. For this reason, he began persecuting God's Church. It was by Herod's order that James, the brother of John, was beheaded.

When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jews, he imprisoned Peter, intending to have him executed immediately after the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Once again, the Church rallied to Peter's aid. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5).

Herod took no chances with Peter. Even when Peter slept, he was flanked by two soldiers, and bound in chains. Outside his cell, guards kept a constant watch.

Herod felt that Peter was entirely secure. But the very night before the intended execution, Herod's plans were completely ruined. The soldiers never did find out exactly what happened that night.

Turn to Acts 12:7 to see what did happen: "And, behold, the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ came upon him, and a bright light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, saying, \_\_\_\_\_ quickly. And his \_\_\_\_\_ off from his hands."

Blinking his eyes, Peter felt the angel tap him and heard his instruction to get dressed. Peter thought he saw a vision as he followed the angel out. The prison doors opened and shut automatically for them.

Suddenly Peter found himself alone on the streets of the city. Finally realizing he was actually free, he went quickly to a house where Church members were gathered. Peter had little time to tell them of his escape before being forced to flee to another city.

The Bible does not give us many details of the original apostles' later ministry. But we do know they went to the scattered Israelites throughout the world. Jesus had commanded them to "go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6).

According to tradition, the apostles separated about 12 years after Jesus' resurrection, traveling to all parts of the civilized world to fulfill their commission.

But the persecution against the Church did not let up. James was not the only apostle to be martyred. In fact, it is believed that John was the only one to die a natural death.

## **YOUR NEXT LESSON**

In this lesson we learned a little about a man named Saul. That was before his conversion. God called Saul to be a leading apostle and changed his name to Paul. We will learn more about this special apostle in next month's lesson.



EDITOR IN CHIEF: **Herbert W. Armstrong**

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**BIBLE MEMORY**

Twelve Disciples

Simon Peter

Andrew

James the Son of Zebedee

John

Philip

Bartholomew

Thomas

Matthew

James the Son of Alphaeus

Lebbaeus Thadaeus

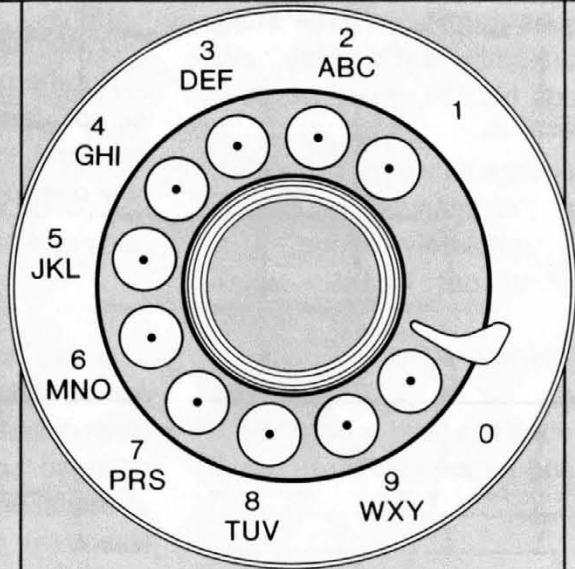
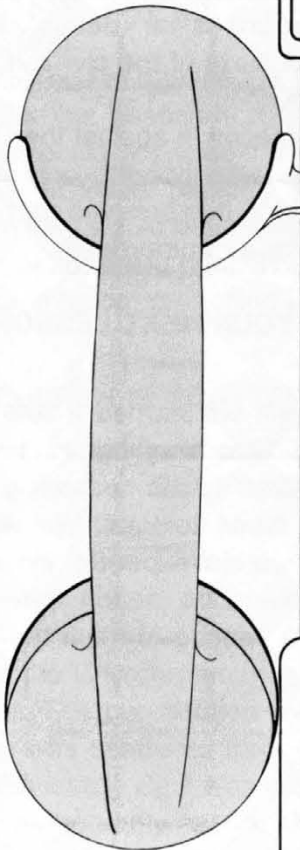
Simon the Canaanite

Judas Iscariot

### DIAL A DISCIPLE

Can you find the name of all 12 disciples by deciphering the number codes below? This one may be a little tricky. Each number has three letters that go with it on the dial. You will have to decide which one to use.

EXAMPLE: 34724753 = D I S C I P L E



**NUMBER CODES**

**DECODED NAMES**

2 6 3 7 3 9

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2 2 7 8 4 6 5 6 6 3 9

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5 2 6 3 7

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5 2 6 3 7

----- (the less)

5 6 4 6

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5 8 3 2 7

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6 2 8 8 4 3 9

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7 3 8 3 7

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7 4 4 5 4 7

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7 4 6 6 6

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8 4 2 3 3 3 8 7

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8 4 6 6 2 7

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