

## THE APOSTLES OF JESUS CHRIST

### Objective

In the Apostles, the children recognize Jesus Christ's envoys.

### Contents

- The twelve Apostles appointed by Jesus (Luke 6:12–16).
- Additional Apostles of the first church (Acts 1:25–26; 13:1–4; & 14:14; Romans 16:7; Galatians 1:19).
- What is an Apostle, and what are his responsibilities?
- The work of today's Apostles.



## Introductory Remarks

### 1 The Commission and Authority of the Apostles

Apostle means ambassador or envoy. Jesus Christ, who was **sent** by his heavenly Father for the salvation of man, is referred to as an Apostle in Hebrews 3:1. He **commissioned** his Apostles: *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:18–20).

According to the commission, *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”*, the Apostles’ teaching firstly comprises what Jesus himself taught. In addition, the Lord announced to his Apostles that the Holy Ghost would provide further revelations, saying, *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you”* (John 16:12–14).

To enable the Apostles to fulfill their commission, Jesus Christ gave them the **authority** to baptize (cf. Matthew 28:19) and forgive sins. *“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained”* (John 20:23). With this authority, the Apostles are able to reconcile man with God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20).

Someone who has authority, acts in the name of the one who gave him the authority. Everything done by the authorized representative, is as valid as if the one granting the authority were doing it himself.

God and his son Jesus Christ are almighty (i.e., they have power and omnipotence in heaven and on earth). Jesus, for example, acted with divine authority when he healed the sick, raised the dead, or drove out unclean spirits. This authority Jesus also conferred on his Apostles, which showed itself, for example, when Apostles Peter and John healed the lame beggar at the entrance to the temple. The rulers, elders and scribes of the people of Israel asked them, *“By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?”* (Acts 4:7). Apostle Peter then explained that he had acted in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

## 2 Biblical Designations for the Apostle's Ministry and the Apostles

In the Bible, the Apostle's ministry is also referred to as the ministry of

- reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18),
- grace (Ephesians 3:2<sup>1</sup>),
- the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6–8),
- the new testament (2 Corinthians 3:6),
- the word (Acts 6:4), and
- righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:9).

In the New Testament, there are formulations, making the Apostles' responsibilities clear.

- ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20),
- those who seek the bride (2 Corinthians 11:2),
- light of the Gentiles (i.e., nations) (Acts 13:47),
- ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1), and
- God's labourers, and master builders of God's spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:9–10).

## 3 The Apostles of Christ's First Church

The Apostles of Christ's first church include the twelve disciples appointed by Jesus, upon whom he conferred the Apostle's ministry (cf. Luke 6:13–16), namely, **Simon** called Peter, his brother **Andrew**, **James** and **John**, the sons of Zebedee, **Philip**, **Bartholomew**, **Matthew**, **Thomas**, **James**, the son of Alphaeus, **Simon**, called the Zealot, **Judas**, the brother of James, and **Judas Iscariot**, the traitor.

Furthermore, the Bible refers to the following who carried the Apostle's ministry:

<sup>1</sup> The following translation of Ephesians 3:2 comes closest to the Greek text. "... to the extent that you have heard about the authoritative commission of God's grace, which has been conferred upon me [Apostle Paul] for your benefit."

**Matthias**, who replaced Judas Iscariot, **Barnabas, Paul, Andronicus, Junias, Timothy, Silvanus**, referred to as Silas in Acts, and **James**, the Lord's brother.

It may be assumed, that there were additional Apostles in the first church. According to non-biblical accounts, John was the last living Apostle of Jesus at that time.

In accordance with Jesus' commission to teach and baptize all nations, the Apostles worked in different areas.

Whereas Apostles Peter and James proclaimed the gospel mainly among the Jews, Apostles Paul, Barnabas, Timothy and Silvanus went to the heathen countries in the area of the Mediterranean. Based particularly on Eusebius of Caesarea's (ca. AD 260–340) history of the church, other Apostles spread the gospel in additional Asian and African countries.

In accordance with their commission, the Apostles converted Jews and Gentiles to Christ's teachings, and thus began to gather the new people of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:10).

Following the death of the first Apostles, the Bishops and other ministers took over the responsibility of caring for the congregations spiritually as well as spreading the Christian teaching further. However, for the salvation of the faithful, the Apostle's ministry was needed.

#### 4 **The Apostles of the End Time**

In the year 1832, in England, **John Bate Cardale** was called as the first Apostle of the end time through prophecy. At the end of 1999 approximately 300 Apostles were active in the New Apostolic Church.

The Apostles of the end time are equipped with the same commission, power and authority as the first Apostles. The Apostles' responsibility is to gather a congregation for the Lord, to lead it, and prepare it for the union with Jesus Christ.

## Lesson Plan

### Lead-In

Workbook, Theme Picture, Discussion

Look at the theme picture with the children and discuss who these men are.

The picture depicts the first 12 Apostles.

The children try to name the Apostles.

Board

A child writes the names on the board, even if incorrect names are provided.

### Implementation

Workbook, Exercise 1

The children individually work on the exercise. Afterwards, discuss the answers.

Discussion

- Jesus Christ himself appointed the first 12 Apostles.

- There also were additional Apostles in the first church.

Teacher's Presentation

In Acts 1:21–26 there is a report of how an additional Apostle was appointed. Matthias was the first Apostle who was not appointed directly by Jesus Christ. One day, following Christ's ascension, Apostle Peter came to the faithful; about 120 were gathered. He first spoke about Judas, who had betrayed the Lord and then had killed himself. He then referred to the fact that, in the Book of Psalms already, it says, "*let another take his office*" (Psalm 109:8). He suggested that one should be selected from among the disciples to replace Judas Iscariot. It was to be a disciple who had been with Jesus since his baptism in the river Jordan and who could also bear witness to his resurrection. Two men were designated, and they prayed that God would stand by the one whom he had selected to be the Apostle. Then lots were cast. The lot fell on Matthias.

Jesus did not designate a fixed number of Apostles. The Lord calls Apostles based on the requirements in his work.

Question Prompt

Apostle means envoy (i.e., one who is sent). Whose envoys were the Apostles?

Discussion

The Lord Jesus sent forth the Apostles.

## Bible

A child reads what Jesus told the Apostles.

John 20:21:

*"... as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."*

Matthew 28:18–20:

*"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world..."*

Matthew 10:40:

*"He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me..."*

## Discussion

Emphasize the following:

- Jesus was sent into the world by his father.
- Before returning to his father, he sent the Apostles to the people in his stead.
- He gave them the commission and authority to lead man to God through word and sacrament.

## Statement Prompt

In the Bible, formulations can be found, through which the Apostles' responsibilities can be recognized.

## Workbook, Exercise 2

The children individually work on the exercise.

## Discussion

Discuss the following with the children:

- As ambassadors for Christ, the Apostles proclaim the gospel, the glad tidings about salvation through Christ (gospel is another word for glad tidings).
- As the light of the Gentiles, the Apostles have the responsibility to spread the bright light of godly truth.
- The Apostles offer divine salvation. They have the Lord's authority to forgive sins.
- As ministers of Christ, they carry out the will of their sender, Jesus Christ.

**Teacher's Presentation**

- A steward looks after the possessions of his master. As stewards of the mysteries of God, the Apostles have the responsibility to dispense the sacraments.

- As labourers together with God, they gather Christ's bridal congregation, and prepare it for the Lord's return.

From the previous lessons we know that the Apostles were persecuted. Apostle James, the son of Zebedee, was the first Apostle to die as a martyr. Men or women, who are killed for their faith's sake, are called martyrs.

Apostle John, apparently, was the only one of the original 12 Apostles who died of natural causes. After all of the Apostles of the first church had died, the Bishops and other ministers tried to keep the existing congregations together, and care for them, as well as disseminate Christ's teachings further.

This was followed by many centuries during which no Apostles were active. In the year 1832, in England, John Bate Cardale, through prophecies, was called as the first Apostle of the end time. Today a great many Apostles are active.

**Workbook, Picture**

In their workbook, the children look at a group photograph taken at the Pentecost 1999 Apostles' Meeting in Toronto, Canada.

**Discussion**

The children will realize, that today that there are many more Apostles than in the first church. Discuss the following:

- So many Apostles are required today because there are so many congregations and children of God.

- Our Apostles today, mostly, do not only work in small areas, but also in foreign countries, to fulfill the commission they received from the Lord.

- Although we do not know all Apostles personally, we nevertheless want to pray for all of them.

- etc.

**Conclusion**

To conclude the lesson, the children play a game in which they are to guess the names of Apostles, as follows:

A piece of paper, indicating the name of an Apostle, is attached to the back of a child (e.g., with safety pins, adhesive tape, string, etc.). The child does not know, whom he or she is "representing", but is to guess it. To accomplish this, the child may ask the other children questions, which may only be responded to with "yes" or "no" (e.g., "Am I the Apostle who wrote the Book of Revelation?", "Am I a living Apostle?", "Am I one of the first Twelve", etc.)

This game will become interesting, if three or more children with names of various Apostles of the first church and present-day Apostles, question the rest of the children. Questions about the place of residence, district, missionary areas, etc. could be asked. If a child posing questions, guesses whom it is representing, other children take their turn.

**Notes**

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