

WEEK 2

The Apostolic Age

A.D. 33–100

From the Apostles to the Close of the Age

Name: _____ Date: _____

Key Idea

When the book of Acts closes, the story does not. The apostles carry the gospel to the ends of the earth and seal their witness in blood; the church is scattered, persecuted, and survives the loss of its founders — yet the faith only spreads.

1. Where the Book of Acts Leaves Off

Acts closes around A.D. 62 with Paul in Rome under house arrest, preaching freely. Luke sets down his pen — but the church's story is only beginning.

HOW WE KNOW THE STORY

- Beyond the New Testament, we rely on:
 - Eusebius (church historian)
 - Tacitus and Pliny (Roman writers)
 - Josephus (Jewish historian)
 - The memory of the churches themselves

THE MOST DECISIVE GENERATION (A.D. 62–100)

- The apostles are martyred
- Jerusalem falls (A.D. 70)
- The faith breaks fully into the Gentile world
- The empire grows increasingly suspicious of Christians

Note: Some details are firmly attested; many — especially the manner of each apostle's death — come from later tradition. We mark the difference honestly.

2. Why the Roman World Turned Hostile

- The Imperial Cult: Rome expected outward honor to the emperor and state deities. Refusal looked like atheism and rebellion against the pax deorum (peace of the gods).
- A Faith with No Shelter: Christianity shared Judaism's legal exemption as long as it looked like a Jewish sect. After A.D. 70, that protection disappeared.
- A Convenient Scapegoat: Dark rumors surrounded Christians — meeting privately, speaking of "eating their Lord's body." They were easy targets when disaster struck.
- Local Before Imperial: Early persecution was sporadic and mob-driven. Empire-wide persecution came later, but the danger was already real for the apostles' generation.

MY NOTES — SECTION 2

3. The First Blood: Stephen and James

STEPHEN — THE FIRST MARTYR (C. A.D. 35)

- One of the seven deacons; stoned outside Jerusalem (Acts 7)
- Saw heaven opened and prayed for his killers as he died
- A young Pharisee named Saul stood guarding the coats of those who stoned him

"But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God..." — Acts 7:55–56

JAMES, SON OF ZEBEDEE (A.D. 44)

- Herod Agrippa killed him with the sword (Acts 12:2)
- The first of the Twelve to die
- The only apostolic martyrdom actually recorded in Scripture

JAMES THE JUST (A.D. 62)

- Brother of the Lord; leader of the Jerusalem church
- Stoned at the order of the high priest
- Reported by Josephus — a non-Christian source

- The Greek word for "martyr" simply means _____

MY NOTES — SECTION 3



4. Three Pillars in Depth

PETER — APOSTLE TO THE JEWS

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." — **Matthew 16:18**

- Where He Went:
- Judea → Antioch → Rome
- World Reached: The imperial West
- How He Died: Crucified (by tradition, head-downward — unworthy to die as his Lord)
- Place & Date: Rome, c. A.D. 64–67

Why Peter Matters: First among the apostles; his Roman ministry made the capital a center of the faith.
Successors: Linus, then Clement of Rome.

PAUL — APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." — **2 Timothy 4:7**

- Where He Went:
 - Asia Minor → Greece → Rome
 - World Reached: The Gentile Mediterranean
 - How He Died: Beheaded (spared crucifixion as a Roman citizen)
 - Place & Date: Rome, c. A.D. 64–67
- Three missionary journeys (c. A.D. 47–62) planted churches through Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece
 - Wrote 13 epistles — nearly half the New Testament

Why Paul Matters: Carried the gospel out of Judaism into the whole Gentile world and gave the church its deepest theology.

JOHN — THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

"The disciple whom Jesus loved." — **John 21:20**

- Where He Went:
 - Jerusalem → Ephesus → Patmos (exile)
 - World Reached: Roman Asia Minor
 - How He Died: Natural death — the lone exception among the Twelve
 - Place & Date: Ephesus, c. A.D. 98–100
- Banished to Patmos by Emperor Domitian; received the Revelation there (Rev 1:9)
 - Trained second-century leaders, most famously Polycarp of Smyrna

Why John Matters: The last surviving eyewitness; his death (c. A.D. 100) closes the apostolic age. He handed the faith intact to the next generation.

5. The Twelve: Where Each Went & How Each Died

Apostle	Where He Went	How He Died	Place & Date
Peter	Judea, Antioch, Rome	Crucified (inverted)	Rome, c. A.D. 64–67
Andrew	Greece, Asia Minor, Scythia	Crucified (X-shaped cross)	Patras, Greece, c. A.D. 69
James (Zebedee)	Judea	Beheaded by the sword	Jerusalem, A.D. 44 ♦ Acts 12:2
John	Jerusalem, Ephesus, Patmos	Natural death (the exception)	Ephesus, c. A.D. 98–100
Philip	Phrygia (Asia Minor)	Martyred / crucified	Hierapolis, c. A.D. 80
Bartholomew	Armenia, Mesopotamia, India	Flayed, then beheaded	Armenia, c. A.D. 70
Thomas	Parthia, India	Speared	Mylapore, India, c. A.D. 72
Matthew	Ethiopia / Persia	Martyred (manner uncertain)	Ethiopia?, c. A.D. 70
James the Less	Judea, Egypt	Clubbed (by tradition)	Uncertain, 1st century
Jude (Thaddaeus)	Mesopotamia, Persia, Armenia	Clubbed / axed	Persia, c. A.D. 65–72
Simon the Zealot	Persia, Egypt	Sawn asunder (tradition)	Persia, c. A.D. 65–72
Matthias	Judea, Cappadocia, Black Sea	Stoned, then axed	Colchis (Georgia), c. A.D. 80
Paul	Asia Minor, Greece, Rome	Beheaded (Roman citizen)	Rome, c. A.D. 64–67

Of the Twelve and Paul, all but John died as martyrs.

"The blood of the Christians is seed." — **Tertullian, c. A.D. 197**

6. Nero and the Fall of Jerusalem

THE GREAT FIRE OF ROME (A.D. 64)

- Fire devastated Rome; Emperor Nero fixed blame on the Christians
- Christians were torn by dogs, crucified, and burned as living torches (Tacitus)
- Tacitus — no friend of the faith — independently confirms both the persecution and Christ's execution under Pilate
- Peter and Paul are martyred in this Neronian persecution, c. A.D. 64–67
- The persecution was savage but _____ — confined to Rome, not yet imperial policy

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM (A.D. 70)

- Jewish revolt erupted A.D. 66; Titus and the Roman legions took Jerusalem and burned the Temple
- The Christians of Jerusalem, warned beforehand, fled to Pella across the Jordan and were spared
- The movement's center of gravity shifted to Gentile churches of Asia, Greece, and Rome
- After A.D. 70, Christianity and Judaism were seen as two distinct faiths
- Christians lost the legal shelter they had enjoyed as a Jewish sect — the long age of Roman persecution was now fully open

MY NOTES — SECTION 6

7. The Successors: The Apostolic Fathers

As the apostles die, leadership passes to the men they trained — our bridge to the second century.

CLEMENT OF ROME

- Bishop of Rome; succeeded Peter's line; c. A.D. 96
- Wrote 1 Clement — the earliest dated Christian writing outside the New Testament
- A letter from Rome to Corinth urging order and unity
- Tradition: exiled and drowned, tied to an anchor

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

- Bishop of Antioch; successor of Peter and Evodius; martyred c. A.D. 110
- On his way to martyrdom at Rome, wrote seven letters pleading for unity around the bishop
- Our first clear witness to the single-bishop church structure
- Thrown to the beasts in Rome

POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

- Bishop of Smyrna; personal disciple of the Apostle John; martyred c. A.D. 155
- A living link: Jesus → John → Polycarp → Irenaeus
- When told to deny Christ after "fourscore and six years" of service, he refused
- Burned at the stake — the earliest detailed martyrdom account outside Scripture

WHY THE SUCCESSORS WERE SIGNIFICANT

- They guarded the deposit — "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3)
- They preserved the eyewitness chain: Jesus → John → Polycarp → Irenaeus
- They modeled faithful suffering — most died for the faith just as the apostles had
- They became the bridge to Week 3: the age of apologists, the Gnostic threat, and the great persecutions

MY NOTES — SECTION 7

8. Discussion Questions

1. **Why did persecution spread the church rather than crush it? (See Acts 8:4)**

2. **What does it mean that the apostles "loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11)?**

3. How does the faithfulness of the apostles and their successors measure — or challenge — our own?

4. What stands out most to you from this lesson? Why?

Looking Ahead — Week 3

A.D. 100–313 · The Early Church The Apostolic Fathers and Apologists · The Gnostic Threat and First Doctrinal Drift · The Great Persecutions · The Church on the Eve of Constantine

One faith, one gospel, one church —
carried unbroken from Pentecost, through the apostles' deaths,
into the hands of the next generation.

Life Church of New Jersey · History of the Christian Church · Week 2