



The Ministry

The symbol for *The Ministry* is the descending dove, representing the guidance of the Spirit. (Mark 1:10-12)

The Story Continues

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"... He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Matthew 16:13, 15

For about thirty years Jesus lives in Nazareth with his family. Only one episode from Jesus' life, a visit to Jerusalem at age twelve, is recorded from that period. Around the age of thirty, Jesus begins his public ministry when he is baptized by John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Following an extended time of preparation in the wilderness of Judea, Jesus returns to the synagogue in Nazareth and announces that in his ministry God is inaugurating a glorious new day. God's power anoints Jesus to release captives, restore sight, remove oppression, and proclaim deliverance.

Jesus recruits twelve disciples to share his ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. The disciples witness God's good news coming true in everything Jesus does. Those held captive by illness and disease are released and made well. Those who are physically and spiritually blind are healed and given sight. Those oppressed by crippling physical and emotional conditions are restored to wholeness.

At a turning point in his ministry, knowing that he must journey to Jerusalem, Jesus questions his disciples about their understanding of all that they have experienced with him, their friend, teacher, and master. Jesus asks them, "But who do you say that I am?" In Peter's answer the truth comes out and life is never again the same.

Preparing for the Search

These thirty-four definitions will help you discover further information about *The Ministry of Jesus* and will be useful in succeeding discoveries.

Andrew, originally one of John the Baptist's disciples, became a disciple of Jesus after John identified Jesus as the "Lamb of God." Along with his brother Peter, whom he brought to Jesus, he was a fisherman living in Capernaum when Jesus called them to follow him. (John 1:35-42; 6:6-9; Matthew 4:18)

Baptism is a symbolic rite of purification with water. In the New Testament baptism is part of the ministry of John the Baptist. After Pentecost it became the rite of initiation into the Christian community. Baptism forms the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry. He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and at his ascension, commissioned his disciples to baptize and make disciples.

Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, is little known. He is not mentioned in the Gospel of John, and except for his listing among the twelve in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), he is not mentioned further in the Bible.

Bethsaida (beth-say' uh-duh) was a fishing village on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee near where the Jordan River flows into it. It was in the area where Jesus miraculously fed five thousand people and healed a blind man (Mark 8:22-26). Bethsaida is also identified as the home of three disciples — Philip, Andrew, and Peter. (John 1:44)

Caesarea Philippi (ses-uh-reeu' h fi-lip'i) was a territory in the north of Palestine that was the scene of Peter's confession of faith. "The villages of Caesarea Philippi" (Mark 8:27) were located at the foot of Mount Hermon.

Capernaum (cah-purh' nay-uhm) became Jesus' home after he left Nazareth. Whenever Capernaum is mentioned in the New Testament it is usually in relation to a healing of one of the many people there who sought out Jesus. Capernaum is the setting for the healing of the centurion's servant, a man with an unclean spirit, the government official's son, Peter's mother-in-law, and the paralytic who was lowered through the roof.

Demon is used in the Bible in many different ways, usually describing an evil spirit. These spirits often have names and are conquered by the power of Jesus.

In the Gospel of Mark the demons are the first to recognize Jesus. According to the *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, "...demonology was a part of the culture of the New Testament world and should be interpreted and understood against that background."

Devil (See Satan)

Disciple comes from *discipulus*, the Latin word for "learner, pupil." It accurately translates the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words used in the Scriptures for "pupil." In the New Testament the term "disciple" is used inclusively to refer to any follower of Jesus (male or female), and more narrowly to refer to the twelve Jesus called as disciples. Those disciples who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and were commissioned by him are also called apostles, and the terms are at times used interchangeably in the New Testament.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God present and active in the creation. In the Old Testament the Spirit inspires prophets and equips judges and kings for leadership. In the New Testament the Spirit is also spoken of as the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of the Lord. This Spirit is dramatically given to the community at Pentecost. The Spirit provides gifts to build up the church, and guides and empowers the church's mission.

James, son of Zebedee, was a fisherman. He and his brother John joined Jesus as disciples early in his ministry. Jesus nicknamed them "Boanerges," which means "sons of thunder." They were close associates of Jesus and together with Peter were present at the Transfiguration and Jesus' ordeal in the Garden of Gethsemane.

James the Son of Alphaeus accompanied Jesus and the other eleven disciples throughout all of Galilee and Judea. He is sometimes called "James, the younger." Little else is known about him.

John, brother of James, was called to be one of the Twelve while he was fishing. Paul calls John one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church. Although he is often regarded as the author of the Fourth Gospel and other New Testament books, this is not certain.

John the Baptist, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth and cousin of Jesus, was understood by many to be Elijah returned, the forerunner of God's Messiah. After years of seclusion in the desert, John appeared at the Jordan River around

27 CE preaching about the coming Kingdom of God and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John baptized Jesus and, until John was beheaded by Herod, their ministries coincided. Both John the Baptist and Jesus had disciples.

Jordan River, the major river in Israel, was the scene of many of God's mighty acts in Israel's history. Joshua and the people crossed over in triumph to occupy the land. Saul and David both crossed by night to avoid defeat. Elijah and Elisha both crossed over the miraculously divided river. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River and was never far from it during his ministry.

Judas Iscariot may have been the only disciple from Judea. He held an important position among the Twelve, being treasurer for the group. For reasons that are not clear, Judas betrayed Jesus, selling the information concerning his whereabouts for thirty pieces of silver. He later tried to undo the deed but was unsuccessful. In remorse he hanged himself.

Kingdom of God. When Jesus began to preach and teach, he proclaimed both the arrival and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' life and teaching demonstrated that God's Kingdom had already arrived — the sick were healed, the dead were raised, the blind were given sight, and sins were forgiven. Jesus' death and resurrection also showed that God's rule is powerful and present. But the Kingdom of God is not yet fully here. Those who believe have a new life now, but in the future all will know the fullness of God's rule.

Mark, known as John Mark in the book of Acts, is traditionally considered to be the author of the second Gospel. He joined Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey to Cyprus, but left before its completion. For that reason Paul would not take him on a later journey. Ten years later their differences were reconciled and Mark became Paul's helper in Rome.

Matthew, tax collector at Capernaum, became a disciple upon Jesus' invitation and subsequently wrote one of the Gospels.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (the supreme Jewish council), met Jesus at night, spoke up for him at a meeting of the Sanhedrin, and helped prepare Jesus' body for burial.

Peter, also known as Simon, was a fisherman from Galilee. He and his brother, Andrew, were among the first disciples of Jesus. Scripture portrays Peter as an eager, sometimes stubborn and spontaneous person who occasionally acted

before he thought. Nevertheless, he was a leader among those who followed Jesus. After Jesus' death, Peter had a prominent role in leading the church in Jerusalem. He preached at Pentecost, had a revelation at Joppa to preach to non-Jews, and probably passed on his gospel message to Mark. Tradition has it that he was killed in Rome, crucified upside down.

Pharisees, a word which may mean "separated ones," was the name of a major Jewish group at the time of Jesus. Other important groups were the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots. The Pharisees began to come into prominence in the second century BCE, when there was a concern to follow the Jewish Law more strictly. They developed detailed rulings about the observance of the Law in everyday life. The largest Jewish group by Jesus' day, they were perhaps six thousand strong. Jesus frequently challenged their strict interpretation of the Law as being legalistic and self-righteous. Nicodemus and Paul were both Pharisees.

Philip was called to be one of Jesus' disciples, as were two others from his home in Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter. In the Gospel of John, the author portrays Philip as one who never fully understands Jesus' ministry, yet he brings Nathaniel to meet Jesus. He also provides Jesus the opportunity to perform a miracle and express further truth. (Matthew 10:3; John 1:43-46)

Rabbi, a Hebrew word originally meaning "my teacher, my master," is the term of respect given to a spiritual leader. Jesus was called "rabbi," which by his time meant simply "master," as did "rabboni."

Sabbath. The Jewish day of worship begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday, reflecting God's day of rest recorded in Genesis 2:1-3. By the time of Jesus over three hundred "laws" had been written, controlling the actions of Jews on the Sabbath. Jesus was often accused by the Pharisees of ignoring the law because he healed people on the Sabbath.

Satan. When used without the definite article, the Hebrew word is translated as "adversary" or "accuser." When the article is used in the Hebrew, the translation is a proper name — Satan. The Greek word for "satan" is *diabolos*, which is translated "devil." Satan, the tempter, the force of evil, is the adversary of God. Jesus was tempted by Satan; Judas carried out Satan's work; and Jesus' healings proved superior to Satan's power. In the resurrection of Jesus, God

defeated Satan. Even though Satan is still God's adversary, God's victory will be total at the end of the age.

Scribes were people who copied and interpreted the Law. Ezra is the Old Testament prototype of the group referred to by this term in the New Testament. Jesus often spoke of "the scribes and the Pharisees," and it may be that the scribes were the scholarly representatives of this well-known sect.

Scroll. Scripture and other important works were written on long strips of parchment, leather, or papyrus and rolled into scrolls. The rods placed at the ends of these strips made it possible to roll and unroll a manuscript to the location of a passage to be read.

Sea of Galilee is just one of the names for the scene of so many episodes and teachings in Jesus' life. An earlier name for the Sea of Galilee was the Lake of Chinnereth, named for a nearby town. The word Chinnereth means "lyre" and referred either to the shape of the town or the shape of the lake. Other names in the New Testament that refer to the same body of water are Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) and the Sea of Tiberias. (John 6:1)

Simon, sometimes identified as "the Zealot" or "the Canaanite," was one of the Twelve. He may have been a member of the Zealot party, whose aim was to drive the Romans out of their nation. The Zealots' attitude towards the Romans could be stated, "The only good Roman is one who stays in Rome."

Son of God, a title infrequently used in the Old Testament to refer to the nation of Israel, the king, or the angels, is used in the New Testament to refer to God's Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. The title is used forty-five times in the New Testament, all but once in relation to Jesus.

Son of Man was the title Jesus most often used to speak of himself. Jesus no doubt chose this title with its many interpretations in order to avoid taking on other titles forced upon him by both friends and enemies. In the Gospels, Jesus calls himself the Son of Man seventy-eight times. In the Old Testament the term is frequently used by Ezekiel and Daniel.

Thaddaeus, whose name means "large hearted" in Greek or "courageous" in Hebrew, is listed as one of Jesus' twelve apostles in Matthew and Mark.

Thomas, often referred to as "doubting Thomas" because of his need for physical proof that the resurrected Jesus was indeed alive, was one of the original

twelve disciples. In John's Gospel he is called "Didymus," meaning twin. On one occasion he evidenced great courage, urging the disciples to accompany Jesus to Jerusalem, even if it would lead to death. (John 11:16)

The Twelve. Twelve is a significant number in the Bible. There are twelve divisions in the Hebrew lunar year, twelve tribes, and twelve disciples. As a name, "The Twelve" is an alternative term for Jesus' disciples. The number is an important image in the New Testament. (See Revelation 12:1; 21:12-14; 22:2.)

The Search Begins

In these passages there is much to discover about Jesus and his ministry. Take careful notes to be able to retell the story of *The Ministry*. Consider these questions as you read:

- ◆ *How did Jesus begin his ministry?*
- ◆ *Where did Jesus' ministry take place? What area did he cover?*
- ◆ *What did Jesus do that captured the attention of the people?*
- ◆ *How would you characterize the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?*

Mark 1:1-20, The Good News Begins

Matthew 3:13-4:17, Jesus' Baptism and Temptation

Luke 4:14-30, Jesus Fulfills Scripture

Mark 1:21-39, Jesus Heals the People

John 6:1-14, Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

Matthew 16:13-20, Who Do You Say I Am?

John 3:1-21, Jesus and Nicodemus

The Search Continues

◆ *In these readings I have questions about...*

◆ *In these readings I discovered...*

Focusing the Search

It is important to recognize the individual characteristics of each of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, as well as the characteristics they share in common. This search to discover the names of Jesus' disciples discloses one instance of similarities and differences among the four Gospels.

All four Gospels tell the story of Jesus Christ. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "Synoptic Gospels" because they see and report events as if seeing them with the same eye (synoptic). The Gospel of John sees and reports Jesus' life differently from the other three. To discover the names of Jesus' disciples we can read the Gospel of either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Even though many of the names are shared in common, the lists reveal individual differences. Use this chart to see what you can discover by comparing the four passages.

JESUS' DISCIPLES

Jesus' disciples are named in various places in the New Testament. Write down the names of the disciples given in each of the following passages. What do you discover by comparing the lists?

Matthew 10:1-4

Mark 3:13-19

Luke 6:12-16

John 1:35-50

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Putting it Together

It is helpful to be able to identify and locate the major settings of Jesus' life in order to get a picture of the limited geographic area of his ministry. His early ministry centered in Galilee, in the north; the later ministry in Judah, to the south.

First, locate the map of "Palestine in the Time of Jesus" on page 169 and mark with a colored dot or other marking the following towns and places:

Bethsaida, Caesarea Philippi, Capernaum, Galilee, Jerusalem, Jordan River, Judea, Lake Galilee (also known as the Sea of Galilee), Nazareth

Next, use the scale of miles on the map to answer these questions:

- a. What is the length of the Jordan River?
- b. How far is it from:
 - Nazareth to Jerusalem?
 - Capernaum to Nazareth?
 - Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum?
 - Bethsaida to the southern tip of Lake Galilee?
- c. Approximately how many square miles or kilometers does Galilee encompass?
- d. How long do you think it would take you to walk from:
 - Nazareth to Jerusalem?
 - Capernaum to Nazareth?
 - Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum?
- e. How long might it take to row a boat from Bethsaida to Tiberias?
- f. What significant discovery did you make about the area of Palestine?

Reflection

1. Reflect upon Jesus' invitation to Peter and Andrew, "Follow me." What concerns, questions and feelings do you think the disciples had about Jesus' call to discipleship?

Jesus also invites you to be his disciple, and he says to you, "Follow me." How do you respond? What concerns, questions and feelings do you have?

2. Consider Jesus' question to his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter quickly responded. But what do you think some of the other disciples may have answered?

Jesus asks you, "Who do you say that I am?" What thoughts and emotions do you have as you consider your answer?



Palestine in the Time of Jesus

0 Miles 40
0 Kms 40

