

***Bible Study:***

# **WAS PETER THE LEADING APOSTLE?**

- **Just what is an Apostle?**
- **Have there been any since the first century?**
- **How do you recognise one?**
- **Was Peter the leading Apostle or is that a Catholic concept?**
- **Who are the ‘big 3’ Apostles?**
- **And why are the Apostles called “holy” – are they on a par with the Patriarchs and Prophets?**
- **Should the senior men of God be magnified before the congregation?**

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### History Research Projects

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The purpose and desire is to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God’s message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

**“No one I have known has had such singleness of thought and purpose. Most of his thoughts and conversation related to God’s work and God’s Word. ...**

**I found him to be the most generous person I have ever known.”  
(Leroy Neff, former WCG Treasurer)**

Related studies:

- *The Seven Eras of Ancient Israel – Type of the Eras of the True Church?*
- *Seven Restorations of the Work of the Church of God*

## Introductory Comments

In this study I aim to investigate, from the Scriptures, the role of Peter in the early Church of God. Was he the leading Apostle or one among equals? How was he viewed by God's Word? Did the Almighty work with his strengths and utilise them in the furtherance of His Work?

Or was Peter a Pope or dictator? What do the scriptures reveal?

By way of background, Church structure has always interested me and it didn't take long to see (in my teens) that there were similarities between the synagogue structure of the first century and that of the Church.

I recall talking about this with a Church of God minister in 1973/74 but received little in answers. I still recall thinking that James was the Church leader from what I could gather from Bible dictionaries and other sources – however he explained that it was Peter who was leader which ultimately led to this Bible study (information on James from this alternative view may be found in the Appendix *Notes on James* – this information was sent to me by a researcher). The Church at that time had next to nothing published on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

In the first instance, we need to have an understanding of what it means to be sent by God. His commissioning of those to undertake a mission on His behalf.

One of the things in His short life that kept Christ going in a darkened world was his desire to do a Work on behalf of the Father who *sent* him (John 4:34).

Notice, Christ was *sent* by the Father (John 5:22-23). The word *sent* is a characteristic word used by John which seems to place emphasis to the reader or hearer that he, as an original Apostle, must be acknowledged as such and who, therefore, remains faithful to the original teachings.

Why did John place such emphasis on the word *sent*? Is it because that he was the remaining of the Apostles? Or that many brethren were departing the faith once delivered to the Apostles – that is the continuation of the original religion or Way of Life that God has revealed to His patriarchs and prophets? A religion that was basically the same, but now had experienced a fundamental step in His Plan – the fulfilment of the coming of the Lamb of God to fulfil the Passover typology.

The Way of Life that is:

- Torah-based (ie the Laws)
- which encourages the development of holy righteous character by true believers inculcating the beatitudes (= beautiful attitudes) contained within Matt. 6-8)
- growing the fruit of the Spirit (1Cor 12)
- fulfilling one's spiritual gifts (Gal 5:22-26)

So John appears to be saying "I am the last one alive that has been sent of God. I want you to get back to the Torah – get back on track. Because I am the only senior man who knows where the track is, follow me."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Some say that there was a growing consensus among the WCG ministry in the 1970s that James was the leader following Peter.

<sup>2</sup> There are many more New Testament Scriptures on the one *sent*. Similarly in the Old Testament: Ex 3:10, 14-15; 5:22; 7:16; 23:20; Neh 2:5-6; 6:12; Is 6:8; 16:1; Jer 1:7; 7:25; 14:14-15; 23:21, 32; 26:5, 12, 15; 27:15; 28:9, 15; 29:9, 19, 31; 35:15; Ezek 2:3-4; 3:5-6; 13:6; Mic 6:4; Hag 1:12; Zech 2:8-9, 11; 4:9; 6:15; Mal 3:1, 4-5.

Now consider this: an Apostle is one that is *sent* forth – it follows that Christ was an Apostle (in fact He is called an Apostle in Heb 3:1). Just as He was an evangelist (= herald of good tidings – see Matt 1:1), Pastor or Shepherd (I Peter 5:4; 2:25), Elder, (Christ is in effect an elder given His functions), Teacher (Rabbi = a title of honour given to Jewish teachers – Matt 23:8; John 1:38) and Deacon (see Phil 2:7).

## What about Peter?

Enter Peter and the controversy over whether he was chief or leader. First of all, he was not a chief in any warlike sense. Secondly, however, was he a leader of the other Apostles? Did the other Apostles form a sort of Council of Elders with Peter functioning as a type of Chairman – or at the very least – as leading Apostle?<sup>3</sup>

We shall see.

Turn to John 1:35-42 and Matt 4:18-19. Here we find that Simon was renamed Cephas or stone by Christ Himself. Why? Does this carry any significance?

Christ was changing his name just like Abram was changed to Abraham and Jacob's changed to Israel. Therefore this must have conveyed to the others that Peter was going to be used in a mighty and new way in God's Plan. This was not some little event – it was important enough to be recorded in the Bible for us to ponder and understand today.

In Matthew 10:2 we find the term "the first, Simon":

"And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee [ie not James, the brother of Christ], and John his brother;

Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not" (Matt 10:1-5)

This cannot refer to him being called first into the truth prior to the other Apostles. Andrew was called first. So what does this term mean? What was Christ, in effect, saying?

Here are what some experts believe:

"Peter is always first, Judas Iscariot always last. Matthew uses "first" in connection with Peter; the word cannot mean he was the first convert (Andrew or perhaps John was) and probably does not mean "first on the list," which would be a trifling comment (cf. 1 Cor 12:28). More likely it means *primus inter pares* ("first among equals") ..." (D Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke. Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, p. 237).

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<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that they are called Apostles prior to the founding of the early Church: Matt 10:2. See also Mark 3:14

"Matthew has made it clear in 10:2 that Peter comes "first" among the Twelve. Throughout the gospel he is mentioned far more than any other disciple, and he regularly takes the lead" (R France, *Matthew. New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 622).

In the New Testament, the number of times an Apostle is mentioned may assist in providing clues to whether or not. The 'big three' are mentioned as follows:

John	49
James (brother of Christ)	7 <sup>4</sup>
Peter	164
Simon	49
Cephas	6

And if we add together the number of times Peter, Simon and Cephas are mentioned, we come to around 219 which is far in excess than any of the others.

## Variety of Proofs

The New Testament provides us with a number of proofs for Peter's leadership:

- He was the first to recognise Christ, respond and show faith (Matt 14:22-28)
- Peter was given a special blessing, one for him alone (Matt 16:13-17)
- Among the 'big three' Peter is mentioned first (Matt 17:1-4; 26:36-38)
- In Matt 17:24, tribute collectors didn't go to the group as a whole, but to the known leader of the group
- He may even be said to be 'Prince' of the Apostles (Matt 26:38-40, 58)
- In many scriptures Peter is singled out by name, while all the others are called "they". Why? Because Peter was the leader (see Mark 5:35-40; 16:6-7; Luke 5:1-10; 8:43-45)
- He is singled out to feed the flock (John 21:1-3, 6-7, 8-17).

What about the time Peter denied Christ? Does that somehow lower his esteem and leadership potential, thus proving he was not the leading Apostle?

That cannot be the case because he repented and, it should be noted, all the disciples denied Him (Matt 14:25-27; 26:30-35).

Why was Peter raised to Apostleship? What outstanding characteristics did he possess that God could use for His cause?

John may provide a clue:

"Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:  
That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.  
Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

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<sup>4</sup> NB: there are 3 James' mentioned throughout the New Testament. Refer to the Appendix *The Three James'* for a succinct article on the subject. James, the brother of Christ is mentioned in Matt 13:54-55; Mark 6:3; and probably Acts 15:13-19; 21:18; ICor 15:7; Gal 1:18-19; 2:9-12.

Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?  
And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.” (John 18:8-11, 15)

This other disciple may have been John himself.

“But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.  
Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.  
And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied *it*, and said, I am not.  
One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?  
Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.” (John 18:16-17, 25-26)

What this serves to show is not only did Peter deny Christ, he also showed exceptional courage to be where he was. He just could not muster up enough courage to acknowledge Christ.

Then in Luke 22:31-32 Satan singled out Peter because he was head of the Apostles.

Now turn to Mark 5:35-40; 16:6-7; Luke 5:1-10; 8:43-45 – note that Peter is mentioned by name – the other Apostles are simply called “they”.<sup>5</sup>

Consider also the title *Acts of the Apostles* (plural), Peter (in the first half of the book) and Paul (second half) – dominate the book – the other Apostles are hardly mentioned at all. This is a further clue to understanding the role of these two and Peter in particular.

On the other hand, Paul and John have more of their writings canonised and preserved as scripture. Why is this so? Perhaps because Peter was concentrating more and more on reaching the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matt 10:5-7; IPet 1:1; James 1:1). While Paul remained in the region to evangelise the gentiles. God was now calling gentiles into the light and He was now inspiring writings from the one He had chosen who was the leading light to them. They were in the region chiefly within the bounds of the Roman Empire while many of the other Apostles, Peter included, who disappeared into Israelitish lands.

Now look up the following scriptures: Acts 1:13, 15; 2:14, 38; 3:1, 6, 11-12; 4:8, 13, 19; 5:3, 8-9, 12, 15, 29; 8:14, 20; 9:32, 34, 39-40; 10:9, 25-28, 34-35; 11:1-4 – for here it is Peter – always Peter – who preaches, performs miracles etc.

See also Acts 1:13; 4:13; 8:14; Luke 6:14; 8:51; 9:28; John 21:2; Matt 10:2; IPet 5:1; Mark 3:16 – in all cases Peter is mentioned first. Why? Obviously because he is the leading Apostle.

Then we can examine the proceedings from the first ministerial conference found in Acts 15:4-6 – these issues were taken to the ‘head quarters’ because Peter was there. Indeed, a read of verses 7-13 shows that it was Peter that announced the matter although James, pastor of the Jerusalem Church, endorsed it. Yet all were involved. For instance, James states “my sentence is” (ie my judgment or opinion) (Acts 15:19).

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<sup>5</sup> See also Luke 9:28-29; 22:8; Acts 2:47; ICor 15:5; 3:21; 4:1; 1:12.

In Gal. 2:6, 9, 11 – here we find that Paul publicly corrected Peter – does this show that Peter was not the leading Apostle after all? Not so – it merely shows that Peter was human and needed to overcome certain problems. This does demonstrate that before the Law and the Way of God, we are all equal. Everyone should be able to take correction from another Christian.

Then in IIPet 1:12-16 we read:

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to **put you always in remembrance of these things**, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by **putting you in remembrance**;

Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus **Christ hath shewed me**.

Moreover **I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance**.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

Well, how are these things he is writing about always to be in remembrance?

IIPeter 3:1-2, 15-17

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds **by way of remembrance**:

That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of **the commandment of us the apostles** of the Lord and Saviour:

And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also **the other scriptures**, unto their own destruction.

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.”

Here Peter has raised Paul’s writings to the level of Divinely inspired writings because he includes them among “the other scriptures” – the collected writings of the Apostles henceforth are to form part of the Word of God – the Bible! Indeed, all of the writers of the New Testament were Apostles with the exception of Luke (apparently author of Acts) and Mark.

After all, the Apostles are:

- Holy (Eph 3:5)
- Performed miracles (Acts 5:12)
- Promulgate commandments or orders from God akin to the Laws of Moses<sup>6</sup> (IIPet 3:1-2)
- Christ shows them things (eg IIPet 1:14)

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<sup>6</sup> *Strong’s Concordance* data for commandments as referred to in the *Bible Works* software package: “**1785 evntolh, entole** {en-tol-ay’}

**Meaning:** 1) an order, command, charge, precept, injunction 1a) that which is prescribed to one by reason of his office 2) a commandment 2a) a prescribed rule in accordance with which a thing is done 2a1) a precept relating to lineage, of the Mosaic precept concerning the priesthood 2a2) ethically used of the commandments in the Mosaic law or Jewish tradition

**Origin:** from 1781; TDNT - 2:545,234; n f

**Usage:** AV - commandment 69, precept 2; 71.”

- Are foundations of the household of God alongside the prophets (Eph 5:20)
- The names of the 12 Apostles appear on the foundations to the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:14). Given Paul's prominence it is likely he will be given accolades of a similar nature.

... and so they are inspired to write Scriptures as directed from God as Peter points out (II Pet 3:15-17). In II Pet 1:12-16 he is clearly demonstrating that for the household of God to always remember his words due to his impending death, he "will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" – how could this be?

Clearly only by his words being canonized along those of other Apostles. Copies must have been made and John apparently finalised the canonization of their works.

## The 'Big Three'

It is common knowledge among many Bible scholars that the Bible reveals three central Apostles, who seemed to be the leaders, for we are told by Paul in Gal. 2:9:

"And when **James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars**, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

Here Paul identifies them as the major pillars or mainstays of the Church.<sup>7</sup> The term pillar is also a term referring to 'teachers of the Law'. It seems that James was the leader of the headquarters congregation at Jerusalem, Peter the leading Apostle and John appears to have succeeded Peter as leader (there are many works available on this possibility, but I am concentrating on Peter herein. Alternatively, James may have succeeded Peter, followed by John. But this does show that leadership can change as one leader transfers to the following.

In Acts 3:1-3; 4:13, 19; 8:14 we have Peter and John together. While in chapter 15 James may have chaired the first Church of God ministerial conference. However, Carson thinks otherwise:

"Peter speaks as an apostle, James as an elder; it is not obvious that either 'chaired' the meeting. But even if James did so, the crucial decisions were taken by the apostles, elders, and the church in concert." (D Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke. Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, p. 229)

In this context the number 3 seems to follow Peter around:

- he was leader of the 'big 3'
- he denied Christ 3 times
- 3 times Christ asked him if he loved him
- Christ asked him on 3 occasions to feed His sheep
- 3 times a voice told him that what God has cleansed must not be called common or unclean

Why is this so? Probably because the number 3 in scripture symbolises finality and a symbolic stamp of approval for Peter's leadership.

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<sup>7</sup> Over the decades, the WCG's pillars would have included Herbert Armstrong, Herman Hoeh, Raymond McNair, Roderick Meredith, Leroy Neff, Leon Walker etc, etc.



## Authority of the Apostles

Paul often commences his letters with statements of his Divinely ordained authority:

Romans 1:1-2, 5:

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,  
(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)  
By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.”

1 Corinthians 1:1:

“Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother.”

II Corinthians 1:1:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.”

Galatians 1:1-3:

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)  
And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:  
Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 1:1-2:

“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:  
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.”

II Timothy 1:1:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.”

Titus 1:1:

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.”

The other Apostles likewise make statements of their Divine authority and mission:

James 1:1:

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

I Peter 1:1:

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.”

II Peter 1:1-2:

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:  
Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.”

They were not shy to remind God’s people of their Divine appointment and mission. It was good for people to remember this – it places their writings and authority in perspective. Herbert Armstrong likewise reminded us of his calling and mission from time-to-time.

## Should we follow a man?

In Eph. 3:5, the Apostles are called the “holy Apostles”:

“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his **holy** apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

And their offices were magnified in the congregation:

In Rom 11:13:

“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I **magnify** mine office.”

In Acts 5:12-14:

“And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.  
And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people **magnified** them.  
And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)”

See also I Tim 5:17. What does magnified mean in this context?:

*Strong’s Concordance* data for 3170 *megaluno*, *nw megaluno* {meg-al-oo'-no}:

“**Meaning:** 1) to make great, magnify 1a) metaph. to make conspicuous 2) to deem or declare great 2a) to esteem highly, to extol, laud, celebrate 3) to get glory and praise

**Origin:** from 3173; TDNT - 4:543,573;

**Usage:** AV - magnify 5, enlarge 2, show great 1; 8.”<sup>8</sup>

The men of God in the Old Testament were similarly magnified:

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<sup>8</sup> As referred to in the *Bible Works* software package

Jos 4:14:

“On that day the LORD **magnified** Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.”

Jos 3:7:

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to **magnify** thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.”

IChron 29:24-25:

“And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king.  
And the LORD **magnified** Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him *such* royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.” (see also IChron 1:1; Num 27:18-19)

IChron 32:23:

“And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was **magnified** in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.”

*Strong's Concordance* data for **1431** *gdal*; G' *gdal* {gaw-dal'}:

**Meaning:** 1) to grow, become great or important, promote, make powerful, praise, magnify, do great things 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to grow up 1a2) to become great 1a3) to be magnified 1b) (Piel) 1b1) to cause to grow 1b2) to make great, powerful 1b3) to magnify 1c) (Pual) to be brought up 1d) (Hiphil) 1d1) to make great 1d2) to magnify 1d3) to do great things 1e) (Hithpael) to magnify oneself

**Origin:** a primitive root; TWOT - 315;

**Usage:** AV - magnify 32, great 26, grow 14, nourish up 7, grow up 6, greater 5, misc 25; 115.”<sup>9</sup>

How similar to the men of the Old Testament were the Apostles. They were magnified before God's people and sometimes even in the world.

So was Herbert W Armstrong – ‘magnified’ before the Church and famous for good works programs, facilities, magazines, television program, meeting with world leaders and so forth. Yet he always offered glory to God for these accomplishments.

Now, believe it or not, we are told on several occasions to follow the Apostles (as they followed Christ of course):

ICor 4:16:

“Wherefore I beseech you, **be ye followers of me.**”

ICor 11:1:

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<sup>9</sup> As referred to in the *Bible Works* software package

**“Be ye followers of me,** even as I also *am* of Christ.”

Phil 3:17:

“Brethren, **be followers together of me,** and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

IThess 1:6:

“And **ye became followers of us,** and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”

IIThess 3:7, 9:

“For yourselves know how ye ought to **follow us:** for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you ... Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to **follow us.**”

We should also follow God (Eph 5:1), Christ (Matt 10:38), the Church of God (IThess 2:14), the Patriarchs (Heb 6:12) and that which is good (IPet 3:13).

As such, we should follow the teachings of Herbert W Armstrong!

“But why?” some may ask. Because he was clearly the human leader of the Church and fulfilled the role of an Apostle.

## Council of Elders

We know that Herbert Armstrong appointed an Advisory Council of Elders to provide input, advise him and was also supposed to appoint a successor after his death<sup>10</sup>. These were men tried and tested over many years, loyal to the truth and the doctrines. In addition, Mr Armstrong provided legal means that only the Council could change doctrine. This was circumvented within a year of his death by his successor.

Establishing a Council follows a Biblical tradition:

- Moses formed an equivalent to a Council – Ex 18:15-26; Num 11:16-17<sup>11</sup>
- Solomon, David and Rehoboam all had elders and counsellors to consult with – ISam 15:20; IISam 15:12; IKings 4:7; 8:1-3; 12:6-8; IChron 15:25
- Ezra also had advisors – Ezra 10:8; 8:16
- God also has His counsellors! – Rev 4:4, 10-11 (see too Is 24:3)

It therefore follows that the Apostles functioned in a roughly similar fashion to the above councils – it seems that they formed a council or similar, with Peter as the leading Apostle and apparently functioning as the chair or similar.

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<sup>10</sup> Scriptures on counsel include: Prov 8:14; 10:3; 11:14; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 24:6. And whether the Council of Elders met regularly or not as a whole is another issue

<sup>11</sup> Other scriptures on the elders under Moses and Joshua are: Ex 3:16; 17:21; 17:5-6; 19:7; 24:1; Lev 4:15; Num 11:16; 16:25; Deut 5:23; Jos 7:6; Jud 21:16; ISam 4:3

Similarly, Herbert Armstrong set up an Advisory Council of Elders broadly patterned on the Biblical example. For indeed, accepting wise counsel is a Biblical principle.<sup>12</sup>

## What did the old WCG teach?

Did the understanding that Peter was the human leader of the early Church something that Herbert Armstrong only believed and taught in the late 1970s to justify his position as some claim; or is it a belief that was understood earlier in the century?

It is not clear as to when this understanding was first taught, but it was certainly understood in the early 1950s and gradually developed over the next 20 years. Prior to that time he rejected it as we can see from this 1944 quote:

“It is said that PETER was the "big boss"---that Christ gave him AUTHORITY to rule the Church. I will gladly pay \$25 for one text showing the delegation of this authority! Rather, when the disciples at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the Gospel from Philip's evangelism, Peter did not order the two men to go to Samaria to lay hands on the new converts for receiving the Holy Spirit. No, rather the other disciples---as a whole---SENT Peter and John on this mission. Peter did not do the sending---HE WAS SENT. Not by any man, by ALL the disciples!”  
 (“Why should we have Churches?” *The Good News Letter*, 20 March 1944)

Mr Armstrong referred to Dr Hoeh’s input on this in sermons.

In fact in the article “Six More Ministers Now Ordained,” *Good News*, Feb-March 1955, Mr Armstrong wrote:

“Until the past very few years there was no real evidence that God had set anyone in the office of apostle in His Church today. Men cannot elect or place in office an apostle. And the only way men can know when God has set one in that office is BY THE FRUITS.

My personal office, from the beginning of the "Philadelphia" Church era, appeared to be that of evangelist. At that time God had used me to preach the Gospel in several towns and places, to bring numbers to repentance and conversion, to heal the sick, to raise up churches in several localities, and to ordain elders and deacons in them. But the work itself had not grown to the point where there were other evangelists whom I should send to raise up churches and ordain elders and deacons.

The first proclamation before the Church that God had filled the office of apostle was made by Herman Hoeh in his sermon at the Feast of Tabernacles, at Belknap Springs, Oregon, in 1951. He had not consulted me. I had no inkling of what he was to say. At the time his words hit my startled ears like an atomic bomb, and my first impulse was to deny and correct his statement immediately. Only propriety restrained this impulse. I felt Mr. Hoeh was just 3 little young, and carried away with himself. Never in my life had I thought of occupying such an office.

But in the light of events, the fact of how God has set up His Church today has become self-evident to all it is GOD’S doing. If one does find, unexpectedly, that God has set him in such an office, there is only one choice-he must accept it with full humility, realizing personal lack, and surrendering the self totally to GOD as an

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<sup>12</sup> In my personal Bible study notes from 1981 I state: “the elders of Israel outlived Joshua and ruled Israel after his death. Might a similar occurrence occur today?” Well, it seems like it did with so many of these men ending up as leaders in at least two major groups that emerged from the WCG after its apostasy. What jiggled this thought was what happened after Joshua – read Joshua 24:1, 31; Judges 2:7

instrument in HIS hands, relying wholly upon God for guidance and every power and need." (p. 7)

In a further article "How God Calls His Ministers" published in the September 1957 *Good News* magazine, Mr Armstrong wrote the following concerning his apostleship:

"Many of you brethren are in scattered areas -- and do not really KNOW who all the ministers are! Usually, we have always printed in the GOOD NEWS Magazine an article about any ordinations that have occurred -- but many new members have been brought in to the flock of true believers in recent months and years, and they are unsure as to WHO is a minister, and who is not!

For that reason, we give you the following LIST, which comprises ALL the God-called and ordained ministers, deacons and deaconesses in the True Church of God for today!

**The one whom God has placed in the office of APOSTLE AND GENERAL PASTOR: Herbert W. Armstrong."** (emphasis mine)

A good summary about this is found in John Robinson's article:

"The first time Herbert Armstrong was called an apostle in public was in a sermon in 1951 during the Feast of Tabernacles.

"The first proclamation before the church that God had filled the office of apostle was made by Herman Hoeh in his sermon at the Feast of Tabernacles at Belknap Springs, Oregon, in 1951," Mr. Armstrong wrote of the incident a few years later in the February-March 1955 issue of *The Good News*.

Mr. Armstrong revealed that Mr. Hoeh had not consulted him about what he was going to announce in his sermon. "I had no inkling of what he was to say," Mr. Armstrong wrote.

"At that time his words hit my startled ears like an atomic bomb and my first impulse was to deny and correct his statement immediately. Only propriety restrained this impulse. I felt Mr. Hoeh was just a little young and carried away with himself. Never in my life had I thought of occupying such an office."

But, in the 1955 *Good News* article, he acknowledged his apostleship.

"But in the light of events the fact of how God has set up His church today has become self-evident to all. It is God's doing. If one does find, unexpectedly, that God has set him such an office, there is only one choice—he must accept it with full humility realizing personal lack, and surrendering the self totally to God as an instrument in His hands, relying wholly on God for guidance and every power and need."

To Mr. Armstrong's credit, he did not dwell on his apostleship for the next 20 years. For most of the next two decades, he would rarely call himself an apostle. He did, however, with increasing frequency over those years call himself "the one you [the ministers and other brethren] call an apostle."

By the 1970s he was calling himself an apostle with growing frequency. In his final decade of life, he often billed himself as the "sole apostle of the 20th century." (Robinson, "History of government in the WCG", *In Transition*, 16 Dec)

Indeed, I recall talking with a WCG minister around 1973 or 1974 about this – I queried whether James or Peter or John was the leader of the early Church. He explained to me that Peter was the

overarching leader while Paul was the Apostle sent to the gentiles. So, this was before Mr Armstrong took back control in 1978 and supposedly appointed himself as successor to Peter – for he understood this concept for decades prior to the events of the 1970s.

In 1958 Herman Hoeh wrote an article on “Government in Our Church”

“Among the twelve apostles, Peter was pre-eminent, although they all held EQUALITY OF OFFICE. Peter had no one-man dictatorial authority over the other eleven. Peter was never a pope. The same authority vested in Peter was also vested by Jesus in the other apostles (Mat. 16:19; 18:18 and John 20:23). **Yet Peter was their LEADER** because he was born with special leadership qualities and ability to make decisions. Jesus gives spiritual talents according to the natural talents with which a person is born.

Paul, himself, said that Jesus entrusted Peter with the direction of the gospel to Israel AS Jesus had entrusted Paul with the direction of the gospel to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7 and 8). But in another place we find that the apostles SENT Peter and John to Samaria, though Peter may have suggested this (Acts 8:14). **His gifts carried the greatest weight in the Church** and would have been especially helpful to the newly converted Samaritans. Among the twelve there must have been such a spirit of peace and love that they had perfect harmony without jealousy in equality of rank and office. They did not quarrel among themselves by trying to build on one another's foundation (Rom. 15:20); they did not compete with one another or take disciples from another ...

"But HE THAT IS GREATEST AMONG YOU, let him be as the younger; and HE THAT IS CHIEF, as he that doth serve. For," said Jesus, "I am among you as he that serveth" -- yet he was their Lord and Master!

So there ARE differences in authority in God's government; some are GREATER than others; some are CHIEF. But they act as SERVANTS OF GOD, not as lords over God's heritage" ...

Down through the ages Jesus has chosen directly those who serve in the capacity of apostles -- His direct representatives bearing His authority. **The world does not use the title apostle for the highest office in the Church** under Christ. Instead, it has invented other lofty titles -- primate, archbishop, pope, all offices of men's devising." ("Government in Our Church," *Good News*, June-July, pp. 3-5) [emphasis mine]

Here Herman Hoeh infers that Herbert W Armstrong was an Apostle of God. And he understood that indeed Peter was the human leader of the first century Church of God.

Herbert Armstrong noted in his *Good News* article “Must God's Ministers Be Ordained By The Hand of Man?” published in 1960:

“Now, Gal. 1:18, after these three years in Arabia Saul returned to Damascus, and went up to Jerusalem **to see Peter -- to report to the CHIEF Apostle**. But he saw none of the apostles on this trip, except Peter, and James, the Lord's brother. This must be the trip to Jerusalem described in Acts 9:23-27. After this "many days," the Jews at Damascus plotted to kill Saul, but Christian disciples let him down over the wall of the city in a basket by night, and he escaped, and went to Jerusalem, attempting there to join the disciples. But they were afraid of him. Then Barnabas took Saul and brought him to the apostles -- just the two, Peter and James, according to Gal. 1:18-19, to whom he reported his heavenly vision, Christ's commission, and his conversion. Thereupon Saul went in and out with Peter and James at the Temple,

preaching boldly -- but the Jews soon sought to kill him. At this time, while Saul was in a trance, praying in the Temple, Christ again appeared, telling Saul to leave Jerusalem, and that he was to be sent to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21). Then the Christian brethren brought Saul to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus, his home city...

Before Saul did any more than a little preparatory preaching, asserting that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah -- even before his ordination as an apostle -- **he went to Jerusalem to see Peter -- to report to Peter his vision from Christ, and the commission Christ had given him.** It is evident from the Scriptural account that Peter accepted him. During his 15 days with Peter in Jerusalem, he roomed with Peter (Gal. 1:18)." ("Must God's Ministers Be Ordained By The Hand of Man?", *Good News*, January) [emphasis mine]

Notice – Herbert Armstrong knew that Peter was the leading Apostle – that it is not workable to have 12 Apostles (or more) all being on an equal footing – there must be a clear leader – even among the Apostles. In 1978 he wrote the article “How Christ Gives the Church its Beliefs” which provided further insights into this doctrine and its historical development (refer to the appendix *Extracts from “How Christ Gives the Church its Beliefs”* for details).

## Concluding Remarks

Let me be clear about this: not every century has seen an Apostle or leading Apostle at the helm of the Church of God. But it seems they are raised up periodically to commence or lead a Church of God revival or era.

Recall what Peter wrote:

“Knowing that shortly I must put off my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance” (II Pet 1:14-15).

Are we sometimes reading his writings or listening to his sermons and Bible studies on MP3 or tapes? Do we follow the doctrines while simultaneously growing in grace and knowledge? Have we read his work *Mystery of the Ages*, which was published shortly before his death?

And do we realise that ‘knowledge shall increase’ in these last days (Dan 12:4)?

If so, it may behove some of us to acknowledge Herbert W Armstrong’s Apostleship – that he followed in the footsteps of the leading Apostle, Peter. Not at the same inspired level, but in an administrative capacity.

In this regard, I highly recommend the excellent booklet *Just what is an APOSTLE?* – you can find further details for this free booklet in the bibliography below.

From the time of Abraham to Christ God’s religion continued through seven successive eras or phases which included revivals of the Work.



Note Moses, Hezekiah, Ezra etc - God raised up a Law-based Works under the helm of a strong leader who put things 'back on the track.' This necessitated – at least initially - centralised administration and purifying of the doctrine. Today we would term this a 'corporate structure.' Localism and congregationalism do not form part of the model to undertake such a task. The only time that localism is of some use is when the Church is scattered due to persecution and must survive locally. Of course, there have been and can be variations to the structure of church administration as required by cultural or historical needs.

The remnants of this religion after the time of Ezra formed synagogues in which to learn, worship and fellowship. To the Jews, together they constituted an assembly. The Hebrew is *edah* which *synagogue* was a common synonym. The Greek equivalent is *ekklesia* which may be found on twelve occasions on the New Testament.<sup>13</sup> In both cases the root meaning was *to call* or *to convene* elders at the town gates to discuss issues.<sup>14</sup> The synagogue was the central venue for all major events in the community and was the centre of their religious and social lives. A certain degree of exclusivism pervaded. They believed that they were the true religion, but they consisted of several groupings. Yet they acknowledged each other despite differences. This might be likened to the old Worldwide Church of God and the Church of God (Seventh Day) and daughter churches.

Then from the first century until the return of Christ, the continuers of this religion, the assembly of true believers – the Church of God – also experiences seven eras along with revivals and restorations.

In the twentieth century Herbert Armstrong continued in the great tradition of men that God raised up to revive His Work. He was ordained the 40<sup>th</sup> of 70 elders. Mr Armstrong explained in his *Autobiography* that he received his ordination certificate signed by O J Runcorn and I E Curtis (2<sup>nd</sup> March 1931) (refer to chapter 24 of Armstrong's *Autobiography* for further details):

"I have in my old files my Ministerial License Certificate, which is reproduced in this autobiography, dated March 2, 1932, and signed by O. J. Runcorn as President, and Mrs. I. E. Curtis as Secretary. This was almost a year after I was ordained -- probably my second certificate."

The certificate states:

"This official document is to certify that H.W. Armstrong is a recognized licensed minister, **and apostle** of the true primitive faith, that he has labored for Jesus, and among this people for the required period before being recognized in this capacity..." [emphasis mine]

Note that he was credentialed as a minister (elder), but like the other 69, was called an *apostle*. This was a job description, not a ministerial rank as such (you can view this certificate in the appendix *Herbert W Armstrong's Ordination Certificate* and also the *Certificate of Discipleship* in the following appendix). However, after his ordination, the Work of the Church of God (Seventh Day) was weighed in the balance and found wanting. The mantle to undertake a large Work fell on Armstrong. And he was the only one of the 70 that operated like an Apostle. This became apparent to him by the early 1950s.

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<sup>13</sup> In the Old Testament the parallel word is *qahal* which means the *assembly* or *church* in modern English. It is also used on twelve occasions (Num 16:3; 20:4; Deut 23:1-8; IChron 28:8; Mich 2:4; Lam 1:10; Neh 13:1). Therefore, the New Testament writers are in effect saying to the Pharisees and others "we are the true continuum of the true religion based upon the Torah – and you are not."

<sup>14</sup> Today the Church is called to assemble from out of society– like Israel and as we are told to do so in Rev. 18:4.

One of the great strengths of the Philadelphia Era under Herbert W Armstrong was its corporate structure. Armstrong learned that the local congregational structure that he had experienced would not work in a modern world to take the Gospel message to the world. For each Church era to function best in the world or culture/civilization it found itself in, it was best for it to form a structure that fitted the need. It is no use trying to use outmoded structure or irrelevant structures not suited to a particular environment.

Therefore, corporate structure, like any structure and any strength (whether it be for a church, nation, company or individual), may also be used by cunning individuals who wish to harass others behind the leader's back. In other words spiritual wolves take advantage of the structure for their ends. They abuse the brethren due to the lack of 'check and balance' or neutral panels/judiciaries to independently investigate and deal with issues arising.

He followed his instincts, guided by Almighty God – today people are taught by the world to ignore their instincts to even fear them. Herbert Armstrong knew that to ignore his instincts and to not appreciate them in others would be disastrous. He knew where he was going and stuck by that course. He knew where people functioned best and slotted them into appropriate positions.

Because, when people act according to their instincts (especially when guided by God), then they go into overdrive, cruising toward a goal. Their energy levels are inexhaustible. That is why nepotism is wrong. Bias, unfairness, jealousy and such like lead to ineptitude, incompetence and watering-down.

So, it is another truism which states that 'that which makes us great is also that which brings us low'. Ignore this principal at your peril – it cannot be escaped, just as death and taxes cannot be escaped. Or the revolving of the earth, the rising of the sun or the thrashing of the seas.

There is no falling and no tragedy without greatness – an organization or person has to be great to be able to fall down to great depths. Is this not what happened?

It is well-known that greatness and uniqueness are symbiotic – one cannot be without the other. So it was with the Philadelphia Era – it stood out like a beacon in a dark, confused world.

And so, one of the Philadelphia Era's great strengths, its structure, was used against it by the apostates. They illegally and immorally took over the central power of the Church and began a campaign to change the hearts and minds of members. They slotted their friends and allies into positions (talk about rank nepotism and cronyism) and harassed the true believers. Even supposed 'conservative' ministers were enrolled to harass anyone that whispered a word against the apostates – adherence to church government is more important to these people than the truth. This harassment commenced weeks or months after power was seized and has continued without ceasing. This is persecution in a modern sense.

So, we had a modern Peter in the Church, as we have seen. Did we accept or reject him?

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I **send** receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that **sent** me.” (John 13:20)

In summary, Peter:

- Is mentioned many more times than the other Apostles

- When mentioned along with the others, he is almost invariably mentioned first
- He made the final decision at the conference of Acts 15
- In many scriptures Peter is singled out by name, while all the others are called “they”
- He is singled out to feed the flock.

So, there can be no doubt – Peter was the leading Apostle!

We should also acknowledge that when there are major revivals in the Old Testament – this typifies that of the New Testament period until Christ’s return. For there is invariably a very prominent person who is raised up to administer and lead a restoration or a successful return of God’s people out of captivity. This leader of God’s people functions as both originator or founder as well as the instigator of the revival movement – a sort of patriarchal figure. Today we would use the term ‘Church leader.’

## Appendix

### Notes on James (sent by a researcher)

"James ... "the Lord's brother," is in all probability the James named first among the four brothers of Jesus in Mark 6:3 (cf. Matt 13:55). He is not to be confused with Jesus' two disciples of the same name, James the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus (cf. Mark 3:17-18, par. Acts 1:13; 12:2). During Jesus' ministry, James seems to have been skeptical of his brother's activities and so was not a follower of Jesus (cf. Mark 3:21, 31-35, par. John 7:3-5). He was, however, converted by an appearance of the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 15:7), and along with others of Jesus' family became a member of the Jerusalem church (Acts 1:14). He rose to prominence quickly in the church (cf. Acts 15:13; 21:18-19; Gal 2:1-10), and after Peter's departure from Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:17) became the leading figure within the church. It would be unfair to attribute his rank in the Jerusalem church simply to a veneration of one who was physically related to Jesus. Probably it is more accurate to say that his prominence came about as a result of the need for someone to lead the growing number of scrupulously minded Christians in the Jerusalem church, and that his physical relation to Jesus, his Davidic descent, and his personal qualities fitted him for the task..." (Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, p.38-39).

"Having previously spoken of certain men of eminence ... "those reputed" with whom he met privately during his visit to Jerusalem (v2), Paul now for the first time names them: James, Cephas, and John. The order, of course, differs from that given in 1:18-19, as well as that implied in vv 7-8 above. That is, probably because in 1:18-19 Paul has in mind the apostles as canons of truth, in which Peter took precedence over James, while the statement of vv 7-8 concerns missionary outreach, which again was preeminently Peter's domain (cf. Acts 2-12; 1 Peter 1:1). In matters of ecclesiastical polity and administration, however, James seems to have become increasingly influential - even dominant - in the Jerusalem congregation, as Paul's reference to "certain ones from James" and Peter's deference in 2:12 clearly suggests (cf. also Acts 15:13ff, and 21:18ff.) ..." (Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, p.56)

Ac 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring [*exegomai*] what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

Ac 15:14 Simeon hath declared [*exegomai*] how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

Lk 24:35 And they told [*exegomai*] what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Jn 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [*exegeomai*] *him*.

"*exegeomai* ... lit., to lead out, signifies to make known, rehearse, declare, Luke 24:35 (A.V., "told;" R.V., "rehearsed"); Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:10. In John 1:18, in the sentence "He hath declared Him," the other meaning of the verb is in view, "to unfold in teaching, to declare by making known.." (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*).

Jerusalem Council

Ac 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

"The decisive voice in the meeting, however, lay neither with Peter nor with the delegates from Antioch but with *James*..." (I Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, p.251).

"James, the brother of the Lord, who had risen to power in the Jerusalem church was obviously the person in charge of the meeting, for he spoke last and crystallized what he had heard the Holy Spirit saying to the group. He followed his Brother's custom of rooting what he said in the Scripture..." (Preacher's Commentary).

"The inaugural event of the second half of Acts is actually the concluding event of the Jerusalem Council: the speech of James. Having heard all the relevant evidence from the mission field, the new leader of the Jerusalem church is prepared to render a verdict" (Robert W. Wall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, NIB, Vol.10, p.217).

Ac 15:13 When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. (NIV).

"The eyes of all now turn to James, the brother of the Lord, a man who enjoyed widespread respect and confidence. If the elders of the Jerusalem church were organized as a kind of Nazarene Sanhedrin, James was their president, *primus inter pares*. The church's readiness to recognize his leadership was due more to his personal character and record than to his blood relationship to the Lord... When he said "Listen to me," they listened" (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT, p.292).

New Dispensation - apostolic to elder rule

Ac 1:10a And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went [*poreuomenou*] up...

Ac 12:17b And he departed, and went [*eporeuthe*] into another place.

"The story of the living Peter's exodus from certain death had not yet been told to "James and the brothers." The abrupt introduction of James into the narrative, typical of Luke's story-telling strategy, both presumes that the reader knows him to be the "James the brother of the Lord" and leader of the Jewish church and hints at the importance of his future role in Acts. The introduction of James into the narrative world of Acts is the complement of Peter's departure from it. Although Peter will make an important cameo appearance during the proceedings of the Jerusalem Synod (cf. 15:6-11), his role in the history of God's salvation has already been served when "he left and went [... *eporeuthe*] to another place." This echoing of Jesus' "going [... *poreuomenou*] ... towards heaven" (see 1:10) at his ascension, which necessitates his apostolic succession, adds a another layer of meaning to the concluding moment of Peter's mission in Jerusalem. This implied meaning is that the reins of spiritual leadership have been transferred to James" (Robert W. Wall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, NIB, Vol.10, pp.180).

"Peter now disappears [after the Jerusalem Synod] from the narrative of Acts; so far as Luke is concerned, says Martin Hengel, "the legitimation of the mission to the Gentiles is virtually Peter's last work" [*Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, E.T. (London, 1979), p.125]" (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT, p.291).

Ac 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me:

"Only the passing reference to James, when Peter departs Jerusalem following his miraculous escape from prison (see 12:17), provides the reader with any hint of the important role James will play in the second half of Acts. Here and later in Acts 21, he stands as the teaching authority of the Jewish church. His discernment of God's will proves decisive in settling the present conflict and for

anticipating the potential problem of mixing uncircumcised and circumcised believers in the Christian congregations of the diaspora" (Robert W. Wall, *The Acts of the Apostles, NIB*, Vol.10, p.218).

Ac 15:6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

Ac 21:18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

"With the dispersal of the Hellenistic almoners of 6:5 in the persecution that followed Stephen's death, the charge of financial affairs in the church seems to have devolved to the elders. The elders (among whom James the Just [FW note: the heir to the Davidic throne] emerges as *primus inter pares*) constituted a kind of Nazarene Sandhedrin. In Acts 15 they share the leadership of the church with the apostles; from then on the apostles disappear from the Jerusalem scene and the elders exercise the whole corporate leadership (cf. 21:18)" (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts, Revised, NICNT*, p.231).

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Paul in Jerusalem - Galatians and Acts

Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

Ac 9:26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

Ac 9:27 But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Ac 9:28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

"*I went up to Jerusalem*. Probably the visit referred to in Ac 9:26-30, though some equate it with the one in Ac 11:30" (Robert Mounce, *Galatians, NIVSB*, p.1782).

Gal 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also.

Gal 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Ac 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

Ac 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Ac 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Ac 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

"*I went up again to Jerusalem*. According to some, the visit mentioned in Ac 11:30; according to others, the one in Ac 15:1-4..." (Robert Mounce, *Galatians, NIVSB*, p.1782).

"Luke's account is straightforward: difficulties arise when the attempt is made to relate it to Paul's account in Gal 2:1-10 of a conference which he and Barnabas had in Jerusalem with the three "pillars" or leaders of the mother-church: James, Peter and John. The great majority hold that Luke and Paul report the same occasion, indeed, one scholar declares that the identity of Paul and Barnabas's Jerusalem visit of Gal 2:1-10 with that of Acts 15:2-30 is "one of the assured results of

Acts criticism." But in biblical criticism no result is so "assured" that someone will not to question it, and there are sound reasons to question the identity of these two visits. The discussion reported by Paul in Gal 2:1-10 centered around the demarcation of spheres of missionary activity (it was agreed that Paul and Barnabas should continue their work of gentile evangelization, while the Jerusalem leaders should concentrate on the witness among the Jews); circumcision receives only marginal mention (in terms which do not necessarily mean that it was discussed at the conference at all), and nothing is said about facilitating table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Moreover, the conference of Gal 2:1-10 is expressly said to have been a private one; the meeting of Acts 15 was held publicly, in the presence of the church. It could be argued that the private interview of Gal 2:1-10 took place during the visit which also witnessed the public meeting; if so, it is difficult to understand why Paul told the Galatian Christians nothing of the discussion reached by the public meeting, since they were relevant to the Galatian controversy. Another suggestion is that in Acts 15 Luke combines into one narrative two originally separate meetings; one (recorded also in Gal 2:1-10) at which Paul and Barnabas were present, and the other (which produced the decision of Acts 15:28-29) at which Paul and Barnabas were not present. It is simpler to conclude that the occasion reported by Paul and that described by Luke were not the same" (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT, p.282-84).

## Appendix

### The Three James'

By David Reagan

<http://www.learnthebible.org/the-three-james.html>

James is the given name for three prominent men in the New Testament. They include two of the twelve apostles and one of the brothers of Jesus. This has caused much confusion as to the identity of the Book of James. We will look at the three men named James and then consider the author of the book.

#### JAMES THE SON OF ZEBEDEE

The greatest number of Bible references (at least 21) refers to James the son of Zebedee and the brother of the Apostle John (*Matthew 10:2*). He is almost certainly the older brother of John since he is mentioned first in 17 of the 18 verses where the two of them are listed together (the exception is in *Luke 9:28*). James worked with his brother John, with his father Zebedee (*Matthew 4:21*), and with Simon Peter (*Luke 5:10*), in the fishing business in the Sea of Galilee (*Mark 1:16*). He had certainly been a follower of John the Baptist as were all the early disciples (*Acts 1:21-22*). He immediately answered the call to follow Christ when he received it (*Matthew 4:18-22*).

When Jesus prayed all night and chose twelve of His disciples to be apostles the next morning (*Luke 15:12-16*), James is the third man mentioned (after Peter and his brother Andrew and immediately before John). Jesus called James and his brother John Boanerges, which means the sons of thunder (*Mark 3:17*). Both brothers evidently had fiery tempers. They proved this when they sought permission to call fire down on a village of Samaritans who did not receive Jesus (*Luke 9:51-56*). They also had the audacity to approach Christ (with their mother – *Matthew 20:20*) and ask Him that they might sit on His right hand and left hand in His kingdom (*Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-44*).

Yet, this aggressive tendency did not keep Christ from drawing James into His inner circle. The inner circle of disciples included Peter, James, and John. Only those three went up with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (*Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28*). The same three were taken in to see the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead (*Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51*). In the Garden of Gethsemane, these three were taken further than the other disciples to pray with the Saviour (*Mark 14:33*). On a couple of occasions (*Mark 1:29; Mark 13:3*), Andrew was included in a slightly larger inner circle.

But though he knew the intimacy of the Saviour, James was not destined to the visible recognition given to Peter and John. His life for His Lord was to be a short one. In *Acts 12:1-2*, probably about a dozen years after the death of Christ on the cross, James suffered as the first of the apostles to die of martyrdom. Herod had James executed with the sword. As such, he entered into the presence of God sooner than all the rest.

#### JAMES THE SON OF ALPHEAUS

Though mentioned ten times in the New Testament, we know very little about this James. His father was Alphaeus (*Matthew 10:3*) and his mother was evidently Mary (*Mark 16:1*). He is called "James the less" (*Mark 15:40*). This could mean that he was either younger or shorter than the other apostle by that name.

James the son of Alphaeus is one of the unknown apostles. We know nothing of his particular character and none of his individual actions are recorded in scripture. He is mentioned as being in the upper room as the disciples pray for the promise of the Father (*Acts 1:12-13*). Then, he disappears from the divine record. Some have tried to identify him as the same James who is the brother of Jesus. But, since the brethren of Christ did not believe in Him during His lifetime (*John 7:5*), this is impossible. Yet, his disappearance from scripture does not mean that he accomplished nothing further for God. Several of the apostles are not mentioned by name after *Acts 1:13*.



### **JAMES THE BROTHER OF OUR LORD**

This James was not one of the twelve, but was a brother of Jesus in the flesh (being born of Mary and Joseph). He is one of four brothers of Jesus mentioned by the Jews in Nazareth (Matthew 13:54-55; Mark 6:3). These later sons of Mary explain why Jesus was called her "firstborn son" (Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7). The attempts by some to make these cousins and not brothers of Jesus are ill-advised attempts to deny scripture.

James would be included in the brethren of Christ who did not believe in Him during His earthly ministry (John 7:5). However, something happened around the time of the Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. For one thing, Jesus made a special appearance to James after His resurrection (1Corinthians 15:7). Then, we see that Mary, the mother of Jesus, and "his brethren" prayed in the upper room before the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). James is now a believer and a disciple.

We do not read about James again until after the death of James the son of Zebedee in Acts, chapter twelve. When the angel of the Lord released Peter from prison, he interrupted the prayer meeting being held for him and told them, "Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren" (Acts 12:17). By this time, James had a prominent place in the church at Jerusalem.

Paul confirms that this same James was the brother of Jesus. After his salvation, he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and while there, saw also "James the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:18-19). In this same passage, James is now considered one of the apostles. In the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, James gave the conclusion of the conference (Acts 15:13-21). We see his authority in the statement, "Wherefore my sentence is" (Acts 15:19). James, so to speak, cast the deciding vote.

James continued to be a force in the church at Jerusalem and by all accounts would be considered its senior pastor. Paul recognized James, along with Cephas (Peter) and John, to be "pillars" in the church (Galatians 2:9). He also speaks of receiving certain men who "came from James" (Galatians 2:12).

The last personal reference to James comes late in the book of Acts when Paul came to Jerusalem. Paul was received of James who encouraged him to take a vow with the Jews to demonstrate his continuation in Jewish practices (Acts 21:18-26). This ended in disaster for Paul, but it shows the character of the Christianity of James. James never left his Jewish practices. Traditionally, he is known for his extreme strictness to the law and is called James the Just. God truly used him in the church at Jerusalem.

### **THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF JAMES**

The question arises, "Who is the author of the book of James?" It begins simply, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting." A "servant of God" could be any of the men known as James. Here are several possible solutions that have been given:

- James, the son of Zebedee
- James, the son of Alphaeus
- James, the brother of Jesus (the most popular choice)
- Both James the son of Alphaeus and the brother of Jesus (by those who think they are the same)
- An unknown James
- Someone who wanted us to think it was written by James (by those who deny scriptural authority)

How are we to make our way through so many choices? In truth, an absolute answer is impossible to determine. Most lean toward James the brother of Jesus. He is prominent in the early church. He is very Jewish in his Christianity and James is the most Jewish of all the epistles. All of this points to James the Lord's brother. But what about the others?

James, the son of Alphaeus, has nothing else written about him. It is just difficult to believe that he would be the author of the book of James. Yet, the book of Jude is written by "the brother of James" (Jude 1:1). Jude is another form of Judas. And, not only does James the brother of Jesus have a brother named Judas (Matthew 13:55), so does James the son of Alphaeus (Luke 6:16).

James, the son of Zebedee, is an interesting possibility. He was in the inner circle. The others in the inner circle, Peter and John, both wrote books in the New Testament. Though he died very early, the book of James was obviously written quite early. He is usually opposed as a choice because of his early death.

Some deny him as a possibility because he writes to the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (*James 1:1*); therefore, he must have died too early for believers to be all over. But what happened at Pentecost? Jews came in from all over the world and heard of Jesus in their own tongues. They went back to their own lands, but they believed in Jesus. They were all over. And, as concerning his early death, by most counts he was killed about twelve years after the death of Jesus. Was this not long enough to write a book to the Jews that were scattered abroad? Certainly, this James must be included in the short list.

In conclusion, either James the brother of Jesus or James the son of Zebedee could have written the book of James. Even James the son of Alphaeus cannot be totally discounted. Perhaps, as with other books in the Bible, God did not deem it important that we know for certain the human author. We need only to be certain that the words written are the words of God.

## Appendix

### Extracts from “How Christ Gives the Church its Beliefs”, *Worldwide News*, 20 Nov. 1978, by Herbert W Armstrong

#### “One sent forth

The word apostle means “*one sent forth*.”

The meaning here is unmistakable – as Peter was the *chief apostle* to Israel and Judah, so Paul was chief apostle to the gentiles.

**Nevertheless, when ALL of the scriptures on this subject are put together, it becomes certain that Peter, in fact, was the overall chief apostle.**

The New Testament Church of God received all its teachings, practices, customs, FROM THE APOSTLES, with Peter chief over all of the others.

I know well that, in view of Roman Catholic teachings regarding Peter being the first pope, this statement will be challenged by many – but it is TRUE, nevertheless.

**Peter did have primacy as chief apostle! I shall amply prove that. YET PETER WAS NOT A POPE! There is a vast DIFFERENCE!**

For remember an apostle is “ONE SENT FORTH WITH THE GOSPEL.” The Roman Catholic pope sits permanently (unless, as some few have done, he takes a trip to some other place – not as carrying the gospel, but as a POLITICAL HEAD OF STATE).

Yet the apostles were the teachers, who instilled in the Church the BELIEFS, TEACHINGS, PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS of the Church. And all members of the Church were required by God to BELIEVE AND SPEAK THE SAME THING! ...

#### Source of Church beliefs

Let’s SET THIS STRAIGHT, once and for all! The SOURCE of the beliefs, teaching, customs and practices in the Church of God is GOD HIMSELF! Not any man. Jesus said “I have spoken nothing of myself” – the FATHER had instructed Him! Jesus, in turn, *taught His apostles in Person!*

THERE WAS NO DOCTRINAL BOARD! The teachings of the Church did not come from a COUNCIL of ministers and/or lay members, who voted on what to believe.

- Right here, SOME are going to ask “WHAT ABOUT ACTS 15? Wasn’t that the first Church Council in Jerusalem, to settle points of doctrine?” THE ANSWER IS **NO!** And I intend to devote enough space in this article to *clear up this point!*

So far, I have shown you from Galatians 1 and 2 that Peter was the chief apostle to the house of Israel and Paul to the gentiles. Now I will show you that Peter actually had PRIMACY OVER ALL.

At the very founding of the New Testament Church of God, it was Peter who stood up and explained what had occurred – preaching the first sermon in the Church that led to 3,000 converts. (Acts 2:14-39)

A day or two later, the number became 5,000. It was *Peter* who said to the cripple "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." (Acts 3:6) It was PETER who preached the sermon to the crowd thus attracted that converted 2,000 more.

Next came the incident of Annanias and Sapphira stealing and lying. It was Peter who spoke and caused them to drop dead.

Next, when signs and wonders were performed by the apostles, it was PETER'S SHADOW, as he passed by, that healed the sick.

Next the apostles were brought before the high priest and the council, and the spokesman for the apostles was PETER, who said "...We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Coming to Acts 8 where Phillip, then a deacon, went to Samaria, and when the people believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, they were baptized. It was Peter and John who went down to Samaria, laid hands on the newly baptized (gentiles) and prayed for the Holy Spirit to be given to them. This is the best example of the Church of God's *custom* of laying hands on the baptized for receiving the Holy Spirit – and PETER was the leader, for when Simon the sorcerer tried to buy an apostleship with money it was PETER who said to him (the first pope) "...Thy money perish with thee...for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." (Acts 8:20-23) He was the pater or peter - papa - pope of the Babylonian Mystery religion. Paul writes (II Thessalonians 2:7) "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work..." That religion, having without authority, appropriated the name "Christianity", is named in Revelation 17:5 "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT."

Is it not ironic that the one who rebuked and condemned the first pope was Cephas, whom Christ had called PETER.

But continue on.

We come to Acts 10. Although Paul was later to be made apostle to the gentiles, the time had come to first open salvation to the gentiles officially. And this was done by PETER, not Paul. It was PETER whom God sent to the house of the gentile Cornelius, to teach him. It was PETER who convinced the others at Jerusalem that God had opened salvation to the gentiles (Acts 11).

### **Peter not a pope**

UNDERSTAND this about Peter. HE WAS NOT A PROUD RULING POPE. He was a humble man, strong in Christ's gospel and faith, but he did not try to lord it over others or always take the top seat, unless his position required. He was HUMAN, still, though since the Day of Pentecost he had the Holy Spirit. When Peter came to Antioch, more than 14 years after the founding of the Church, his human nature showed when he withdrew from the gentiles after some Jewish converts arrived from Jerusalem. Paul rebuked Peter publicly for this. But then, we might well remember that Paul was also human. This event occurred in the chief gentile church, and Paul was a little nettled at seeing Peter withdraw from eating with gentiles because some had arrived from Jerusalem. This incident reflects the humanity of both Peter and Paul – and demonstrates also that Peter was not a pope, else Paul would never have dared rebuke him.

Now we come to that crucial 15th chapter of Acts.

Few in God's Church have fully understood this chapter. I shall go into sufficient detail to MAKE IT CLEAR.

### **Unauthorized teachers**

Notice verse 1 "...certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Who were these men? NOT apostles, or they would have been named.

Right here, MARK WELL THIS POINT, GOD PUT HIS TRUTH INTO HIS CHURCH THROUGH CHRIST AND THROUGH THE APOSTLES! These men were not apostles. What they taught was NOT FROM JESUS!

The apostle Paul KNEW WELL that God gave His Church its teachings only through Christ and the apostles. Immediately Paul withstood these unauthorized teachers.

Verse 2 “When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”

The men from Judea were undoubtedly Jewish Christians who had not received authentic teaching through the apostles, nor did they recognize Paul’s authority as an apostle, or they would not have entered in such a disputation with him.

Undoubtedly being Jewish converts, without full apostolic teaching, they looked on the Church as merely an *extension* of Judaism. Incidentally, the Judaism of that time was **NOT** Mosaic teaching. But after the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the only organized Jewish religion was among the descendants of the contingent of Jews sent back to Jerusalem from Persian Captivity (see Ezra 1:1-3) 70 years after the destruction of Solomon’s temple, to build the second temple – to which Jesus later came. After Ezra and Nehemiah, the rabbis gradually made a considerable change in the old covenant religion given Israel by Moses.

... Now back to Acts 15.

These Jews who had come down to Antioch thought this system of PENANCE was still in effect. In Galatians 5:3, Paul shows that if a man was circumcised as a legal ritual, he became a debtor to the WHOLE RITUAL LAW – and the context is speaking of the RITUAL law, though this verse does not use “works of the law”.

Paul was quite willing to take this to Jerusalem, BECAUSE PETER WAS THERE AT THE TIME.

This visit of Paul to Jerusalem is undoubtedly the one mentioned in Galatians 2.<sup>15</sup> Apparently, according to Galatians 2:9, the only apostles at Jerusalem at that time were Peter, James and John.

But in Acts 15:4, it is stated: “And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church, and of the apostles and elders...”

Then, verse 6 “And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.” All ordained ministers are called elders in the Bible. This means the lay members were excluded, but the apostles and ordained ministers ranked lower than apostles came together in this council.

### **Peter settles the question**

Now we see that even these elders were not clear on this matter of circumcision. For, verse 7 “And when there had been much disputing, PETER rose up...” *and settled the matter!*

Continue, verses 7-11 “...PETER rose up, and said unto the, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made the choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us. And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe through the GRACE [not ritual penance] of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

Verse 12, “Then all the multitude kept silence...” PETER had settled the question!

Right here, NOTE CAREFULLY! Peter was an apostle - ONE SENT FORTH proclaiming the Gospel, not a resident pastor of a church. James was pastor of the Jerusalem church at the time, though also an apostle. Therefore,

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<sup>15</sup> It is not clear if this is the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 9:26-30 or Acts 11:27-30 or Acts 15:1-4.

James acted as chairman of the meeting – even though PETER gave the DECISION. As a matter of protocol, as chairman (as we would call it today) we come now to verse 13.

#### **James speaks as chairman**

“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon has declared...” in other words, acting as chairman of the meeting, James in effect started by saying, “PETER has declared” – Peter had settled it – “...how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.” Again affirming Peter’s primacy – for when God decided to open salvation to the gentiles – to CALL some of them to salvation, whereas heretofore God had called only Israelites (and even them NOT to salvation except the prophets) – when God opened salvation to the gentiles, He used Peter to do it! Now continue James speech:

“And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.”

This was quoted from Amos 9:11-12.

... In this case, it was PETER, chief apostle, who set the decision. The letter they then sent to the church at Antioch specified that this decision was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT. PETER set it, James, local pastor acting as chairman of the meeting, confirmed Peter’s decision, making it OFFICIAL, inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT.

#### **Jesus gave Peter primacy**

In all these successive instances, I have shown you, step by step, that Peter was LEADER of the apostles – and that the Church received its teachings and doctrines FROM THE APOSTLES!

But God has always worked primarily through ONE MAN at a time – as Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob, then Joseph – later Moses, then Joshua, later Samuel, then David – and, in the New Testament Church, PETER. But Peter was an apostle – one sent forth proclaiming the message – not a resident pope over a religious hierarchy.

Now notice how JESUS gave Peter primacy over the apostles.

Jesus had asked His apostles to be whom they said Jesus really was, “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.. And Jesus said unto him [UNTO **PETER**] Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee [UNTO **PETER**] That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto THEE [PETER *not* the Church] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou [PETER] shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:16-19)” [emphasis mine]

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## Appendix

### Herbert W Armstrong's Ordination Certificate

**Ministerial License  
Certificate.**

ISSUED BY THE STATE CONFERENCE OF  
THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Acts 20: 28 1 Cor. 1: 2, 2 Cor. 1: 1, Gal. 1: 13,  
1 Thess. 2: 14, 1 Tim. 3: 5, 15.


This official document is to certify that Herbert W. Armstrong  
is a recognized licensed minister, and apostle of the true primi-  
tive faith, that he has labored for Jesus, and among this people  
for the required period before being recognized in this capacity.  
He is a man of high christian character, able to defend the true  
doctrines set forth by Christ and the apostles, qualified and com-  
missioned to preach the gospel, and administer the ordinance of  
baptism.

Issued on this 2 day of March, the year 1932.  
Good for one year from date.

Signed O. J. Runyon Pres.  
Address Salem Ore.

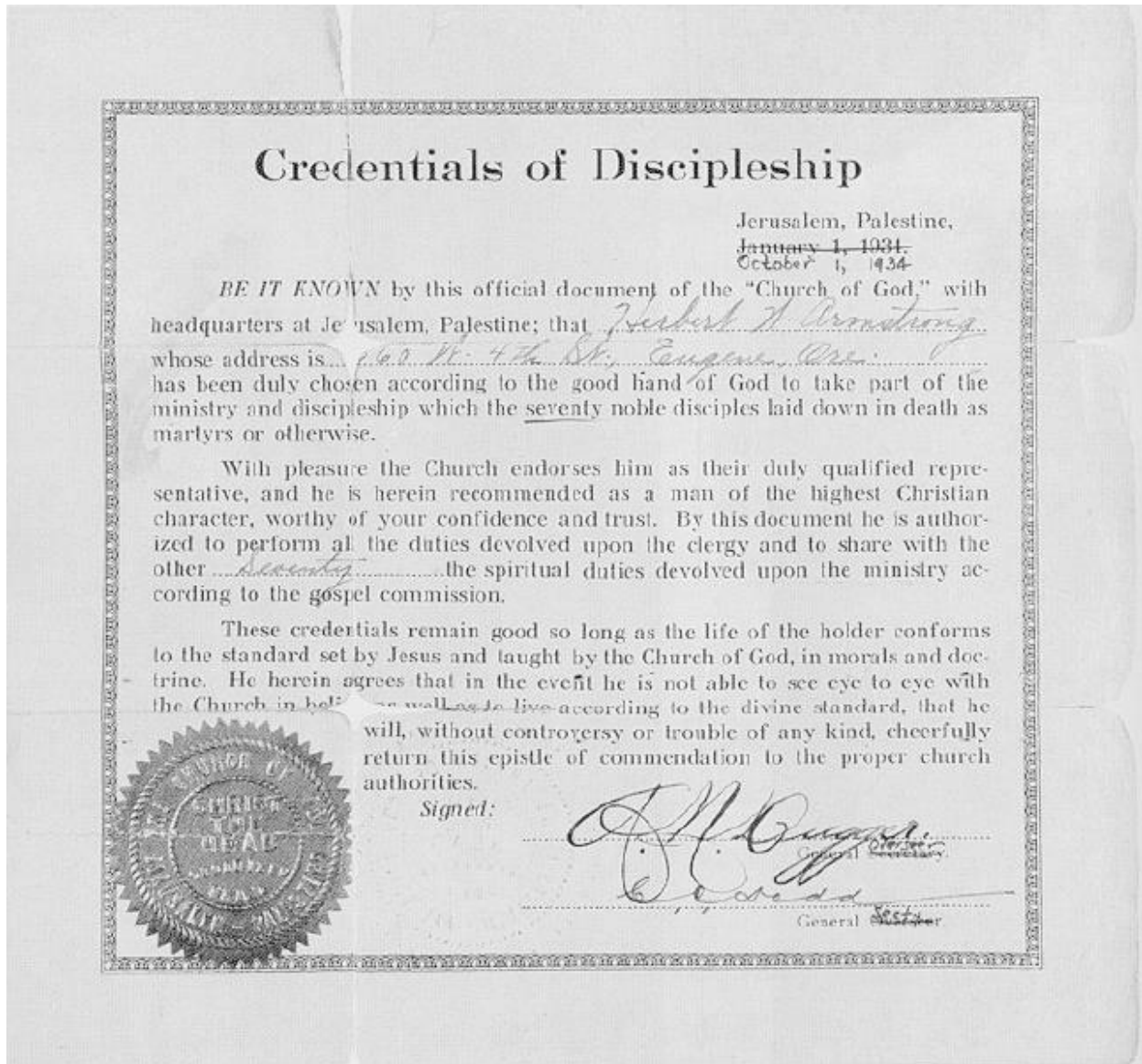
Mrs. J. C. Curtis Sec.  
Address Albany, Ore.

Minister's Signature Herbert W. Armstrong  
Address \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix

### Herbert W Armstrong's Credentials of Discipleship





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# **WAS PETER THE LEADING APOSTLE?**

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