Church of God
Sunday School

PETER AND JOHN ARE PERSECUTED

Acts 4:1-31; 5:17-42

This lesson is about two men in the Bible who were persecuted. Do you know what that means? When someone is persecuted, they are treated cruelly, or made to suffer. Many times God's people have been persecuted because of their faith and belief in Jesus.

After Jesus died on the Cross, arose from the grave, and returned to Heaven, the Apostles began to preach the Gospel. Many people did not like to hear this, and they persecuted the Apostles. Sometimes the Apostles were beaten, thrown in jail, and even killed.

God used two of these Apostles—Peter and John—to heal a lame man who was lying "at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful" (Acts 3:2). The people "were filled with wonder and amazement" (Acts 3:10) at seeing this man walk. He was more than forty years old and had never walked before this! This was a wonderful opportunity for Peter to tell those people about Jesus. Five thousand men "heard the word [and] believed."

However, the priests and Sadducees (*SAD-joo-sees*) were not pleased to hear what Peter was saying. The Sadducees did not believe Jesus had arose from the dead, and this preaching made them angry! They had Peter and John put in jail.

The next day they asked Peter and John, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" Peter said it was "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified . . . . for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." These were the same priests and Sadducees who had crucified Jesus. They did not want to hear any more about Him, but Peter spoke of Jesus boldly.

The priests and Sadducees commanded Peter and John to not "speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Peter and John asked if they were to listen to God or to them. The priests and Sadducees could not deny the wonderful miracle, for the healed man was standing right there. Also, they were afraid of what the people might do. So, they "threatened them, [and] they let them go."

Do you think Peter and John were worried about the threatening of the priests and Sadducees? Did it cause them to stop preaching about Jesus? Where would they find courage and boldness to continue preaching? They prayed and asked God.

God answered that prayer. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

It was not long until Peter and John were thrown into prison again for preaching the Gospel and healing the sick. This time God sent an "angel of the Lord" to open the "prison doors." The angel told them, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." They obeyed.

Can you imagine the surprise of the priests and Sadducees the next morning when Peter and John were not found in the prison? While they were wondering what had happened, someone came and said, "The men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people."

Again, the priests and Sadducees had Peter and John brought before them. They said, "Did not we . . . command you that ye should not teach in this name?"

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Peter's answer was this: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

The priests and Sadducees wanted to kill Peter and John, but "a Pharisee, named Gamaliel (*guh-MAY-lee-uhl*), a doctor of the law, [who] had in reputation among all the people," stood up. He told the others to leave Peter and John alone. God would take care of them if they were doing wrong, and if they were doing God's will, the priests and Sadducees would be fighting against God.

Again, Peter and John were beaten and told not to "speak in the name of Jesus." Then they "let them go." Do you think Peter and John were discouraged or ready to quit preaching about Jesus? No! They rejoiced that they could suffer for the name of Jesus. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

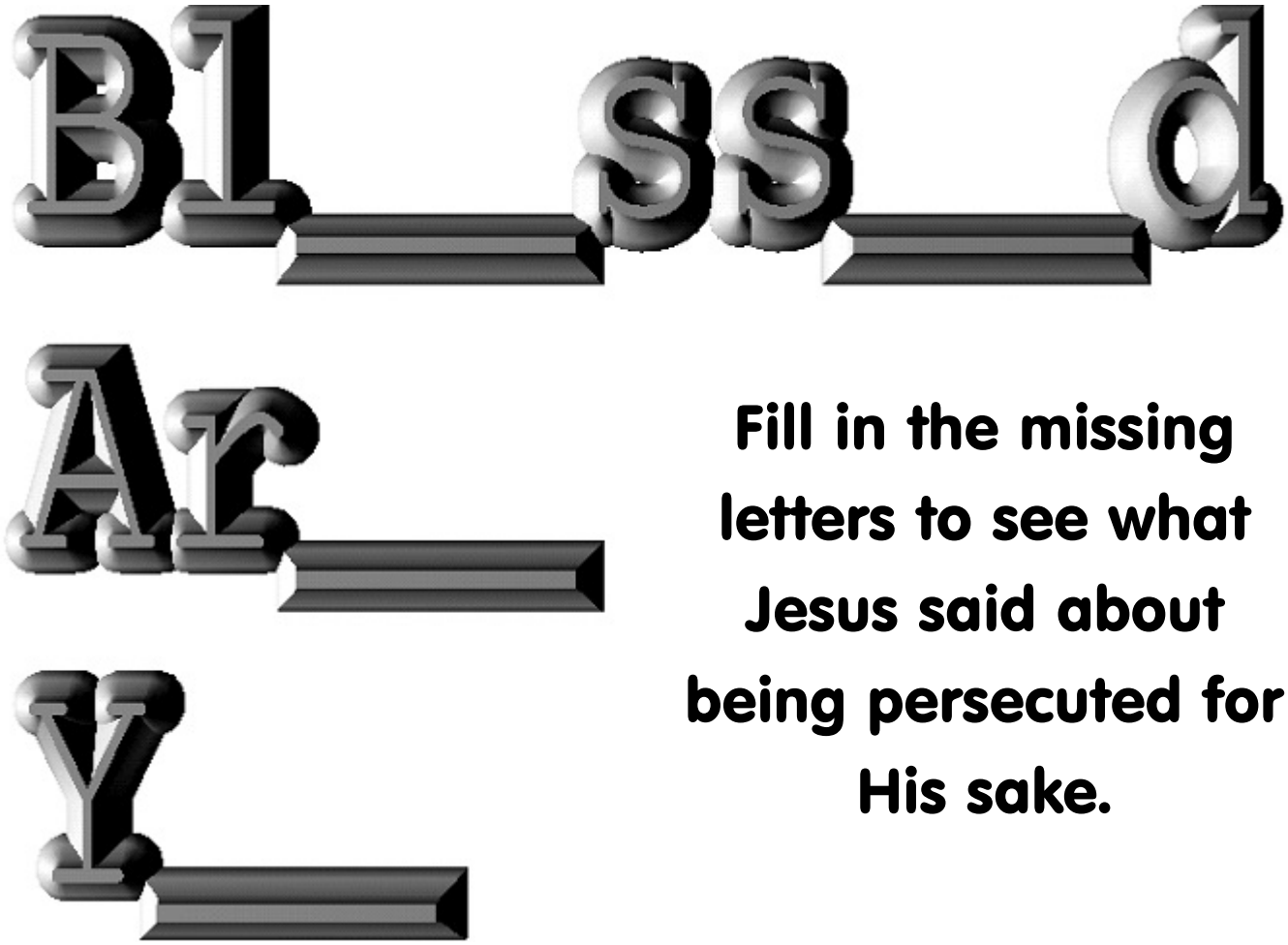
Did you know that persecution can be a good thing? When a true Christian is persecuted, he or she can be a testimony of the love of God. Many people have gotten saved after watching a child of God being persecuted.

Have you ever been persecuted for being a Christian? Persecution is not fun. But remember that other boys and girls might be watching you. You can witness for Jesus by taking persecution the right way.

Jesus told us how to treat those that persecute us: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Why not ask Jesus to help you witness through persecution?

MEMORY VERSE:

"Blessed are ye, when men . . . persecute you . . . for my sake." —*Matthew 5:11*



Fill in the missing letters to see what Jesus said about being persecuted for His sake.

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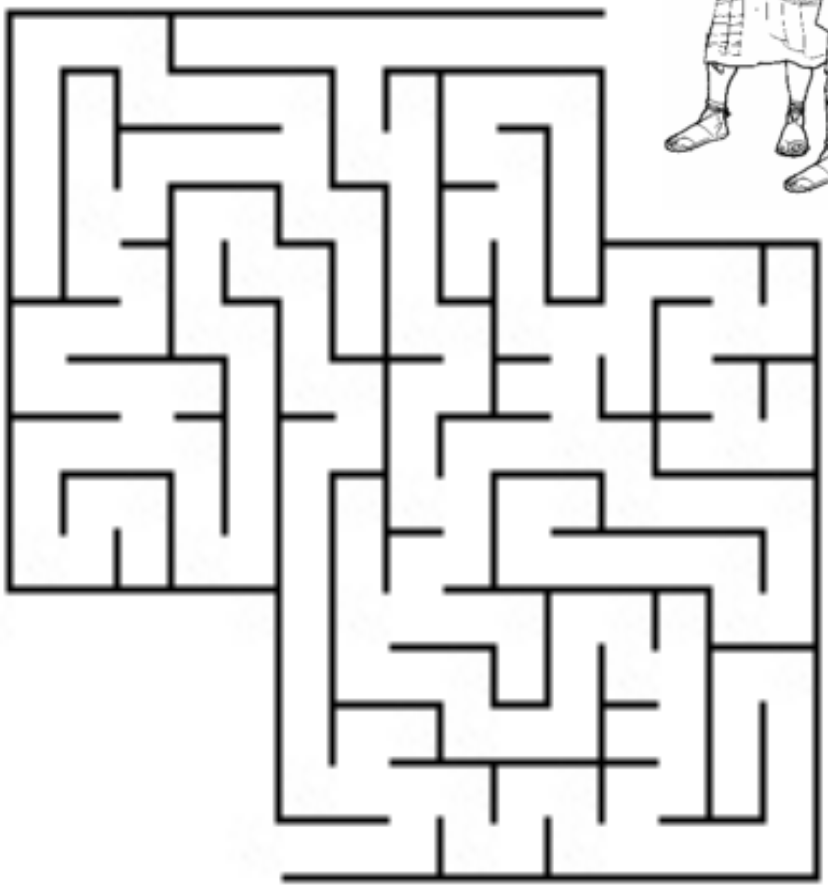
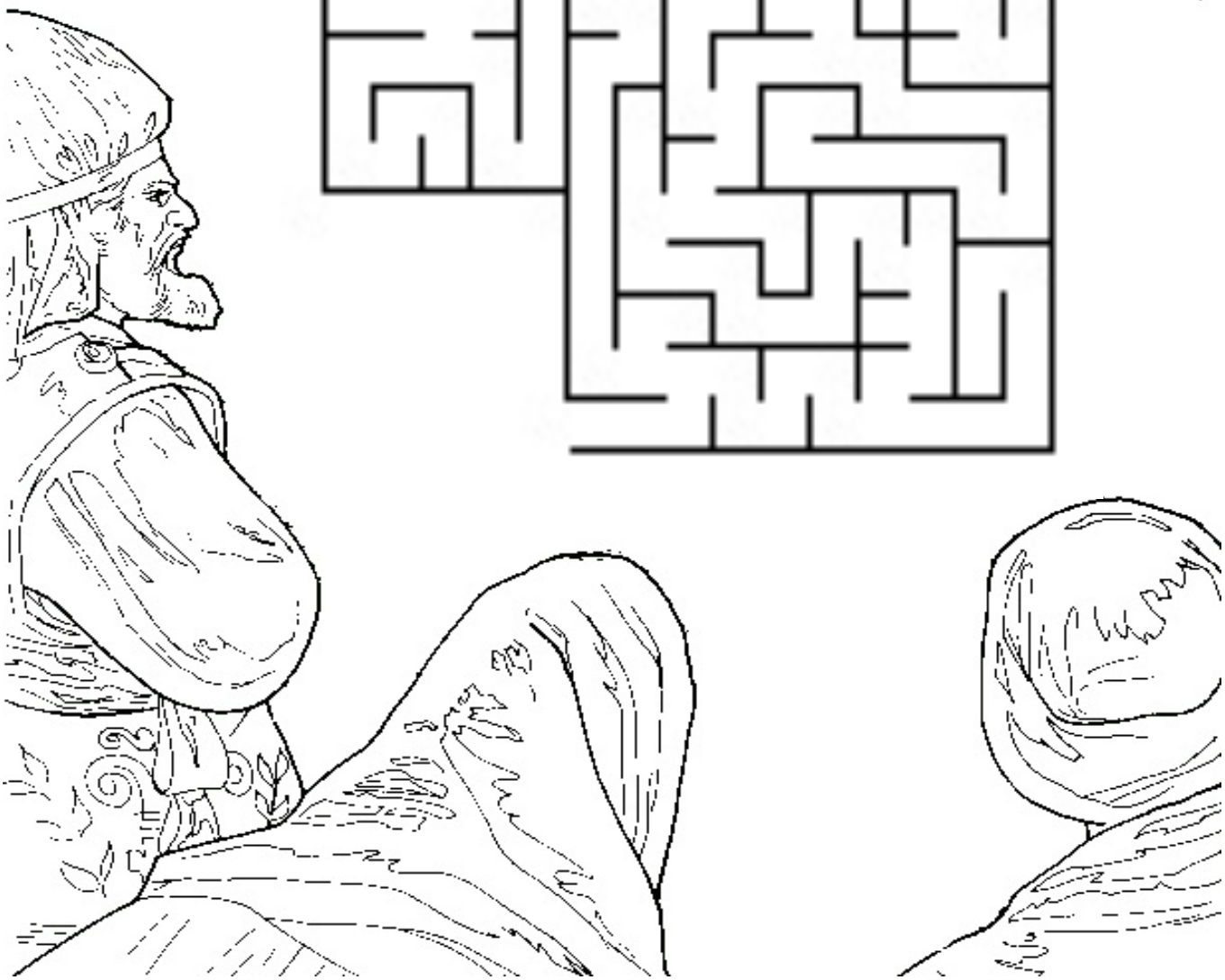
Guide Peter and John to the Priests





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Peter and John Are Questioned

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