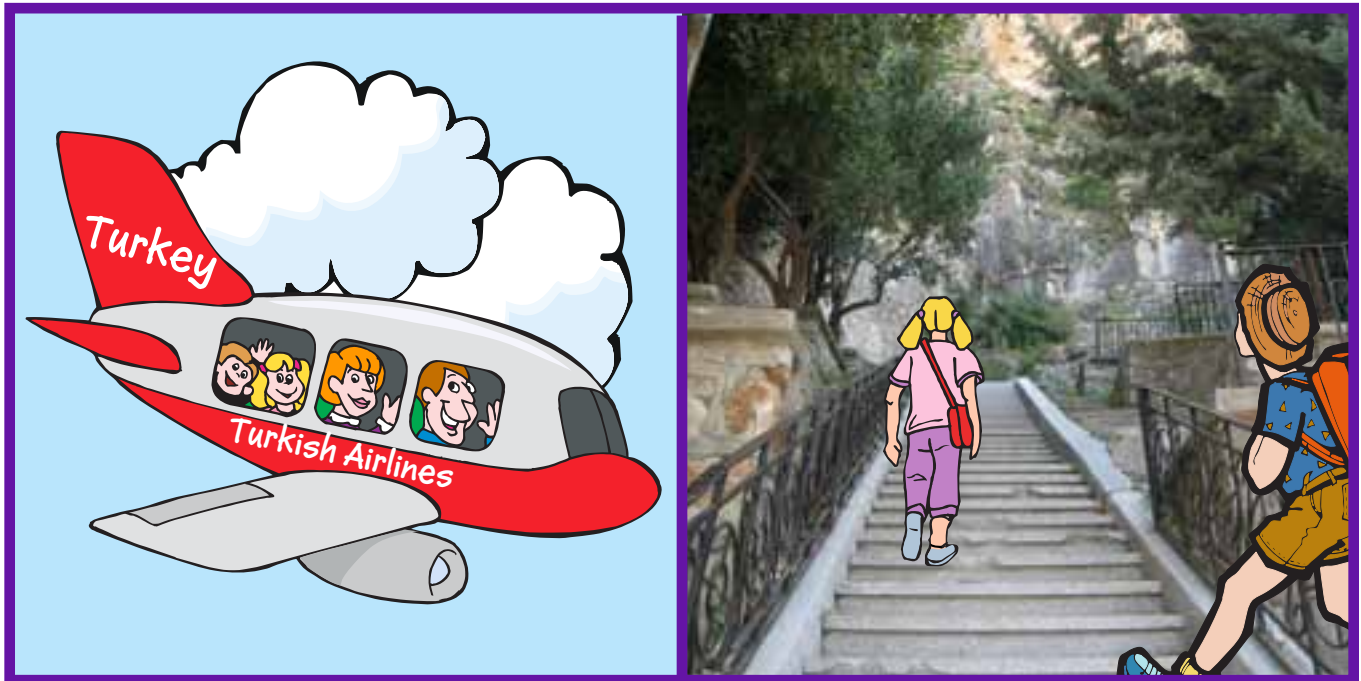
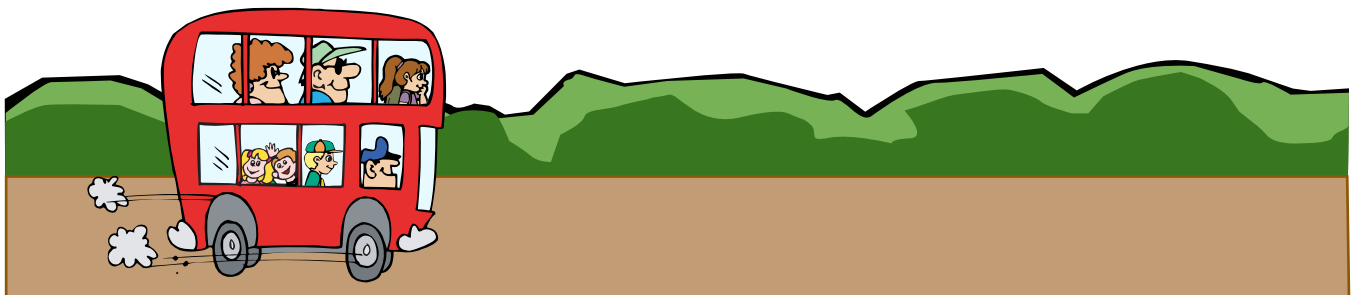


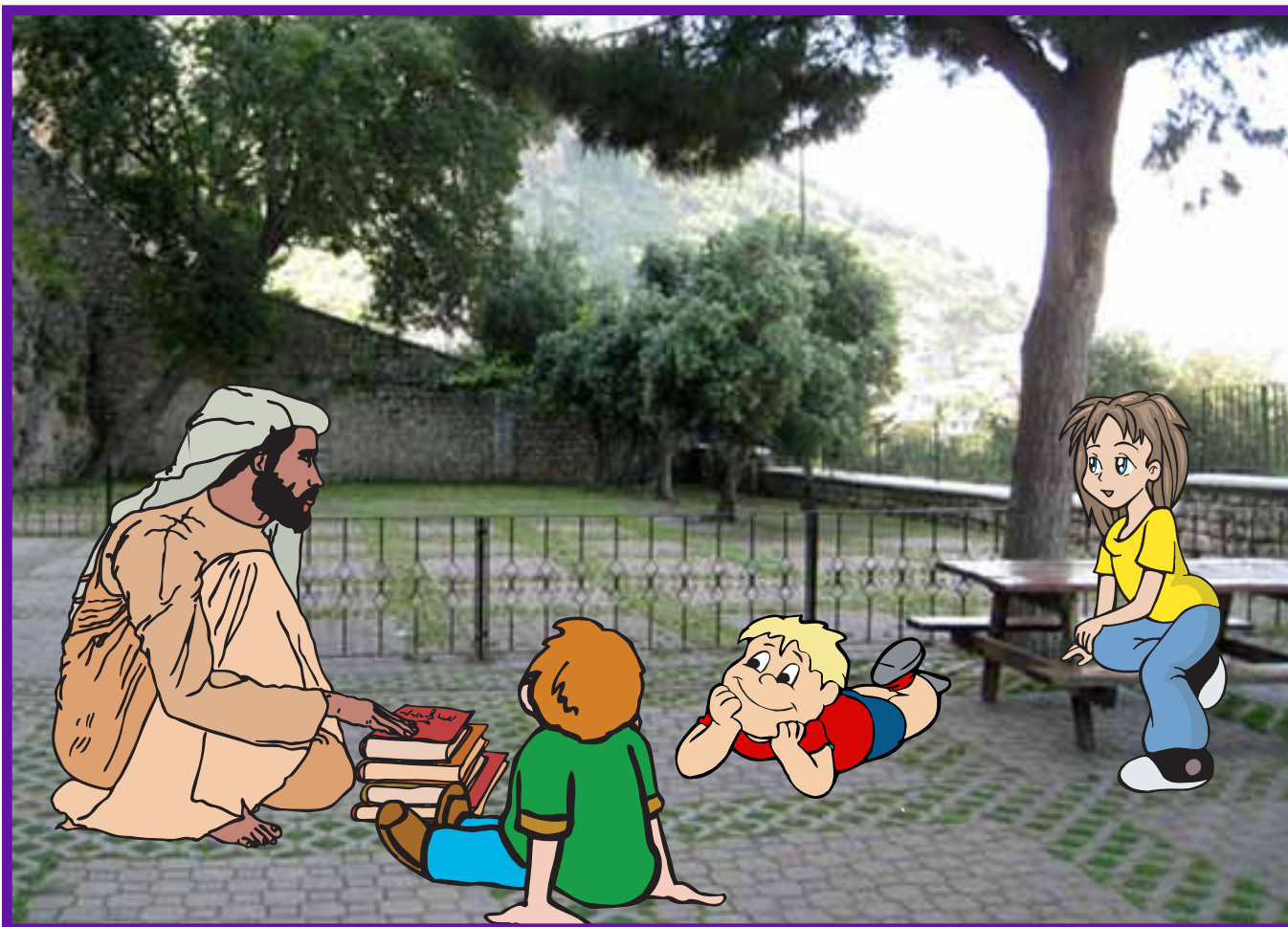
# Tour of the Holy Lands - Syrian Antioch



Hi Kids! Welcome back to our fourth summer tour of the Bible lands. We've already been to Israel and Jordan to learn about biblical characters and how they lived. We've followed stories in both the Old and New Testaments. But the Bible contains still more books and more stories and more heroes. You knew that, didn't you? That's why you've returned with friends and backpacks to enjoy another summer of Bible adventures! On this trip, we'll be finding out how Christianity got started.

So, hop aboard our bus and let's begin our journey! Our first stop is the site of one of the very first Christian churches in the world. Come, let's climb these steep steps to find it.





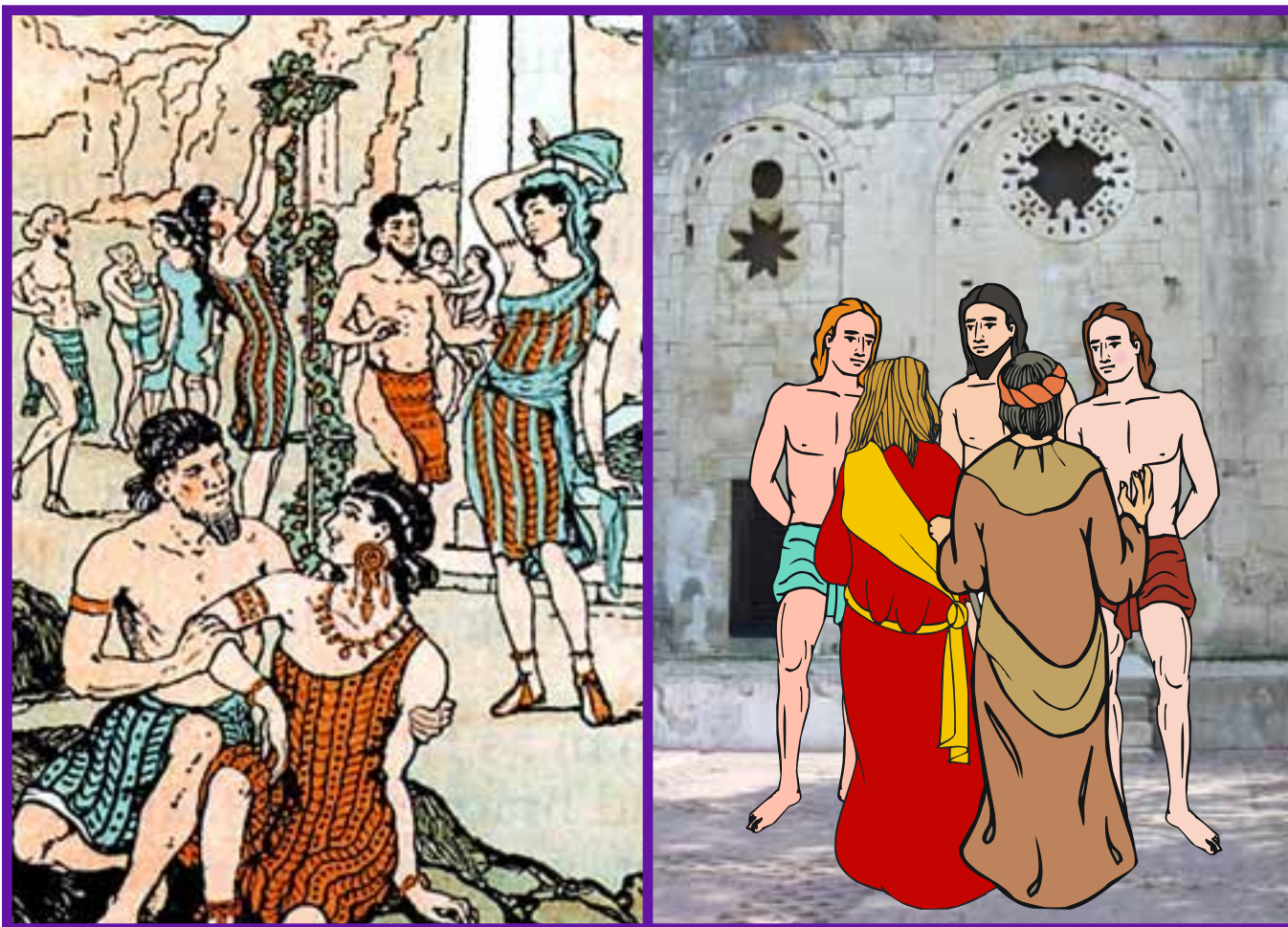
Before we go in, let's sit under these trees and find out a little about the first Christians. Today, we're setting foot in Syrian Antioch in the country of Turkey. Wait a minute! Turkey isn't in the Bible. Oh, yes, it is! But in Bible times, it wasn't called Turkey. Sometimes it was called "Anatolia," and sometimes it was called "Asia Minor." Now let's look at our maps as we follow our new friends, the early Christians.



Last summer, we left Jesus' followers in Jerusalem 300 miles south of here. With Jesus gone, the Holy Spirit – the power of God – guided them as they preached their teacher's message and healed the way he did. They were very successful. More and more people joined them. But the Jewish rulers didn't approve.

They threw some apostles in jail. (The 12 disciples were now called "apostles," meaning "those sent out.") Stephen, a very successful speaker and healer, was stoned to death. This caused many followers to flee Jerusalem and settle in far away places, such as here in Syrian Antioch. (It's called "Syrian Antioch" because there is another Antioch on our journey.) Let's just call it "Antioch" for now.





Something brand new happened here in Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Most people spoke only Greek, not like the Hebrew-speaking Jews back in Jerusalem. Most people here were pagans, worshiping many gods, not like the one invisible God of the Jews. The people drank and partied all night, not like those who obeyed the Ten Commandments. Yet, when they listened to the teachings of Jesus' followers and saw the healings, something changed inside. They wanted to live like these followers lived. The followers were not apostles. They were just ordinary people guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. But they were able to connect with these Antioch citizens and draw them into the church. The churches began to grow. This news traveled quickly back to the apostles in Jerusalem. They were surprised.



While we wait for a response from Jerusalem, let's explore the church. The front looks like a church, but inside, look, it's a cave. If we touch the walls, they're damp.



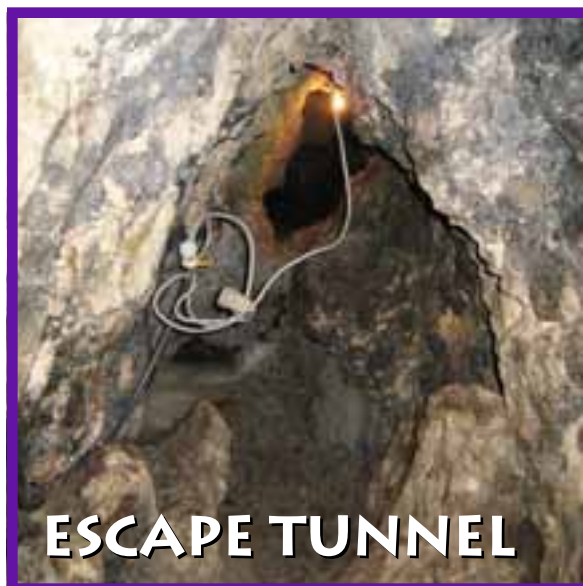
The floor has traces of mosaics. Mosaics are flat pictures made out of small square colored stones, which are strong enough to walk on. Antioch is famous for its beautiful mosaics.



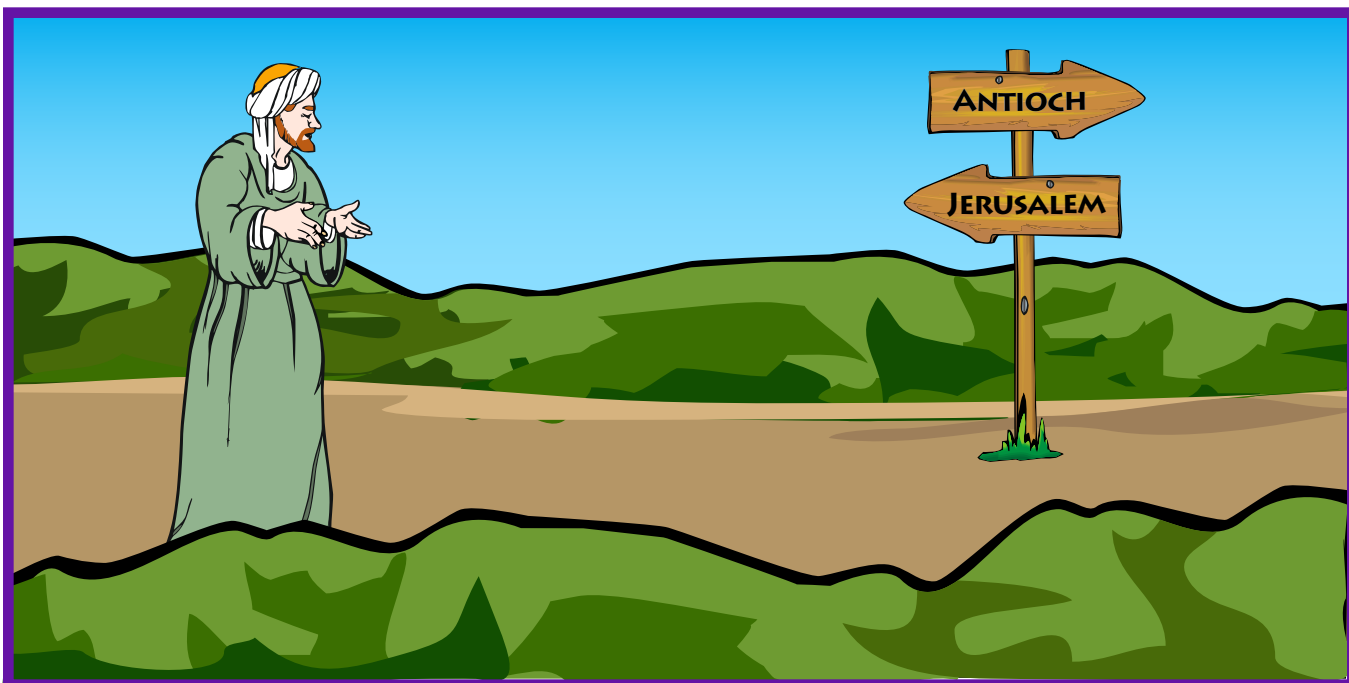


**ALTAR**

In the middle is an altar where the priest stood to give a sermon. In the back we can see a dark hole. They say that leads to a tunnel for the people to use to escape in times of persecution. ("To persecute" is to punish people because of what they believe. Persecutors try to make people change their beliefs.)



**ESCAPE TUNNEL**



A messenger came from Jerusalem while we were in the church. His name is Barnabas. What a fine man! He once sold his farm in Cyprus and gave all the money to the church. On this particular day, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to study the new church at Antioch to find out if the rumors were true. Were Jews and Gentiles actually worshiping together? Did they really get along?

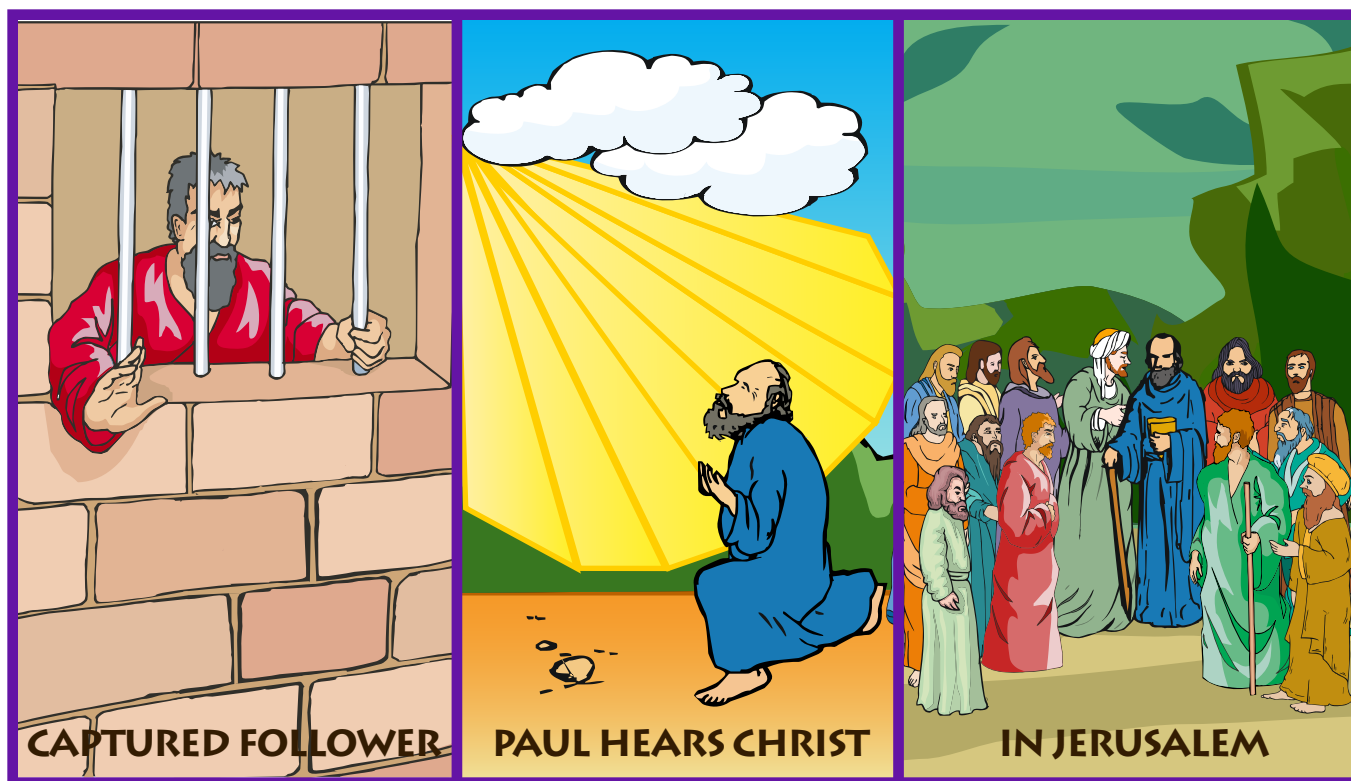


**GIVING MONEY TO  
JERUSALEM CHURCH**



When Barnabas saw this church, he was delighted! The Gentiles loved the Gospel, so he urged them to continue their church work and remain faithful to Jesus' teachings. Barnabas stayed to help. New members joined. The church grew too big for one man to handle. Where could he find help? Aha! He chose a man he hadn't seen in nine years. But this man was perfect for the job – a well-educated Jew, who was able to speak Greek; a man who grew up close by; a man who, no doubt, had been practicing his preaching skills and was ready to work for the church. But this man had not always been a friend of the church.

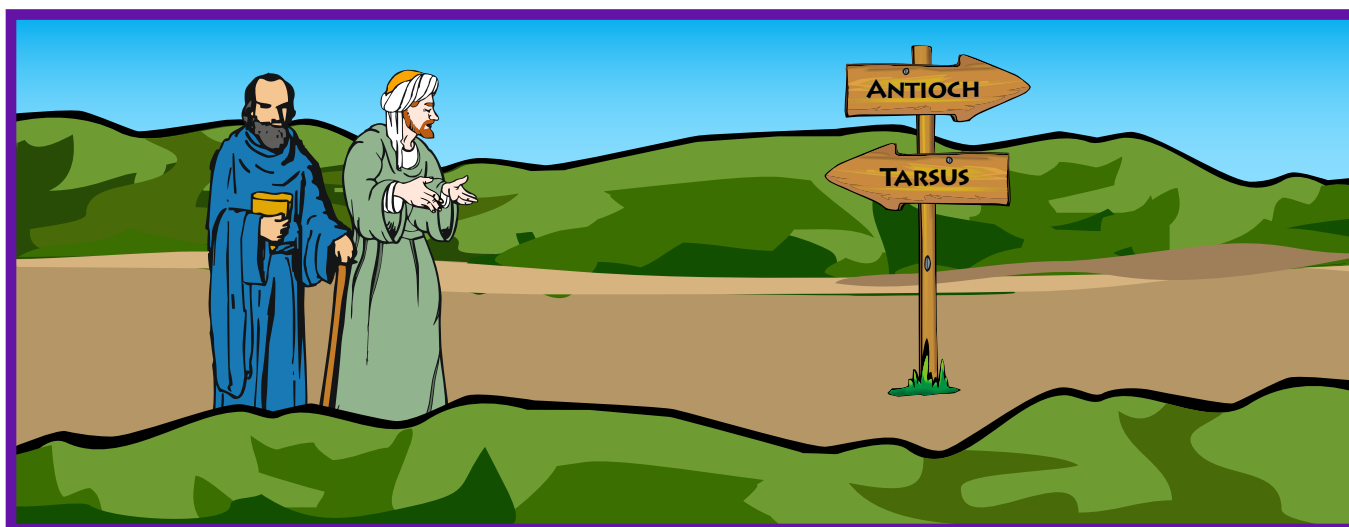


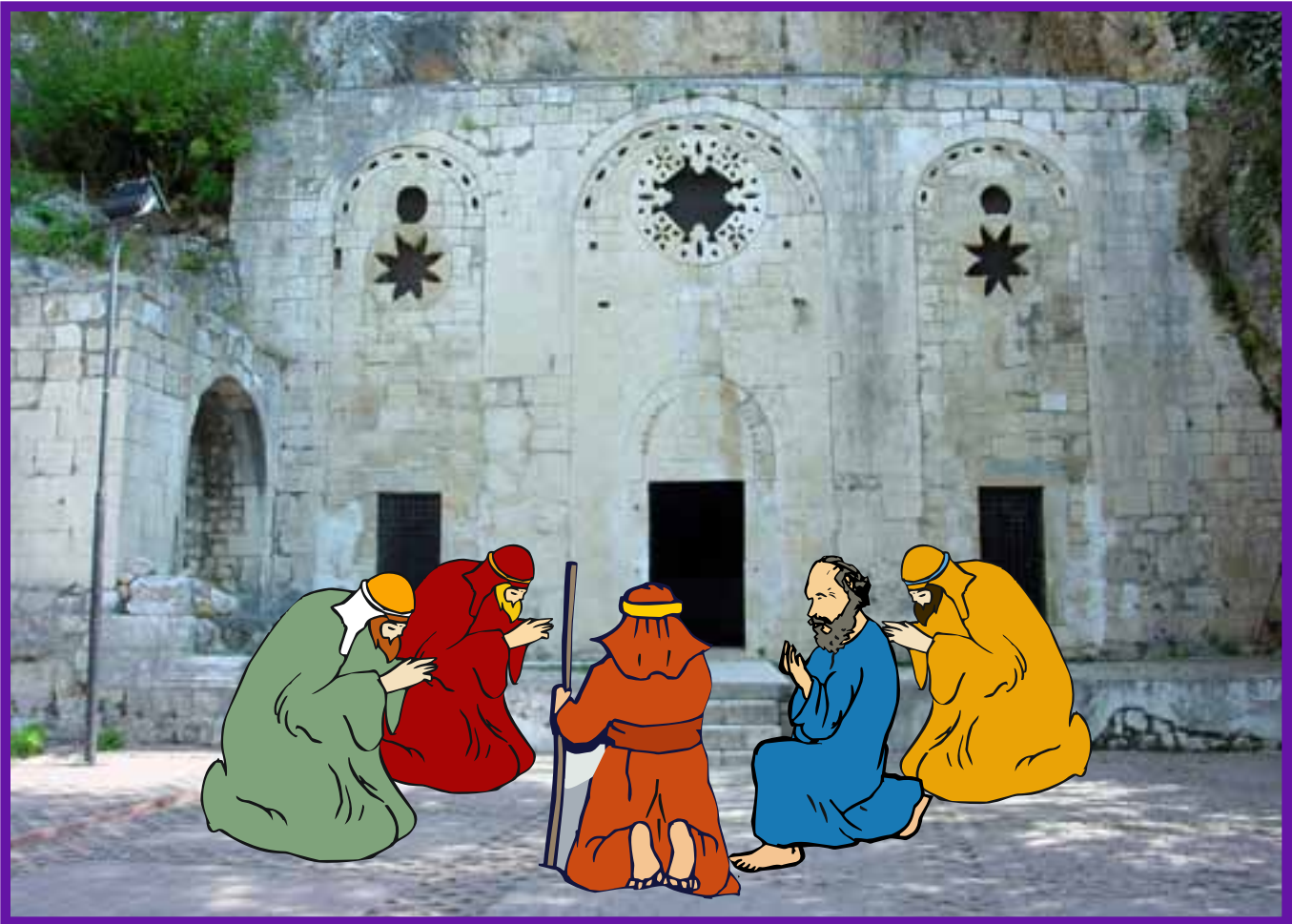


In fact, he had been an enemy of the church. His name was Saul. He once chased followers, captured them and had them imprisoned. But after the risen Christ appeared to him, his life was changed. Saul changed so completely that he became a follower of Jesus and dedicated his life to serving him. (Do you remember meeting him a couple of years ago on our first tour? See him in this picture after being struck blind.) Barnabas chose Saul, whom the followers once feared, and recommended him to the apostles in Jerusalem. Barnabas believed in Saul; but it took some time to convince the rest of the followers.



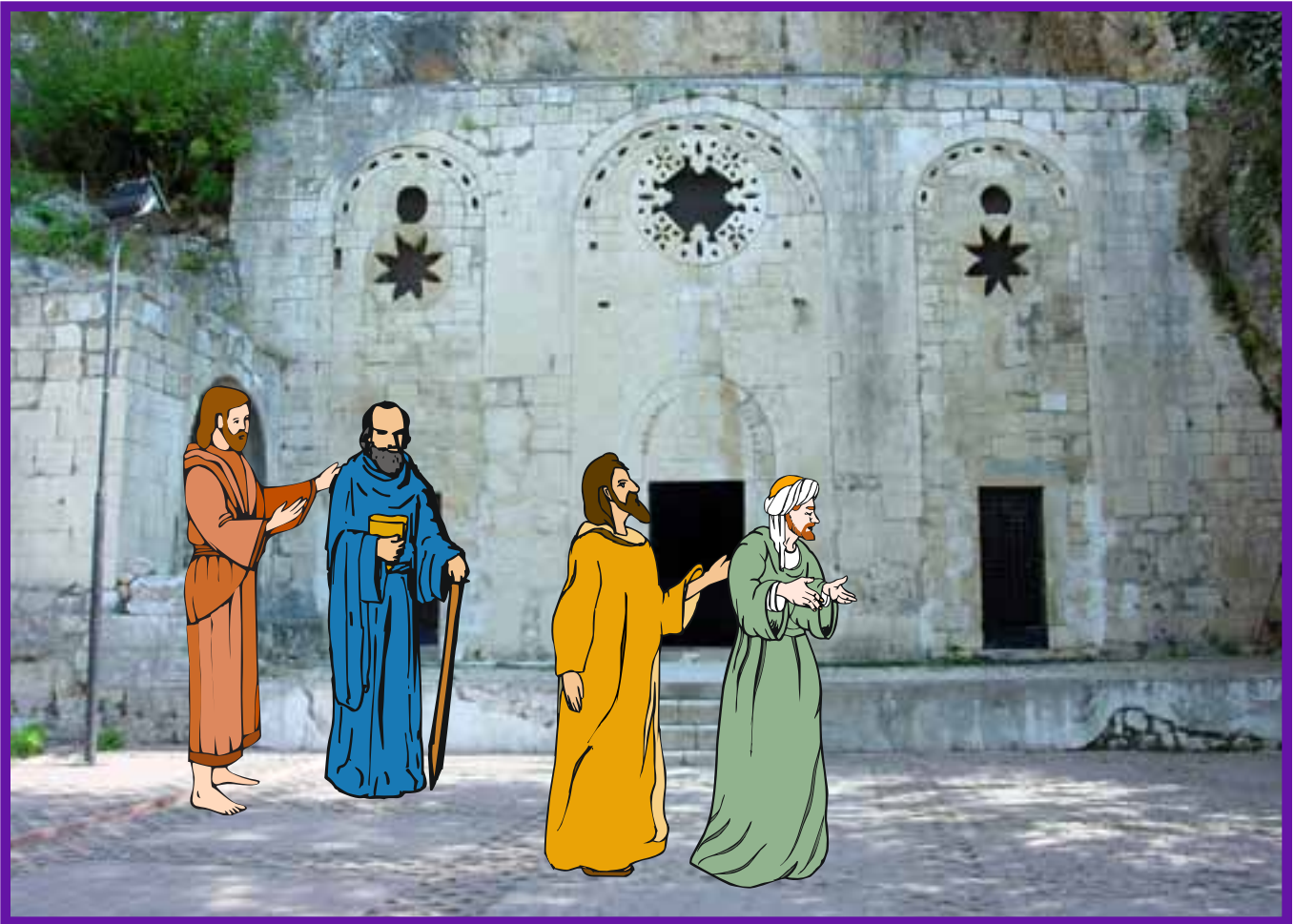
Barnabas found his old friend, Saul, in his hometown of Tarsus. He brought him back to Antioch, and they became a successful team. In a year, the church was the talk of the town. Guess what people called them for the very first time? "Christians!"





The members of this church were prophets and teachers from far off places - Africa, Cyprus, Rome. Each was Spirit-guided. In other words, they always waited for Spirit to tell them what to do next. To them, prayer was mostly listening. Nine years earlier, Saul had been told by the risen Christ that he would speak God's word before nations and kings and fellow Jews. But when would his job begin? He felt as if he had been waiting a long time.





The details of his new job were revealed at a church meeting. The Holy Spirit spoke, "Take Barnabas and Saul and release them from their church duties." Then, after praying, the members laid their hands on the two men and sent them off on their journey. (To "lay hands on" meant to put them in charge of the mission.) The Holy Spirit chose them, filled them with its power, and went with them to guide them. Shall we go, too?

