

Series: "Church of Antioch: The Church that God Can Use"

CHURCH AT ANTIOCH - FOUNDED BY UNNAMED & UNKNOWN DISCIPLES  
CAME TO THIS CITY - 1/2 MILLION - COSMOPOLITAN & SOPHISTICATED

GOSSIPING THE GOSPEL - PERSONAL AND COMPELLING MESSAGE OF JESUS

PASTOR HARRY HAINES - Presbyterian Church of Taiwan - 100th Anniv  
WHAT TO DO? Build Big Church? Hospital? School?  
ANSWER - double church membership in 5 yrs. / Gossiping Gospel  
WITHIN 3 YEARS THE DENOMINATION DOUBLED IN SIZE  
THEY WERE A CHURCH GOD CAN USE

## 1. Problems for the People of God

### a. Suffering and Persecution

WHEN JESUS FIRST CALLED HIS DISCIPLES HE SAID "come and see"

LEARNED MANY THINGS - who Jesus was, what He came to do

INCREASING CONTRAST - more wonderful He was / more He was hated

feed hungry multitudes - healed sick - raised dead - joy & peace

THEN ALL THE LEADERS BECAME TOO THREATENED - MUST KILL HIM

HE HAD BEEN TELLING THEM - WONDER IF THEY UNDERSTOOD IT ALL?

John 16:1-4 "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. {2} They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. {3} They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. {4} I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

SIMILAR STRUGGLE IN CHRISTIAN LIFE TODAY

BEGIN "come to Jesus and be happy, all your problems will end!" you will get rich, loose weight, find a mate, make friends

GO ON "hey, Jesus is great!! much better than I ever imagined!"

BUT I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT HIS FOLLOWERS - HYPOCRISY & FIGHTING

GANDHI "I'd become a Christian if it we not for Xtians"

THIS IS HOW IT REALLY IS - ENDURE TO END - DIG DEEPER - PRAY MORE  
GIVE YOURSELF TO MAKE THE WORLD & CHURCH A BETTER PLACE

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

WELL THAT'S NOT FOR ME - I'LL TAKE JESUS BUT NOT THE STRUGGLE

2 Timothy 3:12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

WELL THEN I'LL HAVE JESUS AND NOT HAVE A GODLY LIFE - many try!!

Hebrews 12:14 without holiness no one will see the Lord.

ONLY SAFE PLACE IS WHERE JESUS IS/ DWELLS IN LIGHT OF HOLINESS

FAMILY LINE OF KING HEROD AGRIPPA I

GRANDSON OF HEROD THE GREAT - ordered baby boys in Bethlehem murdered

NEPHEW OF HEROD ANTIPAS - king who had John the Baptizer beheaded

v. 1 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. {2} He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. {3} When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. {4} After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each.

THE HERODs WERE REALLY EDMITES - NOT JEWS - HATED BY JEWS  
WIN PTS. W/ JEWS KILLING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS THE MISGUIDED RABBI

b. Sovereign Purpose WHY SHOULD JAMES DIE AND PETER BE SPARED??

v. 4 Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. {5} So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

KING HEROD THOUGHT HE WAS VERY MUCH IN CONTROL / SURPRISE!!

"public trial" MOCKERY OF JUSTICE / much like Jesus before Pilate  
IN OTHER WORDS PETER WAS HAVING HIS HEAD SIZED FOR CHOPPING BLOCK

v. 19 GUARDS WHO LOST HIM EXECUTED IN HIS PLACE  
he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

HEROD JUST WAITING FOR POLITICALLY EXPEDITIOUS TIME //  
President signed Defense of Marriage Act on Sunday morning 1 a.m.

NO MATTER HOW EVIL THE RULERS/ WICKED THEIR DEEDS/ OUR GOD REIGNS

CHURCH WHICH GOD USED KNEW HIS POWER - SEEN IN THEIR PRAYERS  
AFTER PETER'S FIRST TRIP TO PRISON FOR THE SAVIOR

Acts 4:24-30 they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. {25} You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? {26} The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' {27} Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. {28} They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. {29} Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. {30} Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

DID NOT PRAY FOR LESS TROUBLE / PRAYED FOR MORE GRACE AND POWER

GOD HAS ESTABLISHED HIS CHURCH  
NO LONGER A NEED FOR 12 APOSTLES / FOUNDATION IS ESTABLISHED

MET AGAIN IN JERUSALEM COUNCIL (chapter 15) DID NOT SELECT NEW 12  
FALLACY OF MORMONS WHO THINK THEY HAVE CHOSEN MODERN APOSTLES

LAST SENTENCE ON PETER v. 17 "he left for another place. {18} In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter."

COMMOTION OF GUYS WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE FOR LOSING THEIR PRISONER

WHAT ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE TEACHES - went to Rome & founded church / Peter is Rock on which Church is Built / Pope now Peter

PETER MAY HAVE INDEED GONE TO ROME / Scripture is Silent on that appears again at the Council in Jerusalem / Important Apostle

SCRIPTURE DOES NOT GIVE PETER R.C. PROMINENCE - JESUS IS ROCK  
1 Corinthians 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

c. Successful Pattern THROUGHOUT BOOK OF ACTS / HISTORY OF CHURCH

LUKE HAS BEEN RECORDING ONE MARVELOUS CONVERSION AFTER ANOTHER

3000 on Day of Pentecost - Samaritans - Ethiopian eunuch  
Saul of Tarsus - Gentile Centurion named Cornelius - Antiochans

WITH EACH LEAP OF SUCCESS THERE IS A NEW SET BACK / CHALLENGE

Revelation 1:9 John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus

PENDULUM IS CONTINUALLY SWINGING THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY  
Expansion - Opposition / Growth - Shrinkage / Advance - Retreat

2 Tim 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.

THROUGH IT ALL - JESUS SHOWS HIMSELF MIGHTY

Matt 16:18 I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

BROKEN PEOPLE YIELD TO GOD'S POWER / GOD GETS THE GLORY/ VICTORY

## 2. Prayer for the Power of God

CHURCH TURNED TO GOD IN PRAYER - only power of powerless

a. Deliverance of Peter GOD SENT ANGEL AS PETER'S ALARM CLOCK

HE WAS IN PRISON FOR THIRD TIME - AWAITING CERTAIN DEATH

{6} The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. SIX HOURS AT A TIME {7} Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. {8} Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals."

PETER CHAINED TO 2 GUARDS / ABOUT TO BE EXECUTED / SOUND ASLEEP!!

Psalms 4:8 I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

PERHAPS HE THOUGHT HE WAS DREAMING/ OR VISION / FOUND HIMSELF OUT

ROLE THAT PETER PLAYED IN MIRACLE / GOD'S ENABLEMENT IN HIM

GOD DID NOT VAPORIZE PETER OUT OF CELL AND PUT IN IN MIDDLE OF PRAYER MEETING WITH HIS SHOES ON

GET UP - PUT ON YOUR SHOES - WALK OUT - KNOCK ON DOOR  
GOD JOINS MIRACULOUS WITH ORDINARY TO KEEP US IN BALANCE

GOD DOES THE EXTRAORDINARY / PEOPLE MUST DO THE ORDINARY

Jesus raised Lazarus from death / Men had to roll away gravestone

Jesus multiplied fish and loaves / Disciples gathered leftovers

Jesus brought Jairus daughter to life / Parents had to feed her

GOD REMOVED CHAINS FROM PETER'S WRISTS / HE PUT ON HIS SANDALS

MUST HAVE HAD A SENSE OF HAND OF GOD ON HIS LIFE - WE ALL SHOULD

JOHN 21.17 "Simon son of John, do you love me?"... "Feed my sheep. {18}...when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." {19} Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

HE DID NOT KNOW THE DETAILS - KNEW THE GOD OF THE DETAILS

{11} Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me

PERHAPS HE WAS CRUCIFIED UPSIDE DOWN AS WELL TOLD LEGEND SAYS

12.11 "angel of the Lord rescued me from the Jews" wd. EXODUS

IRONIC "Apostle to Jews" needs EXODUS from the Jews

WE KNOW THAT HE KNEW GOD WAS TAKING HIM HOME - last letter

2 Peter 1:13-14 I live in the tent of this body, {14} because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

b. Doubting in Prayer ANGEL IS GONE / NEEDS BRAINS AND BLESSINGS

{13} Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. {14} When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed,

"Peter is at the door!" {15} "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." {16} But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

MANY PRAYED FOR HIM / PRAYED EARNESTLY / NIGHT DAY / OVER A WEEK

THOMAS WATSON "The angel fetched Peter, but prayer fetched angel"

PETER AT THE DOOR - "you're out of your mind" / ASTONISHED!!

MUST BE HIS ANGEL "why would angel bother to knock?"

FACT - MOST FERVENT PRAYER MEETINGS / SOME SPIRIT OF DOUBT

James 1:6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN WE WILL BE PERFECT - NO DOUBT, NO SIN  
IF WE COULD PRAY LIKE THAT - NO NEED TO PRAY - WE'D BE GOD!!  
GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYER BECAUSE OF OUR STANDING IN JESUS CHRIST  
NOT JUST HOW YOU COME - MOSTLY WHO YOU KNOW

IF WE ARE HONEST WE ARE LIKE THE FATHER OF BOY JESUS HEALED

Mark 9:24 "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

PERHAPS WE NEED TO BE CHALLENGED TO PRAY WITH MORE FERVENCY FOR •  
OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN PRISON / SUFFERING FOR JESUS TODAY

SLAUGHTER & SUFFERING IN SUDAN - ADULTS KILLED - CHILDREN SLAVES

UNBORN BABIES IN TORTURE CHAMBER OF MOTHER WHO WANTS TO KILL IT

### 3. People see the Purpose of God

THEY SAW IT RIGHT AWAY / WE MAY NOT SEE IT UNTIL WE SEE HIM

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

HEROD'S CAPTIVE HAD ESCAPE / HEROD THE CAPTOR STILL AT LARGE

a. False Praise FIND HIM AT HIS OWN SELF ENTHRONEMENT AS GOD

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea...people of Tyre and Sidon...asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. {21} On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. {22} They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man."

JOSEPHUS - Jewish History - DESCRIBES THIS OCCASION

Festival honoring Claudius Caesar, Herod wore beautiful silver garment - HE IS A GOD - HOW WONDERFUL IT SOUNDED TO HIS EARS

"Upon this, the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery"

2000 YR. OLD STORY / SLICE OF ANCIENT HISTORY / VERY MODERN RING

ONE OF BEST PARTS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS - going to political meetings where free food is given out by politicians

FAMILY & I WENT TO SEVERAL IN LAST ELECTION - they charge now!

PEOPLE WILL SAY ANYTHING TO BENEFIT THEMSELVES

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

DO NOT BE OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT YOU  
BUT BE ULTIMATELY CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT YOU

#### b. Fatal Pride

23 Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, & he was eaten by worms & died

GOD LET HEROD CARRY OUT HIS EVIL SCHEMES ONLY SO LONG

TRAGEDY OF MURDERING AN APOSTLE - STILL HUNG ON THREAD OF MERCY  
MAKING HIMSELF OUT TO BE A GOD - EATEN BY WORMS AND DIED

Proverbs 6:16-19 There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: {17} haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, {18} a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, {19} a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

DO WE ALL HEAR THAT - SOME SECRET SCHEMERS NEED TO HEAR THIS WELL

Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another

HEROD HAD COMMITTED THE UNPARDONABLE / JUDGMENT SWIFT & SEVERE

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

INSTEAD OF HEROD KILLING PETER / PETER'S GOD KILLS HEROD

MAYBE THE SAME ANGEL WHO SAVED PETER SMOTE HEROD

JOSEPHUS "he contracted a disease in his bowels and died five days later"

1 Cor 1:31 "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

#### c. Flourishing Preaching

WARREN WIERSBE "The early church had no 'political clout' or friends in high places to 'pull strings' for them. Instead, they went to the highest throne of all, the throne of grace. They were a praying people, for they knew that God could solve their problems. God's glorious throne was greater than the throne of Herod,

and God's heavenly army could handle Herod's soldiers day or night! The believers did not need to bribe anyone at court. They simply took their case to the highest court and left it with the Lord."

{24} But the word of God continued to increase and spread. {25} When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

ALLAN REDPATH "Let's keep our chin up and our knees down, we're on the victory side"

SATAN TREMBLES WHEN HE SEES THE WEAKEST SAINT ON HIS KNEES

A PRAYING CHURCH HAS ENEMIES IN THIS WORLD / CHURCH GOD CAN USE

LOOKED LIKE MARK NOT A GOOD CHOICE - BACKSLID ONCE

EVENTUALLY AT A TIME PAUL REALLY WAS ALONE

2 Tim 1:15 everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me

PAUL SAID OF HIM

2 Tim 4:11 Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

JOHN STOTT "This chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing; it closes with Herod dead, Peter free and the Word of God triumphing. Such is the power of God to overthrow hostile human plans to establish his own in their place. Tyrants may be permitted for a time to boast and bluster, oppressing the church and hindering the spread of the gospel, but they will not last. In the end, their empire will be broken and their pride abased."

SUCCESSFUL PATTERN OF BOOK OF ACTS CONTINUES ON

2 Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all...So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Heb 12:2,3 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.