

Antioch in Church History

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon delves into the historical significance of the Antioch Church, highlighting its impact on evangelism and missionary movements. It explores the church's role in fighting against heresies like Mary-olatry and its subsequent influence on regions like Persia, Tibet, China, and Mongolia. The sermon emphasizes the importance of contending for the faith, evangelizing unreached areas, and igniting a new missionary movement in the present time.

Scripture: Acts 18:22, Acts 18:23, Matthew 28:19, 2 Timothy 4:7, Ephesians 6:12, 1 Peter 3:15, Mark 16:15, Romans 10:14, Colossians 1:23

Topics: "Historical Significance of the Antioch Church", "Contending for the Faith"

Description

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Transcript

I want you to turn in your Bibles with me to Acts chapter 18 and verse 22 tonight, Acts chapter 18 and verse 22, and I want to bring you to the very last message in this series on the Antioch Church, a vision for LCC, a vision for us here. I believe the entire series of the Antioch Church has given us a vision. We have dealt with so many aspects of evangelism, the Great Commission, Christ-centeredness.

We've dealt with everything, and it's a vital thing as we turn here to the Scriptures again and as we close this. I'm going to deal with something different here tonight as we close, and there's my title, Antioch in Church History. I want to close this series not by primarily dealing with Scripture, because you know why? We've reached the end of Scripture.

In Acts chapter 18, verse 22, you have the last mention of the church at Antioch, the very last mention as far as time sequence and of events in our entire Bible. Antioch is never mentioned again within our Bible. This is the last reference, the last incident, and we are going to deal with that tonight, but then I want to take you out into what happened after that.

You won't find that in your Bible. You have to go to church history, and what you find was the knock-on consequence of the testimony of Antioch almost no Christian knows about. That's a terrible thing, because it's one of the most amazing chapters in church history.

Let's go to Acts chapter 18, verse 22 and verse 23, and this is the Apostle Paul arriving back from his second missionary journey. Listen to what he says. When he had landed at Caesarea and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

That's the last mention. After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. Let's close our eyes and just pray here tonight.

Father, we do thank you for these messages from the Word of God in this church at Antioch. Father, we pray tonight with the same fire, the same gift, and the same outpouring of your Holy Spirit, that same moving of the Holy Ghost, that same soul winning, that same evangelism, that same commission. And oh God, we're asking of you that your Holy Spirit would speak here like you did at Antioch, that your Lord God the Christ would even grant ministries here like he did at Antioch.

And oh God, we ask that you break through in our midst, that you'd gather out the great harvest of souls from this city. Lord God, revive us, that we might evangelize again and raise up and leave behind us that testimony that's going to continue to affect many lives and many nations. Lord God, what you've started here in this church in Limerick.

Lord God, let the repercussions be felt to the end of the earth. Lord God, affect preachers and believers. Lord God, that we may never see or encounter this side of eternity.

We love you. We believe you tonight. And oh God, we ask for an impact of the Word of God.

Grip our hearts, unify us, that we might be one in heart and mind and spirit and vision and in purpose. Lord God, will you unite us? Lord God, that we might be a vessel in your hand for this last hour in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Amen. In this series, we dealt with in part one, an evangelistic church. In part two, a gifted church.

In part three, a culturally diverse church. In part four, a Christ-like church. In part five, a ministering church.

In part six, a missionary church. In part seven, a contending church. And then last week, we dealt with a church with challenging conflicts.

But here tonight, we're going to look at Antioch in church history, where Scripture leaves us and the knock-on impact across many regions, many nations, many peoples over many centuries. Sadly, that has been lost from our knowledge. But I want to convey just a little bit of that to show you the story.

It wasn't complete in Scripture. The foundation was laid. The beginning of the story is told.

But there was much, much more that was yet going to happen. In this church at Antioch, we have covered for months a remarkable story, an amazing story. We have looked at one church that affected our world, that affected its generation, that impacted its city.

Oh, that the Spirit of God would move in our midst in this church, in this city, in this nation of Ireland, that a church would be in this city that could impact this island of Ireland. Why don't we pray? Why don't we believe? Why don't we labor? Why don't we give ourselves as a church and pay a price in this church that could leave an impact for all of eternity? That's not strange to ask or to believe for or to pray for or to preach for when you read your Bible, since it's happened time and time and time again. That some unusual, some unlikely group of believers, God lays his hand upon, raises them up and begins to use them as a light shining in the darkest of nights.

I assure you, God is not finished. Missionary movements are not finished. Gifted ministry is not finished.

Revivals are not finished. The next chapter is yet to be written within our world. And our world's population has never been so large.

Depravity has never been so deep. The barriers have never been so strong. And the likelihood or the lack of faith within God's people has never been at such a low ebb.

Most think it's all over. But I'm telling you, as we finish this series, we have a pattern in the church at Antioch to stir our hearts, to believe God just one more time. When you look at this church, you see individuals named men like Barnabas, men like Saul, whose name was changed to Paul, prophets like Agabus or Silas, men like Peter visited this church, others like John Mark.

He also was sent out from this place. And I forgot to say last week that John Mark is also the author of Mark's Gospel. So important that I say that.

Can you imagine a man that was left for good for nothing rose up to write one of our four Gospels within our Bible. Saints of God, it's time to have a revival again. It's time to evangelize again.

The devil can bind you. The devil can sow seeds of unbelief in your mind. He can so play with your mind that you don't even believe God can do miracles or change your life or use you again.

That is a stratagem of the devil. Here tonight, we want to look briefly in closing at Antioch in church history. Here's my first point.

Antioch's last mention in the Scriptures. Antioch's last mention in the Scriptures. We have this in chapter 18 verse 22.

And when he, that is Paul, landed at Caesarea, he has just returned from his second missionary journey. It was an extraordinary journey. You'll remember that back in chapter 15 and verse 41, we actually see Paul and Silas setting off on the second missionary journey.

You remember how he split from Barnabas like we saw last week. And then Paul and Silas set off on that journey. Silas was a prophet that had come down from Jerusalem, but now he's sent out as an apostle.

He functions in the ministry. Paul chose Silas to go with him. His name in Corinthians is Silvanus.

He became a missionary, a man of God, an apostle to labor with Paul. We read on that missionary journey, they went off into Macedonia and Ilium. They spent three years on this missionary journey.

And you read about it in Acts chapter 16 all the way through to chapter 18. It's a remarkable missionary journey. On that journey, Paul picks up a young man called Timothy.

He picks up another man that's going to write the book of Acts called Luke. He also picks up Aquila and Priscilla, a married couple who are going to travel with him and become two of his greatest co-workers. He's going to plant new churches, one at a place called Philippi that become one of his best supporting churches in the entire Roman empire.

He then raised up churches in Berea, Thessalonica, in Athens, then finally in Corinth and spent two entire years in the city of Corinth. As Paul returns alone, he left Silas behind to look after the churches of Macedonia. You see Paul making this final return journey to Antioch.

This church was his home church. This was his sending church. This was his praying church.

This was his supporting church. This is the church that stood with him like no other church. It was a dynamic church.

It was a missionary-minded church. It was a faith-filled church. It was a church that he always returned to after his missionary journeys.

And the same thing happens here that happened after other missionary journeys. Paul returns again. It says when he landed with his boat, he landed at Caesarea, which was a coastal town.

You remember Caesarea? That's where Philip is later an evangelist and raises his family. So Paul stops at Caesarea. And when he had gone up, he saluted the church in Caesarea.

He went down to Antioch. So when he visited the local church, then he went to Antioch. He's going home.

He has been away three years. God has raised up the great Corinthian church and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are working in a remarkable way. Maybe thousands have been saved in Corinth or the other towns that we've just mentioned here at Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, the very center of the Greek world, a body of believers, not too many, but a body of believers is left there.

It's been a dynamic three years. Miracles, salvation, persecution, riots, but also revivals. Thank God.

I'm happy to have riots, but give us revivals as well. I don't mind opposition. I don't mind troubles.

I don't mind that people reject us or trouble us or fight against us. Let it come, but send us an old-fashioned Holy Ghost revival again. People being born again by the power of God, people having their chains broken off them, outpourings of the Holy Spirit where the gifts of the Holy Spirit operate again.

Can you imagine Paul coming back to Antioch? And after he had spent some time there, we don't know how long he stayed. Maybe it was several months. We don't know.

We don't have the details, but that's where he went back home. After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. Paul again, and this is the last mention of the book of Acts about the church at Antioch, the very last mention.

What is it doing? It is the home base for one of the greatest missionaries that ever walked the face of the earth, a man that gave us most of this New Testament. He was there in that local church. Can you imagine being caught up in this, being in the prayer meetings, praying for this man, saying to God, I want to stir you tonight as we finish and close.

We are going to leave a testimony behind us, and I pray this church here in Limerick. Do you know I can remember prayer meetings back in 2005? We would run four-week schools of Christ here, and we would be looking into some of the worst housing estates from university accommodation. I can remember prayer meetings every single morning, looking over into some of the worst housing estates, praying, believing.

That's when there was all manners of shootings across this city. They said it was the homicide capital of Europe at that point. We had been praying for this city.

People on the streets, all sorts of strange things going down all the time. But do you know what? We were praying this city would become renowned for the preaching of the word of God. Do you think it's an accident this happened? Do you think it's just perchance? Do you think it's circumstance? Somebody prayed, saying to God that the word of God would go out of Limerick.

It wouldn't be known for suicide. It wouldn't be known for homicide. It's going to be known for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God does answer prayer. Why not believe him? Why not enlarge your heart? Why not begin to read the Bible and say, Lord, why not send us a revival, the like of which this nation has never seen before? Here you have this church at Antioch. It is a remarkable church, and it's going to leave its imprint and mark on history.

Will you as a church say, I'm not this church. I am not LCC. Neither are any one individual or few or group or senior persons.

We are the church here gathered together. And saying to God, you and I together laboring with one heart, one prayer, one effort, one desire. No one person can do this.

No two people can. We as a church are going to leave a testimony behind us. And so Paul returns between the second missionary journey.

He left the church of Corinth behind. He sets off on his third missionary journey. Do you know what he's going to raise up? The church at Ephesus.

There was revival. He met 12 disciples outside the city. Said, have you received the Holy Ghost since you believe? We haven't even heard about the Holy Ghost.

What's that? They were disciples. They'd repented. They believed on the Lamb of God, but they didn't know much else.

After many years, they didn't know much else. Paul prayed for them. They got baptized in the Holy Ghost and a revival begins in that city.

Many turned to the Lord. And one of the greatest churches in the entire New Testament was birthed out of that. Do you know there's a church supporting him, sending him, praying for him, encouraging him during that small break between establishing Corinth and going out to establish Ephesus? You know where he was? He was back in his home church, fellowshiping, going from home to home, sitting with them, encouraging one another, part of the body of Christ.

It was a dynamic thing. That's what you see in this first point. Antioch's last message in Scripture.

After that, he had spent some time there in Antioch. What a church. What a testimony.

What a people. Remember, we said the church was raised up by nameless persons, not preachers, not gifted persons, just normal, persecuted believers that lost everything because of the persecution in Jerusalem. They just come telling everyone, wherever they went, in the home, the high street, wherever it is, about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God birthed a church that was going to leave an impact on the world. Here tonight, I want to keep repeating, I want to emphasize as we finish, the church at Antioch, it's not the complete story here. You only see the beginning.

The repercussions of what we have dealt with in this series would go on for several centuries and more. And it was very important. I actually believe what we do here as a church, how you fellowship together, your attendance at prayer meetings, laying a hold of God, believe in God, protecting one another, fighting for the children, I believe it's going to have great consequence.

What we do here will have repercussions in the other countries, other churches, in the families, in the people afar off. It's already happened. But since us standing and contending for the faith, preaching the word of God, evangelizing, living our Christian life, it does matter.

It is going to matter. Your walk with God is going to matter. Whether you backslide, fall over yourself, go back into that world, back to your old sins, or whether you get on fire for God and go serve him and do something in this church, it's going to impact many lives.

Don't you dare say it doesn't matter what you do, your life does count. I want to assure you. Number two, Antioch's early importance in church history.

So we see Antioch's last mention in scripture, but second, Antioch's early importance in church history. When you next go to the history books, you begin to read a vague history of the Roman Empire, of great churches that were raised up in the Bible, continue to grow. In fact, within a couple of hundred years, they say, first of all, 10% of the Roman Empire were won to Christ.

And then one historian actually says a point is reached in Antioch where 50% of the community within 200 years were claiming or outwardly professing to be born again Bible-believing Christians. That was the impact of that church. For the first 300 years, it was one of the four most important churches across the Roman Empire.

Of course, there was Rome, the capital city. Second of all, there was Alexandria in Egypt. Third of all was Antioch.

It was the third great notable church in the entire Roman Empire, Antioch of Syria. Then Constantinople and Turkey was added about 381. These four churches were the leading churches in the entire empire.

What Paul and Barnabas did there, what this church held together was continuing to affect the entire Roman Empire. It was one of the four notable churches over the first four centuries of evangelism, preaching, one generation rising, then passing away, then another rising up, generation after generation. They played their part in early church history.

It was a prominent church, a very notable church. Then Jerusalem was added to this in 531. So there were five main churches, but the church started to be affected by politics, by the Roman emperors, by the thinking of this world.

That's always a dangerous time. The churches we see birthed in the Bible began to be affected by this world, began to lose their holiness, their power. They become part of the political system.

You see church after church beginning with Rome and then Constantinople becoming so politically minded that they lost their evangelistic power. Then they become denominational, organizational, structural, and then power politics enters the church. When you get people playing for position, you're in a very dangerous place in the church.

That church has lost its power, its purity, its purpose. Whenever it begins, men with ministries fighting for position, jockeying for a place of influence. That is the end of that church.

But you know what? Antioch begins to shine at this time. When other churches become part of a religious Catholic system, Antioch begins to fight again. She begins to pursue the purpose of God.

All across the empire, what started happening in these great cities and in these great churches, there was no longer a joint eldership or several elders who were also called bishops or overseers. Something began to change over the first centuries. What began happening was there's no longer just preachers, pastors, elders in the local church.

They begin to exalt one man over an entire city and they give him the title bishop. A bishop was no longer just another name for an elder. He was actually exalted over other preachers.

Then before long, these five churches become so prominent, they actually begin to have authority over other churches. See, when we finished reading about Antioch in the Bible, Jerusalem had no power over Antioch. Notice this, the churches that Paul planted out across the Roman empire, they didn't come under the authority of Antioch.

Each church was sovereign. Each church was independent. There was no hierarchy, no bishop overseeing many elders.

That isn't in the Bible. You don't have one metropolitan bishop that came up in history overseeing many churches. It didn't happen.

You slowly, in these first centuries, you get a change in the church structure, the authority of individual churches. Just like in the Roman empire, there were five political regions, now there's five spiritual regions with five key churches. Why five? Because there was five political regions.

So there was a pattern of creating a church structure that followed politics. This is Antioch's early importance in church history. Number three, Antioch's conflict with Ephesian idolatry.

Let me say that again. I want you to hear this. Antioch's conflict with Ephesian Mary-olatry.

What do I mean by Mary-olatry? What does the word Mary-olatry mean? It's literally Mary idolatry. That's what Mary-olatry is. It's where Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, is taken.

The real Mary, the biblical Mary, the Mary of the Bible, of Scripture. She is taken, removed, and made into an idolatrous system and theology. In other words, she's turned into icons, idols, statues, grottos.

A whole teaching arises around her. She's no longer the biblical Mary, the simple Mary of faith and prayer and of worship of the Lord, but she becomes something else. You see, the church at Antioch in history, and you have to go to history for this.

You don't find it in your Bible. The Antioch of history was going to fight one of the greatest battles against Mary-olatry of any church in the entire Roman empire. It was Antioch that was going to stand against the false teaching that began as soon as this began to arise.

The church at Antioch rejected it, fought against it, rode against it, contended against it, preached against it, moved against it, and stood against other idolatry coming in. What began to happen was there are, and you'll have heard about this, the Gnostic Gospels began to be written. These were not Christian Gospels.

These weren't Christians. They were outside the church. They were rejected as heretics.

They were called Gnostics. The word gnosis means knowledge. Brother Suf dealt with this on the Sunday.

Literally, this is what Gnostic means. Secret, mystical, personal knowledge where you receive it in a dream, a vision, through personal communication, or through some trance. You accept this, and you get a new gospel, a new message, a new revelation, and you add it to the scriptures.

It's beyond the borders of scripture after the book of Revelation. What you had in the Roman Empire, all these Gnostics began to arise, and they began to go off into the forests, into the deserts, into caves, have mystical experience. They wrote these Gospels like the Gospel of Judas, where they turn the story back to front.

All manners of apostasy, crazy, crazy stuff. These guys must have been the first century druggies. I'm telling you, it was the hippie movement of the first, the second, the third century.

As they began to arise, they wrote extraordinary things. But these Gnostics, at the end of the second century and beginning of the third century, began to write about Mary in their letters. The entire church rejected the Gnostics, but listen to what they wrote in those Gnostic Gospels.

This is the only place you get them. Not in the church, not from Christians, not in our Bible, definitely. Listen to teachings you only get, and I've studied this.

I've written about it. I've researched this thoroughly. Listen to what teachings you only get in the Gnostic Gospels.

The perpetual virginity of Mary came, was first written about in the Gnostic Gospels. The immaculate conception or sinless conception of Mary. Her assumption bodily or in spirit into heaven.

Her present heavenly intercession for those on earth. You don't get it in the Bible. You don't get it in any early Christian writings.

You get it in the Gnostic Gospels. Prayers of devotion to Mary. Where was it first written about? In the Gnostic Gospels.

Do you see Catholicism is the product of the Gnostics of the second and third century? It wasn't just a change in a doctrine. It was the writings of the Gnostics. Gave the Catholic church their theology of Mary.

I mean their entire teaching. Also, it's the first time you read about miracles and apparitions of Mary is in these same writings. And so this led to the Catholic Mary of the fourth and the fifth centuries.

First the Gnostics begin releasing their letters, their strange writings in the second and third century. Then by the fourth and fifth, the Catholic church, the organized theologians at the heart of the Catholic church, they begin believing this, teaching it, promoting it, writing about it, and practicing it within what is called the church. Let me explain here about a great warfare that took place right across the Roman empire and Antioch arose shining in the midst of it.

In the fourth century, there were a group of brothers, three I think it was, called the Cappadocian Fathers. That was the given to them. They lived in Turkey.

They began, and they're the first ever recorded at the end of the fourth century. They are the first who began to call Mary the mother of God. No one ever called it that before.

Not written in any Christian writings. They began teaching this, writing about it, promoting it. In fact, what started to take place were dreams and visions of Mary.

They actually affected the capital of the empire where the emperor of Rome was, Constantinople. It was the capital of the eastern side of the empire from the days of Constantine. It became the center of Maryolatry.

It was the very heart of it. The local bishop began believing this. The emperor's sister began to believe this.

They began to pray to Mary, make images of Mary. This is where it began. This is when it began.

Many of the monks locally in this major capital city that was in Turkey, they began to live this celibate life. In fact, they taught, you must not marry. You cannot marry if you're a monk or a devotee of Christ.

The emperor's sister, called Percheria, led and initiated an entire Mary movement from the palace, the imperial palace of Constantinople, for a period of 40 years. She actually put out a reputation that she was celibate, very holy, very dedicated to Christ. She began to call Mary, for the first time, the queen of heaven.

She influenced her young brother, the emperor, but he also had a mind for himself and had a desire to understand truth. She affected the local bishop who'd become a preacher of Mary, the first influential bishop in the Catholic church to become a promoter of this false doctrine. They began to worship Mary, have feast days, but there were many sincere Christians in this city.

They began to separate from what was happening. They met in their own homes. They were angry over this.

They were praying. They were contending. Then when a bishop arose to preach in 428, that local Catholic bishop, 428, this is just before Patrick.

In fact, it's a bit after Patrick, arose to preach this doctrine. In the church, in that great city, there was a man sitting there. He was a preacher from Antioch.

He'd been born in Antioch, trained in Antioch. He was a preacher from Antioch. He was a man of God.

He was a contender for the faith. He was consumed with the word of God. Never you dare say your life doesn't matter.

You standing does matter. You playing your part in your Christian life does matter. You sitting here in this room, if you go on and walk with God, the consequence on other lives is immense, either for good or bad.

Whether you believe a heresy, a false teaching or not, it's going to affect many others. Whether you live right is going to affect many others. If you compromise on certain issues, you are going to affect other lives.

Thank God for this man called Nestorian. He arose at the end of the sermon on Mary. The bishop had preached Mary olitary and Mary theology.

He had prayed to Mary, but here was a man of God. At the end of the sermon, he stood up and began to bring a balance publicly. He spoke out, warning everyone.

He began to correct what was wrong in the message, and then he began to rebuke this bishop, this old backslidden political bishop. See, once money gets a hold of you, you're destroyed, you're finished. You've got to be a free man as far as the church goes.

And so Nestorian began to preach in that same city, in another building, a series on the biblical Mary. He began to preach the truth of scripture. He began to preach what sort of woman she was.

She wasn't the mother of God. She wasn't one that ascended into heaven. She wasn't sinless.

They were brothers. They were sisters to Jesus. And then in 428, a new bishop is appointed.

His name's Nestorian. This very man, the emperor steps in. He doesn't like what's happening.

He doesn't agree with this Mary theology. So he takes this man, Nestorian, with his courage and makes him the bishop of the capital city of the entire empire. This is an extraordinary thing that happened.

Never think that you contend them. It doesn't matter. It could be a lifesaver.

It could affect history for a foreseeable future. He began to expound on who the real Mary was. He stood against every kind of heresy that was taught contrary to scripture.

He preached Christ in all of his fullness. And he challenged the compromised monks that filled the entire city everywhere. And here's something else he'd done.

The emperor's sister actually had a cloak on the altar in the church where they worship, her cloak. And above it was a picture of Mary, the perpetual virgin, the mother goddess. They had exalted her here.

He took her cloak, removed it, took down the picture. He accused her of several adulterous relationships. And he gave the evidence.

He called her a child of the devil. He refused to give her communion in the church. He exposed her.

And he set himself to attack this doctrine of Mary. All of this came out of the church at Antioch. A preacher from Antioch still has fire, still believes in truth, is still fighting the old battle.

There's a preacher who still reads the Bible, still reads what we have dealt with with Antioch, and still believes in challenging Peter when Peter isn't right. And so he began to preach and to proclaim the truth of God. A controversy arose for the three years that he was the bishop of that city.

It was a controversy over Mary. Many of the other church leaders, they began to call Mary Theotokos. And this is a theological issue today in the church.

You ought to know this one point, Theotokos. There's still battles raging right across. If you ever study theology, this is going to be a vital thing.

And you know what? The history books are wrong. What I'm telling you is the opposite of what most history books will tell you, are YouTube videos. So don't go to them.

I'm giving you the hidden history, the forgotten history of this. So he began to teach against the Theotokos. What's the Theotokos? The birther of God, the bearer of God, or Mary being the mother of God.

She is the Theotokos. She gave birth to God. Do you know what Nestorium said? That's impossible.

She didn't give birth to God. She gave birth to Christ. She gave birth to Jesus, to the humanity of Jesus Christ.

The Nestorium believed in the divinity of Christ, the trinity of Christ, the two natures of Christ. He suggested, why not say that Mary was the Christokos? The Christokos. What does that mean? The bearer of Christ, not the bearer of God, the bearer of Christ, the bearer of Jesus.

You may say, what's the big issue here? It's got everything to do with heresy. Mary did not give birth to God. If she did, she becomes a goddess.

This is why the Catholic church has revered her. She gave birth to God. How can you give birth to God? God wasn't born in a manger.

Jesus was. His divinity deity in the beginning was God. All things were created by him.

There's nothing that wasn't created by Christ and his divine nature. His humanity was given by Mary. She gave him a human nature.

She was a woman of God. She wasn't sinless. She had to be forgiven.

She called Jesus her Lord. She needed a savior. She needed to be born again.

As all of this was going on over a three-year period, this preacher from Antioch was right at the front of this battle, raging across. All the churches were involved in Rome, Alexander, everywhere. The entire empire, all the churches were in controversy.

The devil was trying to bring heresy in to destroy the entire Christian movement. As Nestorian was actually fighting a good battle, the Bishop of Alexandria called Cyril traveled to the city. He engaged Nestorian and

was his biggest enemy.

Cyril today is hailed a saint, a hero, a theologian by the Catholic church because he attacked Nestorian. Cyril of Alexandria accused Nestorian of heresy. There's a long history of him making trouble.

He always made trouble, this Cyril. He had a long history of it. The emperor wanted to expose him.

The emperor wanted to expose Cyril, bring an end to his troublemaking. So he thought this could be good. Nestorius can deal with him.

But what Cyril done was begin to misrepresent his teachings, twist it. He started to embark on character assassination. He began to bribe with great amounts of gold and silver.

Those in the emperor's palace, he would pay lots of gold for individuals to be his eyes, his ears, or his mouthpiece. In fact, during these three years, he almost bankrupt the entire church in Alexandria because he took all the money to bribe those that would destroy Nestorius. Nestorius was so dangerous.

A preacher, a man of God, a man of the Bible, a man from Antioch who's in this capital city in the most prominent position. Cyril pours all the finance of an entire city church into destroying his reputation. And you know what's so sad? Guess what happened? It worked.

It actually worked. He managed to blacken this man of God. But just before he did, there was created the Council of Ephesus.

This dispute over Mary was going to be discussed by all the bishops across the Roman Empire. An emperor chose Ephesus in the year 431 to hold a church council. Bishops come from different cities, different times to engage in this dispute.

And the emperor said, go and have it. The only problem is the bishop of Ephesus was pro-Mary. And those in the city were pro-Mary.

It was a setup to have it in Ephesus because Ephesus that once was a revival city and had a church on fire. Remember what we read about? It was a church ablaze for God. No more.

See, after these few years, now it's a church that prays to Mary, worship Mary, has statues of Mary and pictures of Mary. Very easy to lose the fire. A church that's affecting an entire nation can become a thing of idolatry that spreads heresy.

It happened in Ireland. Remember the churches in Ireland that Patrick planted? They evangelized all of Europe. They took the gospel back to Scotland, back to England, back to Germany, back to Austria.

They invaded Italy. Missionaries from Ireland, real red hot burning. There weren't Catholic missionaries.

Patrick wasn't a Catholic missionary. All those, we're going to hear about it in 10 days time when Brother Cecil comes. He's going to speak on Patrick here.

I want you to hear that. But I want to tell you, missionaries were sent out from this island. Then the Catholic church come in and then we become renowned later, hundreds of years later, we become renowned as a nation that prays to Mary, is devoted to Mary, that worships Mary, a nice Catholic nation.

And then Ireland became the number one missionary country for the entire Catholic church. Wherever you find the Catholic church and mission fields, they always spoke with an Irish tongue. I tell you, this land was impacted by this.

But see in the city of Ephesus, before a whole group of bishops and leaders came from Antioch and their associated churches, Cyril started the church council for five days. He didn't want to wait. And they anathematized Nestorius.

They claimed to have victory. They excommunicated him. And all the ones from Antioch hadn't arrived yet.

When the ones from Antioch arrived, they conducted their own church council. So you've got two church councils going on the same city and all saying that they have won this victory. What a disaster.

You know the sad thing out of this? The emperor was won over. He excommunicated Nestorius, put him out of his position as bishop, send him back to Antioch. He stayed there for four years.

Then he was exiled to Petra in Arabia, then into Egypt where he spent 18 years in seclusion before he died of old age. But he died praying, uncompromised, a man of biblical truth. Fourth and finally, let me finish tonight and finish this series.

This is exciting. Wait till you hear this. What happens? This is my fourth and final point.

Antioch's role in world missions to the east. Antioch was connected. The church we read about in our Bibles, after 400 years, here they are.

When the entire, the churches right across the Roman Empire are going Catholic, turning to Mary theology, Mariolatry, being compromised, this church shone. It still had the word of God, still had love for Christ, still had purity. But do you know what else it had? After all these hundreds of years, it had a missionary zeal and passion and burden that was burning brighter and was going to accomplish more than in the first century.

I want to communicate this of what this church accomplished, the impact they left behind, because I pray this church leaves an impact in this world. If I should pass from the scene of time, I pray that preachers arise, leaders arise, missionaries arise, that people beseech the heavens in the prayer meetings. I pray this church will accomplish far more without me than it does with me.

That would be my greatest desire, that God would do that. Well, it happened in the church at Antioch. It didn't just be a missionary or become a missionary church in the first century in our Bible with Paul evangelizing.

Oh no, its greatest chapter was going to be after this fight against heresy. Here they are in the middle of fighting. Do you know the Christians who fight most do the most? You know, today in our world they say, why are you Christians fighting? Do you have to contend? Do you have to preach against false prophets in the church? Do you have to expose sin in the church? Do you have to always be telling us what's wrong? Yes, and I'll tell you what, in the midst of that, we're going to have a revival.

We'll evangelize. We'll reach the lost. We'll make an impact for the glory of Jesus Christ.

It was the same with the church at Antioch. Having fought the heresy of Mary and separated herself from that, she's now going to evangelize in the most remarkable way outside the Roman empire, and this is the

chapter that's forgotten. Very few have even heard this or considered it.

The church at Antioch became the biggest influence on the churches of Persia. There was an, and Persia, in case you don't know, is present day Iraq and Iran. It was the Persian empire that this one church, with its preachers, its translation of scripture, its thousands of books written on doctrine, its stand against the heresy of Mary, was going to affect Persia.

And the church within Persia, it was sometimes called the Persian church or the church of the east, the oriental church, the Syrian church, or it was nicknamed by all the Catholics within the Roman empire, guess what they nicknamed it, the Nestorian church, and even today it's still called that, the Nestorian church. They tried to blacken it by saying Nestorian was a heretic, so is this. All the churches in Persia, Antioch, and now far to the east, we don't even accept them.

They're heretics, and they lied about them. They said that Christ wasn't divine. No, they did not.

That's a lie, absolute lie. In your history books, they tell lies about the Nestorian church, but here's the last chapter of what they accomplished. Antioch impacted this Persian or eastern church and left a remarkable mark upon them.

There were leaders trained for 100 years at Antioch and Edessa, a town nearby. These two cities, these schools of Antioch, it came out of the church at Antioch for 150 years, training leaders, send them into Persia to become missionaries, to evangelize. Let me tell you as I close what happened over the next several hundred years because Antioch was a blazing fire impacting an entire spiritual movement in Persia that would then go on to evangelize widely.

You maybe have heard about the Silk Road. The Silk Road began just above Antioch in Syria and extended 4,000 miles into China. This was going to be the roadway out of the Roman Empire, outside the Roman Empire, on the edge of the Roman Empire.

See, we think church history is all about the Roman Empire, the dark ages for 1,000 years. There was no gospel witness. What a load of rubbish.

What books have you been reading? Oh yes, the typical church history books. You've been listening to the typical preachers. You think the dark ages, not much happened.

It was all the Catholic church. Who told you that? It's a lie. You need to talk to me a bit.

You need to come to my house. I'll educate you a bit because that's false history. That's made up, false, perverted history.

It's not true. Listen, some of the most remarkable things happened outside the Roman Empire, walking down that Silk Road, evangelizing nations everywhere. The Persian churches rejected the Catholic councils of the 5th and 6th century within the Roman Empire.

They banned the entire use of images, statues, and prayer to Mary. That's a spiritual movement, I want to tell you. They began to send out thousands of missionaries to the East, not the West and to Europe, but to the East.

They continued doing this for several hundred years. One historian said by the year 800, there was far more churches outside the Roman Empire, not Catholic, than there were inside the Roman Empire called

Catholic. In other words, there were vast movements, spiritual revivals, evangelism, missionary movements taking place, and the Catholic church never accorded.

See today, church historians, they ignore it. They don't even tell you about it, and they'll tell you Patrick was a Catholic. He was no Catholic.

Just read his two authentic letters, nothing Catholic about those letters. So you have an amazing move. Let me just pull out, and I'm only pulling out a few little things here, just to give you an understanding.

I want your eyes to be open as we finish, to see that a church that stood, that preached, that believed, that labored, that functioned, the normal members, it had a consequence for several hundred years to entire vast regions of humanity to evangelize them. They would go to their grave, they would die, but they passed on the mantle, they passed on the baton to the next generation, and the next, and the next, and the next. Why not train your children in this church for revival? Why not prepare them to be missionaries? Why not prepare them to serve God in their generation? The schools are being invaded by depravity.

Why not make them firebrands? Why not lay your hands on them every morning? See, make my son a man of God. Fill my daughter with the Holy Spirit of God. Let a fire burn within them that no drugs will cross their lips, that they won't lose their virginity, that they'll be men, women of God, in this city that are going to shine as bright light.

Saints of God, we need to get aggressive. We are at war. The devil is after your mind.

See, sitting here tonight, the devil's trying to destroy your mind. He wants to take you out of this church. He wants to nullify your faith, your prayer.

Who do you think it is messing with your mind? Who do you think it is disturbing you? Who do you think it is trying to get you offside, playing with that mind? For years, from a child, the devil's tried to destroy you. I mean you. The devil has tried to destroy you.

He's thrown all manners of things, messed up your family, done everything with your mind, your body, and left you on a heap. And now that you're a believer, he's coming knocking on the door again saying, you're a mess, you're hopeless, you won't come to anything. And if you're not careful, you're going to begin to believe that.

Saints, we must fight. We're here to fight. We're here to help one another.

Better not start preaching on a loose track here. The first organized evangelism, evangelism was constantly going on, but the first organized evangelism that we read of in this period, it's the year 498 to the White Huns of Central Asia. This comes from Antioch to Persia to what we call the Huns.

You may be heard about that as you grew up. There was an entire group called the White Huns of Central Asia. And within 50 years of the first missionaries arriving, they had evangelized an entire people group called the White Huns and extended.

And from them, they become self-propagating. Those White Huns got evangelized. They then so took on the gospel commission, go preach the gospel, that from the White Huns, they began to evangelize Afghanistan, Turkestan, Uzbekistan, Chagasthan, correct me if I'm wrong, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, as well as Pakistan, India, and China.

And the impact of it lasted through to the 14th century. Saints of God, this is forgotten history. It does matter what we do as a church here.

You can't even imagine what might happen through that video. What could happen online? What could happen through someone walking in the door? What could happen through one sinner getting saved off these streets? He'll go do more than you and I have ever done. One sinner, one drug addict, some homeless person, some prostitute in the city, some nun who's worshipping Mary.

Why don't we go evangelize them? Then there was the whole Turkish tribes to the north, converted to Christ between the 6th and the 9th centuries. There was a preacher called Timothy. He wrote this letter.

The king of the Turks, with nearly all the inhabitants of his country, has left his ancient idolatry and has become a Christian. There's the king in Turkey and he has requested us in his letters to create a leader for his country. And this we have done.

This particular king was the supreme monarch over the entire Turkish tribes within Turkey. He now had become a born again Christian and he wanted his entire people to receive the word of God. Through the conversion of the Huns and the Turks, a door for the gospel was opened to the most northern regions as far north as Siberia.

It's before the year thousand. It's all within several hundred years. It's the knock on effect of one church fighting spiritual battles on their knees.

So the gospel went as far as Siberia, with strongholds in the steppes of Russia and the Caucasus region. This is utterly remarkable. Then there were bishops sent out of this Nestorian church to India in the early 5th century.

Don't tell me, why did God not send the gospel to China? What about China? It's been without the gospel all these centuries. And India hasn't had the gospel. And all these Asian people, they haven't had the gospel.

We've had the gospel. Who told you that? Who told you that? That's a lie. They've had the gospel time and time and time again.

Only heaven has the full record of this. And so they sent a bishop to India in the 5th century. Missionaries were also sent from Persia to Tibet in the 6th century, with the bishop being sent from Baghdad in the year 549 to oversee churches, which he had already raised up.

By the 8th century, the church was flourishing in the land of Tibet. There were churches everywhere by the 8th century in Tibet. Now they say, oh, the gospel's never been in Tibet.

Who told you that? Who told you that? It does matter what we do. We could penetrate from here regions that don't have a gospel witness. From Antioch, then Persia, they penetrated Tibet and filled it with born-again Christians.

In a letter dated 782, the Tibetan Christians are mentioned as one of the most significant communities in the whole Nestorian church. Amazing. The story of how China, Mongolia, Machuria, Korea, Java, Yemen, Burma, Siam, Ceylon, keep going, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and many other nations and peoples were reached during the following centuries is truly remarkable and wonderful.

I'm not even beginning. I'm only mentioning things and passing them here. This is an entire spiritual missionary revival, Holy Ghost movement, birthed out of Antioch influencing it, the Day of Pentecost influencing it.

How did the gospel reach Baghdad the first time? On the Day of Pentecost. Do you know there's four names mentioned on the Day of Pentecost? People from them. Where are they? They're in ancient Persia.

Do you know the gospel went from the Day of Pentecost, penetrated Iraq, and then all of this just flows out of it, year after year, century after century. There are records of Nestorian Christians in China as early as 578. But this was only preparation for a great missionary thrust.

A large team of Christian missionaries from Persia, led by a man called Alupin, arrived in central China in the year 635. The emperor of all of China sent his personal minister of state to meet them with an imperial guard, then brought them into the royal palace. This is 635.

Have you heard this history? Do you know this? The emperor is hearing the gospel of all China in 635. He brought them in, cared for them, looked after them, and asked them to translate the Bible into the various Chinese dialects. In fact, in his own palace, he ordered them to translate the Bible in the royal library.

Then the emperor studied the new teaching himself. This is one of the most influential, famous emperors of China ever in their entire history, and he is studying for a period of years the Bible in his own language. Translate it for me, then I will study it.

Then I will decide what to do with it. Saints of God, maybe we've yet to see the greatest spiritual revival. Most of the church has gone after heresy.

Why don't we see? Why shouldn't another move of God come? Don't give up on missionary movements in this hour. This emperor, after listening closely to the teachings of the missionaries during this time, as well as reading the translated scriptures, was convinced and converted to the truth of gospel. In 638, he gave the command that the gospel was to be proclaimed throughout his entire domain, all of China.

In his decree, he said this, quote, this teaching is helpful to all creatures and beneficial to all men, so let it have free course throughout the empire. For more than a generation, the gospel was utterly hindered. Then persecution came, but the gospel kept prospering in China until the 11th century.

Then here's another one. We'll finish with this one, but I could keep you here all night, just with snippets of history that you don't even know of moves of God in entire nations as a knock-on consequence of the church of Antioch. This is the continuing history of a church.

A spiritual revival took place in the year 1007, when 200,000 people were converted amongst the curates, and it was Christian merchants traveling, selling their goods, who evangelized them. This revival, 200,000 come to Christ through this people. Who were they? Where were they? They were part of the Mongolian tribes north of China.

Between the 10th and the 20th centuries, various other tribes surrounding them, Mongolian tribes, in fact, several. I won't even try to pronounce their names. They're too hard.

All these different tribes were converted to Christ. They were penetrated, the Mongolian tribes. Remember Genghis Khan? You know about him.

Wait till you hear this. This is the Mongol tribes that were a terror to Catholic Europe. It was Genghis Khan who first united the tribes into one whole Mongol people.

When he came to power in the year 12,006, one of the kings of the curates, who had been a blood brother to Genghis's father, was also a born-again Nestorian Christian. This is how it had penetrated. He was killed in the year 2012 when he tried to stop Genghis from rising to power.

During the reign of Genghis Khan, there were a number of Christians in the royal family, his royal family. One of his wives that he left behind, she was a Nestorian Christian who began to evangelize many in around her. Her oldest sister, sorry, there was another lady, sorry, lost track, but through her four children, she preached the gospel.

When Genghis Khan died, she evangelized her four children. They never become believers, but they're sympathetic to the gospel. After Genghis Khan died, the gospel had free course amongst all the Mongolian tribes.

When we compare the missionary activity of the Church of the East with that of the Catholic Church in the Mediterranean and in the West, we can see how remarkable was the missionary activity of the church that was constantly evangelizing under hardships. Saints of God, we have looked over several messages of what the Bible says about the church of Antioch, one church gifted, evangelistic, ministering unto the Lord in worship. Out of that came not just a few things, missionary trips in our Bible, but entire missionary movement that saturated and evangelized the darkest place.

All the things you knew in history actually have a Christian testimony that you've never been told, that never, not even in churches does it get told about, or even in Christian Bible colleges. This is the lost history of the church, and we hardly know it. But I want to tell you, I believe again, there's just one last chapter of church history to be written, and we are here right now, and we're right in the midst of this, and either you're going to be a part of it, and this church is going to be a part of it, and we're going to pray, and we're going to preach, and we're going to believe, and we're going to evangelize, and we're going to build the church, and say this church can make a difference in our world.

This church, our children, my husband, my wife, us as a family, me as an individual, it matters that I live for the Lord Jesus Christ, that I serve him, and that here in this church, we're a gifted church, and a Christ-centered church, and a ministering church, and a missionary church, and a praying church, and a believing church, and a holy church, and a separated church, and a contending church. And yes, at times we're a church that has to maneuver through personal conflicts, one with the other, and at times hurt one another, or have to wrestle through those things. But I tell you, let a fire burn here, the like of which, even what's been accomplished in the past few years through touching people online, that that will pale into insignificance, because something breaks out here that impacts the city of Limerick, then Dublin, then Cork, then Galway, then all manners of places in around.

There are villages untouched within reach of us here. There are towns that have newborn again church within a short drive from here. There are people, masses of people right here.

This is a mission field. We are right in the midst of one of the greatest mission field. This island is wide open.

They'll listen to you on that high street. There's people that'll talk to you about the gospel, but we need to go. Someone has to evangelize the surrounding towns.

Someone needs to go plant some churches. Somebody needs to get out of this church, leave this church, and go raise up another work for God that's going to glorify Him and raise up another glorious testimony. Will you pray with me? Let's lift our hands.

Let's stand here as we close in the light of all that we said. Oh saints, that here in this church a vision would be birthed, that us standing, preaching, believing, uniting together, loving each other, making sure that we walk with God with a pure heart could have such a vast knock-on effect in our world. It does matter what this preacher does.

It does matter what you do. It does matter that we hear what the Spirit of God is saying to us. Father, we pray right tonight.

My God, strengthen us against the attack of the devil. Every lie that's been coming against individuals in this room. Lord God, we rebuke it in the mighty name of Jesus.

I pray there'll be a breakthrough in lives in this room. There'll be a setting free of the minds and the hearts and the emotions. My God, we take every thought captive.

We tear down strongholds in our own minds and emotions. My God, we ask for your grace tonight. We ask for the power of God tonight.

We ask for mighty breakthroughs tonight. Oh God, that you'd release a move of God in this city, that we would see a new missionary movement. My God, that we would evangelize unreached places.

Oh God, open our eyes to see the towns and the villages and the cities of this land. Oh God, don't let us be satisfied but light a fire in this church. Oh God, raise up church planters.

Raise up evangelists. Raise up soul winners, oh God. Raise up pastors and shepherds, oh God.

Lord God, raise up those that are going to pray and intercede daily. My God, that every morning they're going to be storming the very throne of grace, praying, revive us again. Lord God, save the hosts.

Lord God, that are on their way to hell. Lord God, break the power of religion in our city. Lord God, use us.

See our hearts tonight. In Jesus' mighty name.

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