

## That The World May Know: In the Dust of the Rabbi - Session 3: The Presence of God: A Counter-Cultural Community

### God Prepared a World to Receive His Message

The people of Asia Minor did not need more gods. They were happy and prosperous enough with their own gods. They were confident of eternal life, had no sense of sin, and felt no need for forgiveness. Yet when the early Christians brought the message of the kingdom of God and lived that message in the midst of a pagan world, the awesome power of God turned that world upside down.

1. Somehow the early believers knew that Asia Minor was a strategic location to fulfill the Messiah's mandate. Scripture reveals that several disciples of Jesus went to Asia Minor. In which regions and cities of Asia did Paul teach?  
Acts 13 – 14  
Acts 16:1 – 10  
Acts 18:18 – 20:28
2. What was the result of Paul's long-term teaching in Ephesus?  
Acts 19:10
3. Which groups of believers did Peter write to in Asia Minor? What was his message to them? How was Peter following the discipleship model Jesus had taught?  
1 Peter 1:1 – 16
4. To which believers did the apostle John write in the Book of Revelation? How was John being a disciple making disciples?  
Revelation 1:4 – 6  
Revelation 1:9 – 3:22

### Culture Clash in the Marketplace

One area in which the values of early Christians opposed those of the culture at large was in the making, buying, and selling of goods. In Asia Minor, every trade — from potters to farmers to sandal makers — had a guild, and every tradesperson belonged to a guild. Each guild had a god, and guild members celebrated and sacrificed to that god. In addition, everyone who had products to sell had to “dedicate” those goods to the honor of the gods of the city.

1. What problems did the early believers face in Asia Minor in relationship to idol worship? How big a problem was this?  
1 Corinthians 8:4 – 13  
1 Corinthians 10:25 – 29  
Acts 15:19 – 29  
  
What was the role of community in practicing obedience? What was the role of community in the life of the early church?  
  
Did Paul's solution to the problem of eating meat sacrificed to idols apply to other goods as well?
2. Sacrifices and offerings made in obedience to God were nothing new to the Jews or early Christians. What did the Jews do in obedience to God?  
Leviticus 1 – 2  
Leviticus 27:30 – 32  
  
What are believers to offer in obedience to God?  
Romans 6:11 – 14  
Romans 12:1 – 2  
  
What do you indicate if you “offer” yourself to someone or something other than God?

### Excluded From Political Power

Jesus' disciples took their message to a world under Rome's authority, but daily life was governed on the local level by town councils meeting in the *bouleuterion*, or council house. His disciples would be excluded from that important leadership council. The councils were powerless to silence the disciples or diminish the power of their message.

1. What had Jesus warned His disciples concerning their relationship with unbelievers and their governments? How did this prepare them, especially those who were Zealots?  
Luke 12:8 – 12  
John 15:18 – 25
2. Who has the ultimate authority in all things and why?  
Matthew 28:16 - 20  
John 17:1 – 5  
Colossians 1:15 – 20
3. Why were the disciples willing to submit themselves to existing earthly authorities? What was their purpose in doing so?  
Romans 13:1 – 7  
Titus 3:1 – 7  
1 Peter 2:13 – 17
4. Scripture records a number of accounts of early believers in conflict with existing authorities. What kind of influence did the believers lack? What kind of influence did they have?  
Acts 4:1 – 21  
Acts 16:16 – 40  
  
What did the influence of the believers accomplish in terms of teaching the message of the kingdom of God?

## Communities of Faith

Throughout Scripture God accomplishes His work with individuals in the context of community. Individual actions affected the community. God's work within the community affected individuals and the community affected the world around it. The Christian commitment to live in obedience to God, as practiced in hundreds of small house churches across the Roman Empire caused the early church to explode.

1. Where did Jesus live with His disciples when they were training to become like Him? How did this housing situation affect the disciples' obedience to the Rabbi's teaching?  
Matthew 13:1 and 36  
Mark 1:29 – 36  
Mark 2:1 – 2  
Mark 10:10
2. Where did Jesus tell His disciples to live when He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God? What impact did this have on their future ministry?  
Luke 9:1 – 6
3. In what kinds of places did Paul meet people and teach them? How much passion did he have to make disciples?  
Acts 16:13 – 34  
Acts 17:10 – 17  
Acts 18:7 – 19  
Acts 20:20
4. What is the evidence that the discipleship model Jesus used to teach and train His disciples was alive and well in the early churches?  
1 Corinthians 4:16 – 17  
Philemon 1 – 2  
1 Thessalonians 1:1 – 10

## Love: Living Evidence of the Presence of God

Jesus emphasized that His disciples would demonstrate the "fire of God" within them through love and unity. Consider the many ways love demonstrates God's presence in our lives.

1. Forgive each other - 2 Corinthians 2:5-11  
Colossians 3:13
2. Love each other  
Ephesians 5:1 – 2 - 1 John 4:7 – 12
3. Share with those in need - 1 John 3:16 – 20  
Romans 12:13 - Ephesians 4:28  
1 Timothy 6:18 – Hebrews 13:1 – 3  
Hebrews 13:16
4. Show compassion - Ephesians 4:32
5. Do not bring lawsuits or publicly defame Jesus and His followers –  
1 Corinthians 6:1 – 8
6. Show tolerance; avoid anger, favoritism, and gossip; promote peace - James 1:19 – 21  
James 1:26 - James 2:1 – 9 - James 3:3 – 6  
James 3:17 – 18
7. Do not seek revenge - Romans 12:9 – 21
8. Show hospitality - Matthew 25:35 – 36  
1 Peter 4:8 – 9
9. Accept one another's differences  
Romans 14:1 – 23
10. Pray for each other, confess sin to each other - James 5:13 – 20
11. Have unity - Galatians 3:26 – 28

## References

Exodus 3	Exodus 19
Exodus 20	Leviticus 1
Leviticus 2	Leviticus 9
Leviticus 27	1 Kings 18
2 Chronicles 7	Isaiah 44
Jeremiah 27	Joel 2
Obadiah 13	Matthew 3
Matthew 9	Matthew 13
Matthew 25	Matthew 28
Mark 1	Mark 2
Mark 10	Mark 13
Luke 9	Luke 12
John 15	John 17
Acts 2	Acts 4
Acts 13	Acts 14
Acts 15	Acts 16
Acts 17	Acts 18
Acts 19	Acts 20
Romans 6	Romans 12
Romans 13	Romans 14
Romans 15	Romans 16
1 Corinthians 1	1 Corinthians 3
1 Corinthians 4	1 Corinthians 6
1 Corinthians 8	1 Corinthians 10
1 Corinthians 16	2 Corinthians 2
Galatians 2	Galatians 3
Galatians 5	Galatians 6
Ephesians 2	Ephesians 4
Ephesians 5	Philippians 4
1 Thessalonians 1	1 Timothy 3
1 Timothy 6	Titus 3
Philemon 1	Philemon 2
Hebrews 13	Colossians 1
Colossians 3	James 1
James 2	James 3
James 5	1 Peter 1
1 Peter 2	1 Peter 3
1 Peter 4	1 John 3
1 John 4	Revelation 1
Revelation 18	