



# Riding God's Wave to Freedom!

Acts 12

# Happy Advent Everyone!!!

Here is a note on not “keeping  
Christ in Christmas)

<https://theologycurator.com/2-reasons-christmas/>

1. Jesus came humbly
2. It is for the Church How are we putting Christ in our lives, not gifts under our trees.

## 2 Reasons NOT to ‘Keep Christ in Christmas’

PANGEA

# This Month we are Looking closely at ACTS 12

Our First Week we tried an escape room in  
to think about Peter in a different way.

This Week we are looking at the Christmas  
Story and History.



<https://forms.gle/7rhp2okU7MtzXPjh9> (The Escape Room)

# Christmas in America- The Story

- One Reason we Celebrate Christmas like we do today is because of the Puritans. They didn't Celebrate it and that caused a vacuum that was filled by Victorian Values. Specifically, Queen Victoria's (1837) German Protestant Mother Kept the Traditions that filled that Void. Christmas Trees... became popular then, but the Church proper did not do much.
- Then (1843) Charles Dickens a Christmas Carol Came along. Understand Charles Dickens was a Rock star! He Created a Myth of Christmas which was focused on Giving, not the Gospel.
- In the US, in 1810 The saint Nicholas Day Dinner Featured illustration of St. Nicholas ( the Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor) in bishop's robes. The illustrations had him being pulled by horses, and 1862 he morphed into a small elflike Creature who lived at the North Pole, as a toy maker, elves, receiving letters from kids.

# More History

- In 1931, Coca-Cola they used his Dutch Name SinterKlass in order for people to encounter Santa (Drinking a Coke). The same man did the illustrations from 1931-1964- developing our current “Santa” that we have also exported.
- Understand that marketing and Consumerism is King. For ex. Diamond Wedding Rings are a modern invention (1930's) Christmas has become a Child centered, Gift Centered Holiday. That is not all bad... but it can distract from It's Origins.
- Don't Forget it is a made up “Christian” holiday...Based on the Pagan celebration of Winter Solstice Feasts that Predate Christianity. ( This is one source of the Trees, Lights etc.) Many Secular Holidays were Christianized to turn pagan holidays into Christian ones. Easter/Resurrection Day is Christian but it too is connected to Pagan fertility Spring festivals- Rabbits and Eggs..

# Christmas in The Bible

Source: [Why Putting Christ Back in Christmas Is Not Enough](#),  
David Taylor Christianity Today

1. **It was A Fantastic Story...** With Real Angels, Magi, Dreams, a Child King, etc. Less like Pixar, more like Narnia.
2. **It was a story of hardship loss, and pain.** Child out of wedlock, Social Stigma of Joseph to marry Mary, Infertility with Zechariah and Elizabeth, A refugee family, and the Massacre of Children. "Christ birth is an encounter with joy and not happiness because joy, biblically considered, can account for suffering, while happiness cannot.
3. **It was a multigenerational, Multi-Cultural story.** ( it was not just for kids and toys). Jesus had a teenaged Mother, Elizabeth, Anna the prophetess and Simeon (the God-Receiver) were all elderly. Mary and Joseph were from the lower Class, The Shepherds were from the outcast class, Zechariah from the Priestly Class, the magi were astrologers (Scientists of their day), and Herod was a king.
4. **It was full of Spontaneous Songs...** Speech wasn't sufficient to tell the story, songs were used. Mary has her Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah sings his way out of silence (Lk1:64), the angels chorus, and Simeon bursts into Verse (Lk 2:33-35) at the sight of the Christ child.

# So How should we Celebrate?

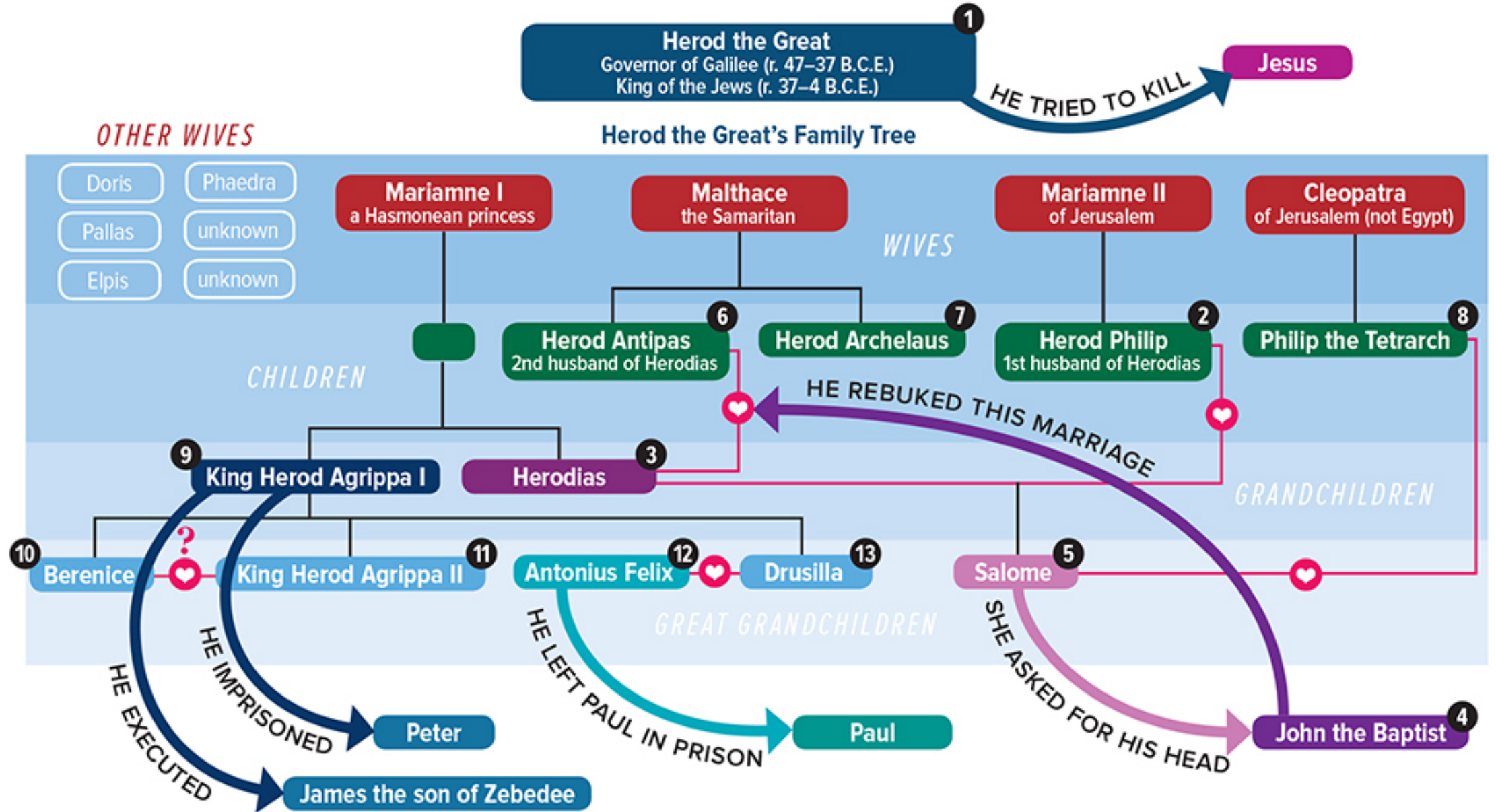
Source: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2018/december/putting-christ-back-in-christmas-not-enough-nativity-america.html>

- **First Without guilt or Shame-** Enjoy what is good about “Christmas in America” ... Enjoy It’s a Wonderful life, Charlie Brown, Wreaths, Trees, Mariah Carey songs (Even if you are singing background for her). God’s Grace and goodness are not absent from such things.
- Second- **Remember “Christmas in America should not be confused with the complex Gospel story** with both joy and sorrow, justice and mercy in a redemptive story of God and His Kingdom.
- **Let America have it’s Christmas story**, it is not worth the fight to try and change it. Treat it like any other aspect of our nations traditions, for better or worse.
- **Celebrate the Feast of the Nativity** and admire the beauty of the story of baby Jesus.
- **Let people see what they need in us.** That Christ is with us (Emmanuel) now right here in this time and place.

# Acts 12 is Primarily 2 Stories

- Peter's Deliverance from Prison
  - Q. Why didn't God deliver James?
  - Q. Why did the Jews hope Peter would die?
  - Q. Why did they leave him hanging outside?
- Herod's Pride
  - Q. How was This Herod Related to the one that remade the Temple?
  - Q. How do you get to the King? Through someone he trusts- Blastus.
  - Q. Why did Tyre and Sidon, give into a prideful King?
  - Q. Why did God kill Herod? His father killed thousands of babies, and didn't die... He simply didn't give praise to God and dies...

# The Tale of the Herods



# What is man that thou art mindful of him?

- Sense our World (input)
- Think about what we sense and make choices (programming)
- Act on those Choices (output)
- What is A robot?... They are becoming more in our image...The definition is important because it helps us to know who we are, and how we are messed up.

# We are not Robots, but they are made in our image, as we are made in God.

- Sin impacts and corrupts our senses and inputs. Be careful of echo chambers that are not Kingdom centered. Romans 1:18-21
- Sin impacts our thinking, it corrupts our code, our programming and our choices. We need to be debugged. Understand that the bad guy rarely thinks they are doing bad things! The Herods knew the Jewish laws and disregarded them... Mark 9:35 ( Jesus came to reprogram us- Last shall be first))
- Sin impacts our outputs so we don't do the things we want to do (Romans 7:14-20ff)



# What does it mean to be a Christian? To be a Disciple?

1. Sense God's Kingdom in Jesus
2. Make a Choice to be a part of it
3. Act on that Choice...

You are not even a Robot if you Can't Choose or act on the choices you have... As God's image bearers we are made to make those choices...

# What is A Robot?

Are We programmed to be stubborn?

- <https://www.wired.com/video/watch/hardwired-so-what-is-a-robot-really>

Are we able to change based on what our Maker wants?



Peter is an imperfect image bearer who decided to Follow His master

Herod is an imperfect image bearer who decided to BE his own master

Who are we?

What things are our Inputs- How are those inputs impacting our thoughts? How are those thoughts impacting our actions? Who are we following?



## Changing our Programming...

- What Can Get you to Change your programming?
- Little Johnny's mother had been noticing that his math grades had been steadily declining. She decided to have a chat with Johnny about his disinterest in math, being more responsible with his studies, and the importance of bringing his grade up.
- The next quarter ended- Johnny's report card came out, and his math grade was still low. So Johnny's mother decided to call his math teacher in an attempt to get to the root of the problem. Little Johnny's mother was hopeful that Johnny's math grade would finally improve. But to her dismay, his grade had still not improved on his next report card.
- In an act of desperation, little Johnny's mother decided to transfer him to the local Catholic school. Immediately, she noticed that when Johnny came home from school, he wouldn't say a word, but would go straight to the table and begin doing his math homework. Johnny's mother was very pleased with this sudden change; and over the course of the next few weeks, it seemed little Johnny's math issue had finally been resolved. Once again, Johnny's report card came; but this time he got an "A" in math.
- Johnny's mother was overjoyed- yet a little perplexed. She asked him, "What do they do so differently at the Catholic school that finally persuaded you to change your attitude and bring up your math grade?"
- Little Johnny replied, "On the first day of math class, when I looked up and saw that guy hanging from the giant plus sign above the chalkboard, I knew they weren't messing around."



# Herod Agrippa's Ego Centric Programming Telling a Self Centered Story

Acts 12: <sup>19</sup> When Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. <sup>20</sup> He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

<sup>21</sup> On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. <sup>22</sup> They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." <sup>23</sup> Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

- He was a slave to the "Nazi's" (Satan and his forces- The occupiers of God's World)
- The fruit of that slavery is sensing things on Satan's terms
- Being programmed to be prideful, self centered, not loving etc.
- Acting on that Selfishness brings a lack of focus on God's kingdom but our own..
- YOU make Disciples (good or bad)- Your children, Other nations, etc. Tyre Sidon...



# Titus Kaphar's Freedom Programming Telling a Complex Story

Here is a Relevant artist who is very humble... but Relevant and shares his voice to serve others..

Not Gospel Centered but Story Centered... How do we Tell the Complex story that God is with us?

<https://artandtheology.org/tag/titus-kaphar/>



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmoWXI1uOA>
- He is free despite doing poorly in High school, He is free to fulfill a purpose his gifts and for Freeing others.
- The fruit of that Freedom is sensing things on God's kingdom terms
- Being programmed to be loving, Humble, Sacrificial, etc.
- Acting on that Selflessness brings a focus on God's kingdom not our own..
- YOU also Make Disciples... Nexthaven...

# Question for Today in Groups if time or as homework


Thing to Ponder- People who are not Christians or Christ focused have

1. a different set of inputs, and
2. a different way of Thinking or looking at the World.
3. Act Accordingly.

Our Job is to allow Christ to set them free by giving them input of what God looks like...  
Once they have that, we can encourage them to choose and act on God's Kingdom.

## • Peter's Deliverance from Prison

- Q. Why didn't God deliver James?
- Q. Why did the Jews hope Peter would die?
- Q. Why did the saints leave him hanging outside?



## Christmas as a Case Study of Robotics at Work...

Christmas, Weddings, and other crazy traditions we often forget where they come from.

Remember Junk in = Junk Out..

- Inputs- Gifts, Lights, Consumerism, love by gifts not sacrifice.
- Thoughts- It's the most wonderful time (or depressing time) of the year. Money fixes things. Traditions are healthy.
- Actions-Going into debt, giving lip service to Christ (cultural Christianity), Family Centered activities (not Christ centered), etc.

IF YOU'RE NOT PART OF  
The  
**SOLUTION**



You're Part Of The  
**PRECIPITATE.**

## Week 3- Becoming a Freedom Fighter and Discipler!

### Recap:

1. **French Resistance Escape room**
  1. **We are in occupied Territory and are part of the resistance or Nazi Sympathizers.**
  2. **God is still in ultimate control (John died , Peter didn't)**
  3. **We have to fight, Pray and Recruit.**

2. Freedom for a person requires knowing what a person is:

- a. Image bearer of God.
- b. A Senser, Thinker, Acter (like a robot but so much more)

	Input	Choices	Actions
Herod Agrippa	Pride of a King	Not to correct those who called him a god.	Killed John for popularity. Jailed Peter
Titus Kaphar	Humble beginnings	Used Gifts to make art	Started NXHVN
Us as Followers	Other Christians, seeing their actions/ words	Saying I want that.	Make-Train new Recruits/ Disciples.

# Occupied Territory Thinking



- What is your commitment to your homeland (God's Kingdom)?
  - a. Saving many from death at the hand of the occupiers?
  - b. Making more disciples to the resistance (Remember- Repentance is really picking a side.
  - c. NOT PICKING AGAINST THE NAZI'S (th dark)- That is what Judas did... but truly Picking God's Kingdom on His terms (the light)!!! John 1:1-5
  - d. Not getting comfortable with the occupation culture. Would you write songs in German? Understand Judea was occupied in Jesus' day. The new Testament was written in the occupied language. But not in it's culture.

# Quiz Break... Which of these Christmas songs were written by Jewish people?

"Do You Hear What I Hear"

"Silver Bells"

"Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"

"Holly Jolly Christmas"

"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"

"Winter Wonderland"

"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"

"White Christmas"

"Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!"

"The Christmas Song"

All of them!





# Do you Hear what I hear... Complexity

Written by a woman who lived next to JFK in Brookline

- Gloria Shayne Wrote the Music, Her husband was Noel Regney. It was written during the Cuban Missile Crisis as a song for Peace.

Wrote it with her husband who was a Wait for it- A French WWII veteran.

- We are in the World not of the World... What does that look like? Was Gloria assimilated?
- What does Assimilation look like?

**John 1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> [a]He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him [b]not even one thing came into being that has come into being. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. <sup>5</sup> And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not [c]grasp it. <sup>6</sup> A man [d]came, *one* sent from God, *and* his name was John. <sup>7</sup> [e]He came [f]as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> [g]He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. <sup>9</sup> [h]This was the true Light [i]that, coming into the world, enlightens every person. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and yet the world did not [j]know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His [k]own, and His own people did not [l]accept Him. <sup>12</sup> But [m]as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who [n]believe in His name, <sup>13</sup> who were [o]born, not of [p]blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only *Son* from the Father, full of grace and truth.

NASB

- John 1 is a great Christmas Scripture and it deals with our Sense Think Act Framework...

	Light Jesus	Darkness Occupied world
Input	Light/Scripture, History	Occupied culture, Satan, Darkness.
Thinking/Choice	Know/Accept/Grasp Him	Not Know/Not Accept/Not Grasp Him
Actions	Witness, testify about the light, resist occupation.	Reject the Light, Accept occupation.



# Week 4- Becoming a Freedom Fighter and Discippler! PT. 2

## Recap:

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  1. **We are in occupied Territory and are part of the resistance or Nazi Sympathizers.**
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Us as Followers	Other Christians, seeing their actions/ words	Saying I want that.	Make-Train new Recruits/ Disciples.

# The Occupied land Awaits to be brought into the Freedom of the Resistance.

## Rom. 8:18-21

- A) We must be willing to Love our Country (God's Kingdom) more than our family, our comforts, our lives. That is what Freedom looks like.
- B) We are most free when fighting for what we believe in AND it aligns with our Maker and what we were designed for (serving others). A screwdriver is not free hitting in nails. A person is not free if demanding to not where a mask at the expense of others. Hellen Keller was an image bearer, even without some of her senses. Her Body was occupied but her spirit was free.

- C. Our Case Studies: The Churches in Revelation 2-3
- Ex. Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6)
- Inputs: Hear what the spirit is saying, Wake up (so you can sense) (vs. 1 & 2)
- Think: Remember what you have heard- Hold it, Change your mind (repent)- Pick the right team! (hint it is not the Nazi's)
- Act: vs1. I know your deeds- they are dead deeds- not supporting the resistance. (there are still some fighting for me though. Vs. 4)



- **Romans 8:** <sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be* compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the eagerly awaiting creation waits for the revealing of the sons *and daughters* of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it*, <sup>[a]</sup>in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only *that*, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons *and daughters*, the redemption of our body. <sup>24</sup> For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, through perseverance we wait eagerly *for it*. NASB

- **Message to Sardis**

- **3** “To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

- He who has <sup>[a]</sup>the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, and *yet* you are dead. <sup>2</sup> Be constantly alert, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. <sup>3</sup> So remember <sup>[b]</sup>what you have received and heard; and <sup>[c]</sup>keep *it*, and repent. Then if you are not alert, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. <sup>4</sup> But you have a few <sup>[d]</sup>people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup> The one who overcomes will be clothed the same way, in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. <sup>6</sup> The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

# Application of Resistance- The 5 Thresholds.

		<b>Someone Growing up in Occupied France</b>
<b>Sensing (Input)</b>	Trust-	As a supporter of the occupation they learn to trust you, as you see them as part of True France.
<b>Sensing/Thinking</b>	Curiosity	They Start to ask- You really love France... and it's historical culture (i.e. on God's term)- Why?
<b>Thinking (Programming)</b>	Open to Change	They See your light and the Spirit allows them to overcome the Darkness to see themselves as Historically French.
<b>Thinking/ Acting</b>	Seeking	They begin to seek ways they can support the Resistance.
<b>Acting (Output)</b>	Follower	They truly love France and focus on seeing it liberated, and others trained for the cause!

## Putting this into Action...

If we have messed up programming, we have need to connect with our programmer, and be maintained by the Spirit of what our Code was supposed to be.

What Programming do we need fixed?

- The example of a 12 step program can be helpful in breaking things down to help to getting the miss information out and growing in self love, need for community etc.

What is your Lament in the occupied Land?

- People not seeing that compassion trumps the law and legalism.. Missing the Spirit of the law. And people not wanting to know God because of the ways we behave.



# Culture Assimilation

What does that look like to you? (this is complex)

- Be aware of the conditioning all around us... slave mentality... identify the core issues in order to address them.

How can you avoid being assimilated into our Culture?

- Being consistent and firm in where you stand... Halloween for Life Church... That we care about people, more than our challenge with a holiday.