

**GATECITY CHURCH**  
**CARRY THE ARK, PT. 2**  
**SEPTEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2024 – BILLY HUMPHREY**

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**I. A Transitional Moment**

- A. Over the last several years, we have been sharing a message that Jesus Christ is repossessing His Church and becoming the central focus of the Bride once again. The Father is exceedingly jealous for the unanimous exaltation of Jesus across every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.
- B. He is removing celebrity Christianity and seeing to it that there is only one star in the Kingdom of God: Jesus. He alone should be the praise of every tongue.
- C. “God has exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow... and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).
- D. The Father has plans in mind to bring this to pass across the nations, and we want to agree and partner with His heart to see the Son’s exaltation and to see the Church become the spotless Bride she is destined to be.

**II. Jesus’ Vision for His House**

- A. It’s time for the Church to wrestle with Jesus’ words and actions when he declared, “My house shall be called a house of prayer.”

**Matthew 21:12-13** – “<sup>12</sup> Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. <sup>13</sup> And He said to them, ‘It is written, MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER, but you have made it a DEN OF THIEVES.’”

- B. I’ve often pictured what this day must have been like. I have stood on the Temple Mount in the old city and walked through the events in my mind, struck with wonder about what that day must have been like.
- C. It was only a few days before His crucifixion. Jesus was making a pivotal statement at a crucial time. He was declaring His own desire for His people, and He was branding the Church with an identity - His people, His house, His Church would be a House of Prayer.
- D. It’s important that we consider more deeply what Jesus wanted us to understand when He said “My House.”

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- E. The word translated “house” is the Greek word “*oikos*.” It speaks of the physical dwelling, the household, as well as the family members. “*Oikos*” is the word that describes someone’s circle of friends and family. It’s as if Jesus was saying, “My friends and family shall be friends and family of prayer.”
- F. At the same time, the passage He is quoting is from Isaiah 56:7, “I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer... for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”
  - 1. The context of Isaiah’s prophecy points to the time when the Lord returns, the time when Jesus will rule and reign from Jerusalem. He is specifically talking about how the temple will be known as a House of Prayer for all nations.
  - 2. Jesus was using this prophecy to establish that the former, the current, and the future identity of the House of God was that we would always be a House of Prayer.
- G. When I consider Jesus’ dreams for His people and the way the Lord has led us at *GateCity* by bringing the House of Prayer together with the local church, I am stunned by His leadership.
- H. Our deep desire is to be a house, a family for Him; that our house, our church, would be the house and the family that He wants. Unto this end, we are walking this out by tending our corporate altar of worship and prayer at the center of our spiritual family.

### **III. A Kingdom of Priests**

- A. Considering Jesus’ words let us now also consider Peter’s description of the redeemed:
  - 1 Peter 2:5** – “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
    - 1. In describing believers, Peter seizes on two metaphors, “*living stones*” built into a spiritual house and a “*holy priesthood*” called to minister to God.
    - 2. Peter was expressing in his own terms the same identity that Jesus had first declared that day in the temple courts, when He said, “My House (my family) shall be a House (family) of Prayer.”

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3. We have to accept and engage in these two truths: The body of believers is the temple (the spiritual house), and the body of believers is the group of priests whose first ministry is to God.
- B. John affirmed this identity that believers are priests who minister to God first.
- Revelation 5:10** – "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."
- C. No one can minister to God for you. It's not something we can delegate. Each of us are priests to God and He desires to receive ministry from each of us.
- D. We believe the entire Church is meant to operate in a priestly capacity, ministering to the Lord as our first work of ministry. This understanding doesn't take away from any of the other components of church life and family, it simply prioritizes ministry to the Lord first (Matthew 6:33).

#### **IV. Antioch as the Blueprint**

**Act 13:1-3** – "1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

- A. What we see in Antioch is an active community of believers committed to evangelism and discipleship, operating in a priestly identity with ministry to the Lord at the center of the Church.
- B. We see Antioch as the key blueprint for how the Church is meant to function. This is our calling and endeavor: to be a church like Antioch that prioritizes ministry to the Lord first, and from there all the other aspects of vibrant church family flow.