

Christ or Christianity

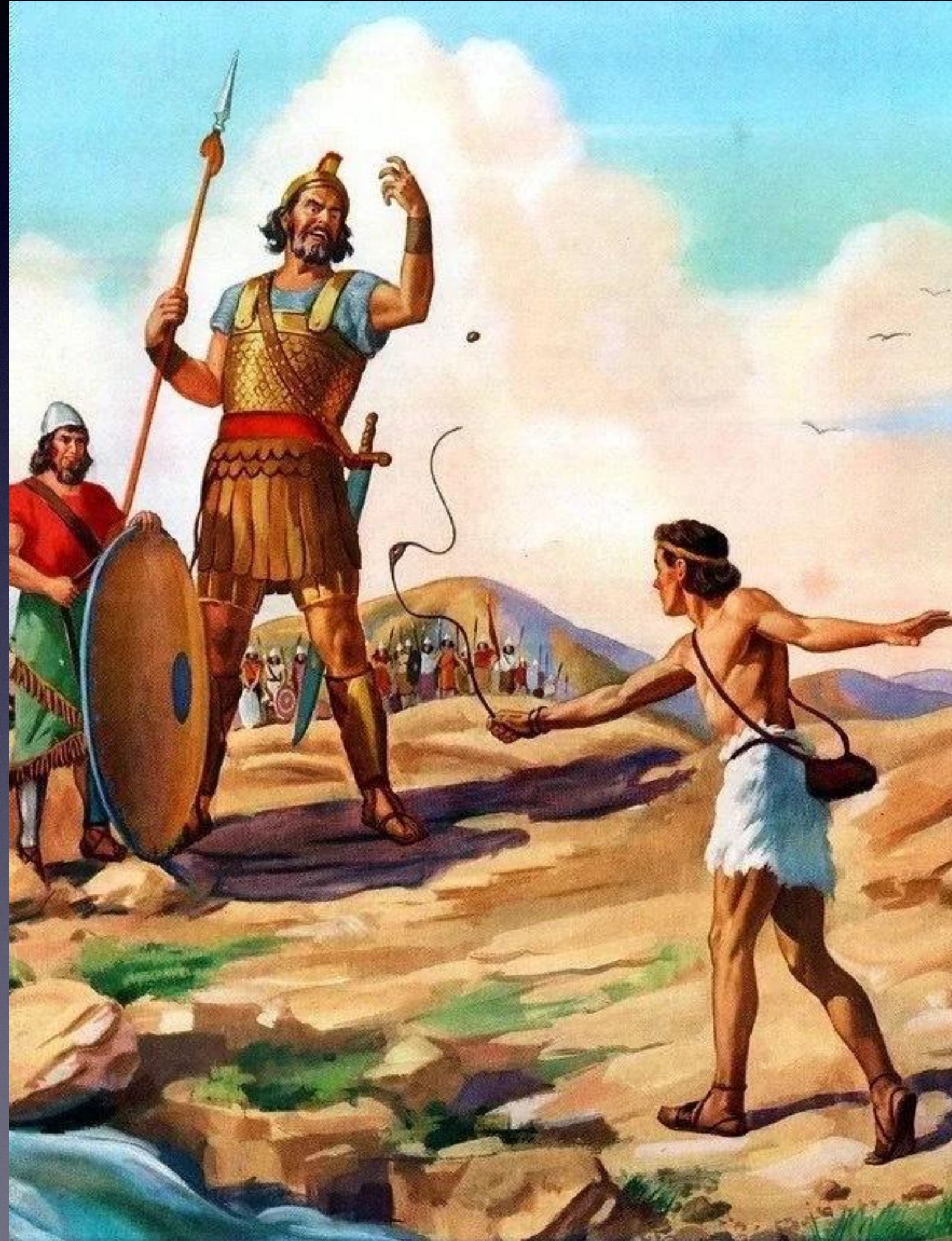
The worst of the Persecutors

Persecution

- Types of persecutions
 - Religious
 - Ethic/Race
 - Political
 - Economics
 - Social/Class (slavery)



The Great Stories



About a farmer

- Matthew 13:10
 - The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”



About a farmer

•Matthew 13:18-23

•“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:
¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”



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Smyrna

I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.



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Jesus Teachings

- **Matthew 5:10–12**

- **Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**



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- **Matthew 10:16–18**

- **“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. ¹⁸ On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.**



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- **Matthew 24:9-14**

- **“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**



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Early Persecutors

- In the Bible
 - Acts 5:17-42
 - 17 High Priest and Sadducees were sad you see (Jealous)
 - 18 Put the Apostles in public jail
 - 19 During the night an Angel lets them out
 - 20 Angel tells them to go to temple and tell people about this “new life”
 - 21-26 comical situation
 - 34-39 Gamaliel stops those that want to kill the apostles
 - 40 Apostles flogged then let go



Early Persecutors

- **Saul (the enforcer)**
 - Acts 7 Stephen is stoned
 - Acts 8:1-3
 - Great persecution against the church
 - Saul going house to house dragging men and women out to prison
 - Later Saul (Paul) is persecuted by those that use to support him



Types of Persecution

- **Violence**

- Physical harm, which includes beatings, torture, imprisonment, and killings
- Acts 7 Stephen stoned
- Acts 8 Saul putting Christians in prison
- Acts 12:1-4 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 met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival 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. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.



Types of Persecution

- **Oppression**

- Systemic control by governments or groups, including strict censorship, limiting speech, and restricting public or private gatherings
- Acts 4:18-21 Then they called them in again and **commanded them not to speak or teach** at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.
”**After further threats they let them go.** They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.



Types of Persecution

- **Rejection**

- Social exclusion where family, friends, communities, or entire cultures push individuals away and attempt to banish them from society
- Luke 6:22 Blessed are you when people **hate** you, when they **exclude** you and insult you and **reject** your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.
- 1 Peter 4:14-16 If you are **insulted** because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.
¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.



Types of Persecution

- **Insults/Slander**

- Verbal abuse, mocking, spreading lies, and shaming individuals because of their beliefs or identity.
- Matthew 5:11 “Blessed are you when people **insult** you, **persecute** you and **falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.**
- Revelation 2:9 I know about the **slander** of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.



Roman Persecutions

- **Roman Persecution**
 - The Roman persecution of Christians was a sporadic and localized conflict that lasted for nearly three centuries



Roman Persecutions

- **Reasons why Romans persecuted Christians**

- Romans viewed offering sacrifices to the emperor as a vital duty for civic unity and state loyalty; monotheistic Christians considered this idolatry and treason.
- Rumors spread among the pagan populace that Christian practices like communion and calling each other "brother and sister" involved cannibalism or incest.
- Unlike other local religions that fit comfortably into the polytheistic Roman Pantheon, Christians claimed universal truth and refused to acknowledge other gods.



Roman Persecutions

- **Major Waves of Roman Persecutions**

- First organized persecutions, **Emperor Nero (64)** blamed Christians for the Great Fire of Rome, subjecting them to brutal executions in the capital, which tradition says included the martyrdom of Peter and Paul.
- **Trajan (98-117 AD)** set a legal precedent through correspondence with Pliny the Younger, ruling that Christians should not be hunted down actively, but must be punished if they refused to recant.
- **Decius (249-251 AD)** Issued the first empire-wide mandate requiring all citizens to obtain a certificate proving sacrifice to the gods, which severely targeted non-compliant Christians
- **Diocletian (303-311 AD)** launched the "Great Persecution"—the final, most systematic, and deadliest state-sponsored effort to destroy church buildings, burn scriptures, and strip Christians of legal rights. His time of persecution was the longest and most brutal
- Small local persecutions throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries.



How did the 2nd & 3rd Century Christians view Persecution

- 2nd Century Elder
 - Brothers, let us willingly leave our sojourn in this present world so we can do the will of him who called us. And let us not fear to depart out of his world.
- Justyn Martyr
 - “Since our thoughts are not fixed on the present, we are not concerned when men put us to death. Death is a debt that we all must pay anyway.”



End of Roman Persecutions

- **Edict of Toleration 311 AD**
 - Emperor Galerius officially suspended the persecutions in the East on his deathbed.
- **Edict of Milan (313 AD)**
 - Co-emperors Constantine and Licinius granted full legal freedom and restitution of property to Christians across the Roman world
- **Theodosius I (r. 379–395) issued the Edict of Thessalonica, officially establishing Christianity as the Roman state religion. It was also during the reign of Theodosius I that pagan practices were overtly deemed punishable offenses, which laid the framework for early Byzantine anti-pagan policies.**



The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

- Emperor Constantine
 - In Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life of Constantine* (Vita Constantini), Book 3, Chapter 64, Emperor Constantine issues a harsh imperial edict directed against heretics ^{and} schismatics (groups holding Christian beliefs outside the mainstream Church).
 - The emperor decrees that dissenting groups should be stripped of the legal and financial privileges previously granted to the church
 - The law explicitly bans heretical and schismatic sects from holding public or private religious gatherings anywhere in the empire



The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

- Constantine called for a church wide council
 - [First Council of Nicaea](#) in 325
 - Constantine chaired the council
 - He persuaded the council to create a creed to address the nature of the Son
- Also convinced the council to create a church organization similar to Rome's government
 - Each bishop was given a diocese (an administrative unit of the Roman government) to rule
 - Thus uniting the empire with the church



The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

- Degrees from the Nicene Council
 - Constantine proposed the wording of a church-wide creed that excluded the viewpoints of church leader named Arius
 - Because of Constantine's persuasive skills all but five of the church representatives signed the new creed
 - Constantine banished into exile the 5 who wouldn't sign including Arius
 - The start of christians persecuting christians



The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

- Constantine continues to prosecute those that he sees as heretics
 - Constantine decreed: “If any treatise composed by Arius should be discovered, let it be consigned to the flames, in order that not only his depraved doctrine may be suppressed, but also that no memorial of him may by any means be left. Therefore I decree that if anyone shall be detected in concealing a book written by Arius, and does not instantly bring it forward and burn it, the penalty for this offense shall be death.”



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The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

- **Results of the Nicene Council**
 - **Constantine Proclaims that the Nicene Creed inspired by God.**
 - **More “church laws” created to make uniformity within all the churches.**
 - **Example: the council decreed that all Christians must stand when praying on Sunday or during the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost**
- **Backlash from conservatives**
 - **More division and fighting**
 - **The next 2 centuries of infighting**
 - **Christians actually took up the sword and slaughtered each other over doctrinal disputes**



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The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

- **Augustine**
 - 4th century bishop of Hippo
 - Considered the most influential person in western Christianity
 - Almost universally recognized as the father of Western theology
 - Was a teacher of persuasive argumentation and writing. Very good at it
 - Never mastered Greek
 - Departed from Christ and apostles teachings and taking the church with him



The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

- **Things Augustine taught (partial list)**
 - Mary was born and lived her entire life without actual sin
 - That unbaptized infants are eternally damned
 - That sex within marriage is an inherently debased act
 - That war can be holy
 - That there is no forgiveness of sins outside the Catholic church
 - That some of the teachings of the apostles don't apply anymore
 - That there is a purgatorial fire
 - That the dead can benefit from the sacrifice of the Eucharist
 - That it is proper for a "Christian" state to persecute heretics



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The Worst 2 of the Persecutors

Augustine developed the first systematic defense of religious persecution

- Called his approach “righteous persecution” because it justified persecution for the righteous cause of saving people from the eternal torments of hell
- His logic of the burning house that as christians should force those in a burning house to leave even if the force is violent
- Used Sarah as an example of using persecution on others (her handmaid)
- Eventually led to the Protestant Reformation



Protestant vs Catholic

Europe religious persecutions

- Persecutions involved largely three main groups.
 - Roman Catholics
 - Lutheranism
 - Calvinism
 - Various smaller groups also involved
- At times the ones persecuted would become the ones persecuting others.
 - The Catholics would persecute the Lutherans
 - The Lutherans would persecute the Anabaptists
 - The Anabaptists started a riot in Amsterdam



American Persecution

Puritans (and Pilgrims) come to America

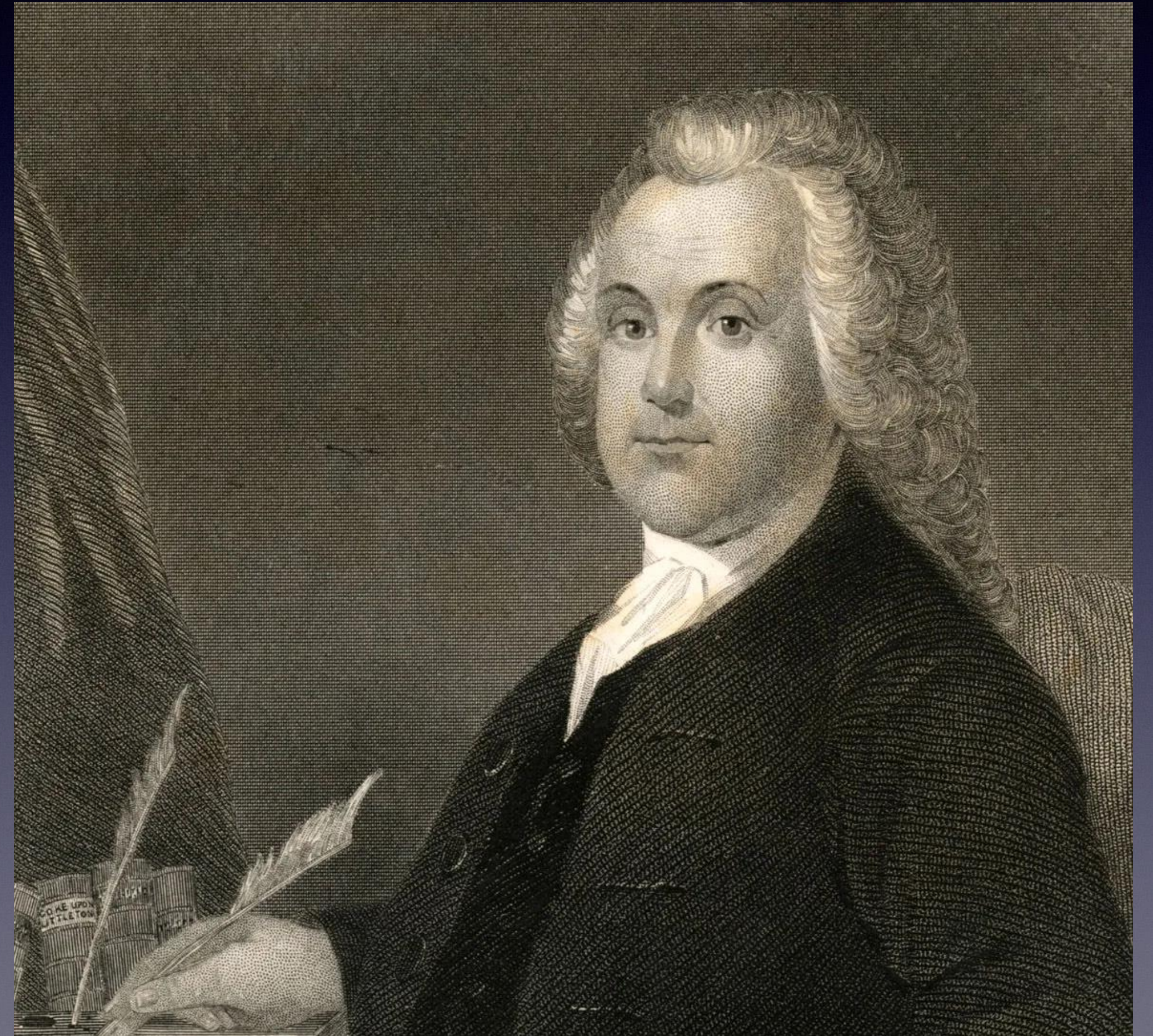
- **Reasons to come to the new world**
 - **English Kings persecuted them with fines, impressment and pressure to conform to the Anglican church**
- **The Puritans began to persecute others**
 - **Massachusetts Bay colony whipped Baptists, cropped the ears of Quakers, and hanged four Quaker missionaries between 1659 and 1661**
 - **Massachusetts passed laws in 1647 and 1700 forbidding Catholic priests from residing in the colony under threat of imprisonment or execution.**



Famous Persecution

Massachusetts Bay banished dissenters like Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams

- **Roger Williams argued that civil magistrates had no authority to police religious beliefs or enforce the Ten Commandments. He also declared that European kings had no right to grant charters for land belonging to Native Americans**
- **Then there was Anne Hutchinson**



Anne Hutchinson Persecution

The Trial and Legacy of Anne Hutchinson

- **The Antinomian Controversy (1636–1638)**
 - **The Religious Dispute:** Hutchinson championed the "Covenant of Grace," arguing that a person's inner relationship with God, not outward behavior or obedience to church laws, was the sole sign of salvation.
 - **The Civil Threat:** Ministers feared her teachings would lead to *antinomianism* (literally "against the law"), believing that if people thought laws didn't affect their salvation, civil society would collapse.
 - **The Gender Subversion:** In Puritan society, women were forbidden from teaching men. Hutchinson hosted twice-weekly meetings in her home that drew up to 60 people, including prominent male political leaders, directly challenging male authority.



Anne Hutchinson Persecution

The Trial and Legacy of Anne Hutchinson

•The 1637 Civil Trial

- The Accusation:** Governor John Winthrop put Hutchinson on trial before the Massachusetts General Court for "traducing the ministers" and promoting lawlessness.
- The Defense:** Lacking a lawyer, Hutchinson defended herself using an extraordinary command of Scripture, out-dueling Winthrop and the magistrates for two days and forcing them to admit she had broken no written laws
- The Downfall:** On the final day, Hutchinson declared that she knew she would be persecuted because God had spoken directly to her via a "voice of revelation." To Puritans, claiming direct revelation bypassed the Bible and was heresy.



Anne Hutchinson Persecution

Church Trial

• Results

- **Church Trial:** In March 1638, the Church of Boston formally excommunicated her, calling her a "heathen" and a "leper" to be cast out of the community.
- **Exile to Rhode Island:** Banished from Massachusetts, a pregnant Hutchinson and her children walked through the snow to join Roger Williams in Rhode Island, where they co-founded the town of Portsmouth.



Anne Hutchinson Descendants

Of notoriety

- **U.S. Presidents:** Franklin D. Roosevelt, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush.
- **Political Figures:** Mitt Romney, George W. Romney, and Stephen A. Douglas.
- **Legal Experts:** Supreme Court Chief Justice Melville Weston Fuller and Associate Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.
- **Academics & Arts:** Harvard University President Charles William Eliot and actor Ted Danson



Next Week

So How Many Planes are Enough