

DON'T BE GROSS

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Andy Stanley

Note: The following content is a raw transcript and has not been edited for grammar, punctuation, and word usage.

0:00:00.0 Andy Stanley: And welcome all of our Atlanta area churches and for those of you who are watching really from all over the country, all over the world, once again. And as you could imagine, with a large church, we plan way ahead, and so today's topic has been planned for quite some time, and in some ways it could not be more perfect with the things that are going on in the world today, and I hope that will become clearer as we spend the next few minutes together. One of history's greatest mysteries, perhaps one of the greatest mysteries in all of history is this one, how did a first century cult birthed in the armpit of the Roman Empire because the idea was considered the armpit of the Roman Empire. If you were assigned to Judea, you had done something terribly wrong.

0:00:47.0 AS: How was it that a first century cult birthed in the armpit of the Roman empire, whose leader, Jesus specifically, whose leader was rejected by his own people and then crucified, how in the world is it that it survived and it thrived in the face of violent organized state-funded resistance. How did this happen? Or let me ask you in a different way. How did it come about that a Nazarene sect, because this is not the church, this is what Christianity was referred to in the first century by people who were wondering, what is this and how do we make it go away? How did it come about that a Nazarene sect would eventually be embraced by the very empire that for 300 years sought to extinguish it? Or how is it, for those of you who have visited Rome in your adult life time, how is it, if you even notice, that there is a cross commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus hanging over the Emperor's Entrance in the Roman Colosseum? How did this happen? This is a mystery that historians have pondered really for generations, and they all pretty much arrive at the same conclusion. Years ago, I read Karen Armstrong's book, *Fields of Blood*, and I just ran across this quote and I've pulled it out and I've read it several times, but here's what Karen Armstrong says about what we would consider history's greatest mystery.

0:02:10.8 AS: Here's what she wrote. She said, "Against all odds," and that is an understatement. We can't even begin to imagine. Against all odds, by the third century, Christianity had become a force to be reckoned with. And then here's the giveaway statement, we still do not really understand how this came about. Nobody can deny that it happened, here we are, but how in the world this happened is one of history's greatest mystery, and we don't know how it came about unless we pay attention to and take seriously the eyewitness testimonies of the men and women who were there for these events and eventually documented them for the entire world who actually saw them and documented. Now, it's amazing that it happened, it's amazing really, that sandwich between temple and empire, this little movement that began in Galilee with again, the Galilee and day laborer we know it was Jesus of Nazareth. It's amazing, we've even heard his name, it's amazing anything about him survived, but it's undeniable that it did. But what's even more amazing is that Jesus of Nazareth actually predicted this. Gathered with his guys way up in what we would consider Syria, way, way, way north of Jerusalem, around that hot Syrian sun, and they're on their way to Caesarea, the region of Caesarea Philippi.

0:03:30.3 AS: And you remember this. Maybe if you grew up in church and Jesus is saying, hey, what's the word on the street about me? A question that you should never ask and I should never ask, 'cause you don't really wanna know. But what's, he's saying, what's my reputation in the community? And you say, well, some people think you're a reincarnated