

ANTIOCH IN SYRIA

- Antioch was the third (Josephus) or fourth (Libanius) largest city in the Roman Empire (after Rome, Alexandria, and Seleucia)
 - it had between 150,000 and 600,000 inhabitants in the first century AD—with 20,000 to 60,000 Jews (Josephus, *War* 7.43)
 - a large number of Greek-speaking Gentiles who lived in the city were attracted to Judaism (Josephus, *War* 7.45)

PAUL REBUKES PETER (Galatians 2:11–14)

- this incident probably took place *after* the first missionary journey but *before* the Council of Jerusalem
 - the men from James were legalistic Jewish Christians who came from Jerusalem—called Judaizers
 - they believed that Jewish Christians should practice the dietary laws of the Old Testament (Gal 2:12) and that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1)
 - it was unlawful for a Jew "to associate with a foreigner or to visit him" (Acts 10:28a): in eating with Gentiles a Jew may accidentally eat meat forbidden by the OT—so they put a fence around the dietary laws to keep people from breaking them
 - this fence was raised to the level of a divine command; but eating with Gentiles is not prohibited in the Old Testament
 - this man-made law has been practiced for at least 200 years—since the writing of Jubilees 22:16 (between 161–140 BC)
 - Peter ate regularly (imperfect tense) with the Gentile Christians in Antioch, but under pressure from the Judaizers he withdrew his fellowship gradually (imperfect tense)—not immediately
- Peter's separation was hypocritical because he knew he was free to eat with Gentiles and he knew the Judaizers were wrong: he was not persuaded to their point of view—he just bowed to their pressure out of fear (verse 12)
 - Paul rebuked Peter in a special meeting or worship service at the church of Antioch
 - the rebuke was public because the sin was public—committed against believing Gentiles in the Church at Antioch
- Peter no longer observed the dietary laws of the OT yet he put pressure on the Gentile Christians to observe them (verse 14)
 - to restore fellowship, the Gentile Christians must sacrifice their liberty and observe the dietary laws of the OT
 - this controversy in Antioch led directly to the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–29)

PRIOR REVELATION

- this incident must be seen in light of the lesson Peter learned from the vision of the sheet full of clean and unclean animals: "God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean" (Acts 10:28b)
 - if no man is unholy or unclean, then Jews are free to eat with Gentiles
- God has removed the dietary laws of the OT (Acts 10:10–16; 11:4–10) and the barrier between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:13–16)
 - Peter ate with Gentiles for the first time in the house of Cornelius, a Roman officer living in Caesarea (implied in Acts 11:3)

UNCOVERING SINS

- the epistle to the Galatians was written *after* the rebuke of Peter in Antioch and *after* the Jerusalem Council
- the Judaizers rejected the decision of the Jerusalem Council and continued spreading their legalism among the churches
 - Paul uncovered Peter's sin of hypocrisy to protect the Galatians from legalism and to preserve Christian liberty
 - Paul chose not to apply the principle of "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8; cf. Prov 10:12; 17:9; 1 Cor 13:4)
- Peter's sin became public knowledge in Antioch and its inclusion in the epistle to the Galatians spread the knowledge further
 - since this letter was preserved in the canon of Scripture, almost every believer in the Church Age knows about Peter's sin
 - this incident apparently did not create any lasting hostility between Peter and Paul
- it's interesting that both parties in this confrontation mention the principle of love covering a multitude of sins in their epistles