



Thousands Touched in Archangel!

The residents, government officials, and Christian churches of Archangel and its surrounding regions in Russia will not forget May 2005. For in that month, the Gospel directly touched tens of thousands of people. Night after night, hundreds of thousands of TV viewers listened to local Christians give testimonies of how God changed their lives.

Also: Special Report on Persecution in Russia



Waiting for revival?

Are you involved in the greatest task?

This July, the theme of the Russia & Asia Report is spreading the Gospel into regions of oppression and opposition. Throughout Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church is increasingly pressuring congregations. In Islamic countries, Christians are imprisoned, tortured, and executed. Life is also difficult for Christians in Asia. In China, the church is struggling yet growing. In northern India, extremist Hindus brutally attack Christian congregations. In Israel, the laws of the land do not protect Messianic Jews—they are not even considered Jews.

All of the above are signs of the times. Jesus said, “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.” (Matthew 24:9).

In addition, many believers are beginning to hate one another. False prophets are appearing. Lawlessness is on the rise. The hearts of many are growing cold. In the midst of all this, the Gospel must be preached in all corners of the earth

and witnessed to all peoples before the end of times (Matthew 24:14). In other words, despite any persecution or resistance, Christians must take the Gospel to the ends of the earth before the coming of Christ.

Is our generation the one witnessing the final signs of the times? I believe that we are. Has each of us been given our task in fulfilling the Great Commission? We most definitely have. Are you a part of this greatest of all tasks? What answer will you give?

Thoughts on Revival:

The exact figures are unavailable, but we should note that there have been more signs and messages of revival during the last decade than in the previous century. Those who have heard the Holy Spirit speak to the churches agree. The message is clear: God wishes a great revival to spread throughout the nations. Yet this has not happened? Why?

The answer could very well be timing. The timing of a revival depends partially on man. If people are not ready and waiting for revival, it will not come. The dark centuries of

the Middle Ages are proof of this.

Some of God’s plans are dependent on people. Mankind has been given free will. In the times of the old covenant, God’s blessing also depended on the people. God told the Israelites: “If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 28).

God wishes for a sustained, ongoing revival, one that transforms society. So why is God waiting? The reason might be man. We must ask ourselves if we are ready to take hold of and follow the principles, attitudes, and behavior that must be in place before the coming of a great revival.

When God looks at us, he looks for at least three characteristics: purity, humility, and unity. If these are lacking, they must be developed. For this to happen, we must have the will to develop them.

Hannu Haukka



Thousands Touched in Archangel!

Archangel is the second largest city in northern Russia. On May 3, it was still shaking off the deep freeze of winter when a never-before-seen message appeared on its streets.

Throughout the town, over twenty giant blue billboards proclaimed different messages: “Experience the power that will change your life,” “God delivered me from drugs,” “God freed me from alcohol,” “God gave me the strength to survive.” In addition to the billboards, the city’s transit vehicles carried posters advertising the Archangel mission and announcing the showing of the JESUS Film. The large jumbotron screen in the city center also showed the mission’s message.

Direct mail flyers were distributed to 200,000 homes, giving people information about showings of the JESUS Film. Each invitation to the film included a small copy of the Gospel.

For the first time, Thousands Make Personal Decisions

A total of 13,000 people who do not normally attend any religious or spiritual events came to see the JESUS Film. At the end of the film, the viewers were guided to take the first step of their spiritual lives through a prayer of repentance. During the mission, over 3,000 people

made a personal decision for Christ.

IRR/TV produced fourteen different TV programs on location in Archangel. The impact of the television shows was significant, allowing spiritual programming to reach nearly 600,000 viewers.

Archangel’s Christians shared the changes they had experienced in their lives through God, testifying publicly on television channels. The harvest was great. Without the use of mass media, the united and dedicated local congregations would have required decades of hard work to reach the city in the way the mission did. This shows how important electronic media is in mission work.

Over 4,000 Phone Calls

The TV programs and outdoor billboards instructed viewers to call the mission’s spiritual counseling call center. Over 4,000 people in the city responded by making a call.

During the mission’s final press conference, an Orthodox Church representative asked, “There are many spiritual centers in our town. No one is calling our phone number. Why are thousands calling you?”

The television programs spoke to people’s hearts and had the desired impact. The response to the broadcasts grew throughout the mission: Thirty callers phoned the call center after the first program. The next evening, the spiritual counselors spoke to over 100 people. By the end of the mission, there were well over 200 phone calls after each evening broadcast. Spiritual counselors received over 4,000 phone calls in all.

A Mute Boy Speaks

Throughout the mission, many miracles gave testimony to God’s power. One such miracle occurred to a six-year old boy who, despite his age and endless speech therapy, had never been able to read out loud. He was walking past a mission billboard with his mother when he suddenly spoke and clearly read the text: “God gave me the power to survive. Call and you will receive a book as a gift.” The startled mother’s surprise quickly turned to joy. She called the phone number and received the book as a gift. This was her first step toward her new life with Christ.

Archangel



The city mission used over twenty giant billboards. The television programs also testified about God's power to free people from addictions and make their life whole again.



The mission call center recorded over 4,000 for spiritual guidance.

Hundreds of Suicides Each Year

The mission's message also touched the military. There are numerous suicides every year in the ranks of the Russian military. This trend is particularly alarming in the Archangel area. One of Russia's largest army and military industrial centers is in the nearby town of Severodvinski. One day, an official at the military complex called requesting some gospel books. The mission quickly dispatched fifteen books to them.

The Mission Reaches its Goals

Pastor Vladimir Vatsher from Severodvinski told us: "The mission accomplished exactly what we had prayed for. We turned people's attention toward spiritual matters. A lot of people joined the mission, and we will continue working with them to offer spiritual guidance to the people of our city. Many people have called our counselors and left their addresses with us. Some want us to meet them and learn more about God. We planned events for couples and already twelve couples have signed up."

Material Needs

Humanitarian help is part of each city's mission. In the city of Novodvinski, we gave aid to 174 widows of war veterans. We also brought winter clothing to the Archangel Regional Children's Prison, enough to meet the needs of 250 boys. Prison block number 19 received a new heater. The Severodvinski Juvenile Correctional Home, the Archangel Association for Blind Children, the Severodvinski Children's Cancer Hospital, and Archangel's Safe House for Minors all received help from the mission.

Attacked by the Orthodox Church

When a mission of this magnitude begins to change a city, some opposition is expected. The Orthodox Church used the local press to mount attacks against the mission and the editorials spewed hate and disdain: "The city mission is only a flash of good works! Souls will be saved for one month only" (MK, May 18th).

Another headline read: "A Cult Falls in Love With a Northern City." The article read: "Local officials should stop

this delegation of the anti-Christ, but apparently they too are members of this non-Orthodox camp." The local head of the Orthodox Church, Bishop Tihon, demanded that the regional government stop the mission. The officials, however, did not obey him and did not interfere.

On the other hand, the Pravda Severa (Northern Truth) newspaper criticized the Orthodox Church representatives: "The organizers of the Archangel mission have reason to be happy. Thousands of people have called the mission's call center and received a religious book at no charge. In addition to this, many people have seen a 'God' movie (the Jesus film). The Orthodox Church's activity has not lessened the people's interest in the mission; in fact, quite the opposite."

Another article explained how, according to an Orthodox Church official, "the city mission was blasphemous and we therefore we took a stand against it." This begs the question of what the Orthodox Church was making a stand against!

The Karjala regional justice chancellor commented, "The mission is fighting



calls. Each day over 200 people called

The "nerve center" where strategic planning and coordination of Mission Archangel took place.

against alcohol, drugs and criminality. When a prisoner who has been sentenced for life begins a new life and starts teaching other prisoners how to change their lives, I stand in awe. Who can oppose such work, such a struggle against evil?"

Russia is drowning in alcohol, despair, and sin. Just a few years ago, the Orthodox Church was selling tobacco and alcohol to the people, thus showing how spiritually bankrupt it was. Now this church is preventing society from being healed by opposing mission work. In a sad, ironic way, the Orthodox Church is standing against the very purpose for which it was established in the first place.

The Orthodox Church's slanderous bombardment in the media was followed by a direct threat from Bishop Tihon, who contacted the directors of the television stations and the head of the movie theater. He demanded that the TV programs be stopped and that the showing of the film be banned. The TV broadcasts were interrupted momentarily but have now been resumed on the city's most popular commercial television channel.

Church Bans the JESUS Film

The constantly growing audience at showings of the JESUS Film proved that the Orthodox Church's ban on the film served only as further advertisement. After the Church decided to ban the film, the city's movie theaters filled to capacity and many were left standing outside the theater doors.

One member from Bishop Tihon's congregation told us, "The Bishop forbade us to come to this event but I decided to see for myself. The Bishop also told us not to read your book. I want a copy of the mission book for myself."

TV Programs to Continue

Vladislav Kornejev, a leader of a Baptist congregation made up of young high school graduates, commented excitedly on the mission: "Ninety percent of our congregation's members participated in the project. This was a unique, amazing and blessed event. Never before has anything like this happened! After the mission I realized that there are others who have given themselves to God outside of our congregation—others whom I would

like to work with again. The unity we experienced was something indescribable. It truly impacted all the pastors and their congregations.

"The television programs will continue for two months after the mission. It is the best way to continue this project. It will show people that despite strong opposition, evangelism will continue and that those who are interested in spiritual matters can contact us. The continuing TV programs truly give a voice to the city's congregations."

Toward New Cities

Russia's large cities wait for new missions, and our path leads us toward the next metropolis, toward the next million souls. There is a great deal of work to do and relatively few workers. Our resources have truly been stretched and tested.

News from across Russia is worrying and suggests that our opportunity to work openly may soon be coming to an end. I ask our prayer partners to pray for Russia. The power of prayer can change the current course of events. The eastern harvest field desperately needs the Gospel, so we shall carry on as long as possible.

Hannu Haukka



Russia's Orthodox Church has become highly politicized and can no longer answer the people's spiritual needs.



IRR/TV produced a total of 14 TV programs that were broadcast on Archangel's main television channel. There were almost 600,000 viewers



Mission Archangel experienced heavy posters with "cult" stickers and tore

Russian Orthodox Church

Christians have been persecuted in Russia throughout history. During the rule of the Czars, the Orthodox Church severely persecuted other Christian churches. After the Communist Revolution, the Soviet secret police's (KGB) fifth division imprisoned and convicted countless thousands of Russian Christians. Many were sent to prison camps.

Since 1990, Russia's Christians have breathed a sigh of relief as religious prisoners were freed and the media was opened up to the Gospel.

State Machinery Revealed
This joy, however, was short-lived. The Orthodox Church has regained its authoritative position and has drawn upon government machinery to achieve its goals. The Orthodox Church's tactics became much more heavy handed in the spring of 2005.

Recently, a conference on non-Orthodox Christian congregations was organized in Saratov. The organizers were a local Orthodox congregation and the city

university. The theme of the conference was: "Pentecostal Cults and the Dangers of Religious Extremism in Russia." The main sponsor of the event was Patriarch Alex II of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Saratov region municipal government supported the conference.

The conference's 232 delegates wrote a petition urging all levels of government to not support the activities of any cults and instead to protect civil liberties, health and property of the Russian people. It was argued that during these so-called "cult events," people were being manipulated through occult and magical means—and that cults sought to control the people's psyche and bring about mass hysteria. Additionally, congregations were accused of embezzling people's property, abusing and even killing parishioners during exorcisms. The conference concluded that cults were dangerous. Parents were warned that they should not let their children participate in any congregational activities under any circumstances.

If this current trend continues, Russia's Orthodox Church will cause great damage to the country's Protestant congregations. The following are examples of the dangerous precedent being set in Russia today.

Izhevsk

On April 14, the local militia in Izhevsk marched into the town's largest Protestant congregation's meeting and arrested forty-six of the workers. Charges were fabricated, and twenty-nine people were convicted.

Moscow

On May 22, Pastor Alexander Purshaga of the Protestant Emmanuel Congregation and 1,500 other Christians peacefully demonstrated outside a municipal administration building, because the plot of land the congregation was planning to build a church on had been confiscated. On May 30, the demonstrators reassembled, upon which pastor Purshaga and two other church leaders were ar-



opposition by the Orthodox Church. Their officials vandalized mission up advertisements.

All the pastors involved in Mission Archangel gathered at town center to pray for spiritual renewal in that city.

h: Oppressor or Partner?

rested and ordered to serve five-day jail sentences. The congregation believes that the Orthodox Church is behind the persecution.

Voronezh

On June 2, the Pentecostal bishop of Voronezh, Andre Bashmakov, and 800 parishioners organized a peaceful demonstration in the city's main square. The congregation's land—upon which a church was to be built—had been confiscated. The legal documents and building permit applications had cost the congregation one million rubles. However, while they were waiting for the building permit, local officials suddenly announced that the permit would not be approved and that the land would be confiscated. The Orthodox Church is believed to be behind these illegal actions.

Petrozavodsk

In November 2004 during Mission Petrozavodsk, extremist elements of the

Orthodox Church attacked the mission's pastoral committee with slanderous newspaper editorials. The Orthodox Church threatened to demonstrate in front of city hall until the mayor ordered the city mission to stop its activities. But the mayor did not interfere with the mission.

Archangel

The Orthodox Church wrote about the Archangel city mission's pastoral committee: "This delegation of the anti-Christ should be forbidden." The highest local official of the church, Bishop Tihon, demanded that the regional administrators stop the mission. The local government did not comment on the matter and remained neutral.

Moscow Region

On May 2, the local Luhovitski Militia made a raid on a private home and arrested a twelve-person gathering and forcefully stopped them from celebrating communion. All of the people present

were charged with organizing an illegal meeting. When the Moscow region's Pentecostal bishop, Nazar Reshikovets, explained that the meeting was to celebrate communion, the militia representative responded that only the Orthodox Church had the right to hold such meetings.

St. Petersburg

The director of the St. Petersburg OTV television channel, Dmitri Shatrov, received a letter from the Russian telecommunications ministry threatening to shut down the channel if the number of spiritual programs did not decrease. Shatrov is also a leader of a St. Petersburg Apostolic congregation.

Perm

A 3,000-member evangelical congregation in the city of Perm bought an unused cultural building from the city to use as a place of worship in complete accordance with Russian law. The local Orthodox Church organized a demonstration in

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Russian Orthodox Church—Oppressor or Partner?

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front of city hall. As a consequence, the congregation was informed that the city was reversing the agreement and that the congregation would lose their legally acquired meeting space.

The numerous examples of Christian congregations being persecuted in Russia are not limited to the cases mentioned above.

Neo-Orthodox

Alex II, the Patriarch of the orthodox

churches of Moscow and all Russia, does not officially admit to having a hand in oppressing other Christian congregations throughout the country. An Orthodox regional official in Karjala told us that elements close to the Orthodox Church were the pushers behind this movement.

Alexander Dvorkin

The Russian national television channels give airtime to a person named

Alexander Dvorkin, whose goal is to ban all non-Orthodox Christian activity throughout Russia. Dvorkin's programs accuse evangelical Christians of being fanatics and members of dangerous cults that prey on uninformed Russians. No other Christian denominations have been given the opportunity to respond on national television channels.

Hannu Haukka

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