

E100 Study Helps #51-75

THE LIVING WORD >

51. The Word Became Flesh – John 1:1–18

- a. John's gospel account essentially announces good news of a new creation brought by Jesus. The first three words in John 1 are the same three words that start Genesis 1 -- "In the beginning ..."
- b. In Genesis 1, we find that God spoke creation into existence with His word. We see God say repeatedly, "Let there be ..." and then what He spoke came into existence.
- c. John's introduction to his gospel outlines the Bible's plot line of *creation, rebellion, redemption, and new creation*.
- d. CREATION: John pours new meaning into the Greek language and context. Greeks were familiar with the concept of the "word" (literally Logos), because Greek philosophy spoke of the Logos/word as a life-giving force.
 - We cannot underestimate the significance of the phrases, "The Word was God" (John 1:1) and "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Combined with "In the beginning was the Word," we find three foundational doctrines about Jesus:
 - Jesus is God.
 - Jesus was pre-existent before the original creation came into being.
 - Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us as a fully human being.
 - a. The word "dwelt" is literally a past-tense verb form of the word "tabernacle". English does not have a verb form of tabernacle, but the verse literally reads, "Jesus *tabernacled* among us." *Tabernacled* is an obvious reference to God instructing Moses and the Israelites to construct the tabernacle (Exodus 26) that housed the Ark of the Covenant and represented the physical presence of the LORD God with His people. The Ark and Tabernacle were central to several E100 stories in the Old Testament (i.e. 24, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38).
- e. REBELLION: The "darkness" in John 1:5 reminds us of the spiritual darkness that came with human rebellion. That darkness caused people to "not know him," even though "the world was made through him" (John 1:10).
 - As part of the light-darkness imagery, John the Baptist is introduced as the one whom God sent to prepare the way for Jesus and give witness about Him as the true Light (John 1:8–9). (John the Baptist is a different John than Jesus' disciple, John, who wrote the gospel.)
- f. REDEMPTION: Jesus came into the world (John 1:9, 11, 14) and he was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He was the Messiah Savior that the Old Testament and John the Baptist had announced was to come. In His incarnation, Jesus revealed the glory of the Father in a way that allowed people to see the face of God and still live (John 1:18). Previously, humans had not been able to view God's face (Exo 33:20–23).
- g. NEW CREATION: As the Word, Jesus spoke a new creation into being; He brought spiritual light into spiritual darkness and recreated fallen human beings into children of God. "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to

become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

- h. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John did not have a negative view of the Mosaic Law, but he did have a negative view of how religious leaders of the time were abusing it and missing its intent.
 - We should not understand verse 17 as saying, "the law through Moses was bad, but grace and truth through Jesus are good." The LORD showed Moses and the Israelites grace and truth through the Law, but His grace and truth were ultimately seen in Jesus. This makes sense in light of John 1:18 where Jesus had fully seen and displayed God's glory, in contrast to Moses who only saw a part of God's glory in Exodus 33:18-19 (E100 Story 22).

52. Gabriel's Message – Luke 1:1-80

- a. Luke dedicates his gospel to a man named Theophilus, a Greek name meaning "lover of God."
- b. Herod was not a personal name, but a rather a title for the governors appointed by the Roman Empire over Israel's provinces. This particular Herod was known as Herod the Great. Throughout the rest of the New Testament, we will encounter Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Herod Philip, Herod Agrippa I, and Herod Agrippa II. Often the Bible will only mention the title, "Herod" without the accompanying name to let us know which Herod the author is referring to.
- c. The Barrenness of Zechariah and Elizabeth reminds us of stories about barrenness in previous passages about Sarah, Rebekah, and Hannah. Here again, God miraculously intervened.
- d. Zechariah had his opportunity as a priest to serve in the holy of holies--an opportunity that came only once in a lifetime. The Angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple and made the following announcements about the birth of John the Baptist:
 - His name would be John
 - John would have no wine or strong drink
 - John would be filled with the Spirit while still in his mother's womb
 - John would prepare the way of the LORD
 - a. He would demonstrate the spirit and power of Elijah (Reference to 2 Kings 2:9-10)
 - b. He would turn the hearts of the fathers to their children. (Reference to Malachi 4:6)
 - Zechariah questioned the angel Gabriel and was made temporarily mute because he did not believe the angel's message from God.
- e. The same angel, Gabriel, visited a young woman named Mary, who was engaged to a man named Joseph.
 - Mary was a cousin of Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, who had been infertile but, by God's supernatural intervention, conceived John the Baptist
 - Joseph was from the house or family lineage of King David
 - God's supernatural intervention to give Mary a child went beyond the examples of His intervention in the lives of Sarah, Rebekah, Hannah, and Elizabeth. They had all been married and had been trying to have children. In

contrast, Mary was still an unmarried virgin.

53. The Birth of Jesus – Luke 2:1–40

- a. The LORD used the demands of a secular government, that required people to return to their city of birth to register for the census, to providentially take Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where Jesus was born.
 - This fulfilled a prophecy from Micah 5:2, written approximately 700 years before the birth of Jesus.
- b. The city of Bethlehem was so crowded with people there for the census that there were no regular accommodations available to Mary and Joseph. When the baby Jesus was born, his parents wrapped Him in cloths and used a manger--a feeding trough--for his bed.
- c. Shepherds were the first people to whom angels announced the birth of Jesus, and they were also the first recorded group to visit the baby Jesus. The fact that God chose shepherds to be the first to see and proclaim the birth of Jesus is significant at a number of levels. Shepherds were among the lowliest professions. They were often marginalized by religiously observant Jews because the nature of their work frequently made them ceremonially unclean. Yet, Moses had served as a shepherd, King David had been a shepherd, and Jesus Himself was known as the Good Shepherd. In addition to being a shepherd, Jesus was also the Lamb of God.
- d. Luke describes Mary and Joseph as being very faithful to observe the teachings of the Law of Moses. Jesus was circumcised when he was eight days old in accordance with the Law of Moses. (See Leviticus 12:3). His parents also presented Him at the temple along with sacrifices in accordance with the Law of Moses (Exodus 13:2, 12). Jesus' parents took their son and returned to Nazareth "when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord" (Luke 2:39).
 - During Jesus' dedication at the temple, the Holy Spirit came upon a faithful elderly servant of the LORD named Simeon and the Spirit revealed to Simeon that Jesus was the promised Christ/Messiah/King.
 - Simeon prophetically referred to Jesus as "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32). This fits in with God's promises to Abraham and Isaac that all nations would be blessed through their offspring--ultimately referring to Jesus (Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4).

54. John the Baptist – Luke 3:1–20

- a. John the Baptist was introduced in E100 Story 51.
- b. John the Baptist preached about the coming of the Messiah and the need of repentance for forgiveness.
- c. Luke 3:4–6 point to John the Baptist as a fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3–5. Isaiah's words were written around 600 years before John the Baptist's birth.
- d. In Luke 3:7, John warned religious people that being a descendant of Abraham was not enough to save them. They also needed to repent of their sins and demonstrate fruit of saving faith.
- e. Some people were questioning whether John the Baptist might actually be the Messiah/Christ (Luke 3:15). However, John quickly let them know that he was not the

Messiah. Where John baptized people with water, the Messiah/Christ would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16).

- f. Herod the Tetrarch (Luke 3:18) was the son of Herod the Great mentioned in Luke 1:5 (E110 Story 52) and Matt 2:16–19. Herod the Tetrarch was named Antipas. Antipas married Herodias, who had been his brother Philip's wife. Herodias divorced Philip to marry Antipas. When John the Baptist confronted their relationship as being against God's laws, Herod Antipas had John put in prison. I encourage you to read Mark 6:14–29, which is not included in the E100 stories. That passage describes how Herod eventually had John the Baptist beheaded.

55. Baptism and Temptation – Matt 3:13–4:17

- a. Jesus went to John the Baptist to be baptized in the Jordan River. It is important to note that Jesus never sinned, therefore we know He was not baptized as an act of repentance for His own sins. Instead, Jesus came to identify with sinful humanity in our sins, and His baptism was portraying His future death and resurrection on our behalf.
- b. Immediately after Jesus was baptized, God the Father affirmed Jesus as His beloved son: "the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:16–17).
- c. It is also important to note that the Holy Spirit then led Jesus into the wilderness with the stated purpose "to be tempted by the devil" (Matt 4:1). As John indicated in John 1 (E100 Story # 51), Jesus came to begin a new creation. For Him to redeem the fallen creation and begin a new one, He needed to succeed where Adam failed. The only recorded temptation we find in Genesis 3 (E100 Story # 2) was the temptation to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from which God had forbidden them to eat. Adam and Eve were living in a lush protected garden where they could eat anything with the exception of the one forbidden fruit. In contrast, Luke 4 reveals that Jesus' temptation occurred in the wilderness where He had been fasting for forty days. Luke 4:2 provides a parallel story adding that the Devil tempted Jesus throughout those forty days.
 - The three recorded temptations in Matthew 4 came at the end of the forty-day period when Jesus was hungry. Although the other temptations were not described in detail, the author of Hebrews lets us know the scope of those temptations was all-inclusive: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15).
- d. We can learn some practical truths by examining the ways the devil tempted Jesus and the ways Jesus responded to the temptations.
 - Satan used similar tactics in tempting Jesus as he used when he tempted Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:
 - In both cases Satan questioned what God had said and tried to cause those he was tempting to doubt and distrust God. His approach to Jesus was to question Jesus' identity--"If you are the Son of God ..."
--to tempt Him to abuse His power and authority.
 - In each recorded temptation of Jesus, instead of responding to the devil with His own words, Jesus quoted Scripture from the Old Testament.
 - a. "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

- b. "It is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
- c. "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"
- ii. We can expect Satan to tempt us by undermining our trust in the truthfulness of what God has spoken in His written word. We can also learn from Jesus' example that in responding to temptation, it is better to declare what is written in Scripture than to use our own words or ideas.
- e. When Jesus returned victorious from His 40 days of wilderness temptation, He was told that John the Baptist had been imprisoned by Herod Antipas. Jesus then returned to His home region of Galilee and began His public ministry.
 - i. Matthew shows that Jesus chose Capernaum as His Galilean base of ministry. That was a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-2, written about 600 years earlier.
- f. Jesus' ministry picked up where John left off, preaching about the Kingdom and calling people to repent of their sins.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS >

56. Sermon on the Mount – Part 1 – Matt 5:1-6:4

- a. Jesus going up on the mountain to teach seems to parallel Moses going up on the mountain to receive the Law from the LORD. Some see Jesus giving a new Law in the Sermon on the Mount. In reality, Jesus clarifies the Law in the Sermon on the Mount, saying, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt 5:17-18).
- b. Jesus alluded to what His listeners had heard about the Law related to six different topics. He said, "You have heard it said ..." and He then proceeded to give a fresh interpretation, saying, "... *but I say to you.*" Note, in each case how Jesus addressed an individual's heart and mind as well as their actual behavior.
 - i. Anger (Matt 5:22)
 - ii. Adultery and lust (Matt 5:28)
 - iii. Divorce (Matt 5:32)
 - iv. Swearing oaths and telling the truth (Matt 5:34)
 - v. Retaliation (Matt 5:39)
 - vi. Love for enemies (Matt 5:44)
- c. Jesus closed this passage with a warning that if we do good deeds in order to be noticed and praised by others, we risk losing a reward and approval from the LORD who sees the good we do in secret. It is better to seek God the Father's approval and reward than to seek the praise and reward of humans.

57. Sermon on the Mount – Part 2 – Matt 6:5-7:29

- a. In part one of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called out the hypocrisy of giving "In order to be seen" by other people (Matt 6:1-3). In today's passage Jesus called out the hypocrisy of those who pray "that they may be seen by others" (Matt 6:5). He was not saying it is wrong to pray out loud where others might hear you. The wrong is praying publicly to present ourselves as spiritual or pious, which makes the supposed "prayer" more of a performance focusing on ourselves and the people around us than on God.

- b. Jesus said that prayer is not for the purpose of telling God something He doesn't already know. We'll never say anything in prayer to which the LORD will say, "That was shocking!" Nor will we convince Him to do what we want with our "empty phrases" and "many words" (Matt 6:7-8).
- c. Jesus taught His disciples a model prayer that is sometimes known as "The Our Father" or "The LORD's Prayer."
 - i. Jesus' prayer was largely centered on God's glory and God's Kingdom being realized.
 - ii. The personal requests are for "the bread we need each day," "forgiveness as we forgive others," and "protection from temptation and the evil one."
 - 1. Jesus made a connection between our willingness to forgive others and God's forgiveness of us (Matt 6:12, 14).
- d. Jesus warned that material possessions can pull us away from the Kingdom of God and captivate our hearts. We cannot serve both God and money. If we seek God's Kingdom ahead of other things, He promises to provide our material needs.
- e. Similar to His remarks about forgiveness, Jesus warned that we should not judge others less graciously than we judge ourselves. The sin that should most concern us is our own. When we see others struggling with sin, we are to help them remove it, rather than condemn them (7:1-3).
- f. In Matt 7:7-10, Jesus reassured that our Father in heaven hears when we pray and will give us what we need.
- g. Jesus gave the "Golden Rule" in Matt 7:12 -- "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them," and then states, "for this is the Law and the Prophets."
- h. He concluded with a warning against false teachers and a challenge to put His teaching into practice.

58. The Kingdom of Heaven - Matt 13:1-58

- a. The parable of the different types of soils indicates that only those who persevered bore fruit. Bible scholar Craig Blomberg explains, "What counts is not profession of faith but perseverance in faith." [Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 214.]
- b. When His disciples asked why Jesus taught in parables, Jesus gave two reasons. First was to reveal secrets of the Kingdom of God to those whose hearts were prepared to receive them. Second was to conceal those same secrets from those whose hearts were not prepared to receive them.
- c. Matt 13:14-15 quotes Isaiah 6:9-10, written approximately 600 years earlier. Jesus used the Isaiah passage as a description of what His disciples were seeing in His teaching of parables and in the response of His hearers.
- d. Jesus offered several other short parables to describe the Kingdom of Heaven:
 - i. Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30)
 - ii. Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven (Matt 13:31-33)
 - iii. Parables of the Hidden Treasure and Pearl of Great Value (Matt 13:44-45)
 - iv. Parable of the Net (Matt 13:47-50)
- e. Matthew describes people in Nazareth as being astonished by Jesus' teaching and marveling at His wisdom and mighty works. It isn't readily apparent why these astonished and marveling people took offense at Jesus (Matt 13:54-57). Luke 4:16-30 seems to describe in greater detail, the same event where Jesus taught in Nazareth

(Luke 4:23–30). Luke's version gives extra information indicating that Jesus spoke harsher words, resulting in His hearers being "filled with wrath" and attempting to "throw Him down the cliff" (Luke 4:28–29). I encourage you to check out Luke's version also.

59. The Good Samaritan – Luke 10:25–37

- a. This parable involves a lawyer trying to test Jesus with questions. When discussing the command to "love our neighbor as yourself," the lawyer "desiring to justify himself, said 'And who is my neighbor?'"
- b. Jesus responds to the lawyer with what is commonly known as the parable of the Good Samaritan. Note that Jesus never actually answered the lawyer's question of "Who is my neighbor?" Instead, Jesus uses a story about three men who see a severely beaten man to describe what it is to be a good neighbor (Luke 10:35).
- c. It's important to note that the Samaritan man proves to be the most loving neighbor. Samaritans were of mixed race between Jewish and Gentile bloodlines, and their religion was not fully Jewish, but a mixing of Judaism and other beliefs.
 - i. Jewish people considered Samaritans unclean. Jews would sometimes go around Samaria rather than through it, traveling extra distance just to avoid contact with Samaritans.
- d. The priest and Levite in the passage were religious figures who took great care to avoid becoming ceremonially unclean. However, the Samaritan--the man considered "unclean" by the Jews, tended to the man and sacrificially paid for his ongoing care.

60. Lost and Found – Luke 15:1–32

- a. Luke 15 begins with some Pharisees complaining that Jesus "receives and eats with sinners" (Luke 15:2). The Pharisees were a subgroup or branch of Judaism that was very intent on keeping the Jewish written and oral laws. Seeing themselves as more pious and obedient to the Law than others were, they had a hard time recognizing sin in their own lives and saw no need for repentance.
- b. Jesus told about three experiences of having something lost that was eventually found-- a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son.
 - i. Each instance emphasizes the joy over finding that which had been lost (Luke 15:6, 9, and 24.)
 - ii. Jesus compared the joy over finding the lost objects with God's joy over "one sinner that repents" (Luke 15:7, 10).
- c. In the parable of the lost son(s), the father was hoping and watching for his wayward son to return home. Because the eldest son was dutiful in serving his father, his need for salvation was less obvious. However, Jesus pointed out that the older brother needed to be saved from his self-righteousness as much as his younger brother needed to be saved from his unrighteousness. Essentially, both sons were lost.
- d. All three parables point to the LORD's concern for those who are lost and His great joy at seeing them found. However, in the parable of the lost sons, Jesus used the older brother to represent the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in Luke 15:2, to whom the three parables were addressed.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS >

61. Feeding the Five Thousand – Luke 9:1–36

- a. Jesus empowered the 12 disciples to proclaim the Kingdom, to heal the sick, and to cast out demons. Jesus had been doing those same three things, so he was essentially sending his disciples out to be extensions of His own ministry he had modeled for them.
- b. Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist imprisoned and beheaded, speculated that Jesus may have been John the Baptist resurrected from the dead.
- c. By multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish into enough food to feed 5,000 people with 12 baskets of left-overs, Jesus demonstrated His power to miraculously provide food. This miracle reflected how God provided manna and quail for His people during their forty years in the wilderness (see Exo 16; Num 11:6–9; Deut 8:3–16).
- d. Jesus does not sugarcoat the call to discipleship. He explicitly warned His would-be followers that following Him would be costly. Taking up one's cross daily speaks to a daily willingness to die in order to follow Jesus.
- e. When Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain with Him, they had a supernatural encounter with Moses and Elijah. Jesus was transfigured before their eyes and God spoke out of a cloud. The cloud that enveloped Jesus, Moses, and Elijah reminds us of God's presence in the cloud when it enveloped Moses on the mountain (E100 Story 22 and Exo 24:15–16).

62. Walking on Water – Matt 14:22–36

- a. After showing His power to create food by multiplying loaves and fishes, in this passage Jesus shows His power to suspend the laws of nature by walking on water.
- b. Jesus also demonstrated His power to enable Peter to walk on water as well. However, Peter started sinking when he began to doubt.
- c. Jesus' display of power over nature led His disciples to worship Him and to declare, "Truly you are the son of God" (Matt 14:33). It is worth noting that Jesus did not reject the worship His disciples offered. If their worship had been misplaced or inappropriate, Jesus would have certainly corrected them.

63. Healing a Blind Man – John 9:1–41

- a. In that period, most Jewish people believed that if something bad happened to someone, blindness for example, the malady was an indication of God's judgment on sin in that person's life or perhaps in the life of the person's parents. Jesus explains that something bad happening is not always directly associated with a particular sin. In this case, the man's blindness was so "that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3).
- b. This healing is different from most. Jesus mixed his saliva with dirt to make mud and put the mud on the blind man's eyes. However, the man did not receive his sight in Jesus' presence. Jesus instructed him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam, and he came back seeing only after he followed Jesus' instructions. Some see Jesus' use of the saliva and dirt mix in John 9:6 as pointing back to creation when God formed the first humans "from the dust of the ground" (Gen 2:7 in E100 Story 1). John explains that

“Siloam” means “sent”, which may point to the fact that Jesus was sent from the Father and He sends His disciples.

- c. This particular healing occurred on a sabbath day, and the religious leaders classified healing as “work.” Rather than rejoicing in the healing of a blind man, they used the healing as an opportunity to accuse Jesus of violating the sabbath. In their mistaken argument, they viewed healing on the sabbath as proof that Jesus was not sent from God.
- d. This story points out that people have been divided about who Jesus was/is for over 2,000 years. Some considered Jesus a holy man while others viewed Him as an unholy sabbath breaker (John 9:16).
- e. Until having the miracle verified by the blind man’s parents, the religious leaders were skeptical and did not believe the man had actually been blind.
- f. Religious leaders called themselves "disciples of Moses," implying that they kept the Old Testament Law and that Jesus and his disciples did not. The religious leaders labeled the man who had been blind as a "sinner" and excluded him from the synagogue. The man’s expulsion was a sign of things to come; many who would come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah were later excluded from the Jewish synagogue communities.
- g. Upon hearing that the once-blind man had been expelled from the synagogue, Jesus went to find him. Jesus had touched the man with saliva and mud, but since the man had still been blind when he left Jesus, this would have been the first time that he saw Jesus with his eyes.
- h. When Jesus asked if the now-sighted man believed in the Son of Man --a term for the Messiah--the man asked for clarification as to who the Son of Man was. In a powerful response, Jesus answered, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you" (John 9:37). The man said, "Lord, I believe" and he worshiped Jesus. Again, we see Jesus received worship without objection. Although the man who had been born blind was rejected from worshiping in the synagogue, Jesus received him and his worship.
- i. Jesus will judge those who think they see just fine but do not recognize Him as the Messiah. Yet, He will open the eyes of others who do not see Him. If anyone sees Jesus as Messiah, it is because the LORD has opened their eyes, otherwise they would remain blind to seeing Him and the truth of God's word.

64. Healing a Demon-Possessed man – Mark 5:1–20

- a. A man with an evil spirit approached Jesus and His disciples as they were arriving. He had seen Jesus from a distance and ran toward Him, falling at Jesus' feet.
- b. The evil spirit had apparently given the man extraordinary physical strength so that he broke free from bonds of shackles and chains.
- c. The evil spirit was also responsible for the man crying out and doing self-harm by cutting himself.
- d. Jesus called the evil spirit to come out of the man and the spirit spoke through the man saying, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me” (Mark 5:7).
- e. It appears that the man was plagued by multiple evil spirits saying, "My name is Legion for we are many" (Mark 5:9).

- f. The evil spirits recognized Jesus' power and authority over them and pled with Jesus not to send them out of the country (Mark 5:11,12). They begged Jesus to send them into a herd of nearby pigs (Mark 5:12).
 - i. Jesus granted the request of the unclean spirits and the spirits entered the pigs, causing about 2,000 pigs to descend into the sea where they drowned.
- g. The financial loss to the owners of the pigs was substantial. The herdsmen went to tell others the dramatic story and by the time they returned, the once-demon-possessed man was "clothed and in his right mind" (Mark 5:15).
 - i. Ironically, the people seemed to be more afraid of Jesus and the transformed man than they had been of the man enslaved to the evil spirits. They asked Jesus to leave their region (Mark 5:17).
- h. The now-transformed man wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus refused and told him to "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19).

65. Raising Lazarus from the Dead – John 11:1–57

- a. John moves from Jesus giving sight to a man born blind to raising a man back to life who had been dead for four days. The Jewish leaders were angry after the healing of the blind man but after the resurrection of Lazarus they were determined to have Jesus killed.
- b. In John 9:3, Jesus said the purpose of the man's blindness was that "the works of God might be displayed in him." In John 11:4, Jesus said Lazarus' death was "for the glory of God so that the Son of God might be glorified through it."
 - i. Lazarus and his sisters lived in Bethany. Bethany was less than 3 miles from Jerusalem where the religious leaders had recently sought to arrest him just after the feast of Dedication (also known as Hanukkah).
- c. John remarks that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (John 11:5). Those words don't seem to align with, "when he (Jesus) heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was" (John 11:6).
 - i. John is making it clear that Jesus' delay did not imply that He did not love Lazarus and his sisters. It was "for the glory of God and so that the Son of God might be glorified" that Jesus delayed.
 - 1. Lazarus had died and been in the tomb for four days before Jesus arrived. Taking into account travel time for messengers to arrive to where Jesus was and for Jesus to travel to Bethany after the two-day delay, it is possible that Lazarus had already died when the messengers arrived to request Jesus to go to Bethany.
 - 2. In the culture of that day, "The general belief was that the spirit of the deceased hovered around the body for three days in anticipation of some possible means of reentry into the body." [Gerald L. Borchert, [John 1-11](#), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 354.]
 - a. Jesus demonstrated His absolute power over death by raising Lazarus back to life after that three-day "window," in which people still held out hope.
- d. In John 11:25, Jesus declared that beyond being able to resurrect people from the dead, He Himself is "the resurrection and the life." All who believe in Him will live again

even after they have died. This claim goes far beyond an offer to forgive sins. Jesus was declaring that He was reversing the death penalty brought on humanity as a consequence of sin back in Genesis 3.

- i. Martha responded to Jesus' claim by declaring her faith that He was the Messiah and God's Son that had been promised in the Old Testament.
- e. The Pharisees and religious leaders feared that if Jesus continued doing more miracles like the resurrection of Lazarus, "everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (John 11:48). "So, from that day on they made plans to put him to death" (John 11:53).
- f. This event occurred just before an upcoming Passover feast in Jerusalem.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST >

66. The Last Supper – Luke 22:1–46

- a. This passage from Luke's gospel picks up at the same point as the raising of Lazarus in John 11. Luke and John's accounts dovetail with one another: "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people" (Luke 22:1–2).
 - i. Their fear was that the people would come to believe in Jesus as Messiah.
 - ii. The religious leaders had already committed to have Jesus put to death, their only question was "how?" (Luke 22:2).
- b. Several forces were at work against Jesus: The religious leaders, His disciple Judas Iscariot, and most importantly, Satan. Satan "entered into Judas" (Luke 22:3).
 - i. Jesus had been doing direct battle with Satan since his temptation (E100 Story 55). Much of Jesus' ministry involved casting out evil spirits and even empowering His disciples to do the same. Now, Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, was himself commandeered by Satan.
 - ii. Judas' role was to let the opposition know a time and place to arrest Jesus away from the crowds who favored Him.
- c. It is important to see the connection between the Passover meal and Jesus' instructions about memorializing Him through the bread and the cup of wine Christians observe as communion/the LORD's Supper/eucharist (aka "The Last Supper").
 - i. Jesus pours new significance into the Passover meal that commemorated God sparing the Israelites from the 10th plague He sent on the Egyptians--the plague that brought death for all of the firstborn. (See E100 Story #19). When the LORD sent the Angel of Death to take the lives of all the firstborn residing in Egypt, those who spread the blood of a sacrificed "Passover lamb" over their doorways were spared.
 - ii. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He used unleavened Passover bread saying, "This is my body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19). He used one of the four cups of wine used in the Passover meal to say, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20).
 1. "Poured out" is the language of sacrifice.
 2. "For you" denotes vicarious substitution--taking the place of another.

- iii. Jesus was confirming John the Baptist's claim that Jesus was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29.36). The Apostle Paul later directly declared, "For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7). Peter writes that followers of Jesus have been ransomed by "the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet 1:19).
- d. Jesus was aware that Judas was about to betray Him (Luke 22:21).
- e. Luke's gospel does not record Jesus washing the disciples' feet, but the dispute over who was greatest among the disciples in Luke 22 dovetails with John 13. There, we find Jesus washing His disciples' feet in conjunction with the Passover Meal and the announcement of betrayal. In the context of their dispute over who was the greatest, Jesus reminded them, "For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves" (Luke 22:27). It was probably at this point that Jesus got up and washed the disciples' feet while they remained reclining at the table. He even washed the feet of Judas whom He knew was about to betray Him.
- f. Although Judas would be guilty of direct betrayal, Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny knowing Jesus on three occasions before the rooster would crow the following morning.
- g. When Jesus said that the Scripture stating, "he was numbered among the transgressors," needed to be fulfilled, He may have been talking about being crucified between two criminals (Luke 23:32, 39-42).
- h. Jesus's public ministry began by being tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. Near the end of His ministry, Jesus experienced an intense time of temptation to turn away from going to the cross. He was clearly anguished in knowing what was ahead. Just as angels ministered to Him in the wilderness temptation (E100 Story #55), an angel appeared to Jesus in the garden as He anguished in prayer on the night before His crucifixion.

67. Arrest and Trial – John 18:1-40

- a. Judas knew where to find Jesus at the garden where He had been praying and led a band of soldiers to arrest Jesus there away from the crowds.
- b. In his effort to protect Jesus, Peter wielded his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, the High Priest's servant (John 18:10). Jesus calmed the situation. Although John does not record it, Luke mentions that Jesus healed Malchus' ear (Luke 22:51).
- c. The passage notes Peter's three denials before the rooster crowed (John 18:15-18, 25-27).
- d. After His arrest, Jesus was taken to the High Priest, Caiphas, and then to the regional governor, Pontius Pilate.
 - i. Twice, Jesus noted that the Kingdom He ruled over was "not of this world" (John 18:36).
 - ii. Pilate did not find Jesus guilty of anything deserving of crucifixion (John 18:18). Luke's parallel account has Pilate sending Jesus to Herod, the regional governor in Galilee, to get his ruling. Herod also did not find Jesus guilty of any crimes (Luke 23:15).
- iii. There was a custom in which the governor would release one Jewish prisoner during the Passover feast. Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but the Jewish crowd

insisted that Pilate release a robber named Barabbas instead of Jesus.

68. The Crucifixion – John 19:1–42

- a. Crucifixion literally means, "to attach to a cross." Nailing a human being to a cross was an extreme and inhumane form of execution in the Roman Empire. Jewish people had never practiced crucifixion in the Old Testament and were not permitted to perform it themselves in the time of Jesus. "Only slaves, provincials, and the lowest types of criminals were crucified, but rarely Roman citizens. Thus tradition, which says that Peter, like Jesus, was crucified, but Paul beheaded, is in line with ancient practice." [J.B.T., "[Cross, Crucifixion](#)," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 245.] Roman citizens condemned to death were normally beheaded rather than crucified.
- b. Flogging was part of pre-crucifixion torture.
- c. Depending on the way the person was crucified, the major causes of death were dehydration, asphyxiation, and exhaustion.
- d. The terms "Messiah" and "Christ" both referred to a savior king anointed by God--the King God had promised to send, throughout the Old Testament, as far back as Gen 3:15 (E100 Story 2). The claim that Jesus was the promised Messiah King gave Pilate and the people fodder to mock Jesus.
 - i. Despite the mockery of Jesus as a king, Pilate the Governor declared, "I find no guilt in him," repeating for the third time that Jesus was innocent of wrongdoing, (John 18:38; 19:4 and 5).
 - ii. Those being crucified usually had a sign known as a *titulis* posted on their crosses stating their name and crime. Pilate insisted on stating Jesus' crime as being "King of the Jews" (John 19:19). This was not necessarily a profession of faith by Pilate, so much as a passive aggressive way of irritating the Jewish leaders who boxed him into delivering a death sentence to Jesus although Pilate found Him innocent of wrongdoing.
- e. The robe that had been given to Jesus in mockery was assigned to one of the soldiers by lot (similar to rolling the dice), so that it would not be cut or torn into equal parts among four soldiers. John noted this to be a fulfillment of prophecy from Psalm 22:18--"They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."
- f. Most commentators believe "the disciple whom he (Jesus) loved" in John 19:26 referred to his disciple John who wrote this gospel. Interestingly, Jesus' brothers did not yet believe in Him as Messiah at this point. So instead of entrusting the care of his mother Mary to his brothers per cultural norms, Jesus pronounced a sort of informal and non-legal adoption relationship between Mary and John.
 - i. In addition to John and Jesus' mother, Mary, the gospel notes that Mary's sister and two other women named Mary were at the foot of the cross--Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.
 - ii. In an earlier moment, Jesus had cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2).
- g. John writes that Jesus said, "I thirst" and the soldiers gave Him sour wine in order "to fulfill the Scripture" (John 19:28). The Scripture being fulfilled was Psalm 69:21.
- h. John again points to details of Jesus' crucifixion as fulfillment of prophecy in noting that Jesus' legs were not broken like the legs of the two men crucified alongside Jesus

(John 19:32-33). John sees that fact as a fulfillment of Psalm 34:20--"He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."

- i. John explains that when the soldier pierced Jesus' side by a spear, he fulfilled Zechariah 12:10.
- j. Normally, those who were crucified were placed in a mass grave for poor people. However, Joseph of Arimathea, a Pharisee who had become a secret disciple of Jesus, retrieved Jesus' body and placed it in a brand new tomb. The new tomb would help validate Jesus' resurrection just a few days later.
- k. Many Jewish leaders viewed Jesus' crucifixion in light of Deut 21:23 which says, "for a hanged man is cursed by God." Therefore, before he came to faith in Jesus, Saul of Tarsus (aka the Apostle Paul) had understood Jesus' crucifixion to be proof that He was cursed by God. After coming to faith, Paul did not change his view that Jesus was under God's curse on the cross, but he understood Jesus to have taken the curse of our sins upon Himself so that we might be blessed with salvation (Gal 3:10-14).

69. The Resurrection - John 20:1-21:25

- a. John named Mary Magdalene as the first person to arrive at the tomb where Jesus had been placed, seeing the stone seal rolled away and the tomb empty (John 20:21). She was also listed as the first person to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection (John 20:11-17).
 - i. Mary Magdalene was unable to recognize Jesus until He called her by name (John 20:14,16).
 - ii. During that encounter, Jesus told her two times that He must "ascend to the Father," "my God and your God" (John 20:17).
- b. Jesus next appeared to His disciples on two occasions where they were in a room with the doors locked because they were afraid of the Jewish religious leaders who had Jesus crucified. John leaves the impression that Jesus somehow appeared in their midst without entering through a door or window--a supernatural entrance.
 - i. During Jesus' first appearance in the locked room, He greeted His disciples with "Peace be with you." He then identified Himself by showing His scarred hands and side. Next, "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"
 - ii. We find that Jesus' disciple, Thomas, was not with the others at Jesus' first appearance. Having not seen Jesus with his own eyes, Thomas had been skeptical of the other disciples' claim to have seen Jesus. However, Thomas was present at Jesus' second visit. After Jesus invited Thomas to touch His wounds and to believe, Thomas addressed Jesus as "My Lord and my God" (John 21:28).
 - 1. Jesus received Thomas' praise and affirmed his belief that He was Lord and God.
- c. Jesus next appeared to some of the disciples as they were fishing. For some reason, they did not recognize Him at first. Jesus then cooked and ate with them, indicating that His resurrection body was material and able to eat food as He had before.
 - i. This was the third time John mentioned Jesus being in the presence of Peter after His resurrection, but neither of them had said anything about the three times Peter had denied knowing Jesus (See E100 Story 57). On this occasion, Jesus brought the topic up. He asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" (John 21:15, 16, & 17). Jesus then extended the same call He had given when He first called Peter to be His disciple: "Follow me" (John 21:19; also see E100 Story 55 for

Peter's initial call).

70.The Ascension – Acts 1:1–11

- a. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, is also accepted as the author of the Book of Acts. In Acts 1:1, the author mentions a "first account" to a recipient named Theophilus. Luke's gospel had been dedicated to someone named Theophilus, almost certainly this same man.
- b. Luke's gospel ends with Jesus ascending into heaven (Luke 24:50–53) and Acts launches from that event (Acts 1:2,9).
- c. Luke lets readers know that Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples between his resurrection and supernatural ascension. During those 40 days, Jesus gave convincing "proofs" of His physical resurrection.
- d. We recall that 40 days has been a significant period of time throughout the Bible. Moses was on the mountain learning from the LORD God for 40 days and 40 nights (Exo 24:18, E100 Stories 21 & 22). In preparation for His public ministry, Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights during His intense time of temptation (E100 Story 55). In Acts 1, Luke shows Jesus spending 40 days instructing His disciples to prepare them for their ministry in His name.
 - i. Acts 1:3 reveals that the instruction Jesus gave was about the Kingdom of God, the very same message that was at the core of His coming and ministry.
- e. Before ascending, Jesus instructed His followers to remain in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would come to "baptize" them (Acts 1:4–5).
- f. With all of Jesus' instruction about the Kingdom of God, both during His ministry and after His resurrection, it is easy to see why the disciples would ask, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).
 - i. However, Jesus said it was not their place to know when God would fully establish His Kingdom on earth. Rather, it was their place to be His Spirit-filled and empowered witnesses to all people on the earth. The Greek word translated as "witness" is literally the word for "martyr". The English word "martyr" came to describe those who lost their lives for being faithful witnesses for Jesus and His Kingdom.
- g. Luke tells readers, "And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). The cloud taking Jesus up, as onlookers watched, reminds readers of the transfiguration of Jesus (E100 Story 61) as well as Moses in the cloud on the mountain receiving the Law (E100 Story 22 and Exo 24:15–16).
- h. Although it is not one of the E100 passages, in John 16:7, Jesus alluded to the moment He would physically depart, saying, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." Jesus made clear that His leaving at the ascension and the subsequent coming of the Holy Spirit were connected.

THE CHURCH IS BORN >

71. The Day of Pentecost – Acts 2:1–47

- a. Pentecost derives from the word “fifty”. The feast of Pentecost began 50 days after Passover. That means the disciples had been waiting somewhere between a week and ten days from the time Jesus ascended and the time the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost (50 days minus the 40 days Jesus spent with them after His resurrection).
- b. *Wind* or *breath* are common symbols of the Holy Spirit. God breathed life and spirit into Adam at creation (E100 Story 1). In speaking to a religious leader named Nicodemus in John 3:7, Jesus said, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." After His resurrection Jesus went to His disciples and "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (E100 Story 19).
- c. The tongues of fire "appearing and resting on them" is a fulfillment of John the Baptist's words, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16, E100 Story 54).
- d. "Every nation under heaven" in Acts 2:5, is more literally translated, "Every ethnicity under heaven." This harkens back to God's promise to Abraham in Gen 12:3 that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through him (E100 Story 6).
- e. God used the Pentecost event as a sort of temporary reversal of the judgment that occurred at the Tower of Babel. At that time in Gen 11 (E100 Story 5), the LORD confused the languages of the people for rebelling against His command to fill the earth. In Acts 2, God allowed people from every ethnic group to hear the gospel preached in their native languages.
- f. As the amazed crowd gathered in wonder, the Holy Spirit came upon Peter to preach the gospel as Jesus' witness to people from all over the earth. Peter used passages from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) to present Jesus as the promised Messiah King.
- g. Peter gave his listeners the horrifying news that they were responsible for the death of the promised King God sent to save them--the LORD Himself (Acts 2:36).
 - i. Upon hearing of their guilt, the people asked what they should do. Peter promised them forgiveness of their sins and that they would receive the Holy Spirit if they repented of their sin and were baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah. Baptism did not wash away sins or initiate salvation. Rather, baptism identified these new believers with Christ in his death and resurrection and displayed their trust in Him as the promised Messiah King.
- h. About 3,000 people received Peter's message, placed their faith in Jesus, and were baptized in Jesus' name. In accordance with Peter's promise, they also received the Holy Spirit.
 - i. These new believers made their relationship with Jesus and one another the focal point of their lives. They gathered daily in larger groups in the temple courts where the apostles taught them more about Jesus. They also gathered each day in homes where they ate together, prayed together, and fellowshiped together. Their remarkable care for one another included selling personal property to have resources to care for those who lacked.
 - i. Acts 2:47 declares, "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."
- j. Scholar John Polhill notes, "Formerly they had experienced the Spirit through the presence of Jesus. After Pentecost they would experience Jesus through the presence

of the Spirit." [John B. Polhill, [Acts](#), vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 81.]

72. Growth and Persecution – Acts 3:1–4:37

- a. After healing a man, who had been lame from birth, in the name of Jesus, Peter made clear that the man was healed through the power of the resurrected Jesus (Acts 3:12–15).
- b. Peter again made the most of the opportunity by preaching the gospel to the gathering crowd. In his message, Peter referred back to Abraham, to Moses, and to all the prophets after him, saying they foretold of Jesus (Acts 3:21–25).
- c. Religious leaders at the temple had Peter and John arrested for "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2).
- d. The next day, the Holy Spirit empowered Peter to give a defense, not only of himself but of the gospel, saying, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). That exclusive message, that salvation is found only in Jesus, was not popular at the moment and it is not popular today.
- e. The religious leaders released Peter and John with the command "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18), but the two apostles responded, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19–20).
- f. Once freed, we should note that the believers did not pray for protection from arrest and mistreatment. Instead, they prayed for boldness to proclaim the gospel (Acts 4:30).
- g. The unity and mutual care of the believers, demonstrated in Acts 4:32–37, is remarkable. Luke introduces a man named Joseph "Barnabas", who sold a property and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet to use for those in need. He will appear later as Barnabas and will live up to the meaning of his name--"Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36).

73. The First Martyr – Acts 6:8–8:8

- a. The Hellenists were from a Greek cultural background. In this case we can assume that they were Jews who had come from Greek culture--either Jews who had dispersed into Greek regions or Greeks who had converted to Judaism.
- b. The church in Jerusalem was distributing food to widows as one of the ways we saw believers caring for one another in the previous E100 passage. However, the Jews from a Greek background felt there was a disparity or favoritism that allowed Hebrew widows to receive more food than Greek widows.
 - i. When the 12 Apostles were presented with the dilemma, they did not want to be taken away from their primary tasks of "prayer and ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). They chose to delegate the authority to seven other men, charging them with finding a solution to the food distribution problem. Some believe those 7 men were the first deacons (servants) in the church.
 - It is notable that each of the seven men chosen to minister among the Greek widows had Greek names. They were not just any men, but men "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3).

- c. One of those seven Greek men, chosen to minister among the Hellenist widows, was Stephen. Luke tells readers that Stephen was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5), and that he "full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people (Acts 6:8–9). Stephen also preached the gospel and faced such opposition from other Grecian Jews that they stoned him to death. Stephen was the first named *martyr* in Scripture. He was empowered by the Spirit to *witness* as Jesus promised in Acts 1:8 would happen (E100 Story 70). Recall that "witness" was literally the word "martyr" in New Testament Greek.
- d. To have less restricted movement in their throwing, those stoning Stephen "laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul" (Acts 7:58). Saul continued his own persecution of other Christians: "ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).
- e. As a result of the increasing persecution of the church, many fled Jerusalem and dispersed to other areas. (A technical term for this dispersion is "diaspora"). Luke mentions Philip went to Samaria--the mixed race/mixed religious territory that most Jews avoided (E100 Story 59). Philip was also one of the seven men chosen in Acts 6 to minister to the Hellenist widows. In Samaria, Philip preached the gospel, cast out demons, and healed the lame; just as Jesus and the 12 had done in their ministries.

74. Sharing the Word – Acts 8:26–40

- a. An Angel of the Lord--perhaps a special manifestation of Jesus--led Philip to go out to a road in a desert place. Ordinarily, going out to stand along a desert road would not have been considered a wise thing to do, but Philip understood the command to come directly from the LORD and he obeyed.
- b. After arriving at the site, the Holy Spirit led Philip to come alongside a passing chariot transporting a man who was an official in the court of the Queen of Ethiopia. The man was a eunuch "in charge of all her treasure" (Acts 8:27). The fact that the eunuch had traveled from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship indicates that he was at least a God-fearer, if not fully Jewish. Philip learned that the man had been reading from the Book of Isaiah, but he was not understanding what he was reading.
 - i. The eunuch invited Philip into the chariot to help explain the passage from Isaiah 53. If you are not familiar with Isaiah 53, you will want to read it now. The passage, written 600 years before Christ prophesied what appears to be about the crucifixion of Jesus, even though crucifixion was not invented as a punishment until around 400 BC.
 - ii. Philip began with the passage the eunuch was reading in Isaiah 53 and continued to explain "the good news about Jesus" (Acts 8:35).
 - iii. Philip must have also included baptism as part of his gospel presentation (perhaps as Peter did in Acts 2:38), because the Ethiopian eunuch saw water and asked to be baptized. We can be confident that he also placed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, because if he had not, Philip would not have baptized him.
 - iv. We cannot be sure, but this may be the manner by which the gospel first arrived in Ethiopia.

75. Good News for All – Acts 10:1–11:18

- a. Beginning with E100 Story 20 and continuing through this story and the ones to follow in Acts, Luke shows the advance of the gospel message following the outline Jesus

gave in Acts 1:8--"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- i. In combination with the geographic progression, we've also seen a religious/ethnicity progression. The first converts to the gospel of Jesus after the Holy Spirit came were Jews or God-fearers in Jerusalem (E100 Stories 71 & 72). Then we see the Spirit move the gospel to Samaria (E100 Story 73), a land of mixed-race people who were from part Hebrew and part Gentile ancestry. Their religion was also a mixture of Judaism and other beliefs systems. Then an Ethiopian, who was probably a God-fearer, put his faith in Jesus while visiting Israel and then returned to Ethiopia. Now, we see the Spirit take the gospel to Gentile God-fearers outside the borders of Israel in Caesarea.
- ii. The LORD sovereignly used an angel to speak to a Gentile named Cornelius, and the LORD gave a vision to the Apostle Peter to coordinate the LORD's plan for the meeting of the two together. The LORD not only gave Peter permission to enter the Gentile home but a specific command to do so that went against Peter's cultural and religious understanding of clean and unclean.
- iii. Peter entered the home and found an audience eager to hear the gospel message. As Peter explained the good news about Jesus, the Holy Spirit baptized these Gentiles with the Holy Spirit in a similar way to how the Jewish believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.
- iv. Having already been baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter followed by baptizing them with water in the name of Jesus.
- v. Luke refers to the Jewish believers who accompanied Peter to the Gentile home as "the circumcised." When Peter returned to Jerusalem and was reporting how Gentiles had received the gospel of Jesus and how the Holy Spirit had baptized them, a group Luke calls "the circumcision party" criticized Peter for eating and having close contact with Gentiles.
 - Circumcision--the removal by cutting of the foreskin of the penis--was a sign that males were part of God's covenant people. The E100 Stories did not cover this topic, but you can read about God's command for male Jews to be circumcised when they were eight days old in Genesis 17:1-14. The issue of circumcision and Gentile converts will become a significant theme in the coming chapters of Acts, so be on the lookout for it.
 - Peter explained his initial reluctance to go to the Gentiles and how the vision he received from the LORD overcame his prejudices. He also mentioned John the Baptist's prophecy that Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit (E100 Story 54 - Luke 3). The fact that God baptized the Gentiles in the Holy Spirit, was for Peter undeniable proof that the gospel and the Holy Spirit were intended for them just as much as for the Jews. It is hard to imagine what a major paradigm shift this was for Peter and pious Jews, who for all their lives had thought of Gentiles as unclean and unworthy.