

E100 Study Helps

INTRODUCTION >

“The E100: The Essential One-Hundred Bible Reading Plan” consists of fifty Old Testament and 50 New Testament passages (Scripture Union, Valley Forge, PA, 2011). The 100 stories give a foundational overview of the Bible’s central message. Augustine of Hippo wrote, “In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed” (*Seven Questions Concerning the Heptateuch*, AD 420–21). These Study Helps are intended to assist those using the E100 reading plan to see connections between individual Bible stories and between the Old and New Testaments.

Many casual readers of the Bible mistakenly conclude that the Old Testament describes God as judgmental and wrathful, but then in the New Testament, God had a change of heart to become merciful and loving. Throughout the 100 stories of the E100, we will see that in the midst of God’s judgment and wrath in the Old Testament, He was also demonstrating mercy and love. In the New Testament stories, we will see God put His mercy and love on display in Jesus. However, we will also see that God’s judgment and wrath are never demonstrated more clearly than on the cross where Jesus bore God’s wrath and judgment against sin.

The first Christians came from a Jewish background and more easily saw those links between God’s judgment and mercy, between His wrath and His love. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:3, the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians about the gospel he had preached to them. He wrote, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” “The Scriptures” that Paul referred to were the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians often call the Old Testament. The books of Genesis through Malachi were the only Scriptures the earliest church recognized.

Paul is not the only one to call attention to how the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus, himself, challenged religious leaders of his day by saying, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.” The gospel-writer, Luke, describes Jesus’ encounter with two men along the road after his death and resurrection. Luke writes, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself ... Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled’” (Luke 24:27,44). For other examples of Christians in the New Testament using Old Testament Scriptures to explain the gospel of Jesus, see Acts 7; 8:25; 26:22, and 28:23.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE E100 >

- Read the passage from the E100 in your Bible before reading the Study Helps.
- Read the Study Helps, looking back at your Bible to clarify or substantiate any points that you missed in your first reading or that are still not clear to you.
- Familiarize yourself with the passage to the point that you can tell a summary of it in your own words. Actually, sharing your summary of the passage with someone will reinforce it for you, and it might help someone else learn something new about God's word.
- Note any questions and/or personal applications you may have related to the passage.
- If you are going through the E100 and Study Helps alone, consider asking someone else to go through it with you or perhaps even gather with a small group.

IN THE BEGINNING >

#1 – Genesis 1:1 – 2:25 – Creation

- God spoke the universe into existence by the power of his word (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). Later in John 1 we see God beginning a new creation. To accomplish that new creation, God himself becomes the incarnate Living Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.
- We find two of the three persons of the Trinity referenced on the first page of the Bible. In addition to the word “God,” we see “the Spirit of God” hovering over the waters. In the New Testament, we also find passages that present Jesus as active in the original Creation (John 1:1–3, 14; Col 2:16). Since we have the advantage of possessing the complete canon of the Bible, we can see, in ways previous generations could not, that the plural, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness” (Gen 1:26), is arguably the first evidence of God as a Trinity in the Bible.
- God created humans as male and female with the capacity and purpose of procreation, just as he did other creatures. However, Adam and Eve in particular, and other human beings by extension, were created in the image of God, setting them apart from every other classification of living beings (Gen 1:27).
- God gave the first humans a mission: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (1:28). This verse is known as the “cultural mandate.” Essentially, God was instructing Adam and Eve to create culture throughout the world that reflected His image as His sub-rulers over the rest of creation.
- The example of God resting from His work on the 7th day (Gen 2:2–3) becomes the example and basis for Sabbath rest later in Scripture, as seen as in the fourth commandment (Exo 20:8–11).
- God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with instructions to “work and keep it” (Gen 2:15). They were free to eat from any tree except for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eating from that tree would bring death to the humans (Gen 2:16–17).
- At that time, Adam and Eve were both naked and unashamed. (Gen 2:25).

#2 – Genesis 3:1–24 – The Fall

- The sin of Adam and Eve came as a result of distrusting God's word and character (Gen 3:1–6). Instead of trusting God, Eve allowed Satan, in the form of a talking serpent, to deceive her (Gen 3:13). Adam then listened to the voice of Eve rather than God's voice (Gen 3:27). They both followed their appetites and ate the fruit God forbade them to eat (Gen 3:6). The root of all sin is rebelling against God's rule in our lives. When we trust other voices instead of God's word, we usurp His role as the arbiter of truth and ruler of our lives. We are then likely to follow our appetites, seeking our pleasure more than we seek His pleasure.

- Adam and Eve were ashamed. They covered themselves with fig leaves and hid when they heard the Lord coming near. (Gen 3:7–10)
- The curses and consequences of sin impacted all of creation (Gen 3:14–19). Adam and Eve suffered spiritual death (having an estranged relationship with God) and later both physically died. Yet, this is an example of God showing mercy in the midst of judgment. God was merciful in not having Adam and Eve die immediately, which would have snuffed out the human race.
- In Genesis 3:15, God promised that a descendant of Eve would kill Satan, represented by the serpent. The serpent would bite the descendant’s heel but the descendant would bruise/crush the serpent’s head is known as “The Proto-Evangelium” or the Proto-Gospel.” This is the first hint of the gospel that foreshadows Jesus suffering on the cross and His resurrection that conquers death and Satan who was the original enemy of God and humanity.
- God clothed them with animal skins in place of fig leaves (Gen 3:21). God’s kind act foreshadowed that the covering of sin required a substitutionary death and the shedding of blood. We’ll see this both in the story of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 22), the priestly sacrificial system (Exodus * Leviticus), and ultimately in Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
- The Lord cast Adam and Eve out of the garden following their distrust and rebellion. It was as much an act of mercy as it was of punishment so that they would not eat from the tree of life and live forever in their fallen state. (3:24)

#3 – Genesis 6:5–7:24 – The Flood

- We see a dramatic decline from Genesis 1:31 where God saw all that He had made and that “it is very good” (Gen 1:31), to Genesis 6:5 where God saw “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
- Because of sin’s corrupting and violent effects, God chose to destroy all terrestrial life with a catastrophic flood (6:5–7, 11–13).
- Noah was not sinless but he did “find favor in the eyes of the Lord” (6:8). The word “favor” may also be translated as “grace.” God also shows favor to Abraham (Gen 18:3, 10, 33) and Moses (Exodus 33:12–13, 16–17).
- Noah’s three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. God chose to bring the Messiah through the lineage of Shem. Shem’s descendants are known as “Semitic,” deriving from his name. Although “Semitic” is popularly used today as synonymous with Jewish peoples, technically, Muslim peoples who trace their lineage through Abraham’s son Ishmael are also Semitic peoples.
- Noah trusted God and obeyed all that God commanded him (6:22 & 7:5), which was a stark contrast to those around him.
- In this most catastrophic judgment of God against humanity’s sinful rebellion, God demonstrates His grace and extends salvation to and through Noah and his family.
- God commanded Noah to construct an ark which He used to save Noah’s family and terrestrial wildlife, allowing creation to survive.
- Genesis 7:11 mentions the “fountains of the great deep burst[ing] forth” and “the windows of the heavens opened.” The vast amount of water came from below the earth as well as from the rains from above. It took 150 days for the waters to recede.

#4 – Genesis 8:1–9:17 – God’s Covenant with Noah

- Noah and his family’s fresh start as the only human beings on earth was essentially a “new creation.”
- In 9:1 & 7, God essentially gave Noah and his family the same instructions He gave Adam and Eve in the cultural mandate of Gen 1:26 --to be fruitful and multiply, filling the earth as God’s image bearers and ruling over it as His sub-rulers.

- Perhaps in light of the violence that was epidemic before the flood, God instituted human retribution for bloodshed that took the life of another human. God based the punishment on the fact that He had created human beings “in his own image,”(Gen 9:6), referring back to the original creation in Gen 1:27.
- God gave the rainbow to be a sign (9:8–13) of His covenant promise that He would never destroy all living creatures again with a flood.

#5 – Genesis 11:1–9 – Tower of Babel

- Up to this point everyone had been a descendant of Noah. They comprised one people with one language (11:1).
- The people wanted to make a name for themselves rather than spreading out as God commanded to make His name known (11:4). Their explicit reason for building the tower and city was that they would not have to be “dispersed over the face of the whole earth” as God had told Noah and his descendants to do back in Gen 9:1 & 7.
- God turned the one people with one language into many peoples with many languages. They dispersed over the earth and left off building the city (11:6–9).
- The place was called Babel which sounds like the Hebrew word for “confused.”

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB >

6 – Genesis 12:1–20 – The Call of Abram

- Abram was living in Haran when God called him to leave his family and homeland to go to a place that He would show Abram. It doesn’t appear that Abram knew the destination (12:1).
- We find that Abram grew up in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 11:31). A later passage, Joshua 24:2 reveals, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.’” God’s call to Abram was not based on his previous worship of the LORD God YHWH. God’s revelation of Himself and call to Abram was a result of God’s election and grace, not Abram’s merits.
- God did not make any rule-keeping or stipulations necessary to Abram, only to leave his family to follow God, which would require sacrifice and trust (12:2–3).
- God promised to bless Abraham, his family, and all the families of the earth through him. (12:3).
- Although God promised Abram offspring that would form a nation, Abram was 75 years old with no children when he left his homeland with his wife, Sarai, his nephew, Lot, and his servants to follow God’s direction (12:4).
- God appeared to Abram at Shechem in the land of Canaan at that time. Shechem corresponds to modern-day Nablus, about 34 miles north of Jerusalem. The Lord declared that Shechem was part of the land that He would give Abram and his descendants (12:6–7).
- Abram and his companions went to Egypt due to a famine in Canaan (12:10)
- Abram had Sarai pretend she was his sister instead of his wife because he was afraid someone in Egypt might kill him to have Sarai if they knew she was his wife. Abram’s deception allowed Sarai to be taken by Egypt’s king as one of his wives (12:19). Although Abraham is known for his great faith, his faith wasn’t always consistent.
- God plagued the king and his household because of taking Sarai for his wife so the king gave Sarai back to Abram and sent them away (12:17–20)

7 – Genesis 15:1–21 – God’s Covenant with Abram

- Abram was questioning God because even though God had promised Abram many descendants, he and his wife still didn’t have any children. When God reiterated His promise to give Abram and Sarai innumerable descendants, Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted Abram’s trust as righteousness (Gen 15:2–6). We saw back in Genesis 12 that Abraham had been both untrusting and unrighteous in sacrificing his wife’s well-being for his own, but God considered Abram righteous because of his faith to trust God’s promise. This truth will be referred to in the New Testament (Romans 4:3–9; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23).
- After Abram trusted God about descendants, he still had questions about how he would inherit the land that was still filled with Canaanites. In response, God made a covenant with Abram that involved the sacrifice and blood of animals (Gen 15:7–11).
- God foretold to Abram that his descendants would spend 400 years in Egypt where they would be slaves. However, at the end God would bring them out with many possessions. We will see this promise/warning played out in the Book of Exodus.
- God himself walked between the cut halves of the animals and promised Abram the land. This was an unconditional covenant backed by God’s word and actions. All Abram had to do in this covenant was watch and believe.

#8 – Genesis 21:1–22:19 – Isaac’s Birth and Sacrifice

- We want to note that Abram is now called Abraham and Sarai is now called Sarah. We can look back to Gen 17:1–5 and Gen 17:15–16 to see when God changed their names. Abram means “exalted father” and Abraham means “father of a multitude.”
- When Abraham was 100 years old, God enabled Sarah and Abraham to have a son they named Isaac. That was 25 years after God called Abraham to leave his home to follow Him (Gen 12 in story #6)
- Abraham had a son named Ishmael by Sarah’s Egyptian servant Hagar. (You can find that story in Genesis 16.) Here in Genesis 21, God protected Ishmael when Sarah demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. Hagar found a wife for Ishmael in Egypt. Muslim peoples trace their ancestry back to Abraham through Ishmael. There will be an interesting Egyptian connection later in the Joseph story. Sarah likely acquired Hagar during her and Abraham’s stay in Egypt that we read about earlier in Genesis 12.
- God tested Abraham’s faith by asking him to sacrifice Isaac, his one and only son. We see two important truths here.
 - Abraham trusted that God would do something to save his son. In Gen 22:5 Abraham says, “I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” Hebrews 11:19 looks back on this event and explains, Abraham “considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.”
 - In response to Abraham’s faith, God provided a substitute ram in place of Isaac. We now know that this substitutionary sacrifice pointed to God’s sacrifice of his one and only Son--the “Spotless Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36). Jesus became the God-provided substitute for us, and God did raise him from the dead.

#9 – Genesis 27:1–28:22 – Jacob and Esau Compete

- Isaac’s wife Rebekah led her youngest Son Jacob to deceive Isaac in order to get the blessing intended for the first-born son. This reversed the natural order, allowing the greater blessing to go to the youngest son. God chose Jacob’s lineage to bring the promised Messiah, not because of Jacob’s righteousness but because of God’s grace. The Apostle Paul will make a major point of this truth in Romans 9.
- In Gen 28:36 Esau mentioned his brother cheating him two times. In Gen 25:29–34, we see that Esau traded his birthright as firstborn to his younger brother Jacob for a bowl of porridge.
- Rebekah sent Jacob away to protect him from Esau who wanted to kill him.
- Esau married a descendant of Ishmael. His descendants became the Edomites who later had ongoing conflict with Jacob’s descendants--the Israelites.
- The Lord appeared to Jacob and gave him the promise of land and descendants along with the promise that through him all families of the earth would be blessed. This is the same promise given to his grandfather Abraham (Gen 12).

#10 – Gen 32:1–33:20 – Jacob and Esau Reconcile

- We are led to believe that Jacob’s wrestling match “a man” (Gen 32:24) was actually with the Lord Himself in some incarnate form. The superior being says as much in giving Jacob the new name, Israel, which means “he strives with God” or “God strives” (Gen 32:28). Jacob also conclude that he was wrestling with God: “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered” (Gen 32:30).
- Jacob and Esau met and were reconciled.
- Jacob arrived safely in Shechem. Shechem was the city where God first promised Abraham the land of Canaan (Story #6). Here, Jacob bought his first tract of land in the Promised land at the very place God had promised to give it to his grandfather.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH >

11 – Gen 37:1–36 – Joseph Sold Into Slavery

- By this time, Jacob had 12 sons who are also known as the 12 Tribes of Israel.
- Joseph was the next to the youngest and the favorite of his father Jacob. The Bible shows the human and relational costs that occur when parents favor one child over others. Jacob had been the favorite of his mother and Esau the favorite of his father. Here, the pattern continued with Joseph being the favorite of Jacob.
- This passage describes the first two of a number of dreams associated with Joseph.
- Joseph’s brothers sold him to a band of Ishmaelites. We don’t want to miss that these Ishmaelites were sons or grandsons of Ishmael--the son of Abraham by the slave Hagar. Abraham had been the owner of Hagar and had allowed Sarah to send her and Ishmael away where they both would have died without the LORD rescuing them. Here, we see descendants of the slave woman Hagar ended up purchasing the great-grandson of Abraham for 20 shekels of silver.
 - It seems the Midianites were a subset of the Ishmaelites, or the two were used interchangeably.
- Potiphar, the captain of the guard serving the Egyptian King Pharaoh, bought Joseph as his slave from the Ishmaelites. God would use Joseph’s proximity to power during his slavery to place Joseph exactly where He wanted him.

#12 – Gen 39:1–41:57 – Prison and a Promotion

- The Lord was with Joseph and gave him favor with his master so that he became overseer of the entire household, second in command to the owner himself.
- Joseph’s behavior displays integrity and faithfulness to his master but he is falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife and imprisoned as a result.
- We see an almost instant replay of Joseph’s early experience with Potiphar. The Lord was with Joseph in prison and gave him favor with the keeper of the prison so that Joseph became second in command of the prison.
- We see three more dream descriptions that God used to give Joseph favor with the King Pharaoh. Those dream interpretations gave Joseph favor with the King and set Joseph up to become second in command over all of Egypt.
- Three times we see Joseph displaying integrity and faithful service to those who rule over him and all three times the Lord God gives him favor with his masters, causing Joseph to become second in command in a household, in the prison, and in the nation.

#13 – Gen 42:1–38 – Ten Brothers Go to Egypt

- God used the famine about which Joseph had foretold through a dream interpretation.
- Joseph devised a plan of storing extra grain to prepare Egypt for the coming famine, which gave him favor with Pharaoh, leading Joseph to become second in command over all of Egypt.
- When the famine came it also plagued the Promised Land of Canaan, leading Joseph’s brothers to seek food from Egypt. God led the brothers before Joseph who recognized them. However, they did not recognize him.
- Joseph kept one of his brothers, Simeon, as a sort of collateral to get the other brothers to return with his younger brother Benjamin. He sent the other brothers back with food and also returned their money to them.

#14 – The Brothers Return – Gen 43:1–44:34

- The brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin to get more food and gain the release of Simeon. They brought twice the amount of money they owed to make up for the money that had been returned to them in their bags the previous time.
- Joseph planted a silver cup in the youngest brother Benjamin’s bag as a ploy to get them to leave Benjamin with him.
- However, Judah offered to substitute himself for Benjamin so that Benjamin could return to his father who would have been devastated without him. Judah was one of the older brothers who had earlier tried to prevent the other brothers from killing Joseph (Story #11, Gen 37:26).
 - Jesus would later be born from the line of Judah and would substitute himself to save others that they might be with their heavenly Father.

#15 – Gen 45:1–46:7 – Joseph Reveals His Identity

- Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and showed them mercy and grace. He credited God for sovereignly using their evil against him for a greater plan: “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt” (Gen 45:4–8).
 - Joseph’s father, brothers, and entire household moved to Egypt where they received both food and pasture lands. Unbeknownst to any of them at the time, this move would play a pivotal role in fulfilling the prophecy God gave Abraham (Story #7, Gen 15:13) that his descendants would spend 400 years in Egypt.
 - Later in Gen 50:20 Joseph tells his brothers, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” Joseph suffered repeated injustices over many years—sold into slavery, carried to a foreign land with foreign gods, falsely accused, and imprisoned. God used the unjust sufferings of Joseph for His saving purposes. The LORD showed grace to Joseph in the middle of his suffering and placed him in positions of responsibility to save many people from death. Joseph’s life pointed ahead to Jesus as One who suffered unjustly for sins he did not commit so that many would be saved.

MOSES AND THE EXODUS >

#16 – Exodus 1:1–2:25 – Birth of Moses

- We hear echoes of God’s commands to Adam and Noah to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” The family of Jacob “multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7).
- The passage doesn’t tell us how long the Israelites had been in Egypt, but we see that both Joseph, and the Pharaoh whom he served as second in command, had died. A new Pharaoh came to power “who did not know Joseph” (Exodus 1:8).
- Fearing that the growing numbers and strength of the Israelites might result in their uprising against the Egyptians, Pharaoh forced them into slave labor. He took them out of their primary vocations as shepherds and made them field workers and brick fabricators.
- Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all males that were born, but to let the girls live (Exodus 1:16). At risk to their own lives, the midwives honored God and disobeyed the Pharaoh’s order. Therefore, God blessed them.
- When the midwives did not kill the baby boys, Pharaoh enlisted the Egyptian people to do the job by throwing baby boys into the Nile River.
- Descendants from the Tribe of Levi gave birth to a son and named him Moses, which means “from the water” (Exodus 2:10). When Moses was 3 months old, his mother placed him in a floating basket at the end of the Nile where God led Pharaoh’s daughter to find him. In God’s providence, he arranges for Moses’ mother to become his nursemaid with compensation.
- After being raised in the household of Pharaoh, Moses killed an Egyptian for beating a fellow Hebrew. Moses had grown up as an Egyptian of privilege and even royalty. He looked like an Egyptian in his dress and hair, and he spoke like an Egyptian. However, in killing the Egyptian he sided here with his own oppressed Hebrew people.

- So Moses fled Egypt and went to Midian, a region along the Sinai peninsula. The Midianites were known to be descendants of Abraham through his second wife Keturah. Midianites were also associated with descendants of Ishmael in Gen 37 (Story # 11)

#17 – Exodus 3:1–4:17 – The Burning Bush

- When the Lord called Moses, He identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Exodus 3:2 refers to the “angel of the LORD,” which many Bible scholars believe to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.
- In the previous story, Moses tried to intervene and help a mistreated Hebrew slave. However, Moses had been operating in his own anger and strength. Now God called Moses to go back to Egypt to serve as His leader in delivering the Hebrew people from their Egyptian slavery.
- The Lord not only promised to deliver the Israelites. He also promised to return them to the Land of Promise they left 400 years earlier during a famine (Story 13). By this time, the Promised Land was not suffering famine but was “good and broad” and “flowing with milk and honey.” (Exo 3:8)
- The Lord called to Moses out of a burning bush on Mt. Sinai. The Lord promised Moses that he would serve the Lord at this same spot with the people of Israel after they were set free from Egypt.
- The Lord further identified Himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM” (Exo 3:14). This is God’s special name he used with His covenant people. It is literally four Hebrew letters, YHWH. Anytime we see the word “LORD” in all capital letters in our Bibles, it translates this special name of YHWH.

#18 – Exodus 6:38–11:10 – The Ten Plagues

- The Lord made clear to Moses that He was in the process of forming a new covenant people for Himself. He had previously revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as “God Almighty” but He had never identified Himself to them as YHWH --THE LORD. God was doing something new with Moses.
- The Lord emphasized to Moses and the people that they would be His people, in His place, under His rule (Exodus 6:7–8). This will be a recurring theme throughout the Bible--God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule. We will see various degrees of that reality in the Bible and throughout history, but it will not be perfectly realized until heaven. Only God’s people will be in heaven, and they will be in perfect accord with His rule.
- Pharaoh’s magicians seemed to be able to reproduce the first two plagues, but not the following 8.
- To make a clear distinction between God’s people and the people of Egypt, the LORD God spared the Hebrew people from plagues 4–10.
- The Lord actually told Moses back in Exodus 4:22–23 that He would send the 10th plague on all the firstborn in Egypt.

#19 – Exodus 12:1–42 – Passover and Exodus

- The Hebrew people spread the blood of an unblemished lamb over their doorways as a sign for the angel of death to not touch any of the Israelite firstborn. The angel would “pass over” those who were under the sign of the lamb’s blood. This event was the basis for the celebration of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
 - Passover was a celebration of deliverance and salvation and the LORD commanded, “You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast” (Exo. 12:14).
 - John the Baptist later refers to Jesus as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, 36). The Apostle Paul writes, “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (2 Cor 5:7).

- The 10th plague on the firstborn became the basis for Israel’s Passover and unleavened bread celebrations. Again we see the Lord wanting the Egyptians to know that the LORD makes a distinction between His people Israel and the Egyptians (Exodus 12:7).
- Again, we see the Lord giving favor to His people. In this case the Egyptians gave the Israelites whatever they asked for so that the Hebrew people “plundered the Egyptians” (Exo 12:36) without a battle.
- “A mixed multitude also went with them” (Exo 12:38) indicates that non-Hebrew people accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt. Having seen the works of the LORD in the plagues, they cast their lot with the Israelites and their God YHWH.

#20 – Exodus 13:17–14:31 – Crossing the Red Sea

- Exodus 13:15 explains that the LORD killed all of the firstborn in Egypt because, “Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go.” We repeatedly see the LORD demanding that Pharaoh let His people go to worship Him and offer sacrifices to Him in the wilderness (Exo 5:1; 7:16; 8:1, 8, 20, 21; 9:13, 17; 10:3).
- The LORD manifested His presence as a cloud that shielded and guided the Israelites by day and a pillar of fire that lit their path by night. During the crossing the Lord gave light to the Israelites and kept the Egyptians in darkness.
- Before leaving Egypt, Moses retrieved Joseph’s bones (Exo 13:19) and carried them back to Israel to honor Joseph’s directive recorded in Gen 50:24–25.
- Pharaoh’s army thought they had the Israelites trapped with their backs to the sea. However, the LORD was actually enticing the Egyptians into a trap.
- The LORD demonstrated His sovereign power over nature by parting the sea so that the Hebrew people could cross on dry land. Then He released the seas to drown the ensuing Egyptians.
- We read that after this event, the people of Israel “believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses” (Exo 14:31).
- All the Hebrew people had to do to be saved was trust God enough to walk on the dry ground and watch Him work salvation on their behalf.

THE LAW AND THE LAND >

#21 – Exodus 19:1–20:21 – The Ten Commandments

- After the Passover and up to this point, the main thing the Israelites had to do was to follow the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night wherever the Lord led them. It was an act of trusting faith that He would lead them to safety.
- It’s important to see that the Ten Commandments and the Law came after God had already saved his people from their slavery in Egypt. They did not have to obey the commandments in order to be saved or to be the people of God. Rather the commandments laid out for them how the people of God were to live in a way that honored and pleased Him. Obeying the commandments was one way the LORD’s people were to worship Him as their Savior and Ruler.
- There were times the Lord called Moses to meet Him on the mountain to receive words to later deliver to the people at the bottom of the mountain. However, God spoke the 10 commandments audibly from the mountain so all of the people heard them directly without an intermediary.
- The first 5 commandments of the 10 revolve around the people’s relationship with God. The next 5 commandments deal with their relationships among themselves.

#22 – Exodus 32:1–34:35 – The Golden Calf

- Exodus 24:18 tells us Moses was on the mountain for 40 days. That means within a 40-day period of hearing God speak the 10 commandments directly to them, the people made a golden calf idol and worshiped it.
- The bottom of the mountain is the area of worship where the people had worshiped the Lord. Now they were worshiping the golden calf at that place of worship. That is the place Moses smashed and broke the tablets with the commandments.
- Moses called out asking who would be for the Lord and all of the Levites stepped forward. Moses called them to kill some within the camp. It is clear that Aaron and some of the Levites were involved in the golden calf incident, yet not all of them were killed. It seems some were spared because they turned to the Lord and again promised to be faithful to Him. We are left to think that the 3,000 who were killed did not repent of their idolatry. The LORD was making it clear how serious an offense idolatry is to Him, an offense worthy of the death penalty.
- The LORD renewed His covenant of the Law with the people, gave them new tablets with the commandments, and promised to go before them in giving them the Promised Land.
- Even after their idolatry, the Lord did not forsake them as His people. However, He did bring a judgment on those who refused to repent to keep unrepentant sin from further harming the group.

#23 – Joshua 1:1–18 – Joshua Succeeds Moses

- Joshua was the leader to succeed Moses and the people recognized him as such. The LORD reassured Joshua that He would be with him just as He had been with Moses.
- The LORD promised to fulfill promises about the land made to Joshua's forefathers.
- The first land upon crossing the Jordan River was allocated to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Upon arrival, the men from those tribes could leave their families and livestock there, but they needed to continue on to fight for the land of the other tribes. They were not to return to their own families and land until the land had been secured for everyone.

#24 – Joshua 3:1–4:24 – Crossing the Jordan

- Priests carried the Ark of the Covenant, symbolizing the presence of the LORD, before the people. As the priests entered the waters of the Jordan with the Ark, the LORD parted the waters of the river in a way reminiscent of the parting of the Red Sea with Moses (Story #20 – Exodus 13:17–14:31).
- The priests kept holding the Ark of the Covenant as they were in the middle of the river until all of the people had crossed over on dry ground.
- The LORD commanded a member from each of the 12 tribes to carry a stone from the middle of the riverbed to set up as a memorial of what God had done in parting the waters of the Jordan and leading them into the Promised Land. Parting the waters of the river, with Joshua as their human leader, was a clear reminder of the LORD parting the Red Sea 40 years earlier when Moses was their human leader. "On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life" (Josh 4:14).

#25 – Joshua 5:13–6:27 – The Fall of Jericho

- After crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the LORD ordered all of the men who had not already been circumcised to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant that they belonged to Him.
 - It was necessary to camp there for a time while the men healed from their circumcisions. The LORD said at that time and place He had “rolled away the reproach of Egypt” from His people (Josh 5:9). They named that place Gilgal which sounds like the Hebrew word for “rolled.”
- While at Gilgal, the people also celebrated their first Passover meal in the Promised Land.
- From that point on the Israelites began to eat the produce of the Promised Land and God stopped providing the manna they had received for the previous 40 years in the desert.
- The Commander of the Army of the Lord that Joshua encountered outside of Jericho was an angel. The angel instructed Joshua to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. This is just what the LORD had said to Moses when He spoke to him from the burning bush (Story # 17). Readers should note this event as a confirmation that Joshua was the successor to Moses as the earthly leader/deliverer of God’s people.
- The Israelites followed the LORD’s command and marched around the walled city of Jericho for seven days. On the 7th day, the walls fell and the Israelites entered to plunder the city.
 - It’s important to note that when the Israelites conquered Jericho, they spared a woman named Rahab and her household. Rahab was a prostitute who had helped Israelite spies on an earlier expedition to spy out Jericho (Josh 2:1–24). Rahab later figures into the genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:5).

THE JUDGES >

26 – Judges 2:6–3:6 – Israel’s Disobedience

- The LORD had commanded the Israelites to drive out and destroy the various peoples who were occupying the Promised Land. The “What is this you have done?” in Judges 2:2 refers to how God’s people did not destroy all the inhabitants of the land as the LORD had instructed them to do (See Judges 1). Because they failed to obey the LORD’s command, the LORD said, “So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (Judges 2:3).
- After Joshua and the elders around him died, “there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel» (Joshua 3:10). These people did evil and worshipped the Baals--idols of the Canaanite peoples.
 - Baal was considered a storm god, responsible for bringing rain. Along with the rain was the secondary idea of Baal being a fertility god. Baal would die during the dry season and needed to be resuscitated by Baal’s sister god, Anat, to begin the rains again.
- Baal worship among the Israelites would not have occurred if they had destroyed the idolatrous inhabitants of the land as God had instructed them and as Moses had the Israelites do to their own idolatrous members in the desert (Story #22– Exodus 32).
- Because of the Israelites’ idolatry, the LORD did not support them in battle, but allowed them to be defeated by their enemies. Even so, God did not abandon them. Instead, He raised up “judges”--leaders of the various regions. The LORD empowered these judges to deliver the people from their enemies. Yet, when the judges died, the people “turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them” (Joshua 2:19).

- Because of the Israelite unfaithfulness, people from the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites remained in the land (Judges 3:5). As a result, the Israelites intermarried with them and served their gods (Judges 3:6).

#27 – Judges 4:1–5:31 – Deborah Leads Israel

- We see a pattern: The people of Israel did evil, the LORD allowed their enemies to oppress them until they cried out to Him, and He raised up a Judge/Deliverer to defeat Israel’s enemies.
- The LORD raised up and called out a woman named Deborah to be the Judge or deliverer of Israel. Judges 4:4 describes Deborah as “a prophetess and the wife of Lappidoth.”
- Deborah called out Barak to go up against their oppressor. We don’t know much more about Barak other than his name and the name of his father, but Hebrews 11:32 in the New Testament names him in a list of people who displayed great faith.
- Barak said he would not go against his enemies without Deborah also going with him so she also went. However, she declared that a woman would get the credit for the victory rather than Barak (Judges 4:9).
- The LORD Himself fought on behalf of the Israelites, routing the enemy army. As Deborah had announced to Barak, a woman received the glory for the victory as a woman named Jael drove a tent stake through the temple of the enemy general Sisera.

28 – Judges 6:1–7:25 – Gideon Defeats the Midianites

- We see the pattern from earlier repeated: the Israelites did evil, God allowed their enemies to oppress them until they cried out to Him, and He raised up a Judge/Deliverer to defeat Israel’s enemies.
- This time the enemy was the Midianite people. We recall the Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his wife Keturah, whom he married after Sarah died. Joseph’s brothers had sold him as a slave to a group of Midianites (Story #11– Gen 37) and Moses tended sheep for 40 years among the Midianites after he had fled Egypt for killing an Egyptian (Story #17 – Exodus 3).
- The LORD called Gideon as the Judge/Deliverer, but Gideon was reluctant and uncertain of his calling. Gideon came from the weakest of the 12 tribes--Manasseh. Gideon asked for repeated signs to make sure he was hearing the LORD correctly and the LORD granted him the signs he requested.
- Gideon had an encounter with the “angel of the LORD” which may be a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. We have seen the “angel of the LORD” in previous stories:
 - Calling to Abraham when he was about to sacrifice Isaac (Story #8 – Gen 22).
 - Visiting and calling Moses (Story #17 – Exodus 3:2).
- The LORD had Gideon pare down the size of his army three times to make the Israelites vastly outnumbered by the Midianites. Under Gideon, the reluctant warrior leader with an outnumbered army, the LORD caused the Israelites to defeat the Midianites.
- We’ll see this theme repeated throughout the history of Israel--God repeatedly chose to show His might and grace through the weakness and inability of His people so that only He could receive the credit and the glory.

29 – Judges 13:1–16:31 – Sampson Defeats the Philistines

- We see the same pattern again. The Israelites did evil, God allowed their enemies to oppress them until they cried out to Him, and He raised up a Judge/Deliverer to defeat Israel’s enemies.
- This time the enemy was the Philistines and Sampson was the Judge/Deliverer. Sampson was a miracle baby to a barren mother.
- Once again, we see the angel of the LORD appearing, this time to Sampson’s parents.

- Sampson was to live his whole life observing a Nazirite vow. Part of that vow was to never cut his hair, drink alcohol, or eat anything unclean. He broke his Nazirite vow by eating honey from the carcass of a lion.
- Sampson had supernatural strength and killed many Philistines with very unorthodox weapons, such as the jawbone of an ass and foxes with their tails lit on fire. Again, the LORD was showing His power to fight on behalf of His people.
- The secret to Sampson’s supernatural strength was tied to his long hair from the Nazirite vow. Sampson gave that secret away to his love interest named Delilah. Delilah then cut his hair, which took away his strength, and betrayed him to the Philistines who were enemies of Israel.
- The Philistines bound Sampson, blinded him, and mocked him. By this time, Sampson’s hair had grown out again and his strength returned. Although blind and mocked, Sampson pushed apart two pillars of the building, causing it to collapse on himself and about 3,000 Philistines celebrating his capture. Sampson killed more Philistines by his death –than he did in his combined battles during his life. There is a possible image in Sampson’s death victory that foreshadows how Jesus conquered His and our primary enemy through His death on the cross.

30 – Ruth 1:1–4:22 – The Story of Ruth

- Ruth was a Moabite. Moab was a son by Lot’s incestuous relationship with his oldest daughter (Genesis 19:37 – Not one of the E100 stories but you may want to check it out).
- Ruth trusted her Jewish mother-in-law Naomi and Naomi’s God--the LORD YHWH.
- Boaz was a relative of Naomi’s deceased husband Elimelech as well as of their deceased son who had been married to Ruth. Boaz followed the Jewish role of a “redeemer kinsman” to sire a child for his dead relative. Boaz married Ruth and together they would become grandparents of King David.
- Although Ruth did not have Jewish blood lines, she was named in the genealogy of Jesus along with Boaz (Matthew 1:5). We see in Ruth as with Rahab earlier, a sort of grafting in of Gentiles into God’s people, not because of their bloodlines but because of their trusting faith in the LORD YHWH.

THE RISE OF ISRAEL >

31 – 1 Samuel 1:1–3:21– Samuel Listens to God

- Once again we see God allowed a couple to conceive and have a child together who had previously been infertile. Samuel’s special birth was linked to the fervent prayers and commitment of his mother, Hannah. Samuel would become a pivotal leader in Israel’s history.
- Samuel served as bridge between the period of Israel’s judges and the period of the monarchy.
 - Samuel acted as a priest serving the LORD in the tabernacle and was Israel’s final Spirit-empowered judge. In his role as a priest, he was called to anoint Israel’s first and second kings.
 - Samuel was also God’s prophet, and all that he prophesied was fulfilled.
 - As both prophet and priest, Samuel served the LORD YHWH as his ultimate King. However, the LORD used Samuel to identify and anoint earthly kings that the LORD selected. Samuel’s various roles as Prophet, Priest, and Judge foreshadowed the coming of Jesus who was the ideal Prophet, Priest, and King in perfect submission to God the Father.

32 – 1 Samuel 8:1–10:27– King Saul

- In Story 31, we saw the Priest Eli’s sons did not honor the LORD (1 Sam 2:12–36). Similarly, Samuel’s sons did not honor the LORD (1 Sam 8:1–3).

- The Israelites demanded a king like the other nations.
- The LORD declared their demand for a human king to be a rejection of Him as King (1 Sam 8:7–9; 10:18–19).
- The LORD directed Samuel to anoint Saul as King. Saul was an extremely tall and handsome son of a wealthy man named Kish. Although, Saul was reluctant to take on the responsibility and protested that he was from the tribe of Benjamin, “the least of the tribes of Israel” (1 Sam 9:21), he became Israel’s first king.

#33 – 1 Sam 16:1–18:16 – David and Goliath

- Because of Saul’s disregard for the LORD’s instruction, the LORD rejected Saul as King of Israel and then instructed Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse from Bethlehem, as Israel’s future King.
- Samuel met Jesse’s sons and the LORD confirmed that the youngest son, David, was His choice to be Israel’s future King.
 - We will later see that Jesus was a descendant of King David and was also born in Bethlehem. In Romans 15:2, the Apostle Paul teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise in Isaiah 11:1 --”There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”
- Samuel anointed David as king, “And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward” (1 Sam 16:13).
- David entered the service of Saul as his armor bearer (1 Sam 16:21). David also played the harp to give Saul relief from harmful spirit’s that sometimes plagued him (1 Sam 16:23).
- The young David accepted the challenge of the Philistine giant warrior Goliath and stepped forward to fight the giant on behalf of the Israelites. David had only a slingshot and five smooth stones when he faced Goliath and he declared that it would be the LORD, not David’s superior weaponry or skill, that would deliver Goliath into David’s hand (1 Sam 17:45–47).
 - We need to recognize that this is not the story of David’s exceptional bravery. It is the account of David’s faithful God who had earlier “rushed His spirit upon David” (1 Sam 16:13). The LORD YHWH goes before His people to fight on their behalf just as He had done against the Egyptians in the Exodus event (Story # 20), the Canaanites in the Promised Land (Stories 24 & 25), and the stories of Deborah, Gideon, and Sampson (Stories 27, 28, & 29).
- David’s relationship ties with Saul and his family are complicated.
 - Saul’s son Jonathan would have normally been heir to the throne of his father Saul. However, “the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam 18:1). Jonathan recognized God’s hand upon David. Essentially, Jonathan willingly ceded what would have been his throne to David.
 - Note David and Jonathan’s covenant in 1 Sam 18:3–4. Jonathan’s gift of his armor, sword, bow, and belt to David was a literal disarmament and figurative surrender. Jonathan’s act symbolized handing his power to rule over to David.
 - Saul became jealous of David’s successes and the resulting adulation from the Israelite people. Saul found himself conflicted in his jealousy of David. He wanted David to continue winning battles against Israel’s enemies; however he also had an inward desire for David to be taken down by those enemies (1 Sam 18:17, 21, 25).
- In spite of Saul’s behind the scenes efforts to harm David, David enjoyed growing success in battle and esteem from the people.

34 – 1 Sam 23:7–24:22 – David and Saul

- The ephod referred to in 1 Sam 23:9 was a priestly garment, probably similar to the one described in Exodus 28:6–35. If so, it contained something called the “Urim” and the “Thummim,” which was the only God-approved physical apparatus for discerning God’s direction (Num 27:21).
- Saul moved beyond simply hoping that his enemies or someone else would kill David. Here, Saul began with his first of many all-out attacks on David (1 Sam 23:15–24:22).
 - Rather than fighting back against Saul, “And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.” (1 Sam 23:14).
- We repeatedly see both Jonathan, David, and others coming to David’s aid.
 - “Jonathan, Saul’s son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, ‘Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this.’” (1 Sam 23:16–17)
 - “As Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them, a messenger came to Saul, saying, ‘Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid against the land’” (1 Sam 23:26–27).
- David honored Saul as God’s anointed king even when Saul was trying to kill him. Saul demonstrates an example of “confession” without “repentance.” Even though Saul announces the truth, he does not surrender his will or change his behaviors to align with that truth.
 - “And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, ‘You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands’” (1 Sam 24:16–18).
- We see Saul asked David to agree to not cut off his offspring once David is king.
 - “‘And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Swear to me therefore by the Lord that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father’s house.’ And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold” (1 Sam 24:20–22).
 - However, in 1 Sam 26 we find that Saul again tried to kill David and David again had opportunity to kill Saul but spared his life (1 Sam 26:1–25)

35 – 2 Sam 5:1–7:29 – King David

- In preceding chapters, we find that Saul, Jonathan, and two others of Saul’s sons were killed in battle on the same day (1 Sam 31:1–4).
- The people of Judah, comprised of the southern tribes, chose David as Saul’s replacement rather than following Saul’s family line (2 Sam 2:4). However, Saul’s son, Ish-bosheth, set himself up as king over the northern tribes of Israel.
- David sought the LORD’s guidance and followed Him. The LORD went before David in battle and gave him victory (2 Sam 5:22–25). This episode of following God and seeing him intervene is reminiscent of God going before the Hebrew people and fighting on their behalf in the Exodus and with Gideon in Judges.
- David wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant, symbolizing the presence of the LORD among His people, to Jerusalem. The ark had remained in a private residence near the Philistine border since the time of Samuel--about 20 years (1 Sam 7:1–2).
- However, there was a serious hiccup and delay in the process of retrieving the ark.
 - Uzzah meant well, but by touching the Ark he disregarded the holiness of the LORD and the fact that he was not authorized to touch the holy things of the ark (Numbers 4:15). Actually, the ark was not meant to be carried on a cart (Exo 25:13–14).

- David was then afraid to take the Ark to Jerusalem, fearing the LORD, so he left it at the house of Obed for 3 months.
 - Seeing that God blessed Obed, David went back for the Ark and brought it to Jerusalem. This time David had the ark carried rather than transporting it on a cart (1 Chronicles 15:15).
- David's wife, Saul's daughter Michal, ridiculed David for his uninhibited worship she thought unbecoming a king.
- David desired to build a temple for the LORD in Jerusalem. However, the LORD answered that God would build David a house--not a physical structure but a kingdom that would endure forever.
 - "Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:11-13).
- God said one of David's sons would be allowed to build Him a temple.
 - David trusted the LORD's promise and offered a prayer of thanks as he worshipped the LORD.

THE FALL OF ISRAEL >

36 - 2 Sam 11:1-12:25 - David and Bathsheba

- Instead of going out and leading his soldiers in battle as he normally did, David sent his soldiers to fight, but he stayed at home.
- David abused his power by having relations with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of David's soldiers out fighting battles.
- When David found out Bathsheba was pregnant, he tried to cover his sin by inviting Uriah back to be with Bathsheba. However, in stark contrast to David's ignoble behavior, Uriah nobly refused to enjoy physical relations with his wife while his colleagues were at battle.
- In trying to cover up his initial sin of adultery, David committed another sin that amounted to murdering Uriah by contract.
- After Uriah's death, David took Bathsheba as his wife.
- Nathan the prophet used a sort of parable to indirectly confront David about his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. Upon hearing Nathan's parable, David became enraged at the injustice of the man in the parable who turned out to represent David himself.
- God did not allow David's sins to go unpunished and brought judgment on David's family.
 - 2 Samuel 12:10 -- Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.
 - 2 Samuel 12:13-14 -- David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die."
 - The child born to Bathsheba died as the LORD said would happen.
- Later, as a married couple, David and Bathsheba became parents of Solomon. Solomon was also called Jedidiah, which means "beloved of the Lord" (2 Sam 12:25).

37 – 1 Kings 2:1–3:28 – King Solomon

- Before David died, he gave some parting advice to his son Solomon, warning Solomon to stay faithful to the LORD and His commands. David sought to instruct Solomon about some threats to his kingdom, as well as to inform him of some promises David had made. These are some of the individuals David discussed with Solomon.
 - Joab, the son of Zeruah
 - Joab had deceitfully killed Abner (2 Sam 3:27–30) and later killed David's son Absalom (2 Sam 18:14).
 - As we recall David, committed adultery with Bathsheba and then ordered that her husband, Uriah, be left alone on the front line of battle to be killed. After Uriah's death, David married Bathsheba. From Scripture, we are only aware of four persons who knew about those grievous sins of David--David, Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan, and Joab who had been the commander of the army who ordered the front line to retreat so that Uriah would be killed.
 - Abner, son of Ner
 - Abner was the Commander in Chief of Saul's army. After King Saul's death, instead of supporting David, Abner supported Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, as king among the northern tribes (2 Sam 2:8).
 - Amasa, son of Jether
 - Amasa was one of David's nephews (1 Chr 2:17). Amasa supported David's son Absalom (2 Sam 17:25), but later was appointed as one of David's army commanders (2 Sam 19:13–14). Joab later killed Amasa (2 Sam 20:9–10).
 - Barzilai, the Gileadite
 - Barzillai was hospitable to David during his stay in Gilead, and he refused to receive any compensation (2 Sam 17:27–29).
 - Absalom
 - Absalom was David's son, born to Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur (2 Sam 3:3).
 - Shimei, the son of Gera
 - Shimei had publicly cursed David for killing members of Saul's family (2 Sam 16:5–13).
- David's son by Haggith, Adonijah, was older than Solomon, which meant by normal lines of succession, Adonijah would have been thought to be in line for the throne before Solomon. However, the LORD had said Solomon would be the next King over Israel.
- Solomon followed through on each person about whom David had spoken to him, solidifying his kingdom in the process.
- Solomon prayed for God to give him wisdom to govern over the people. God not only honored Solomon's prayer for wisdom but also promised to give him riches and honor. Solomon went on to be known as one of the wisest and wealthiest men on earth.

38 – 1 Kings 8:1–9:9 – Solomon’s Temple

- Solomon brought the Ark of the Covenant into the temple as the LORD’s permanent localized residence. The ark would no longer be carried around by men on poles as it had in the times of the tent-like tabernacle the priests transported from place to place.
- The LORD warned Solomon and the people that if they did not faithfully worship Him exclusively, He would allow the temple to become a heap of ruins.
 - “But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’ Then they will say, ‘Because they abandoned the LORD their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore, the LORD has brought all this disaster on them.’” (1 Kings 9:6–9).
 - This warning later became a reality when the temple was destroyed in 586 BCE.

39 – 1 Kings 16:29–19:18 – Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

- Note that the united kingdom, over which David ruled, had now been divided into the southern kingdom of Judah, under King Asa, and the northern kingdom of Israel, under King Ahab.
 - Ahab worshipped the idol Baal and other false gods.
 - You may recall from the Study Helps for Story #26, Baal was considered a storm god, responsible for bringing rain. Along with the rain was the secondary idea of Baal being a fertility god. Baal would die during the dry season and needed to be resuscitated by Baal’s sister god, Anat, to begin the rains again.
 - Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, was a princess from the land of Tyre that worshipped Baal. Ahab built a temple for Baal worship for Jezebel.
 - Asherah were Canaanite “mother goddesses” often represented by poles. The idolatrous King Ahab joined his wife in worshipping Baal and Asherah.
- 1 Kings 16:33 says, “Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.”
- Elijah the Prophet confronted Ahab with a warning that the LORD was going to withhold both rain and dew for a period (1 Kings 17:1–2).
 - When Elijah called for there to be no rain until God said there would be rain, he was confronting the false notion that Baal controlled the rain.
- The LORD then led Elijah to a remote area near a brook where the LORD sent ravens to take him bread and meat to sustain him.
- The LORD then led Elijah to seek the hospitality of a widow with a son in Zarephath. Her supplies were down to a small quantity of oil and flour, but the LORD supernaturally multiplied her resources for many days so that they all had food.
- While Elijah was there, the widow’s son became ill and died. When God used Elijah to resuscitate the widow’s son, the LORD demonstrated that He was the God who had power over death, not the pagan goddess Anat.
- Obadiah, who was over Ahab’s household, “feared the Lord greatly” (1 Kings 18:3). Obadiah hid and fed 100 prophets of the LORD when Jezebel began having the LORD’s prophets killed.

- When the time of drought had extended to three years, the LORD told Elijah to go to Ahab.
 - He gathered 400 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. Elijah was the only prophet of the LORD present because the others had been killed or were in hiding.
 - When everyone was gathered at Mt. Carmel, Elijah asked a question that is relevant to many of us today: “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”
 - The people did not respond, but Elijah set up a test between the false gods and the LORD God that proved that the LORD is dominant over all the other gods.
- Once the people believed, they gathered and killed the prophets of Baal (1 King 18:40).
- The LORD brings rain once again to the drought-stricken land. Throughout the event, the LORD is shown to be powerful and concerned for the people. He can send rain or fire. In contrast Baal is proven to be weak and unconcerned for the people’s wellbeing.
- After such an enormous victory and manifestation of God’s power and care, Elijah seemed to have a dip in his confident faith. He ran away when Jezebel threatened to have him killed.
 - Elijah was so tired and discouraged that he said he wanted to die: “I have had enough, Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.’ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.” 1 Kings 19:4–5).
- The LORD addressed Elijah’s concerns with a gentle renewal of his call and told Elijah to go back the way he came with a three-fold mission:
 - To anoint Hazael as king of Syria
 - To anoint Jehu as King of Israel.
 - To anoint Elisha as Elijah’s successor prophet.
- The LORD also announced that He had preserved 7,000 people in Israel who had been faithful to Him and not worshipped Baal.

40 – 2 Kings 25:1–30 – The Fall of Jerusalem

- Babylon’s siege against Jerusalem began in late 589 BCE and was complete in 587 BCE. During that siege, Jerusalem ran out of food after a year.
- Once the city was defeated, Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar’s representative, supervised the burning of the temple, palace, homes, and important buildings in the city.
- The loss of the temple was more than the loss of a building. It was the loss of worship as the Israelites understood it through the Torah. The temple was the place of offerings, sacrifices, and festive gatherings for worshipping the LORD and receiving forgiveness of sins.
- With the destruction of the city and exile of the people, the line of Davidic kings seemed to have been completely cut off. It appeared that God’s promise to always have a king from David’s line on the throne was no longer possible to keep.

PSALMS AND PROVERBS >

41 – Psalm 23:1–6 – The Lord is My Shepherd

- Psalm 23 is attributed to David, the shepherd-boy-turned-king. It is perhaps the most familiar Psalm in the Bible.
- Psalm 23 is normally categorized as a “psalm of confidence” or a “trust psalm.”
- David presents the LORD God as both a shepherd and a host who shows His care for His “sheep.”
- The path where the LORD the Shepherd leads includes restful green pastures as well as difficult places portrayed as the “valley of the shadow of death.” Yet, even in those dark places, the psalmist didn’t fear because the “LORD was with” him.

- As a host, the LORD protects His guests, making it safe for them to eat in the presence of their enemies.
- The LORD generously provided more than the Psalmist needed, giving him confidence that he would dwell in the presence of the LORD forever.

42 – Psalm 51:1–19 – Have Mercy on Me

- Psalm 51 is also attributed to David. It is categorized as an “individual lament psalm” (in contrast to a “corporate lament psalm”).
- Psalm 51 describes David’s repentance after his sins against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah (Story 36).
- David based his request for forgiveness and restoration from God on the LORD’s covenant faithfulness, love, and grace.
- David recognized that he could not cleanse himself of his sin and therefore asked the LORD to cleanse him.
- David referred to God using “hyssop” to cleanse him. Israelites used hyssop branches to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to their doorposts (Exo 12:22, Story 19).
- David recognized that God was more pleased by genuine repentance that demonstrated a contrite heart than by mere religious sacrifices of animals.
- David recognized that his true joy would not be restored until he was forgiven by God.
- David knew that without the Holy Spirit empowering him, he would be unable to lead God’s people.
- David promised that after he had been restored to a right relationship with God, he would help lead other sinners like himself to repentance.

43 – Psalm 103:1–22 – Praise the Lord

- Psalm 103 is categorized as a psalm of praise and it is also attributed to David.
- David gives the command to “Bless the LORD” six times. In this instance, “bless” has the idea of praising the LORD for his character and deeds.
- The psalmist lists several praiseworthy acts of LORD’s.
 - He forgives ... heals ... redeems ... crowns with steadfast love and mercy ... satisfies with good. He works righteousness for the oppressed. We will see these attributes literally fleshed out in the person of Jesus the Messiah in the New Testament.
- The LORD does not do these deeds because of our righteousness or merits. Rather His acts stem from His mercy, grace, and steadfast love to those who reverence Him as God. He knows “we are dust.” In contrast to our brief lives, His love and grace are everlasting.
- Recognizing his mercy, grace, and steadfast love that forgive and redeem us, in spite of our inability to deserve such treatment, calls us to “bless the LORD.”

44 – Proverbs 1:1–4:27 – Godly Wisdom

- David’s son, King Solomon, who had asked God for wisdom, wrote most, but not all of the Book of Proverbs. He is thought to have written chapters 1–4 in today’s reading.
- Chapter 1 calls readers to listen to wisdom and knowledge which begins with “the fear of the LORD.” Otherwise, sin will entice us and lead us to destruction.
 - There is a promise related to repentance in Proverbs 1:23 – “If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.”
 - In contrast, those who turn away from the LORD (Prov 1:32) will receive the consequences of their foolishness.
- Chapter 2 promises wisdom to those who listen to and heed God’s words. There is also a promise that the “upright” and “those with integrity” will remain in the land God promised (Prov 2:21).
- Note all of the “do not” instructions in Chapter 3.

- Proverbs 3: 5–6 are great verses to memorize if you do not have them committed to memory already.

45 – Proverbs 16:1–18:24 – Proverbs of Solomon

- Proverbs 16 emphasizes that the LORD is all-power--the sovereign King over all. He can overrule man's plans and see where man's heart is impure when he himself is blind to it.
- Pride and arrogance are denounced as deadly and abominable sins (Prov 16:5, 18)
- Much in these chapters addresses how wisdom impacts our speech. In the New Testament, we see Jesus modeling the wisdom of speech that Proverbs encourages.

THE PROPHETS >

46 – Isaiah 51:1–53:12 – The Suffering Servant

- It is helpful to know a little about the context of this passage. When we match events in Isaiah to the historical record, we find that the Prophet Isaiah received his call as God's prophet around 742 years before the birth of Jesus and he died 681 years before Jesus. Isaiah's prophecies were so remarkable that more-liberal scholars deny that Isaiah could have foretold events with such accuracy. They argue that the book, especially chapters 40 –66, had to have been written at a later time, after the fulfillment of the events he prophesied. Even so, Isaiah's prophecies that Christians see as referring to Jesus, such as this passage, were written hundreds of years before Jesus' birth and no serious scholars disagree.
- Throughout the book, Isaiah accused God's people of sin and idolatry and called them to turn away from their sins and back to him (repent). Isaiah warned of future judgment of their sin, but he also promised a future salvation of redemption and restoration. Our reading today is about that future redemption and restoration.
- In our reading, Isaiah is using language reminiscent of the Exodus. Yet, he is talking about a future redemption that has not yet occurred.
- In their time of despair when all signs were pointing to imminent hardship, Isaiah exhorted his hearers/readers to recall how God brought them forth as His people through Abraham and Sarah--two individuals, who at the time of God's calling, thought their fruitful days had passed them by. Isaiah declared that the LORD can make the wilderness like the idyllic Garden of Eden.
- God's redemption of His people does not involve a purchase with money -- "You were sold for nothing and will be redeemed without money" (Isa 52:3).
- Isaiah's language in 52:6--"My people shall know my name" and "They shall know that it is I who speak; here I am"--parallels the language of Exodus.
 - Exo 3:15 - "The LORD ... this is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."
 - Exo 6:3 - "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty but by my name the LORD, I did not make myself known to them."
 - Exo 9:16 - "... so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth."
- In Isaiah 52:10: "All the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," we hear an echo of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18: "... and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice"
- "You shall not go out in haste" (Isaiah 52:12) is a sharp contrast to the way the LORD instructed the Israelites to leave Egypt in haste after they ate the first Passover meal (Exo 12:11,33).
- Isaiah 52:13–53:12 describes one who brings salvation through his suffering, sometimes known as "the suffering servant." Several New Testament passages see those Isaiah passages as pointing to Jesus.

- Isaiah 53:1 referenced in John 12:38; Rom 10:16.
- Isaiah 53:4 referenced in Matt 8:17.
- Isaiah 53:6–8 referenced in Acts 8:28, 32–33.

47 – Jeremiah 1:1–3:5 – Jeremiah’s Call and Message

- Intro and Context of Jeremiah
 - Jeremiah was born and raised in Judah under Assyrian domination during the reign of wicked King Manasseh (687–642 b.c.). (F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, vol. 16, The New American Commentary {Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993}, 21.) Assyria was in the process of decline while Babylon was on the rise. Jeremiah warns the people of Israel about impending conquest by Babylon as a discipline for the idolatry and unfaithfulness of Israel’s priests. Because Jeremiah’s message was of doom and gloom if Israel failed to repent, his teaching was often unpopular, and his life was endangered a number of times. He was vindicated when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BCE, and exiled survivors back to Babylon.
- Jeremiah’s clear and memorable experience of God’s call to him prepared him for a career of prophesying to people who often did not welcome his words.
 - Jeremiah initially resisted God’s call with two excuses, not unlike the way Moses initially resisted God’s call in Exodus 3 (Story 17).
 - “I do not know how to speak.”
 - “I am only a youth.”
 - The LORD reassured Jeremiah not to be afraid because the LORD would be with Jeremiah to deliver him (Jer 1:8).
- Jeremiah’s vision of the almond tree branch was a sign that God was “watching over” his previous words of judgment against Israel’s unfaithfulness. It was to say the LORD had not forgotten His words of judgment and He would “perform” them or bring them to pass.
- Jeremiah’s vision of the boiling pot represented an invading force from the north that would pour out on Israel like a boiling pot. This would be a judgement against Israel’s idolatry--“worshiping the works of their own hands” (Jer 1:16).
- The LORD warned Jeremiah that his prophetic ministry would face opposition and attack, but from his own people rather than the invading forces. Yet, the LORD would make Jeremiah like a fortified city with iron pillars and bronze walls and would rescue him.
- Jeremiah 2 rebuked the people for their many acts of unfaithfulness to the LORD and invited them to accuse God of any unfaithfulness toward them that would justify their behaviors.
 - The general accusation against the people was that they had forsaken the LORD as the spring of living water and had dug their own cisterns that could hold water (Jer 2:13).
 - They no longer had awe of the LORD but had worshipped other gods that were really no gods at all. Their priests did not know the LORD and their prophets prophesied by the Canaanite idol Baal.
- Jeremiah 3 exhorted the people to “turn” or “return” to the LORD. This is the word we often translate “repent.” “Turn/repent” occurs 125 times in the Book of Jeremiah.

- The image of divorce in 3:1 is best understood in light of the divorce law instruction found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. That law forbade a divorced person from marrying someone else and then returning to his/her first spouse. Jeremiah accuses Israel of not even marrying someone else but simply prostituting herself. Who would take back such a spouse? Yet, the LORD is not your average spouse -- “Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the LORD your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the LORD. Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion” (Jer 3:12-14).

48 – Dan 6:1-28 – Daniel and the Lion’s Den

- Darius was the King of Persia who ruled over Babylon where Daniel and the people of Israel had been exiled.
- A “satrap” was a regional leader – literally a “protector of the kingdom” – who helped govern one of 20 areas known as “satrapies” in the Persian Empire.
- Although Daniel was essentially a Jewish servant exiled in Persia, the LORD gave him authority and influence to be one of three men over all of the satraps. In fact, the king planned to give Daniel charge, under the king himself, of the entire kingdom. This display of God’s power and calling in the life of Daniel reminds us of Joseph, another Jewish servant whom the LORD called and empowered to be second in command over Egypt. Only the king had more authority.
- Other satraps and high officials were jealous of Daniel’s favor with the king, much like Joseph’s brothers were jealous of him. Like Joseph’s brothers, they sought to get the object of their jealousy out of their lives.
- The only avenue the jealous satraps and high officials saw to rid themselves of Daniel was to take advantage of his faithfulness to God. Daniel would not pray to the king, or to another god, and he would not stop praying to the LORD.
- When King Darius found out that Daniel had been caught praying to the LORD, Darius had regrets about the decree he had issued saying that no one could make petition (or pray to) to any god or man beside him for thirty days. He sought a way to deliver Daniel, but to no avail. The king even fasted and prayed for Daniel. Assumedly, King Darius was not praying to himself and thereby violated his own decree. We will see how King Herod in the New Testament regretted a rash decision he made that would take the life of John the Baptist.
- The LORD rescued Daniel, preventing the lions from doing him harm.
- King Darius sent out a decree about the Kingdom of Daniel’s God being greater than his own kingdom: “In all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end” (Dan 6:26).

49 – Jonah 1:1-4:11 – The Story of Jonah

- The LORD called Jonah to “arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil.” However, instead of arising to go to Nineveh, Jonah arose and fled in the opposite direction to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD” (Jonah 1:1-13).

- Nineveh was situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, opposite the modern city of Mosul, north of the city of Zab. It was an old city, dating back to approximately 4500 B.C.E. and one of the principal cities of ancient Assyria ... They were well known in the ancient world for brutality and cruelty. (Billy K. Smith and Franklin S. Page, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, vol. 19B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 224–25).
 - In spite of Nineveh’s evil and violent ways, the LORD called Nineveh “an exceedingly great city” (Jonah 1:2; 3:3; 4:11). There is a word play in the Hebrew that means both “great in size” and “a city great to God.”
- We might think Jonah was reluctant to preach to Nineveh because he feared the violent Ninevites. However, in Jonah 4:2, we find his real fear and motive for fleeing was that he feared the Ninevites would repent and God would show them mercy.
- In his getaway, Jonah boarded a ship with pagan sailors. Jonah was willing to die to avoid his mission. Ironically, the pagan sailors ended up worshiping the LORD while Jonah continued to rebel against Him.
- We see that the LORD has dominion over all creation. He even rules over the fish of the sea. The LORD “appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jon 1:17). Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land” (Jon 2:10).
 - The big fish served the LORD by swallowing Jonah and depositing him where the LORD instructed him.
 - Jonah’s being swallowed by the big fish was not an act of God’s judgment as much as it was God’s saving grace for both Jonah and the Ninevites.
- The LORD then called Jonah again with the same initial call, “Arise go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you” (Jon 3:2).
- Jonah reluctantly obeyed the LORD and went to preach at Nineveh (Jon 3:3). However, his message was very incomplete. He only warned of impending judgment from God in 40 days--No mention of Sin ... No mention of repentance ... No mention of God.
 - In spite of Jonah’s lackluster effort, “the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them” (Jon 3:5).
 - Sackcloth was a rough cloth made of goat’s hair, worn as a sign of mourning or penitence. Wearing sackcloth was often combined with putting ashes on one’s body as a sign of death (Jon 3:6).
- The LORD did not destroy the Ninevites, but He responded to their repentance and belief with mercy.
 - In Luke 11:32, Jesus mentioned Nineveh’s repentance as a contrast with the way the people of Israel were responding to Him, “The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”
- Jonah became so angry that he said he would rather die than see his enemies forgiven by God: “for it is better for me to die than to live” (Jon 4:3).
- Jonah went out to a vantage point where he could watch what would happen.
- The Lord used a plant as an object lesson to reveal that Jonah cared more about his plant and his own comfort than he cared about 120,000 people separated from God and facing His judgment.
 - As LORD over all creation, God “appointed” a plant to give Jonah shade and comfort just as earlier He had “appointed” a big fish to swallow and rescue Jonah.
 - When the LORD also “appointed” a worm to destroy the plant, Jonah was again incensed and said he’d rather die than live.

- Hundreds of years later, Jesus referred to Jonah and the Ninevite repentance as historical facts (Luke 11:32). The gospel of Matthew also records Jesus saying, “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40).

#50 – Malachi 1:1–4:6 – The Day of Judgment

- Written about 400 years before the birth of Jesus, Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. It serves as a wonderful bridge to the gospel of Jesus as it looks back to God’s faithful covenant love in forming a people for Himself and looks ahead to the coming of both John the Baptist and Jesus. It reminds us that God’s choice of Israel had nothing to do with their moral superiority or faithful obedience to the LORD, because they had neither. The Lord’s treatment of Israel was a demonstration of His covenant love and grace.
- 47 of the 55 verses in Malachi record the LORD speaking to Israel in the first-person.
- Although the E100 title for the Book of Malachi is “The Day of Judgment,” God’s faithful love to an unfaithful people is just as present a theme as His eventual judgment.
- One of Israel’s major errors in Malachi was that they failed to recognize God’s love and grace. By doubting His love, they fell into beliefs and practices that disregarded the LORD.
- They were unfaithful to God in their marriages. They married heathen wives who did not worship the LORD, and they were unfaithful to their Hebrew wives, divorcing them unjustly (Mal 2:14–16).
- They failed to give their tithes and offerings and often gave inferior offerings when they did give.
- Their priests were corrupt (Mal 1:6–2:9)
- They were indifferent to social wrongs and injustices, but they accused God of being unjust (Mal 2:13–16; 3:13–14).
- When the LORD accused His people of sin, they asked questions that indicated they were clueless as to His love and their own sin.
 - The LORD: “I have loved you (and continue to love you.)”
 - The People: “How have you loved us?”
 - The LORD: The priests have despised My name (Mal 1:6a)
 - The people: “How have we despised your name?” (Mal 1:6b)
 - The LORD: “By offering polluted food on my altar.”
 - The people: “How have we polluted you?”
 - The LORD: no longer accepts their offerings (Mal 2:13).
 - The people: “Why does He not?” (Mal 2:14).
 - The LORD: has been wearied with their words (Mal 2:17a).
 - The people: “How have we wearied him?” (Mal 2:17b).
 - The LORD: “Return to me and I shall return to you” (Mal 3:7a)
 - The people: “But how shall we return?” (Mal 3:7b)
 - The LORD: “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me” (Mal 3:8a).
 - The people: “How have we robbed you?” (Mal 3:8b).
 - The LORD: “Your words have been hard against Me” (Mal 3:13a).
 - The people: “How have we spoken against you?” (Mal 3:13b).
- Mal 1:1–4 refers back to Jacob and Esau (Gen 27–33, Stories 9 & 10).
- Edom refers to the descendants of Esau and the land they possessed. “Edom, a pagan nation noted in the Bible for its pride, treachery, greed, and violence. They had made themselves especially odious to the Jews when Babylon had conquered and plundered Jerusalem.³⁸ Edom’s actions that had brought about God’s destruction of their nation are not mentioned here, but they would have been common knowledge.” (Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, vol. 21A, The New American Commentary {Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004}, 250.)

- The idea of God hating Esau should be understood in the context of God’s choice to form His people through the lineage of Jacob rather than Esau. Walter Kaiser helps us understand this love-hate language.
 - “‘To love’ is, in effect, to prefer or be faithful to one while ‘to hate’ is to slight or think less of another. In two parallel lists in the NT, Matt 10:37 uses the formula *ho philon huper eme*, ‘He who loves ... more than me,’ while Luke 14:26 parallels it by saying, ‘if anyone comes to me [*kai ou misei*] and does not hate ... In Jacob’s case, God’s love signaled his election and his call for service 9i.e., to be a blessing to all the nations on the earth--including Esau’s nation of Edom.” (Walter Kaiser, *Malachi: God’s Unchanging Love*, p. 27)
- The LORD makes a number of promises in Malachi that reinforce covenant promises He made earlier to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David.
- The LORD will make Himself known among the nations (Gentiles)
 - Mal 1:11 – “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.”
 - Mal 1:14 – “For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.”
- The LORD will send a messenger before the LORD (Jesus) comes.
 - Mal 3:1 – “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.”
 - Mal 4:5-6 – “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”
- The LORD will receive those who repent.
 - Mal 3:7 – “Return to me and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.”
- Summary – Despite the unfaithfulness of Israel’s priests and the people of Israel as a whole, God still loved them. Their sin had ruptured their intimacy with the LORD and that breach led them to the mistaken conclusions that He did not love them and was not just. The first words the LORD spoke in Malachi were, “I have loved you” (Mal 1:2). It was not the LORD unloving and unjust. It was the people of Israel who had been unfaithful and unjust.

The Israelites’ unfaithfulness in their marriage covenants both reflected and affected their lack of faithfulness in their covenant relationship with the LORD. The LORD declared that He had not changed: “For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts” (Mal 3:67). The LORD’s love was the only reason His wayward people had not destroyed. A dreadful time of judgment – The Day of the LORD – was to come, but before that day, the LORD would send a forerunner to prepare the way of the coming Messiah. Once the Messiah had come, the LORD’s name would be great, not just among Israel but among all peoples of the earth (Mal 1:11,14). The stage is set for the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus.

Now that you have concluded the fifty E100 Old Testament passages, you’re ready to embark on the fifty E100 New Testament passages.

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.

E100 Study Helps #76-100

THE TRAVELS OF PAUL>

76. The Road to Damascus – Acts 9:1–31

- Saul was the person in Acts 7 tending the coats of those who stoned Stephen.
- At the time, the Church had not separated from Judaism. Early on, these Jewish disciples of Jesus were referred to as “The Way”.
- Saul traveled to Damascus, Syria on a mission to persecute followers of Jesus. His intent was to arrest and take any “belonging to the Way” back to Jerusalem.
- The Lord Jesus appeared to Saul on his way to Damascus and asked, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” The Lord essentially declared that to persecute followers of Jesus was the same as persecuting Jesus, Himself.
- Saul’s traveling companions heard the voice that Saul heard, but they did not see anyone.
- Saul lost his sight and had to be led by the hand to Damascus. The only explanation the LORD gave Saul was that he would receive more instructions in Damascus.
 - The LORD gave a vision to a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. In the vision the LORD told Ananias where to go to find Saul. The LORD also told Ananias that He had given Saul a vision of “a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight (Acts 9:12). Ananias was reluctant because he had heard about Saul’s persecution of Christians. However, Ananias obeyed the LORD’s instructions.
 - God’s stated reason to have Ananias go to Saul was that God had selected Saul to be His “chosen instrument” to carry God’s name to “the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:5).
 - The LORD also noted that Saul, himself, would suffer greatly for the sake of God’s name.
- Ananias obeyed the LORD and as a result, Saul regained his sight, was baptized, and was filled with the Holy Spirit.
- The disciples in Damascus then welcomed Saul to join them (Acts 9:19).
- Saul began his ministry by going to Jewish synagogues. He preached that Jesus was the Son of God and gave convincing proofs to Jewish opponents that Jesus was the Messiah.
 - Saul’s arguments angered some of the Jews to the point that they plotted to kill him. By this time, Saul was making his own disciples of Jesus and they helped him escape those trying to kill him.
- Saul went to Jerusalem in hopes of joining Jesus’ disciples there, but they were suspicious and fearful of him.

- Barnabas, the disciple also called Joseph, was the man who had earlier given the proceeds from the sale of his property to the church (Acts 4:36–37– E100 Story 72). Barnabas came alongside Saul and vouched for him to the 12 apostles.
- In Jerusalem, Saul began to preach boldly about Jesus, and the Hellenists--the group of Grecian Jews that stoned Stephen while Saul tended their coats--plotted to kill Saul also.
 - Therefore, the believers in Jerusalem sent Saul back to his hometown of Tarsus.

77. The First Missionary Journey – Acts 13:1–14:28

- There are two different cities named Antioch in Acts 13. The first is Antioch in Syria (Acts 13:1), and the second is called Pisidian Antioch, which was in southern Turkey. Actually, there were 16 different cities named “Antioch” named in honor of the Seleucid King Antiochus.
- You can read more about the church in Syrian Antioch in Acts 11:19–30. There, we learn that the church in Syrian Antioch was not planted as a result of the Apostles. Rather, believers who had been scattered there after the stoning of Stephen and the persecution of Christians, largely promoted by Saul (E100 Story 73). When the Apostles heard about the church, they sent Barnabas there to support the work.
 - This is the same Barnabas who gave the proceeds from the sale of his property to the Jerusalem church and later vouched for Saul, when he went to Jerusalem from Damascus after his conversion. Galatians chapters 1 and 2 fill in some blanks, indicating that as many as ten years may have passed between Saul leaving Jerusalem for Tarsus (Acts 9:30, E100 Story 75) and Barnabas searching for Saul to take him to Antioch to help with the church there (Acts 11:25–26).
- This church in Syrian Antioch was truly international. Barnabas, who from Cyprus. Saul was from Tarsus. Luke also mentions “Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, [and] Manaen, a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch” (Acts 13:2).
 - Simeon’s name “Niger” indicates that he was dark-skinned.
 - Lucius of Cyrene was from northern Africa.
 - Manaen grew up in the house of privilege and royalty, literally “suckled by the same nursemaid” as the half-Jewish king, Herod.
- In a direct linkage to the church’s worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:3). This marks the first intentional sending of a mission team to Gentiles from a church in a majority Gentile city.
 - At this point in the story, Barnabas was mentioned before Saul, indicating that Barnabas was given precedence. However, in Acts 13:13, Luke makes two changes we don’t want to miss.
 - From here on, the man we have been introduced to as Saul of Tarsus will be called Paul. The reason for the name change may be as simple as taking on a more Greek-sounding name since Paul would be ministering primarily among Gentiles.

- The second point is that from here out, whenever the two are mentioned together, Paul is mentioned before Barnabas, giving precedence to Paul as the prominent member of the team.
- There is another point to note in Acts 13:13. Paul and Barnabas did not set out alone on their mission trip from Syrian Antioch, but they had a team of others with them. A certain “John” is mentioned in Acts 13:5 and 13:13. This John was sometimes referred to as John Mark. He was the likely author of the Gospel of Mark and also Barnabas’ cousin (Colossians 4:10). For whatever reason, John Mark, “left them and returned to Jerusalem” in Acts 13:13.
- When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Antioch of Pisidia (Western Turkey), they went to the synagogue, indicating that their audience was primarily Jewish or Gentile God-fearers. Paul’s message there did not begin with Jesus but with the Old Testament stories, several of which are covered in the E100.
- Paul addressed them as “sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God” (Acts 13:26). “Sons of the family of Abraham” were the Jews. “Those among you who fear God” were often referred to as “God-fearers.” God-fearers were Gentiles who respected or worshipped the LORD God of the Jews, but they had not fully converted to Judaism. For men, full conversion would have required circumcision.
- Many in the synagogue were so interested in Paul’s message that they invited him to return to speak the following sabbath day in the synagogue.
 - The following week, there was a crowd so large that Luke described it as “almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord” (Acts 13:44).
 - As with the teaching of Jesus, there was a mixed response. Many believed but some violently opposed.
- Acts 13:46–47 marks a pivotal moment in the expansion of the gospel message from the Jews to the Gentiles. Paul stated, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”
- Just as many of the Jewish religious leaders had opposed the teaching of Jesus, and as Saul himself had persecuted Christians before becoming one himself, the proclaimers of the gospel repeatedly found opposition from Jewish religious leaders in Gentile territories also (Acts 13:50).
- Iconium was a city about 90 miles to the southeast of Pisidian Antioch.
- The pattern continued of seeing “a great number of both Jews and Greeks believ[ing]” followed by persecution, instigated by a subset of Jews who opposed the gospel teaching. When the mission team learned of a plot to stone them, they “fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country” (Acts 14:6).
- Lystra was situated about 20 miles south of Iconium. The LORD used Paul to heal a man who had been unable to walk since birth. Upon seeing the healing, the crowd

mistakenly thought Paul and Barnabas were incarnations of the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes, and the people began to worship Paul and Barnabas, (Acts 14:11–13).

- Paul spoke out over the crowd to tell them about the one true God.
- However, Jewish opponents from the previous cities of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium arrived and persuaded the crowd to stone Paul. This crowd's fickle turn from worshipping Paul one moment to stoning him the next is reminiscent of the crowds crying out "Hosanna" to Jesus as the Messiah one day and just a few days later, crying out "crucify Him" (E100 Story 61 – John 19:6).
- The crowd stoned Paul and then left him for dead. However, the LORD protected him, and he was able to recover.
- Derbe was about 65 miles to the southeast of Lystra, a trip that would have taken several days on foot, especially considering Paul's injuries from being stoned.
- In spite of their previous mistreatment, Paul and Barnabas backtracked from Derbe, up through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch—a total distance of about 175 miles.
 - In the face of opposition and persecution, Paul and his team had been blessed to see evangelistic fruit in each of the cities. On their return pass through, they appointed elders from among these relatively new Christians in every church (Acts 14:25).
- The team returned to their original base church in Syrian Antioch and reported on what God had done.

78. The Council at Jerusalem – Acts 15:1–41

- After Paul and Barnabas had returned to the Church in Antioch from their first mission trip "some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'" (Acts 15:1).
 - Though not one of the E100 stories, Genesis 17:10–27 records God's covenant of circumcision with Abraham. Males of Abraham's lineage were to be circumcised as infants as a sign of incorporation into God's covenant people. Circumcision was then reinforced in the Law given by Moses (Leviticus 12:3).
 - Paul and Barnabas had a vigorous debate with those insisting that circumcision was necessary for salvation and acceptance into God's covenant people. This altercation led to a monumental landmark decision in the early church.
 - Those requiring circumcision were essentially saying that in order to be saved as a Christian, it was necessary to also convert to Judaism. Their argument could be described as "Jesus + circumcision" for salvation.
 - Paul and Barnabas argued that salvation came by trusting faith in Jesus without any additional requirements.

- The Church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas along with other representatives to the apostles and elders of the Church in Jerusalem to clarify with whether circumcision was a requirement for salvation.
 - On their way from Antioch to Jerusalem, Paul and company stopped in Phoenicia and Samaria to report about the conversions of the Gentiles on their recent missionary trip. Their report “brought great joy to all the brothers” in these mixed Jewish-Gentile areas.
- Their report to the Church council in Jerusalem was not initially met with unanimous joy as it had been in Phoenicia and Samaria.
 - “Some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses’” (Acts 15:5).
 - Recall that during the ministry of Jesus, He had many disputes with the Pharisees over their mistaken interpretation of the Law (See E100 Stories 53, 58). Even so, some Pharisees like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea believed and became followers of Jesus (E100 Story 61).
- In Acts 15:7–11, Peter refers back to his experience of God leading him to evangelize the Gentile, Cornelius (See E100 Story 75). Peter actually faced similar scrutiny from Jewish leaders in Jerusalem when he reported how Cornelius and his household had believed in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit.
 - Peter declared that Gentiles and Jews alike were cleansed from their sins by grace through faith.
 - Peter asked the council, “Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? (Acts 15:10). Peter’s questions reflects Jesus’ critical words about the Pharisees and Scribes in Matthew 23:4: “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.”
 - By stating “We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will” (Acts 15:11), Peter acknowledged that circumcision was not a means of salvation for the Jews either. Both Jews and Gentiles were saved through faith in Jesus.
 - A man could not become a Jew without circumcision, but he could become a born-again Christian without it.
- One of Jesus’ brothers, James, was a leader in the Church in Jerusalem. The words James spoke in Acts 15:16–18 basically quoted portions of Amos 9:11–12, with possible allusions from Jeremiah 12:15 and Isaiah 45:21. His point was that God’s word had prophesied centuries earlier that God would save “all the Gentiles who are called by my name” (Acts 15:17).
 - James concluded, “We should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols,

and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood” (Act 15:19–20).

- The “things polluted by idols” was likely meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols.
- These prohibitions were not listed as necessary to be saved but as moral restraints that contrasted with idolatrous practices of the time.
- The Jerusalem Council sent representatives with a letter to the Church in Antioch that included Gentile believers and the letter addressed them all as “brothers.” One of the men who delivered the letter from Jerusalem was Silas.
- After some time, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they travel to the believers in the cities where they had preached the gospel on their first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them again. However, Paul did not want John Mark to go because he had started but not finished the first trip. (E100 Story 77). Paul and Barnabas’ disagreement was so severe that they separated. Paul chose Silas as his major mission partner on a second journey to Asia, and Barnabas went a different direction, taking John Mark with him to Cyprus.

79. More Missionary Journeys – Acts 16:1–20:38

- As Paul and Silas visited from city to city, they communicated the decisions made by the council of leaders at Jerusalem regarding requirements and prohibitions expected of Gentile converts to faith in Jesus (E100 Story 78).
- During his return through Derbe and Lystra, Paul invited a young disciple named Timothy to accompany the team he and Silas were leading. Having a Jewish mother and a Greek father, Timothy had not been circumcised as a baby. In hopes of making Timothy more acceptable to Jewish audiences and converts, Paul had him circumcised.
- As the mission team passed through what is now part of southern Turkey, they planned to continue on into Asia. In some way, the “Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” (Acts 16:7). Instead, Paul received a vision of a man of Macedonia urging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Paul and company interpreted this *Macedonian Call* as God’s leading to preach the gospel in Macedonia.
- Paul and Silas traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and a leading city of Macedonia. Apparently, there was no synagogue in Philippi, only a place of prayer by the river.
 - Paul continued his pattern of sharing the gospel with the Jews first. Since there was no synagogue, he went to the place of prayer.
- In Acts 16, Luke records three conversion stories from the city of Philippi. The stories describe a diverse group of respondents--a wealthy woman from Asia, a demon-possessed slave girl, and a middle class man.
 - First was Lydia, a businesswoman of some means. She sold purple goods which were expensive and often associated with royalty. She also had enough accommodations to host Paul and his team in her home.

- Lydia was from Thyatira, a city in Asia where Paul had originally hoped to go before being prevented by the Spirit and called to Macedonia.
- The second convert was a slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination that enabled her to tell people's fortunes. Her owners exploited her for financial gain (Acts 16:16). In contrast to Lydia, this woman had no means of her own and was actually the legal property of someone else. The spirit controlling the girl made her repeatedly follow Paul and Silas crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17).
 - Her behavior was an annoyance that distracted people from hearing the proclamation of the gospel, so Paul cast the spirit of divination out of her. As a result, the girl was liberated from the demonic spirit. Unhappily for her owners, this also meant that they were liberated from their fortune-telling source of profit.
 - The owners of the girl brought charges of "advocating customs not lawful for Romans" against Paul and Silas, resulting in their arrest.
- The third convert was the Philippian jailer, a middle class Roman civil servant. His conversion story shows God's powerful intervention through an earthquake and Paul and Silas' counter-intuitive act of not fleeing when their chains fell off and they had opportunity. They showed more concern for the jailer's life and salvation than they did about their own escape from chains.
- The beating Paul received before being jailed had violated his rights as a Roman citizen. Paul's legitimate status as a Roman citizen gave him additional rights and privileges that most Jews did not have.
- There is a familiar pattern in Acts 17 and 18. In Paul's travels, wherever a synagogue was present, Paul generally went there first to share the gospel of Jesus with Jews and God-fearers. Repeatedly, there were conversions of both Jews and Greeks before Jewish opponents incited violence against Paul and his team, claiming the Christian gospel was seditious against the Roman empire.
- In the space of two verses, Luke notes that Paul returned to the sending church in Antioch and after a time departed on a third missionary trip back through Galatia and the places where he had previously ministered (Acts 18:22-23).
- On this third trip Paul spent over two years in Ephesus
 - There he found disciples of John who did not seem to know the full story of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 - According to his usual pattern, Paul began in the synagogue with Jews. But after three months, many became hardened to the gospel. Paul then went to daily private discussions with disciples in the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus--a non-religious venue.
 - Paul had an experience similar to the one in Acts 16 when he cast out the demon from the fortune-telling slave girl. Recall that her owners could no

longer make money off of her fortune telling and managed to have Paul arrested. In Ephesus, Paul had conflict with Demetrius, an idol-making silversmith. He was upset that the gospel had negatively affected his shrine building business for the goddess Artemis. Upon hearing Demetrius' accusations that Ephesians turning from idols to Jesus were doing economic and cultural harm to the city, a riot ensued. Idolatrous Ephesians shouted, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

- Paul next traveled to Greece where he spent three months. Once again, Jews who were hostile to Paul and his message devised a plot against him so he headed back to Syria through Macedonia. He called for the elders at the Church in Ephesus to meet him along the way. Paul told the Ephesian elders that they would never see him again and warned them about false teachers who would be like "fierce wolves" who would "speak twisted things" and "draw away disciples after them" (Acts 10:28-30).
 - Paul's later letter to Timothy reveals that the false teachers did indeed infiltrate the church: "To Timothy, my true child in the faith ... As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith" (1 Tim 1:2-4).
- Paul did not offer details when he told the Ephesian elders that they would never see him again. He simply said, "I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24).
- There is an interesting but not obvious detail in Acts 20. Prior to Acts 20:5, Luke, the author of Acts, wrote in the third person as late as Acts 20:2, "When he (Paul) had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece." However, Acts 20:5, the word "we" indicates for the first time that Luke had joined as a traveling companion of Paul, "These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread" (Acts 20:5-6).

80. The Trip to Rome – Acts 25:1–28:31

- By this time, Paul had been imprisoned (see Acts 21:33) after going to Jerusalem as he had prophesied in Acts 20:22-25 (E100 story 79). When the Roman officials heard of a plot to kill Paul, they stealthily sent him to Caesarea to appear before Felix, the Roman Governor over the province of Judea in Israel.
 - Paul remained in Felix' custody for two years, testifying before him from time to time.
 - After two years the Romans appointed Festus to replace Felix as Governor of Judea.

- Festus, the new governor, went to Jerusalem. There he heard some of the Jews who were hostile to Paul bringing their litany of charges against him. They had not given up their hopes of ambushing and killing Paul, so they asked the new governor to do them a favor and have Paul sent to Jerusalem.
 - Festus invited the religious leaders to go to Caesarea to argue their case against Paul before him. Even though Festus found their charges insufficient to proclaim guilt, he seemed willing to endanger Paul by sending him back to Jerusalem. Festus asked Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to be tried before me there concerning these *things?*” (Acts 25:9).
 - Paul may have suspected the motives of the request to have him sent to Jerusalem. In any case he refused and demanded his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar in Rome.
- Festus sought counsel from the King (Herod) Agrippa. Agrippa also had Paul brought before him to testify. It is noteworthy that Agrippa came from the family of the Herods. This Herod was actually Agrippa II. His father, Herod Agrippa I, was responsible for the execution of James, the disciple of Jesus, and for the imprisonment of Peter. Agrippa’s uncle, Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded. His great grandfather, Herod the Great had all the boys under two years old in Bethlehem murdered in an effort to kill Jesus, whose family had fled to Egypt.
 - Paul evangelized Herod Agrippa II by sharing his testimony and the gospel message during his hearing.
 - Herod Agrippa II remarked to Festus, “This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar” (Acts 26:32).
- Paul and his traveling companions, including Luke, faced horrendous conditions as they sailed toward Rome and were eventually shipwrecked on the island of Malta.
 - Because the LORD had given Paul favor with the Roman Centurion in charge of guarding prisoners on the ship, the Centurion convinced his colleagues not to kill the prisoners as they had discussed.
- After arriving in Rome, Paul was under arrest and could not go to the synagogue, so he called the leading Jews of the city to visit him. Paul explained to them what had happened with Jewish opposition back in Israel and why he had appealed to Caesar and come to Rome. He wanted to share the gospel with them about the “hope of Israel” -- Jesus.
 - He shared with them the gospel about Jesus and the Kingdom of God and as had been the pattern in ministries of Jesus and of Paul, “some were convinced by what was said, but others refused to believe” (Acts 28:24). As in previous occasions, after preaching to the Jews first, Paul declared, “let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They also will listen!” (Acts 28:28).
- Paul continued for two years, freely preaching to and teaching those who drew near while he was under house arrest.

PAUL TO THE CHURCHES>

81. More than Conquerors – Rom 8:1–39

- Paul’s letter to the Roman Christians was intended to explain his understanding of the gospel, in particular how the Jewish people needed to hear and receive the gospel just as much as the pagan Gentiles did. Chapter 8 is one of the clearest declarations of the gospel and its assurances in the entire Bible.
- Romans 8:1–11 focus on God’s work through Jesus the Messiah and the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:12–39 center on the benefits to human beings as the recipients of God’s saving work.
- The chapter begins with a promise of “no condemnation” and ends with a promise of “no separation.” Those promises are for everyone who has been saved by Jesus and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- Paul uses the word “groan” three times in the chapter to remind His readers that although the gospel is true, Christians will not enjoy its full benefits until Jesus returns and His Kingdom is fully established. Creation groans for the return of Jesus (Rom 8:22) ... humans groan as we wait for the return of Jesus (Rom 8:23) ... the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings too deep for words (Rom 8:26).
- Not only does the Holy Spirit intercede for Christians, but the resurrected Jesus is now at the right hand of God, also interceding for us (Rom 8:34).
- Part of the good news of the gospel is that God has given the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11) to live in everyone who receives Jesus as the promised Savior King (Rom 8:11--“dwells in you” twice). The Holy Spirit in the Christian is equated with having “Christ in you” (Rom 8:10). In fact, the indwelling Holy Spirit is the primary indicator revealing those who belong to Jesus and those who do not (Rom 8:9).
- Paul made it clear that the Holy Spirit was able to deliver both Jews and Gentiles from sin and death in ways that the Jewish Law could never accomplish (Rom 8:2–3).
- Paul contrasts new life in the Spirit with life lived in the flesh.
 - In the New Testament, the word “flesh” is used in various ways.
 - “Flesh” can refer to the actual skin and meaty part of a human being or animal. This type of flesh is not bad in and of itself. God created Adam and Eve with human flesh before sin entered the world and Jesus took on human flesh to redeem humans from sin.
 - “Flesh” can refer to life lived in human abilities and strength apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. Using human abilities and strength is not wrong or sinful either. However, these efforts in our fallen state are insufficient to redeem us and restore a proper relationship with God.
 - “Flesh” can also refer to carnal or lustful appetites that human beings are instinctively drawn to satisfy in our fallen sinful states. This kind

of flesh is sometimes equated with a human's sinful nature coming as a consequence of original sin.

- Paul writes that the fleshly mindset is "hostile to God," and it "does not submit to God" because it "cannot" (Rom 8:7). It "cannot please God" (Rom 8:8). Therefore, living according to the flesh results in death (Rom 8:6, 13).
- In contrast, living according to the Spirit results in "life and peace" (Rom 8:6) and the "the Spirit ... will also give life to your mortal bodies" (Rom 8:11, 13).
- It is the Spirit who makes us adopted sons and daughters of God (Rom 8:15, 23). As children of God we become heirs with Jesus (Rom 8:17).
 - *Adoption* literally means: "a son placing" ... giving the same legal rights as a biological son or daughter including inheritances.
 - Israel was referred to as God's adopted child and called a son in the Old Testament. Here, Paul says Christians have become God's adopted children.
- *Justified* is a legal term meaning "declared righteous." In spite of sinning, Christians are declared righteous because of Jesus' perfect righteousness. Jesus' righteousness was credited to their accounts when they trusted Him as the King who substituted Himself in their place of condemnation. That is why there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1).
- *Glorified* refers to the future state of Christians when they will receive a new resurrection body and be freed from sin and death for forever in the presence of God.
- Paul states that God calls, justifies, and will glorify both Jews and Gentiles who receive Jesus.
- God did all of this so that His adopted children would "be conformed to the image of his Son" Jesus (Rom 8:29).
- Absolutely nothing can separate God's children from His love that is embodied in Jesus the Messiah.

82. The Fruit of the Spirit – Gal 5:16–6:10

- Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to a group strongly influenced by "Judaizers." Judaizers insisted that Gentiles needed to observe circumcision and the Jewish law in order to become followers of Jesus. These Jewish converts in what is modern-day southern Turkey had apparently not accepted the conclusions of the Jerusalem council about Gentiles and the Jewish law (E100 Story 78).
- Like he did in Romans, Paul compared and contrasted the flesh and the Spirit. In Galatians, Paul more directly addressed the "desires of the flesh" (Gal 5:15–21). The desires of the flesh Paul listed oppose the direction of the Holy Spirit and result in sinful attitudes and behaviors.
- Paul described the characteristics of the flesh in terms of "works of the flesh" (Gal 5:118). These works occur when we allow the desires of the flesh to control us rather than allow the Holy Spirit to control us.
- Paul spoke of "the fruit of the Spirit" in contrast to the "works of the flesh." The Holy Spirit produces God-pleasing attitudes and behaviors as the natural fruit of being surrendered to His power. It is not our work but the Spirit's work in us.

- When we realize that the good fruit of the Spirit is God working in us and not by our own effort, we live as humble debtors to grace. We cannot take credit for our good and we cannot be harsh with those who sin. Therefore, we take care to guard ourselves from sin as we gently try to help others in the mire of it.
- Galatians 6:2 and 6:5 can seem contradictory at a surface reading. Verse 2 says we are to “bear one another’s burdens” while verse 5 says, “for each will have to bear his own burden.”
 - Paul used two different Greek words that can both be translated “burden” in English. The first describes a heavy load that no one person can carry alone for a long distance. The second word describes a knapsack or backpack. John Stott helps clarify the confusion: “So we are to bear one another’s ‘burdens’ which are too heavy for a man to bear alone, but there is one burden which we cannot share—indeed do not need to because it is a pack light enough for every man to carry himself—and that is our responsibility to God on the day of judgment.” (Cited in Timothy George, [Galatians](#), vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 418.

83. The Armor of God – Eph 6:10–20

- We saw in the previous E100 story that God’s Spirit produces good and righteous works in the believer. In this passage, Paul says that we are totally dependent on God’s power to fight and win against our ultimate enemy, the devil. Instead of the fruit of the Spirit producing changes within us, here we are to cloth ourselves with the armor of God. We absolutely need “the might of His strength” (Eph 6:1) if we are to “resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand” (Eph 6:13).
- Even when it looks as if our primary struggle is against physical beings or objects, Paul says, “our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Each of these—rulers, authorities, forces—are terms used to describe evil spirits or Satanic powers.
- Note, the armor itself is defensive protection more than offensive weaponry. The only offensive weapon mentioned is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). The Spirit wields God’s word in the life of the Christian to conquer the powers of evil. God has provided followers of King Jesus with the armor of truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, and salvation.
- Our role is to be alert and perseverant as we pray at all times.
- Note that Paul does not ask the Ephesian Christians to pray that he be released from jail. Rather, Paul prays “that a word may be given to me at the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:19). Paul saw the extension of the gospel as more important than his personal freedom and comfort.

84. Rejoice in the Lord – Phil 4:2–9

- Paul gives five commands in these verses: (1) Rejoice, (2) let your gentleness be made known, (3) be anxious for nothing, (4) in everything with prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God, and (5) think about things that are true, honorable, right, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy.
 - Note each of those commands was given in the context of a quarrel between two sisters in the LORD, Euodia and Syntyche, who had struggled alongside Paul in the ministry of the gospel (Phil 2:2–3). We don't know much at all about the women or the details of their disagreement, but their influence in the church and their ongoing disagreement posed a threat to the unity of the church.
 - The five commands and the call to prayer and supplication were almost certainly related to resolving the women's disagreement.
- The word translated *peace* “conveys a range of meanings, including well-being, prosperity, freedom from anxiety, safety from harm, and deliverance from enemies. (John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Php 4:7.)
- Paul indicated that the entire congregation had a role and responsibility in helping the two sisters reconcile their differences and enjoy the peace of God.

85. The Supremacy of Christ - Col 1:1–23

- It is widely accepted that some false teachers had infiltrated the church in Colossae, located along the way between Ephesus and Galatia. Those teachers were emphasizing some sort of “higher knowledge” along with requirements that went beyond receiving the gospel and following Jesus. Although not in our present focus passage, we can deduce some of those extra-gospel teachings in Col 2:6–23. Being aware of those additional false teachings will help us understand Paul's intent in Colossians 1.
- In Colossians, Paul argued that nothing needs to be, or can be, added to the work of Jesus for salvation. Jesus is fully sufficient as the ultimate power and authority.
- Epaphras (Col 1:1) was a coworker of Paul who likely started the church in Colossae. It was probably Epaphras who reported the problem of the false teachers in the church prompting Paul to write this letter to the church.
- Paul prayed that the believers in Colossae would be filled with knowledge and wisdom from God (Col 1:9). That was in contrast to the false teachers who had “an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh” (Col 2:23).
- Paul also prayed that the ones he referred to as “saints” or “holy ones” in the church would “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him” (Col 1:10). That involved living out their faith in service that produced fruitful works since the Father had “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col 1:13).

- Such living would require that they be “strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might” (Col 1: 11) because it was God the Father “who qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12). What began with God and the gospel could only continue with God and the gospel.
 - Most scholars believe Col 1:15–20 contain a hymn the early church used in worship of Jesus as Messiah. The hymn presents Jesus as the Creator God (Col 1:16) as well as the God who redeemed the sin of His fallen creation and made reconciliation with God possible (Col 1:19–20).
 - All things were created “by Him,” “through Him,” and “for Him.” Jesus was alive and active back in the original creation of the universe (E100 Story 1).
 - He also sustains creation --“In Him all things hold together” (Col 1:17).
 - Jesus was the perfect visible image of the invisible God, precisely because He was God in human flesh. The image of God in other human beings was still present but corrupted by sin and not a truly faithful representation of the Father.
 - The fact that humans needed to be reconciled to God and empowered by God to live lives of fruitful good works, assumes that they were “alienated” and “hostile” toward God (Col 1:21). They needed Jesus who “delivered [them] from the domain of darkness and transferred [them] to the kingdom of His beloved son” (Col 1:13).
 - The sacrifice of Jesus’ flesh and blood made reconciliation possible by presenting those who received Him as “holy and blameless and above reproach before him” (Col 1:22).
 - The assurance of that reconciliation is demonstrated by enduring in faith without shifting from the gospel that saves (Col 1:23).
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PAUL TO THE LEADERS>

86. Elders and Deacons – 1 Tim 3:1–16

- In E100 Story 79, Paul warned the elders of the Ephesian church that they would not see him again and that false teachers would come into the church after he had departed. Those false teachers did rise up within the Ephesian church as Paul forewarned, so Paul sent his protégé, Timothy, to confront the false teaching and lead the church to health--“As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim 1:3). 1 Timothy is Paul’s letter to Timothy to encourage him as he confronted the false teachers.
- In 1 Timothy 3, Paul outlined qualification traits for those who were to serve the churches as “overseers/elders” and “deacons.” It is noteworthy that almost all of the qualifications for both offices have very little to do with ministry skills or spiritual practices. “Able to teach” is the only true skill required of an elder.

Everything else has to do with the potential elder's character and interpersonal relationships with family and others.

- Essentially, just about every listed qualification for an elder or deacon is also expected in the life of every follower of Jesus.

87. The Love of Money – 1 Tim 6:3-21

- 1 Tim 6 implies, while not directly saying, that the false teachers at the church in Ephesus had material wealth as a motive for their “ministry” -- “imagining that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim 6:5). Paul's critique of the false teachers in Ephesus would seem to apply to contemporary teachers of the so called “prosperity” or “health and wealth” gospel that promises health and material wealth to those who believe.
 - Paul wrote “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6:6). Christians need to be content at having enough food and clothing, without envying and “desir[ing] to be rich” (1 Tim 6:9).
- Paul does not teach that money is *the* root of all evil, but rather he does state that “the love of money is *a* root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10).
- Paul commands Timothy to flee from certain sinful things and to pursue some specific godly things.
 - “Flee these things” in 1 Tim 6:11 refers to previous verses about:
 - Being puffed up with conceit
 - Craving controversy
 - Quarreling about words that produce envy, slander, suspicions, and friction between people
 - Seeing godliness as a means to gain
- As he flees from those evils, Timothy is to pursue:
 - Righteousness
 - Godliness
 - Faith,
 - Love
 - Steadfastness
 - Gentleness” (1 Tim 6:11)
- Paul writes that Instead of setting their hopes on becoming rich, Christians are to set their hopes “on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (1 Tim 6:17). They are “to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Tim 6:18-19).

88. Good Soldiers of Christ – 2 Tim 2:1-26

- Here, Paul gave young Timothy very personal instructions.
- Paul told Timothy to invest himself in spiritual reproduction; he was to focus on people who would accept sound teaching and then teach those truths to others (2 Tim 2:2). The best way to stop bad teaching is with good teaching.

- Paul pointed to soldiers, athletes, and hardworking farmers as examples of how Timothy needed to stay focused on the goal.
- Timothy, and Christians in general, needed to be prepared for suffering if they were to remain faithful to Jesus. Jesus suffered for His faithfulness and Paul was chained in a prison cell for his faithfulness. Paul said the suffering was worth it though because the end result of suffering with and for Jesus is life with Jesus in eternal glory (2 Tim 2:3, 9–10).
- To be a worker approved by God, Timothy and Christians in general, needed to learn to rightly handle the truth of God’s word (2 Tim 2:15) rather than quarreling with the words of men.
- Hymenaeus and Philetus were two of the false teachers Timothy was charged with correcting. One of their errors was teaching that the final resurrection had already taken place, denying a future physical resurrection.
- Timothy was to:
 - (1) flee youthful passions
 - (2) Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace
 - (3) Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies
- Timothy was given the difficult task of confronting false teaching in a way that was gentle, without being quarrelsome.
 - The goal was that the false teachers would “repent” (2 Tim 2:25) and “escape from the snare of the devil” (2 Tim 2:26).

89. All Scripture is God-breathed – 2 Tim 3:10–16

- Paul reminded Timothy of the examples Timothy had been privileged to learn from.
 - Timothy had received Paul’s teaching and had seen how Paul lived out that teaching—teaching that affected Paul’s conduct, aim in life, faith, patience, love, and steadfastness— even when it resulted in persecutions and sufferings (2 Tim 3:10–11).
 - Timothy also had godly models in his life since his childhood (2 Tim 3:14).
- Paul declared, “All who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted.” That doesn’t mean that everyone will be beaten and imprisoned like Paul. However, it does mean that being faithful to the gospel will bring opposition from some. Paul’s words to Timothy echoed Jesus’ call to discipleship in Luke 9 (E100 Story 61) that following Jesus comes at a cost.
 - The people Paul called “evil” and “imposters” opposed the gospel and deceived others because they themselves had been deceived (2 Tim 3:13).
- Paul reminded Timothy that all/every Scripture in the Bible was inspired—literally “God-breathed.” In his context, he was talking about the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament. Paul’s own letters had not yet been collected and accepted as Scripture, nor had the gospels or any other writing of the New Testament. The New Testament Scriptures were not recognized as such until 393 A.D.
- The inspired words of the Bible are useful for:
 - Teaching -- The word for teaching has to do with right doctrine. This was especially relevant to Timothy’s situation in which he was confronting false

teachers who were not holding to sound doctrines. Paul wanted Timothy to tether his teaching to the Scriptures.

- Reproof -- Reproof can more literally mean "rebuke." In this case, Scripture is not only used to teach sound doctrine but to reprove or rebuke errant doctrine and errant living.
- Correction -- Once an errant doctrine or behavior has been confronted by Scripture, Scripture then continues the process by correcting the errors.
- Training in righteousness -- Scripture provides a system of training and discipline to lead God's people to a righteous character and lifestyle.
- In summation, Paul declared the Bible to be our completely sufficient written guide to instruct every area of life, both conceptually and practically.
- The end goal of Scripture is to make its readers and hearers fully equipped for all that God created them to know, do, and be.

90. The Coming of the Lord – 1 Thes 4:13–5:11

- This passage comes from Paul's first letter we have to Christians in Thessalonica.
- Paul had taught them to be prepared for Jesus to come again at any time. However, years had passed, and Jesus had not yet returned. Some of their loved ones had died and they were concerned about what would happen to them since Jesus had not returned before they died.
 - Paul assured them that their deceased loved ones who had died "in Christ" would be resurrected at the return of Jesus. Therefore, Christians grieve the loss of loved ones who die but we do not grieve as people who have no hope of the resurrection and life after death with the LORD.
- Paul's teaching did not intend to give the Thessalonian Christians details about the return of Jesus but rather to comfort them and reassure them that their loved ones would not miss out on His coming. Paul's statement in 1 Thes 4:16 that "The LORD Himself will descend from heaven" corresponds to the words of the angel at Jesus' ascension in Acts 1:11: "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (E100 Story #70).
- The Day of the LORD -- In E100 Story #50, the prophet Malachi prophesied that God would send a prophet like Elijah "before the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Mal 4:5). That prophet was John the Baptist (E100 Stories #52 and 54). Here, Paul picks up the theme of the Day of the LORD, a terrible time of God's judgment against sin and evil in the world.
 - Paul compared followers of Jesus to "children of light" and "children of the day" in contrast to those who "children of the darkness" and "children of the night."
 - Children of the night are spiritually asleep ... they get drunk at night ... they are destined for God's wrath.
 - Children of the day are spiritually awake ... they are sober ... they are destined for salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

- Paul mixed his “sleep” metaphor a bit in 1 Thes 5:10. Here, “sleep” does not refer to “children of the night” but rather to those who have physically died. (See 1 Thes 4:16).
 - In the face of grief, and even in the face of the terrible Day of the LORD’s judgment, Christians can encourage one another with these words.
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THE APOSTLES’ TEACHING>

91. The Most Excellent Way – 1 Cor 13:1–13

- This passage comes from Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. The church at Corinth consisted of mostly Gentile who had come out of a very pagan and sexually immoral background. As a result, Paul needed to address a number of problems in light of the gospel. Chapter 13 is sandwiched between two chapters that deal primarily with gifts given by the Holy Spirit and how to exercise them in ways that please God and build up others.
- “Structurally, 1 Cor 13 divides into three sections: Verses 1–3 expound the absolute necessity and primacy of love, vv. 4–7 describe the nature or character of love, and vv. 8–13 establish the permanence of love.” (Mark Taylor, [1 Corinthians](#), ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 303.)
- Paul’s emphasis on love in chapter 13 declared that love is even more important than any spiritual gift, talent, or ability someone might have.
- Paul did not define “love” as feelings or an abstract concept. Rather, he talked about what love does and does not do.
 - The first two descriptors, “Love is patient” and “Love is kind” describe the kind of love God had demonstrated with his covenant people throughout the Old Testament. Paul calls Christians to reflect the same kind of love to others that God has demonstrated to us.
 - Paul followed with 8 negative attributes to clarify what love is not:
 - Jealous, boastful, conceited, dishonorable, selfish, angry, scorekeeping of wrongs done to us, joyful for unrighteousness.
 - Some of the professing Christians in the Corinthian church were manifesting these things Paul says love does not do. It was their unloving and inappropriate behaviors that caused Paul to write this letter.
- The last section contrasts the permanence of true love vs. the temporality of everything else. Spiritual gifts as we know them will end but “love never ends” (1 Cor 13:8). This claim echoes the phrases declaring that God’s “love endures forever,” found approximately 96 times throughout the Bible.
 - In the permanent age of God’s fully installed Kingdom, the things that now point to that perfect time and place will be replaced by the real thing (1 Cor 13:8–12).

- The incomplete will be completed
 - We'll move from childishness to maturity
 - Rather than seeing a reflection in a metal mirror, we will see God face to face.
 - We saw in E100 Story 22 that “The LORD used to speak with Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend” (Exo 33:11). Paul says we will all have that glorious experience when God’s enduring love replaces our temporal reality here, which only points to that permanent reality.
 - Our knowledge that is partial now will be complete then.

92. A New Creation in Christ – 2 Cor 4:1–6:2

- The passage begins with the topic of Paul and his companions’ ministry of the gospel and also ends with their ministry of the gospel.
- Paul in particular and Christians in general are not to lose heart when they suffer for the sake of the gospel.
- Some people have been blinded to the truth of the gospel. Paul essentially describes the gospel as a new creation story, a story of God bringing about a new creation through the person and work of Jesus and the imparting of the Holy Spirit to live in those who receive Jesus and His gospel.
 - The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to not lose heart, even when their bodies or “earthly tents” are suffering. The Spirit reminds us of a future where we will have eternal life and our heavenly dwelling (2 Cor 4:2–3; 5:1).
 - Paul taught, “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (2 Cor 4:5). The word “guarantee” has the idea of a down payment or earnest money, assuring believers of the future promises.
- Although Paul describes suffering for the gospel ... he sees suffering as a relatively “light momentary affliction” compared to the “eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” Christians will experience in the future.
- Echoing 1 Cor 13:8–13 (E100 Story 91) Paul continues to compare the temporal to the eternal ... the “transient things that are seen” compared to the “eternal things that are unseen” (2 Cor 4:18).
- Like the temporary tent or tabernacle that represented the presence of the LORD God, YHWH, with His people (Exodus 40), and like Jesus who “tabernacled” among us (see John 1:14) as God in human flesh, human bodies are like temporary tents that we inhabit on earth. Christians are promised “eternal house in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1–4) when life on earth is over.
- Paul moves from assurance of future blessing to a warning of future judgment. When this temporary earthly life is over, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil” (2 Cor 5:10). Ultimately, God’s judgment of the sins of Christians has been carried by Jesus in their place, but even so, we will all come before God’s judgment seat to give an account.

- In Paul's imagery of a new creation, he alludes back to Genesis 1 (E100 Story 1) where the Creator God said, "Let light shine out of darkness" (2 Cor 4:6a). In this new creation, the same Creator God "has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6b).
 - The result is "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17).
- In this new creation, God did more than reconcile those who are "in Christ" to Himself. He also entrusted us with both the message and ministry of reconciliation as His ambassadors (2 Cor 5:18-20).
- All of this came about because Jesus, "who knew no sin," was "made to be sin" so that "we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). To better appreciate this story of new creation in Jesus, it will be helpful to look at two passages that are not part of the E100 stories. Roman 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-26 present Jesus as a "second Adam," who unlike the first Adam, did not succumb to temptation and sin. The first Adam and his descendants were under the curse of death as a result of sinful rebellion. However, Jesus, as the second Adam, absorbed death in order to free the descendants of the first Adam from that curse.

93. A Living Hope – 1 Pet 1:1-2:12

- The Apostle Peter, one of Jesus' most prominent disciples, wrote 1 Peter to Christians that included many who were Gentile converts to the faith. They were experiencing persecution for their faith, and they had possibly been exiled from Rome to the named places in Asia Minor-- "Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Pet 1:1). Peter wanted to encourage them to faithfully follow Jesus in the face of persecution and suffering.
- Peter reinforces the message of new creation we saw Paul write about in 2 Corinthians 5 (E100 Story 92). He describes the new creation twice by saying his readers had been "born again" (1 Pet 1:3, 23; Jesus also taught the need to be born again in John 3:1-8).
 - No matter what they would have to endure in this life, they had been born again "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet 1:4-5). This is true for every born-again follower of Jesus as King.
- In calling the believers to not revert back to their former pagan and immoral lifestyles, Peter reminded them of God's repeated calls to "be holy for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16 quoting Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26).
- The earth and life on it are temporary, but the truth of God's word remains forever (1 Pet 1:24-25 quoting Isa 40:7-8).
- Peter declared these truths about the everlasting gospel to support his exhortations to "be holy" (1 Pet 1:16) and to "love one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Pet 1:22). Neither are possible without the gospel that "ransoms us from our futile ways" (1 Pet 1:18) by the "precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:19).

- Peter presented Jesus as “the cornerstone” --the primary support--of the “spiritual house” God is building. Peter compared Christians to “living stones” being built upon Jesus in that spiritual house.
- Peter also declared that Christians, even Gentile ones, are a “royal priesthood” called to “offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5).
- Those who do not believe in Jesus as Messiah “reject the cornerstone” (1 Pet 2:7) and “stumble over him” (1 Pet 2:8). These realities were written about hundreds of years earlier in Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14.
- Peter repeated the priesthood theme, describing Christians that included Gentile believers. By referring to them as “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9), Peter was declaring that God had fulfilled Exodus 19:5-6: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”
 - God’s original desire was not to have a designated priesthood of a select few but rather that all of Israel serve him as a holy priestly nation. Sadly, they did not obey His voice and keep His covenant. Now however, because Jesus has completely obeyed the LORD’s voice and kept the covenant, those who are His followers--even Gentile Christians--are considered holy priests in service to God.
- The descriptions “chosen race,” “holy nation,” and “people for [God’s] own possession” had previously been exclusively used for the Jewish people. God fulfilled His promises to Abraham and his descendants that the Gentiles would be blessed through his lineage. Through Jesus and the gospel, Gentiles who had been excluded and not considered “a people” were now included in the covenant as a people for God’s own possession and given privileges that had been reserved only for the Jewish people.

94. Faith and Works – James 1:1–2:26

- James, the brother of Jesus, became a leader in the Church at Jerusalem, and he is widely believed to have written the Book of James.
- James taught that God allows trials in order to strengthen our faith.
- We can ask God for wisdom and trust that He will give it to us.
- The gospel levels the playing field between the lowly/poor and the wealthy/powerful. It lifts up the lowly and humbles the exalted.
- James described a lethal progression of sin, comparing the process of temptation and sin to the human life cycle. The cycle begins when humans are tempted and lured by our own desires ... then sin is conceived by that desire which gives birth to sin ... the consequence of sin then leads to death.
- James instructed his readers to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger” (James 1:19). This instruction teaches us to put some distance between our initial emotional responses to what we hear and our consequent verbal responses.

- James warned readers to not merely hear God's word but to live according to it as "doers of the word" (James 1:22–25).
- James equated an "unbridled tongue" with a "deceived heart" (James 1:26).
- Professing faith in Jesus needs to result in actions that reflect Jesus' teaching, heart, and lifestyle. Otherwise, there is reason to question whether the profession of faith was genuine.
- James pointed out the sin of partiality, particularly in terms of giving preference to those exhibiting signs of affluence over those of lesser means (James 2:1–4). James connected the rich with oppression of the poor (James 2:6).
 - James also placed the sin of partiality alongside the sins of adultery and murder. In that, James called Christians to show mercy to the poor as those who wish to be judged under "the law of liberty" (James 2:12) because "mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).
- James warned that faith that does not result in actions consistent with the profession of faith is a "dead" faith as compared to "living" faith (James 2:17–26).
- James did not say that salvation comes by works, but rather salvation comes by a genuine faith that produces actions consistent with faith. He warned professing believers to examine their professed faith to make sure it was genuine rather than dead.
 - In explanation, John Calvin wrote, "It is therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone: just as it is the heat alone of the sun which warms the earth, and yet in the sun it is not alone, because it is constantly conjoined with light" (Canon 11 of the sixth session of the Council of Trent).

95. Love One Another – 1 John 3:11–4:21

- This passage was written by the Apostle John, one of Jesus' twelve original disciples. In addition to this letter of 1 John, John also wrote the Gospel of John, the letters of 2 John and 3 John, and the Book of Revelation.
- The theme of loving one another is central in the entire Bible. Jesus taught that the command to love one's neighbor as oneself was the second greatest commandment, only preceded by the commandment to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30–31).
- When John repeatedly refers to a commandment that came "from Him" [Jesus] in 1 John 3:22, 23, 24; 4:21, John is alluding to what Jesus called "a new commandment." Jesus gave the new commandment to His disciples during the last hours of His life before He was crucified: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34).
 - The "new" part of this familiar-sounding commandment is that Jesus' command to love one another replaced "as yourself" with "just as I have loved you." Jesus raised the bar of how we are to love one another to include

His kind of self-sacrificing love--love that is willing to lay down our lives for others.

- All the love John calls Christians to manifest is based upon God's prior love for them and is empowered by God's Spirit living within them.
 - Love for others calls us to lay down our lives for them because Jesus laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16).
 - We are to love one another because "love is from God" (1 John 4:7).
 - "We love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
 - "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).
 - "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).
- John's allusion to Cain and Abel comes from Genesis 4:1-16, which was not one of the E100 selected stories. Reading that passage will bring more light to what John was communicating.
- A lack of love for others is a sign that a person has not "passed out of death into life" (1 John 3:14). In fact, John goes so far as to say, "whoever does not love abides in death" (1 John 3:14).
- John declared that those who hate are murderers. John is echoing what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21-22, E100 #56).
- John called believers to love "in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18) and he warned that God's love does not abide in those who have "the world's goods" but fail to share them when they see a "brother in need" (1 John 3:17). John's words parallel James' warning about seeing a brother in need without doing what we can to alleviate the need (James 2:15-17 in our previous E100 Story # 94).
- The kind of love that Jesus and John call Christians to is a supernatural kind of love that God demonstrates toward us. It is the defining characteristic of those who "abide in Jesus" and have Him "abiding in us" (1 John 3:24; 4:24).
 - God abides in Christians by "the Spirit whom He has given us" (1 John 3:24; 4:4, 13).
- Christians are no longer under the power of other lesser spirits that lie and deceive because the Holy Spirit that dwells in believers is greater than the spirit of the devil in the world (1 John 4:4).
- Even with God's Spirit living in Christians, there is a learning process that increases as we obey His commands and abide in His love. God's love in Christians is not immediately and perfectly manifested. This love needs to be "perfected" in us as we grow in our understanding of God's love for us and act on that love with others (1 John 4:12, 17, 18).

THE REVELATION>

96. A Voice and a Vision– Rev 1:1–20

- The literal word translated “Revelation” is “Apocalypse” --something formerly hidden but now revealed. Apocalyptic literature was familiar during the time of the early church. It was known for using symbols and numbers to reveal things that would happen in the future.
- This particular apocalypse, or revealing of what had been hidden or unknown, comes to the author through Jesus (Rev 1:2). John, the author, is widely accepted to be the disciple of Jesus who also wrote the Gospel of John and 1, 2, and 3 John. If not him, the author was another knowledgeable follower of Jesus named John.
 - The Revelation was given by God to Jesus who delivered it to John by way of an angel. The purpose was to let servants--literally slaves--of the LORD know some of the things they would soon be facing.
 - The Revelation is called a prophecy. Biblical prophecies were used to both warn and comfort God’s people in times of crisis.
- The Revelation was addressed to seven particular churches in Asia in the region of modern-day western Turkey. It was probably written in the 90’s A.D., when persecution was mounting on Christians at the hand of the Roman Emperor Domitian.
- The author instructed that the Revelation was to be read out loud in the hearing of others, probably because many were not able to read and needed someone else to read to them.
- Like we’ve seen in previous E100 Stories from the writings of Paul, Peter, James, and John, the hearing of God’s word was expected to result in obeying “what is written in it” (Rev. 1:3).
- Like 1 Peter 2:9, John states that through the blood of Jesus, He has made all true believers a “kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (Rev 1:6).
- The first prophetic word in Rev 1:7 speaks of the return of Jesus: “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.”
 - The prophetic word delivered by John concurs with previous prophetic words about Jesus returning in the clouds (some which were covered in the E100):
 - “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven” (Mark 13:26–27).
 - “Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven’” (Mark 14:61–62).

- When the disciples watched Jesus ascend through the clouds (Acts 1:9, E100 Story 70), an angel spoke to them: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).
- “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thes 4:16–17 E100 Story 90).
- Jesus is presented with glory and power as He explains to John that the apocalyptic images of seven lampstands portray seven churches and the seven stars stand for the angels/messengers of the seven churches. Although the imagery is symbolic, the seven churches were actual churches situated in particular contexts at the time of writing. As in the story of creation, the number 7 in the Bible often carries the symbolic idea of completeness.

97. Messages to the Churches – Rev 2:1–3:22

- Each church is assessed by the LORD Jesus. Some assessments are positive (Philadelphia). Some are negative (Thyatira). Some are mixed (Sardis). Words of comfort and correction are offered where fitting. Each of the letters ends with a promise and an exhortation.
- The first church addressed was the Church at Ephesus. We saw in E100 Story 79 that Paul warned the Ephesian elders about false teachers who would infiltrate and damage the church (Acts 20:28–31). We saw in E100 Stories 86–88 that Timothy was charged with confronting false teachers that had indeed infiltrated the Church at Ephesus. In Rev 2:1-8, we see that the false teachers had not prevailed. The message of Jesus commended the Ephesians for recognizing false teachers who called themselves apostles when they were not. The church is also affirmed for their endurance and good works. However, Jesus accused them of having “abandoned the love [they] had at first” (Rev 2:4). Jesus called them to repentance or else He would remove their lampstand. They would lose their light and virtually be removed as a church. The promise is for those who overcome or conquer. They will “eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).
- The message warned the Church at Smyrna of intense persecution they would face. They were called to “be faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10). Those who overcome were promised the crown of life and protection from the second death (Rev. 2:10–11).
- The Church at Pergamum was in the hotbed of Satan’s lies and persecution-- “where Satan dwells” (Rev 2:13). Their assessment was mixed. They had not denied their faith in the midst of extreme opposition. However, they had not confronted some in their congregation who had also adopted the idolatrous beliefs and practices of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. The ones who overcome were promised to

receive “hidden manna” and “a white stone with a new name written on it” (Rev. 2:17).

- Jesus broadly affirmed the faith and works of the Church at Thyatira. However, he rebuked the congregation for permitting a false prophetess referred to as “Jezebel” (Rev 2:20) who led some “to practice sexuality and to eat food sacrificed to idols” (Rev 2:20). Jesus warned He would strike dead Jezebel and her followers if they did not repent. Those who overcome would receive “authority over the nations” and “the morning star” (Rev 3:26–28). “Morning star” probably refers to Jesus, Himself (See Rev 22:16).
- Jesus corrected the Church of Sardis, saying that although it had a good reputation as a church that was alive, in reality it was spiritually dead (Rev 3:1). Jesus warned them to repent and wake up. Those who overcome were promised that Jesus would confess their names before the Father and angels, and their names would not be blotted out from the book of life (Rev 3:5).
- Jesus affirmed the Church at Philadelphia for keeping His word and not denying His name” (Rev 3:8). He also promised to protect them from the worst persecution and to write God’s name upon them.
- Jesus admonished the Church at Laodicea for being lukewarm. Jesus said, “you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). Jesus called them to repent and promised those who overcome that they would sit with Him on his throne (Rev 3:21).

98. The Throne of Heaven – Rev 4:1–7:17

- This E100 passage begins a whole series of judgments and tribulations that will continue throughout the Book of Revelation until the ultimate victory and return of Jesus as King. This vision of the throne in heaven followed the vision of the messages to the seven churches and spoke of what was to follow.
- The four living creatures were probably angelic beings representing cherubim. Cherubim were first mentioned in Gen 3:24 guarding the way back into the garden of Eden once Adam and Eve had been expelled (E100 Story 2). Images of cherubim with their multiple wings were depicted in the tabernacle (Exo 25) and further referenced in Ezekiel chapters 1–10.
- The 24 thrones and the 24 elders around the main throne probably represent the 12 tribes of Israel from the Old Testament and the 12 Apostles from the New Testament. Some believe they could be 24 angels.
- The “seven torches of fire” are “the seven spirits of God” (Rev 5:5). Again, the number 7 represents complete fullness and probably intends to communicate the complete fullness of the Holy Spirit of God.
- The passage itself does not offer certainty about the identity of all of the beings described apocalyptically. What is clear is that the beings were of high celestial rank and that they were worshiping the LORD on His throne as part of a heavenly congregation of worshipers.

- John’s revelation included a scroll with 7 seals, held “in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne” (Rev 5:1). One single scroll with seven seals indicates that the scroll was completely sealed. The seals would have been wax, clay, or another soft substance that could have been applied and inscribed on the scroll.
 - The scroll reminds readers of OT prophets and of Daniel’s apocalyptic vision. It was to reveal how God’s Kingdom would come fully.
- At first, no one was found who was able to open the seals on the scroll to reveal its contents. In the midst of the revelation, John began to weep loudly because the information on the scroll was unavailable to him (Rev 5:4).
- Then, John and his readers learned that “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (Rev 5:5).
 - The “Lion of Judah (Gen 49:9), root of David” (Isa 11:1) are titles of the Messianic King from the Old Testament that pointed to the person of Jesus.
 - Initially, John heard words about the conquering Messiah King, but what he then saw was not a warrior king but a sacrificed Lamb of God (Rev 5:6). The Lamb overcame by dying rather than by killing. The cross initially appeared to be a defeat, but it was actually part of Jesus’ enthronement.
 - The Lamb that had been slain, but was now alive, opened the seals on the scroll.
 - By His blood, Jesus the Lamb had “ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,” and He had “made them a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rev 5:9–10).
 - These verses fulfilled promises we have seen throughout the E100 about God’s plan to save Gentiles as well as Jews, people from all families of the earth. The passage also echoes 1 Pet 2:9–10 (E100 Story 93).
- The seven seals represented seven judgments from God. They were not judgments of total destruction, rather they called for repentance.
 - The first four seals depicted four horsemen, often referred to as “the four horsemen of the apocalypse.” They represent judgments of war, conquest, famine, and death.
 - The fifth seal represents the innocent martyrs and their blood that cries out to God.
 - The sixth seal represents the great judgment of the “Day of the LORD” foretold throughout the Scriptures (Isa 2; 13; Joel 2; Mal 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10)
 - After the sixth seal of judgment, the people cried out, “Who is able to stand?” (Rev 6:17).
 - Before moving to the seventh seal, the revelation gives an answer to the people’s question.
 - Before he saw them, John heard about an army of “144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel” (Rev 7:4). However, what John saw was not

a warring army of but a multiethnic group “from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev 7:9).

- These represent martyrs who had come out of the great tribulation. Like Jesus, they conquered by their faithfulness to God, even unto death.

99. Hallelujah! – Rev 19:1–20:15

- The abundant symbolic language in this passage does not leave readers with the clarity of understanding we might desire. These notes will focus on the larger truths without venturing into speculation about that which is not clear. The big idea is that Jesus will return to both conquer and judge evil. In the process, He will save and vindicate His own followers.
- Once again, John heard “the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven.” The multitude was praising God specifically for His victory over evil and His rescue of His people (Rev 19:1–5). Between E100 story 98 that ended with Rev 7:17 and the beginning of this E100 story, Revelation chapters 8–18 describe the judgments, battles, and rescue foretold in earlier chapters (E100 Stories 97 and 98).
 - In Rev 20:2, John described “the Dragon,” a manifestation of Satan, similar to what we saw when Satan took on the form of a serpent in Genesis 3 (E100 Story 2).
 - Babylon was introduced in Rev 4:8. Interpreters are divided as to whether Babylon is a physical location, an institution such as a segment of the Church, or an idolatrous mindset that seeks worldly wealth and power. Whatever Babylon represents, it stands in opposition to Jesus and His Church. The use of Babylon is likely meant to draw readers attention to the place Israelites were taken as captured exiles in the Old Testament and particularly to the Book of Daniel and Daniel’s apocalyptic prophecies. At the time of John’s writings, many Jews referred to Rome as “Babylon.” Revelation’s descriptions of Babylon are general enough that readers of nearly any generation could likely associate a country, a people, or a mindset they believe can be described as Babylon.
 - “The Great Prostitute” mentioned in Rev 19:3 appears to be a synonym for Babylon. Babylon was repeatedly described as representing grievous sexual immorality (Rev 14:8; 17:5).
 - “The Beast” is not the same being as “the Dragon,” but the beast is given authority by the dragon (Rev 13:2). It seems as if the beast is similarly related to Satan as Jesus is to God the Father. Rev 13:2 says, “And the dragon gave him (the beast) his power and his throne and great authority.” The beast appeared to be fatally wounded in one of his heads, but “his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast” (Rev 13:3–4).
 - The beast will be a false messiah that imitates aspects of Jesus as the true Messiah.

- In addition to the dragon and the beast, there is a false prophet who performed signs (Rev. 16:13; 19:20).
- The great multitude worshipped with cries of hallelujah celebrating that “the LORD our God the Almighty reigns” (Rev 19:6).
- The return of Jesus is associated with Him fully establishing the Kingdom He initiated at His first coming. Before His Kingdom could be completely realized, Jesus would have to defeat and judge Satan, death, and evil of all kinds. His Kingdom fulfilled would reunite Jesus “the Groom” with His Church, “the Bride of Christ.”
- After the announcement of the wedding supper of Jesus the Lamb and His bride, the Church, John’s revelation describes Jesus’ ultimate victory over Satan and evil.
- Jesus is depicted as riding upon a white horse. He is given the names, “Faithful and True” (Rev 19:11) and is also called “the Word of God” (Rev 19:13). His titles are “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16).
- Even before the battle began, Jesus was clothed in a bloodstained robe (Rev 19:13). That is because Jesus’ blood had already been poured out. His real battle and victory were realized on the cross as the slain Lamb of God.
- Jesus’ sword is not in His hand but rather in His mouth. Whereas sin and death entered the world when Satan deceived Adam and Eve, causing them to distrust God’s word (Gen 3), Jesus will win the victory by the power of His truthful words reflected in His names in this passage: “faithful, true, the Word of God.”
- During the battle, the dragon (a.k.a. Satan, the devil, and the serpent) is thrown into great abyss and locked away there for “1,000 years” (Rev 20:2, 3).
 - Satan was bound “so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the 1,000 years were completed” (Rev 20:3).
- Scholars debate whether 1,000 years is a literal measurement of time or a symbolic phrase simply referring to “a long time.”
 - Some known as Pre-millennialists understand the Bible to teach that Jesus will return to rule over His kingdom on earth for 1000 years before bringing in the final judgment.
 - Others known as A-millennialists teach that the 1,000-year reign symbolizes Jesus’ victory in the present over sin and death. In a real sense, Jesus has conquered Satan and has begun reigning over His Kingdom.
- John wrote that at the end of the literal or figurative 1,000-year period, Satan, the dragon, “must be released for a little while” (Rev 20:3). When released, the dragon would “come out to deceive the nations” (Rev 20:8).
- Rev 20:7–19 describes a final victorious battle for the Kingdom of God. The names Gog and Magog reference the same names found in Ezekiel 38–39. There, Gog was a ruler, and Magog was his kingdom. They waged war against Israel. Here, in Rev 20, Gog and Magog represent an innumerable force enlisted by Satan to attack God’s people.
 - Once again, the LORD God supernaturally intervened to save His people from insurmountable odds. When the nations with Gog and Magog

“surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city ... fire came down from heaven and consumed them” (Rev 20:9).

- The dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and even death itself is thrown into the eternal judgment of the lake of fire to be tormented day and night without end (Rev 20:10). These are the sources and consequences of sin which has now been fully eradicated. See E100 Story 2 and the promise that the seed of the woman would one day mortally wound the serpent’s head.
 - In the crucifixion, God removed the penalty of sin for those who trust that Jesus bore that penalty on their behalf and receive Him as King. This is often called *justification*--being made righteous through the righteous saving work of Jesus.
 - With the coming of the Holy Spirit, God removed the power of sin (See Rom 6:14, 20–22). This truth is often called *sanctification*--being made holy and set apart for God’s service.
 - Upon entering the new heaven and new earth, worshippers of the one true God are protected from even the presence of sin. It has been eradicated, judged, and condemned to the lake of fire. This new state is often called *glorification*--when we will receive a new eternal resurrected body. (See 1 Cor 15:52–54; 2 Cor 5:4, E100 Story 92; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2),
- Rev. 20:11 pictures the future fulfillment of the great white throne judgment prophesied in Dan 7:9.
- The Revelation foretells that God will sit on a great white throne and every human who ever lived will be resurrected to face judgment for what he/she has done. This is a good time to recall the reassuring gospel truth found in Rom 8 (E100 Story 81) that “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” When a Christian stands before God in judgment, the judgment is absolutely factual and complete but without condemnation, because the Lamb of God has taken our condemnation on Himself (E100 Story 66).
- If someone’s name is not found written in the *Book of Life*, that person will also be condemned to the Lake of Fire.

100. The New Jerusalem – Rev 21:1–22:21

- In this concluding chapter of the Bible, we see that God is fully installing His new creation and Kingdom. The former heavens and earth are replaced by new ones.
 - Before sin entered the world, God dwelled with Adam and Eve In the Garden of Eden. Later, God symbolically dwelled among His people Israel in the tabernacle and then in the temple. Rev 21 assures that God will once again dwell in the midst of His people, this time in the city of the New Jerusalem.
- God, Himself, will wipe away tears of grief and sorrow because all the causes of grief and sorrow--death, mourning, pain, and their root cause of sin--will be destroyed.

- Alpha is the first letter and Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. God called Himself “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” to describe His eternal being.
- The second death refers to the judgment those who did not receive Jesus as Messiah will face as they are expelled from God’s presence and thrown into the lake of fire.
- The splendid city of the New Jerusalem is depicted as a perfect cube (Rev 21:16).
- The 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles are honored with each of the sons of Israel’s names inscribed one of the twelve gates of the city and each of the apostle’s names on one of the city’s twelve foundations.
 - The city’s foundations and streets are constructed with items that are considered some of the most beautiful and valuable on earth. Considering that foundations are normally underground, and residents will be walking on gold, the Revelation seems to communicate that what is above the subfloor and floor levels is even more beautiful and valuable than humans can currently conceive.
- There is no need for eternal light from the sun or moon in the New Jerusalem, because the glory of God illuminates everything so that there is never darkness.
- The tree of life first mentioned in Gen 2 (E100 Story 1) is on each side of the river of life that flows from the throne of the Father and the Lamb. In Gen 3, the sin-corrupted humans were excluded from the garden to prevent them from eating from the tree of life in their tainted state (E100 Story 2). Now, those redeemed by Jesus are welcomed to eat from the tree(s) of life.
- The “nations” are mentioned in the heavenly city as distinct entities (Rev 21:24–26; 22:2). Apparently, the beauty of God’s diverse creation that allowed for so many skin tones and cultures will not be erased in eternity. The presence of the nations also fulfills the LORD’s promises to Abraham that he would become “a multitude of nations” (Gen 17:5–6; 16) and that “all the nations of the earth be blessed” through him (Gen 17:17; 22:18, E100 Story 8).
- Whereas God cursed the serpent and the ground because of the serpent’s deception and mankind’s sin in Gen 3 (E100 Story 2), Rev 22:3 promises, “There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him;”
- Whereas seeing the LORD YHWH’s face would have brought death to human beings in their former sinful state (See Exo 33:20 E100 Story 22), now those who were saved by Jesus will see God’s face and be more alive than ever.
- In contrast to those who took the mark of the beast on their foreheads, the servants of the LORD--redeemed Christians who have received Jesus as Messiah--will have the LORD God’s name on their foreheads. They belong to and serve Him (Rev 22:3–4).
- They will worship the LORD and they will reign with Him forever. Adam and Eve had been created as sub-rulers of the Creator God, but their sin kept them from reigning as they had been created to do. Now in the new creation, humans are once

again given authority share in God's reign as image-bearers of the Creator (Rev 22:5).

- The LORD told John that he had given this Revelation to him to show the LORD's servants--His Church--"what must soon take place" (Rev 22:6). He followed by saying, "Behold, I am coming soon."
 - Now, nearly 2,000 years since John received this revelation, God's use of "soon" (Rev 22:6, 7, 12, 20) doesn't fit our understanding of "soon." Three points may be worth noting:
 - The Greek word translated "soon" can also mean "quickly." Quickly does not necessarily mean soon in relation to the present, but rather a short amount of time between the beginning and ending once it starts.
 - "Soon" to an eternal being is not the same as "soon" to those of us whose human life spans are limited to roughly 100 years.
 - Several of the warnings of imminent threats of martyrdom to believers at the hands of evil rulers would have been seen as fulfilled in the lifetimes of many believers who were alive at the time of John's Revelation. (Look up the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian).
- The Spirit and the Bride now give the invitation to come and drink the water of life from the river of life, without price. That seems to indicate that the Church, in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, is to invite people to Jesus to drink the living water of salvation before He returns.
- The Revelation ends with the Lord Jesus declaring, "Surely, I am coming soon/quickly" followed by John's response, "Amen. Come Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen."

The beginning of creation began in a garden with God dwelling among His people. The new creation with a new heaven and new earth begin in a city known as the New Jerusalem, where God's Kingdom promised back in Gen 3 is fully established. In that city, God once again dwells with His people and they are secure from all harm. Sin, death, and evil will be forever defeated. The chart below show continuity between the first chapters of Genesis and the last chapters of Revelation, recorded by two different men more than a thousand years apart.

Genesis

Revelation

Darkness over the deep and God separated the darkness (Gen 1:2-4).	There will be no night or darkness there (Rev 21:25).
God separated the dry earth from the seas (Gen 1:10)	There was no more sea (Rev 21:1).
God created the sun, moon, and stars to give light (Gen 1:14-18).	There is no need for the sun or moon to shine because the glory of God gives lights (Rev 21:23-24)
The tree of life was in the garden (Gen 2:9).	The tree of life was in the middle of the city (Rev 22:2)
A river flowed from Eden (Gen 2:10).	The river of the water of life flowed from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 22:1).
The land had gold (Gen 2:12).	The city and street were made of pure gold (Rev 21:18, 21).
God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:8)	God's dwelling place is with humans and He will be with them as their God (Rev 21:3).
The garden gave access to the deceiving serpent (Gen 3:1-5).	Nothing detestable or false will ever enter the city (Rev 21:27).
God promised that the serpent would be defeated (Gen 3:15).	The devil was thrown into the lake of fire for all eternity (Rev 20:10).
The ground was cursed because of human sin (Gen 3:17).	There will no longer be any curse (Rev 22:3).
Death came as a result of sin (Gen 3:19).	There will be no more death (Rev 21:4).
When Adam and Eve sinned, God clothed them with animal skins (Gen 3:21).	God will clothe those redeemed from their sin by Jesus with fine pure bright linen (Rev 19:8).
Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and access to the tree of life (3:22-23).	Those redeemed by Jesus are invited to eat from the tree of life (Rev 22:14)
Cherubim (special angels) guarded the way back to the garden and the tree of life to keep humans from entering and eating from the tree (Gen 3:24).	The gates to the city are never shut but always open (Rev 21:25).

CONCLUSION>

Congratulations on getting acquainted with 100 stories from the Bible that follow the plot line of God's creation, human rebellion, redemption through the work of Jesus, and restoration through the work of the Spirit. I hope you will keep in mind that framework of Creation ... Rebellion ... Redemption ... and Restoration with Jesus at the center no matter what Bible passage you happen to be reading. I suggest you take the challenge of reading through the Bible in one year to get an even richer overall understanding of God's word. You can accomplish that task by reading four chapters every day. I would recommend that you get a quality study Bible, produced by a team of scholars (as compared to study Bible with one individual's notes). Here are a few solid choices:

- The ESV Study Bible
- The CSB Study Bible
- The NIV Study Bible
- The Quest Study Bible
- The Student Bible
- The Life Application Study Bible
- The Apologetics Study Bible

Keep reading and keep connecting the dots in God's great love story. The written word will reveal to you the one who is the Living Word as it feeds your soul and transforms your life.

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" -- Jesus the Messiah, spoken in Matthew 4:4.