

▼ Easter 2021

Rocklyn Clarke Sr. - Sunday April 4, 2021

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• Read the Passage: Luke 23:44-49

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

• Read the Passage: Psalm 31:1-5

31:0 For the director of music. A psalm of David.

1 In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.

2 Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.

3 Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me.

4 Free me from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge.

5 Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.

6 I hate those who cling to worthless idols; I trust in the LORD.

7 I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul.

8 You have not handed me over to the enemy but have set my feet in a spacious place.

9 Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief.

10 My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.

11 Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors; I am a dread to my friends — those who see me on the street flee from me.

12 I am forgotten by them as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery.

13 For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God."

15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.

16 Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

17 Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I have cried out to you; but let the wicked be put to shame and lie silent in the grave.

18 Let their lying lips be silenced, for with pride and contempt they speak arrogantly against the righteous.

19 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues of men; in your dwelling you keep them safe from accusing tongues.

21 Praise be to the LORD, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city.

22 In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from your sight!" Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to

you for help.

23 Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.

24 Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.

▼ **Easter - Purpose**

- The Tragedy of Jesus' Death
- The Why of Jesus' Death
- The Victory of Jesus' Resurrection
- The Challenge of Jesus' Ascension

▶ **Understand the issues at stake in the conflict**

▶ **The Language of Harvest**

▶ **Understanding Salvation**

▼ **The Tragedy of Jesus' Death**

▼ **Jesus final words on the cross. - Luke 23:44-49**

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The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

▼ **Preceding Signs**

- Darkness because the sun stopped shining. This could not have been an eclipse since it was Passover, which occurs in association with a full moon.
- Curtain of the temple torn in two.
- Jesus says: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

▼ **Trailing Signs**

- Centurion: "Surely this was a righteous man."
- Others: Beat their breasts and went away.
- Jesus' followers: Stood at a distance and watched.

▼ **This scene beckons us to, like his followers on the scene, stand and watch.**

- Jesus had so much going for him. How did it come to this?
- It seemed like Jesus could do anything. Why did he let this happen to himself?
- Why was all of this necessary?

- There are people within your sphere of influence who aren't planning to visit church with you or anyone else but who have heard about Jesus and are wondering why was all of this necessary. Can you explain it to them?
- Make sure you spend enough time with unchurched people who will look at you cross-eyed when you use too much churchy language.
- To understand why, we have to look back through human history through the eyes of the Bible.

▼ The Why of Jesus' Death

▼ Creation

- God created a good world! When he was done he said it was "good".
- God created us in his image, which means that we represent him in the world. When he was all done he said it was "very good".

▼ Rebellion

- Adam and Eve eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - choosing independence from God rather than dependence on him.

▼ As a result of their rebellion:

- They are exiled from the Garden. We will see this theme of exile again.
- They are cut off from the Tree of Life.
- They are still alive! God has not terminated his creation project.

▼ Human descent into wickedness.

- Cain murders Abel. Cain's offspring display an increasing degree of depravity.
- Seth's offspring decline more slowly.
- Man hits rock bottom and God decides to wipe them out. - Genesis 6:5-8

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth — men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air — for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

▼ Solutions

▼ A progressive series of solutions to human rebellion.

- The rest of the Bible presents a progression of solutions to the problem of human rebellion and the broken world that resulted from it.

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▼ Solution 1 - A Man of Faith

▼ Noah

- God's grace or favor finds Noah
- Noah has a wife and 3 sons with wives of their own.
- Noah is a man who responds to God in faith.
- God preserves Noah and his family on the ark during the flood.
- ▼ After the flood
 - Noah plants a vineyard, makes wine, and gets drunk.
 - His son Ham sees his father and tells his brothers, who cover their father.
 - Noah pronounces a curse on Ham's son Canaan.
- Noah's descendants resume humanity's decline, culminating in Babylon and the tower of Babel.
- ▼ Solution 1 Outcome:
 - We have not solved the problem.
 - We have learned that starting over with a faithful human is not enough.
- ▼ Solution 2 - Another Man of Faith
 - ▼ Abram (Abraham)

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.
 - God calls Abram to leave his father's household and follow God to a new location.
 - God promises Abram that all nations will be blessed through him.
 - Abraham responds in faith.
 - Abram has no children. He is dependent on God to become the nation that God promised.
- Abram walks with God through various ups and downs and, as Abraham, becomes the father of Isaac.
- ▼ God continues to walk with Abraham's descendants through Isaac:
 - Isaac becomes the father of Jacob.
 - Jacob becomes Israel and fathers the 12 tribes.
 - God allows Israel to experience 400 years of slavery in Egypt so that he can rescue them.
- God raises up Moses and rescues Israel from Egyptian slavery.

- God enters into a new covenant with Israel designating them as his chosen people, heirs of the promise he made to Abraham, and the nation through whom he would bless the rest of the world. So far, so good!
- From the very beginning Israel violates the covenant and this pattern of rebellion repeats itself despite the occasional bright spots.
- Ultimately Israel, like Adam and Eve before them, is sent off into exile.

▼ Solution 2 Outcome:

- We have still not solved the problem.

▼ We now know:

- Starting over with a faithful human is not enough.
- Starting over with a faithful human and giving his offspring your laws is not enough.

▼ Solution 3 - The Complete Package

▼ Jesus

- Jesus is the perfect Israelite.
- Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. - John 1:29
- Jesus is the suffering servant. - Isaiah 53.

▼ Solutions 3 Outcome:

- Problem solved!
- What no human could do, no matter how inclined to respond to God with faith, God did by sending his Son to die. - Revelation 5

▼ **The Victory of Jesus' Resurrection**

▼ Jesus - Luke 24:36-49

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

- Jesus established God's Kingdom.

- Jesus secures our place in God's Kingdom.
- Jesus empowers us to become part of the solution to our broken world.

▼ **The Challenge of Jesus' Ascension**

- Jesus leaves his disciples with an assignment and then ascends to the Father. - Acts 1:1-11

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

▼ We have a job to do:

- Do it as a team!
- Know the message.
- Proclaim the message.
- Recognize and welcome those who respond.
- Make disciples.

▼ Develop the skills for the job:

▼ Skill development:

- Recognize what you lack.
- Work on it.
- Make mistakes! If you're not willing to make mistakes, you're not willing to be successful.
- Learn to consistently discover the message from the text.
- Learn to explain the message.
- Learn to share the message.
- Learn to recognize when someone responds.

- Learn to welcome new people and make disciples.
- We have the power! - Ephesians 1:15-23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

▶ **Setup for Next Week:**

▶ **Make Disciples!**

▶ **Conclusion**

▶ **Followup**



Easter 2021

Sunday April 4, 2021



Easter - Purpose

1. The Tragedy of Jesus' Death
2. The Why of Jesus' Death
3. The Victory of Jesus' Resurrection
4. The Challenge of Jesus' Ascension



The Tragedy of Jesus' Death

Jesus final words on the cross. - Luke 23:44-49

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

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The Tragedy of Jesus' Death

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The Why of Jesus' Death

Solutions

- A progressive series of solutions to human rebellion.
- The rest of the Bible presents a progression of solutions to the problem of human rebellion and the broken world that resulted from it.



The Why of Jesus' Death

Solution 1 - A Man of Faith

- Noah
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- Abram walks with God through various ups and downs and, as Abraham, becomes the father of Isaac.



The Why of Jesus' Death

Solution 2 - Another Man of Faith (continued)

- God continues to walk with Abraham's descendants through Isaac:
 - Isaac becomes the father of Jacob.
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 - God allows Israel to experience 400 years of slavery in Egypt so that he can rescue them.
- God raises up Moses and rescues Israel from Egyptian slavery.



The Why of Jesus' Death

Solution 2 - Another Man of Faith (continued)

- At Mt. Sinai God enters into a new covenant with Israel designating them as his chosen people, heirs of the promise he made to Abraham, and the nation through whom he would bless the rest of the world. So far, so good!
- From the very beginning Israel violates the covenant and this pattern of rebellion repeats itself despite the occasional bright spots.
- Ultimately Israel, like Adam and Eve before them, is sent off into exile.
- Solution 2 Outcome:
 - We have still not solved the problem.
 - We now know:
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 - Starting over with a faithful human and giving his offspring your laws is not enough.



The Why of Jesus' Death

Solution 3 - The Complete Package

- Jesus
 - Jesus is the perfect Israelite.
 - Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. - John 1:29
 - Jesus is the suffering servant. - Isaiah 53.



The Why of Jesus' Death

Isaiah 53

- 53:1 ¶ Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
- 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
- 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
- 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.
- 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.



The Why of Jesus' Death

Isaiah 53

- 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.
- 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.
- 9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- 10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.
- 11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.
- 12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.



The Why of Jesus' Death

Solution 3 - The Complete Package

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 - Jesus is the perfect Israelite.
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- Solutions 3 Outcome:
 - Problem solved!
 - What no human could do, no matter how inclined to respond to God with faith, God did by sending his Son to die. - Revelation 5



The Why of Jesus' Death

Revelation 5

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."



The Why of Jesus' Death

Revelation 5 (continued)

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.



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The Victory of Jesus' Resurrection

Jesus - Luke 24:36-49

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They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

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- Jesus established God's Kingdom.
- Jesus secures our place in God's Kingdom.
- Jesus empowers us to become part of the solution to our broken world.



The Challenge of Jesus' Ascension

Jesus leaves his disciples with an assignment and then ascends to the Father. - Acts 1:1-11

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

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We have a job to do:

- Do it as a team!
- Know the message.
- Proclaim the message.
- Recognize and welcome those who respond.
- Make disciples.



The Challenge of Jesus' Ascension

Jesus leaves his disciples with an assignment and then ascends to the Father. - Acts 1:1-11

We have a job to do:

Develop the skills for the job:

- Skill development:
 - Recognize what you lack.
 - Work on it.
 - Make mistakes! If you're not willing to make mistakes, you're not willing to be successful.
- Learn to consistently discover the message from the text.
- Learn to explain the message.
- Learn to share the message.
- Learn to recognize when someone responds.
- Learn to welcome new people and make disciples.



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We have a job to do:

Develop the skills for the job:

We have the power! – Ephesians 1:15-23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.



Picturing Salvation

With salvation we receive a “superpower” - the ability to distinguish between Jesus and other sources and to pay attention to Jesus.

“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” - John 10:1-5 (NIV)

- This is the flip side of the “faith” that is the evidence of salvation.
- What we do with this “superpower” will determine the course of our spiritual life.



Modeling Conversion

Compare 2 paradigms:

- Salvation as a free gift.
- Salvation as a commitment to following and obeying Jesus.

Salvation as a free gift:

- Illustration: Free tickets to a show I can't afford.

Salvation as a commitment to following and obeying Jesus.

- Illustration: Free membership to a gym with a trainer.
- Illustration: Scholarship to college with a faculty mentor.



Modeling Conversion

What is the normal path to conversion (i.e. becoming a follower)?

- Gospel proclamation (e.g. The Kingdom of God is here)
- Saving faith (includes the “superpower” ability to pay attention to Jesus)
- Acts of commitment (e.g. baptism, “Jesus is Lord”, joining family of believers)
- Discipleship



Modeling Conversion

Let's use Peter's Pentecost sermon as a model:

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. - Acts 2:36-42 (NIV)

- Peter: "God has made this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ."
- People: "What shall we do?"
- Peter: "Repent and be baptized . . ."
- Outcome: Those who accepted the message responded (were baptized) and 3,000 were added to their number.
- Outcome: They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching . . .



Discussion Questions – Part 1

- Can you clearly articulate the gospel?
- Find a passage where the gospel is clearly presented and practice presenting it.
- Are there any parts that you don't understand?