

# LITERARY BACKGROUND

## HOW TO READ THE GOSPELS

### I. WHAT \_\_\_\_\_ THE GOSPELS?

- -Like the four-chambered \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible
- “The Gospels are the centerpiece of God’s \_\_\_\_\_ revelation precisely because they focus on the centerpiece of God’s revelation, \_\_\_\_\_.” (Layton Talbert)

#### A. The Gospel accounts are stories.

- historical focus—to reveal \_\_\_\_\_
- theological focus—to teach \_\_\_\_\_
- literary focus—to recreate \_\_\_\_\_ (in our imaginations)

1. They are different from \_\_\_\_\_

a. They do not cover an \_\_\_\_\_.

b. They are focused on one last \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John

c. They are not \_\_\_\_\_ analysis.

2. They are similar to \_\_\_\_\_ biographies

a. They began with the person's \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

b. They devoted much attention to the person's \_\_\_\_\_.

c. They filled in the middle with salient \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

3. They are different from modern \_\_\_\_\_.

a. They have a \_\_\_\_\_ in their \_\_\_\_\_ of incidents.

Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Cleansing the leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16
Centurion of Capernaum	8:5-13	No parallel	
Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15		
Sick healed	8:16-17		
Following Jesus	8:18-22	No parallel	
Stilling the storm	8:23-27		
Gaderene demoniac	8:28-34		

b. They have a variety in their \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 26:63-64	Mark 14:61-62	Luke 22:67-70
<p>26:63 But Jesus was silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."</p>	<p>14:61 But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest questioned him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" 14:62 "I am," said Jesus, "and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven."</p>	<p>22:67 and said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, 22:68 and if I ask you, you will not answer. 22:69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." 22:70 So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" He answered them, "You say that I am." 22:71 Then they said, "Why do we need further testimony? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"</p>

4. They are similar to ancient \_\_\_\_\_.

a. They felt free to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ (accurately).

c. They weren't as concerned with modern "\_\_\_\_\_."

Sequence of the Temptations of Christ		
	Matthew 4:1-11	Luke 4:1-13
Temptation #1		
Temptation #2		
Temptation #3		

**B. The Gospel accounts have a \_\_\_\_\_!**

1. Like all history—they are \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Like all the Gospels—they are about \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Like all Scripture—they are pointed at \_\_\_\_\_.

a. Because of its dual authorship—its meaning is both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

b. Because of its dual authorship—it is not given for information, but \_\_\_\_\_.

**II. HOW DO I \_\_\_\_\_ THE GOSPELS?**

**A. Overview—\_\_\_\_\_ approaches**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ each story: “What does this small story tell us about Jesus?”

Episode 1 ↓	Episode 2 ↓	Episode 3 ↓
What is the _____ telling us about Jesus?	What is the _____ telling us about Jesus?	What is the _____ telling us about Jesus?

2. \_\_\_\_\_ the stories: “What is the Gospel writer trying to say to his readers by the way that he puts the smaller stories together?”

Episode 1 ↓	Episode 2 ↓	Episode 3 ↓
What is the _____ telling us about Jesus?	What is the _____ telling us about Jesus?	What is the _____ telling us about Jesus?
How does this story _____ with the ones around it? →	How does this story _____ with the ones around it? ↔	How does this story _____ with the ones around it? ←

**B. Reading each story (reading stories \_\_\_\_\_)**

1. Isolate the literary \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Identify the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Isolate the different \_\_\_\_\_.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ the narrative:

- Tips: (1) listen for voicing; (2) pray for illumination; & (3) slow down and ask 5Ws and 1H.

a. rising \_\_\_\_\_ (“crisis introduced”)

b. \_\_\_\_\_ (“climax of crisis”)

c. \_\_\_\_\_ (“resolution introduced” & “crisis resolved”)

d. \_\_\_\_\_ action or interpretation (“conclusion”)

Luke 10:25-29↓	Luke 10:30-37↓	Luke 10:38-42 ↓
What is the episode telling us about Jesus?	What is the episode telling us about Jesus?	What is the episode telling us about Jesus?

**C. Connecting the stories (reading stories \_\_\_\_\_)**

1. Look for themes and \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Look for logical \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., cause and effect).

3. Look for \_\_\_\_\_ statements and connecting statements.

4. Look for differences and \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., characters, actions, words, reactions, etc.).

Luke 10:25-29 ↓ →	Luke 10:30-37 ↓ ↔	Luke 10:38-42 ↓ ←

**III. WHAT ARE SPECIAL TYPES OF LITERATURE \_\_\_\_\_  
THE GOSPELS?**

**A. \_\_\_\_\_ (hyperbole)**

1. Definition: when a truth is \_\_\_\_\_ for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_  
to the extent that a literal fulfillment is either impossible or completely  
ridiculous.

2. Purpose: to \_\_\_\_\_ in a powerful way with the listeners

3. Examples: Matthew 5:29-30; Luke 14:26; Mark 10:24b-25

4. Lesson: Do not \_\_\_\_\_ a literal interpretation; ask, "What is the point here?"

**B. \_\_\_\_\_ and Simile**

1. Definition: literary vehicles used to make \_\_\_\_\_

2. Purpose: to cause the reader to \_\_\_\_\_ the topic at hand by giving a \_\_\_\_\_

3. Examples: Matthew 10:16; John 6:35; Luke 13:34

5. Lesson: Locate the intended point of \_\_\_\_\_; it may help to \_\_\_\_\_ the figure of speech; do not \_\_\_\_\_ the details too far.

**C. Narrative (or Situational) \_\_\_\_\_**

1. Definition: an unexpected \_\_\_\_\_ in the story; a contrast between the \_\_\_\_\_ and the unexpected

2. Purpose: to drive home the point; to unexpectedly \_\_\_\_\_  
you and your assumptions

3. Examples: Luke 12:16-21; Mark 4-5

6. Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_ it; look for \_\_\_\_\_ between the  
expected and unexpected; ask, "What does this reveal about my own  
\_\_\_\_\_ and expectations?"

#### **D. Rhetorical Questions**

1. Definition: questions that don't \_\_\_\_\_ an answer

2. Purpose: to force the reader to \_\_\_\_\_ in his mind and to  
consider the \_\_\_\_\_ of the answer

3. Examples: Matthew 5:46; 6:27; Mark 4:40; Luke 12:51

4. Lesson: Turn the questions into \_\_\_\_\_.

## E. Parallelism

1. Definition: two or more lines that use \_\_\_\_\_ words but \_\_\_\_\_ grammatical form to express the \_\_\_\_\_ idea

2. Purpose: to \_\_\_\_\_ and elaborate on one point (through two lines)

3. Examples:

a. \_\_\_\_\_: the lines basically say the \_\_\_\_\_ thing in a similar way (Matthew 7:7; Mark 4:22)

b. \_\_\_\_\_ (antithetic): the second line \_\_\_\_\_ with the first (Mark 4:25; Matthew 12:35)

c. \_\_\_\_\_ (synthetic or climactic): the second line repeats part of the first line, then \_\_\_\_\_ the thought of the first line to a climax (Matthew 10:40; John 6:37)

4. Lesson: Avoid making \_\_\_\_\_ points; look for a \_\_\_\_\_ thought or point.

## F. Parables

1. Definition: to “\_\_\_\_\_ alongside;” a \_\_\_\_\_ story—with an additional level of meaning (\_\_\_\_\_)—in which some details \_\_\_\_\_ other realities; an extended analogy.

2. Purpose: (a) to \_\_\_\_\_ the truth and (b) to prod the reader to sense the \_\_\_\_\_ between his situation and the one in the story.

3. Difficulty: to know \_\_\_\_\_ details should stand for other things

### 4. Examples:

a. Augustine—\_\_\_\_\_: nearly \_\_\_\_\_ the details represent something else

1. \_\_\_\_\_ different opinions

2. Nothing to do with what Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ for original audience

3. Depends on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the reader

c. **G. Campbell Morgan**—\_\_\_\_\_ -point: where the parable communicates \_\_\_\_\_ truth, normally towards the end of the parable.

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ counter to the allegorical method

2. Tries to work \_\_\_\_\_ the text.

3. Restricts the meaning \_\_\_\_\_ than Jesus originally intended.

d. **Craig Blomberg**—one point per \_\_\_\_\_: in which there are essentially as many meanings as major \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ of the parable.

1. One main point per each main character or group (one, two or sometimes three)

2. The points must be ones that Jesus' \_\_\_\_\_ audience could have grasped.

# **HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE GOSPELS**

## **I. THE PERSIAN PERIOD (539-334 BC)**

**A. Providential return**

**B. Three return**

**C. Small return**

**D. Disappointing return**

**E. Serious return**

## **II. THE GREEK PERIOD (334-166 BC)**

### **A. Alexander the Great (334-323 BC)**

**1. Unified empire--conquest**

**2. Unified culture--Hellenization**

**3. Unified language--koine Greek**

**B. Ptolemaic Domination of Israel (323-198 BC)**

**1. Egyptian**

**2. Hands-off approach**

**C. Seleucid Domination of Palestine (198-166 BC)**

**1. Syrian**

**2. Under Rome**

**3. Antiochus IV (“epiphanes”)**

**a. Hellenistic zeal!**

**b. Roman taxation**

**c. Jewish annihilation**

### **III. THE MACCABEES AND JEWISH INDEPENDENCE (166-63 BC)**

#### **A. The Maccabean Revolt (166-135 BC)**

1. Jewish rebellion
2. Judas “Maccabeus”
3. Liberation of Israel and the temple

#### **B. The Hasmonean Dynasty (135-63 BC)**

1. New leadership
2. New dynasty
3. New direction
4. New reactions
  - a. Hasidim: Pharisees and Essenes

b. Hasmonians: Sadducees

#### **IV. The Roman Period (63 BC - AD 135)**

**A. Took power in 63 BC**

**B. Appointed Antipater governor of Judea**

**C. Appointed Herod (“the Great”) king of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee**

**1. Biblically mentioned (Matthew 2:1-19; Luke 1:5)**

**2. Personally insecure and cruel**

**3. Civically helpful**

**D. Divided Herod the Great’s kingdom among his three sons**

**1. Archelaus (4 BC - AD 6)--Judea, Samaria, Idumea**

**2. Herod Antipas (4 BC - AD 39)--Galilee and Perea**

**3. Herod Philip--Iturea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Auranitis, and Batanea (regions**

north and east of Galilee)

#### **E. Ruled the known world**

1. Pax Romana

2. Roman roads

3. Roman law

### **V. Jesus' Historical Context**

A. Living under a pagan superpower

B. Rich and poor

C. A new desolating sacrilege

D. Maintaining the traditions

E. Longing for change

## **F. Religious confusion and division**

# RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE GOSPELS

## I. FOUR KEY MARKS OF SECOND-TEMPLE JUDAISM

### A. One true God

### B. God has chosen Israel.

1. God has chosen Israel to be His people.
2. God has chosen Israel to be a light to the nations.
3. Because He has chosen Israel, God had regularly delivered His people.
4. God expresses His choice of Israel through making covenants with them.

### C. God has provided a way to live.

1. A Law because Israel was His people.
2. The Law became very important to Israel.

**3. The Law showed what made God's people distinctive.**

**a. circumcision**

**b. Sabbath rest**

**c. food laws**

**4. The Law kept Israel eligible for deliverance by God.**

**5. The Law preserved Israel's national identity in a time of pagan rule.**

#### **D. Hope for the Future**

**1. Why Israel was looking for more**

**a. prophetic promises**

**b. historic disappointments**

**2. What Israel was looking for**

**a. Hope for the restoration of all twelve tribes of Israel to the land**

b. The conversion, subjugation or destruction of the Gentiles

c. A new, purified or renewed temple

d. Pure worship

e. Messianic expectations

## **II. PARTIES AND GROUPS WITHIN FIRST-CENTURY JUDAISM**

### **A. Sadducees**

1. From the Hasmonians

2. Political and leaders in the temple (priestly)

3. Politically--"Don't rock the boat."

4. Theologically liberal

### **B. Pharisees**

1. From the Hasidim

2. Popular middle-class and leaders in the synagogues

3. Political moderates

4. Theological conservatives

### **C. Essenes**

1. From the Hasidim

2. A radical minority

3. Politically separatists

4. Theologically separatists

### **D. The “Zealots”**

1. Social bandits

**2. Political revolutionaries**

**3. Prophetic leaders**

## **BIBLICAL BACKGROUND**

### **I. JESUS, THE WHOLE BIBLE, AND THE KINGDOM**

**A. The Bible is about God's re-creation.**

**B. The Bible is about God's re-creation through Jesus.**

### **II. THE PATTERN OF THE KINGDOM**

**A. The kingdom pattern established.**

**B. The kingdom pattern tested.**

### **III. THE PERISHED KINGDOM**

**A. Rebellion against the good King**

**B. God's promise of war**

**C. Human rebellion and death advances**

#### **IV. THE PROMISED KINGDOM**

**A. The promise of a land**

**B. The promise of a people**

**C. The promise of a blessing**

#### **V. THE PARTIAL KINGDOM**

**A. God rescues His people--keeping kingdom promises**

**B. God rules His people--the laws of the King**

**C. God lives with His people--a return to Eden through sacrifice**

**D. God creates the need for kingly rule--the era of the judges**

**E. God appoints a king for His kingdom--the era of Saul**

**F. God partially fulfills His promises of a kingdom--the era of David and Solomon**

## **VI. THE PROPHESED KINGDOM**

**A. The kingdom declines**

**B. A new promise**

**C. Still waiting . . .**

## **VII. THE PRESENT KINGDOM**

**A. The King is here!**

**B. God's presence**

**C. God's rule**

**D. God's people**

## **VIII. THE PERFECTED KINGDOM**



# LIFE OF CHRIST

## **I. PROLOGUE--THE STAGE IS SET FOR THE KINGDOM**

### **A. Preview of Jesus**

1. Mark

2. Matthew

3. Luke

4. John

### **B. Early Years of Jesus (5 BC to AD 8)**

1. Jesus' conception

2. Jesus' birth

3. Jesus' childhood

## **II. JESUS PREPARES FOR HIS KINGDOM MISSION (SUMMER 26 TO SPRING 27--8 MONTHS)**

**A. The ministry of John the Baptist**

**B. The baptism of Jesus**

**C. The temptation of Jesus**

## **III. ACT ONE: THE YEAR OF OBSCURITY (SPRING 27 TO FALL 27--8 MONTHS)**

**A. Jesus announces the arrival of the kingdom**

**B. Jesus begins to call kingdom followers**

## **IV. ACT TWO: THE YEAR OF POPULARITY (WINTER 27 TO SPRING 29--15 MONTHS)**

**A. Jesus launches His kingdom mission in Galilee**

**B. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom through His mighty words**

**C. Jesus reveals the kingdom through His mighty works**

**D. Jesus begins to arouse opposition to His kingdom mission**

**E. Jesus gathers a kingdom community**

**F. Jesus welcomes sinners and outcasts into the kingdom**

1. Meals

2. Healings

**G. Jesus explains the kingdom with His parables**

1. The kingdom . . . .