

# The Gospels

---

## Study Guide

LESSON  
ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS



THIRD MILLENNIUM  

---

MINISTRIES

Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

For videos, manuscripts, and other resources, visit Third Millennium Ministries at [thirdmill.org](http://thirdmill.org).

## STUDY GUIDE

### CONTENTS

Outline.....	3
Notes.....	4
Review Questions .....	15
Application Questions.....	19

### How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
  
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
  
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (1:14)
- II. Literary Character (2:10)
  - A. Genre (3:08)
    - 1. Historical Narrative (4:40)
    - 2. Greco-Roman Biography (7:40)
    - 3. Biblical Historical Narrative (15:41)
  - B. Reliability (18:40)
    - 1. Access (19:41)
    - 2. Candor (21:45)
    - 3. Corroboration (25:08)
    - 4. Training (28:00)
    - 5. Theological Convictions (29:23)
    - 6. Holy Spirit (31:14)
- III. Status in the Church (34:18)
  - A. Composition (34:32)
    - 1. Similarities (35:40)
    - 2. Theories of Composition (41:35)
    - 3. Certainty (43:07)
  - B. Authenticity (45:32)
    - 1. Trustworthy Authors (47:50)
    - 2. Apostolic Approval (48:38)
    - 3. Witness of the Church (49:45)
- IV. Unity (52:49)
  - A. Same Story (53:08)
  - B. Jesus (57:02)
    - 1. Proofs (57:30)
    - 2. Vocabulary (1:01:00)
    - 3. Stages (1:05:08)
- V. Variety (1:10:18)
  - A. Apparent Difficulties (1:10:47)
    - 1. Chronology (1:11:28)
    - 2. Omission (1:12:57)
    - 3. Different Events (1:14:32)
    - 4. Different Speeches (1:15:50)
  - B. Distinctive Emphases (1:18:27)
    - 1. Matthew (1:22:17)
    - 2. Mark (1:26:03)
    - 3. Luke (1:32:13)
    - 4. John (1:39:40)
- VI. Conclusion (1:45:20)

## Notes

### I. Introduction

The Bible records all sorts of good and bad news related to God's people throughout history.

The Gospels are the life-changing accounts of the person and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### II. Literary Character

#### A. Genre

A genre is a category or type of literature.

#### 1. Historical Narrative

Historical narratives are stories about people who lived in the past and about the actions and events that took place in their day.

In the secular writings of the ancient world, historical narratives typically developed in three main parts.

- The beginning
  
- The middle
  
- The end

## 2. Greco-Roman Biography

- Similarities
  - Defending the leader's ideas
  - Perpetuating awareness of his actions
  
- Differences
  - Intended Audience
  
  - Emphases
  
  - Cultures

### 3. **Biblical Historical Narrative**

The Gospels are most similar to the historical narratives in the Old Testament.

## B. **Reliability**

There is plenty of evidence that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had the resources and motivation to write trustworthy accounts about Jesus.

### 1. **Access**

The gospel writers had access to records of the events they recorded.

### 2. **Candor**

The historical reliability of the Gospels is seen in the high level of candor in their works.

### 3. **Corroboration**

Our confidence in the reliability of the gospel writers is strengthened by the corroboration of other historical sources.

- Pliny the Younger
- Suetonius
- Tacitus
- Julius Africanus
- Josephus

#### **4. Training**

The training Jesus' disciples received should have taught them how to preserve an accurate record of his words and deeds.

#### **5. Theological Convictions**

The gospel writers had strong theological convictions that emphasized the need for a true, reliable record.

#### **6. Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit led the gospel writers to write their records of Jesus' words and deeds.

### **III. Status in the Church**

#### **A. Composition**

The composition of the Gospels refers to the way they were written.

#### **1. Similarities**

- The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke
- The term "synoptic" simply means "seeing together."

2. **Theories of Composition**

3. **Certainty**

**B. Authenticity**

The four gospels were always received as genuine and authoritative by the faithful churches of God.

Reasons for the early church's bold confidence in these four gospels:

1. **Trustworthy Authors**

2. **Apostolic Approval**

3. **Witness of the Church**



## **IV. Unity**

### **A. Same Story**

The four gospels tell the same story of the kingdom of God.

When the Bible talks about the gospel of Jesus, it's referring to the good news about Jesus.

The New Testament gospels use terms like "gospel" and "evangelize" far less frequently than language referring to God's kingdom.

### **B. Jesus**

The Gospels emphasize that Jesus is the king who brings the kingdom of God.

#### **1. Proofs**

- Jesus' power over demons
- Jesus' power to heal and resurrect
- Jesus' authority to forgive

## 2. Vocabulary

New Testament authors use a variety of vocabulary to talk about the kingdom of God.

- Explicit words
- Related concepts

## 3. Stages

Jesus taught that the present experience of the kingdom he offered was not the whole picture.

At some point in the future, the kingdom of God would come in all of its fullness.

Jesus was bringing the kingdom in stages:

- He inaugurated the kingdom during his earthly ministry.
- The kingdom continues now as he reigns from heaven.
- It will be consummated or completed in the future when he returns.

## **V. Variety**

All four gospels present the same story of the coming of God's kingdom, but each does this in its own way.

### **A. Apparent Difficulties**

There are a number of places where the gospel records appear to say different things.

#### **1. Chronology**

Chronology is the order in which events are described in the various gospels.

#### **2. Omission**

The omission of material in one or more of the Gospels.

#### **3. Different Events**

Similarities between different events.

#### **4. Different Speeches**

Different speeches sometimes had similar content.

## **B. Distinctive Emphases**

Each of the gospels was written by a unique author who brought his own:

- Perspective
- Concerns

All the New Testament gospel stories:

- Describe the same Jesus
- Speak about Jesus in different ways
- Highlight different aspects of Jesus' ministry

### **1. Matthew**

- Jesus: the Messianic King of Israel that was foretold in the Old Testament
  
- Following Jesus: changed hearts give us the power and motivation to follow Jesus with a loving, thankful, joyful obedience

## 2. Mark

- Jesus: the suffering Son of God who conquered the enemies of God's people.
  - Many miracles
  - Power over the forces of evil
  
- Following Jesus:
  - We won't always understand Jesus
  
  - Difficulties and suffering are inevitable for Christians

## 3. Luke

- Jesus: the compassionate Savior of the world
  
- Following Jesus: care for the poor, and strive to meet their needs

#### **4. John**

- Jesus: the Son of God who accomplishes the eternal plan of salvation

- Following Jesus: being loved by God, and showing that same love to each other

#### **VI. Conclusion**

## Review Questions

1. What is the genre of the Gospels?
2. How do we know that the Gospels are historically reliable?

3. How were the Gospels composed, and why is their composition important?

4. How do we know that the four canonical gospels are authentic?



5. How unified is the story told by all four gospels?

6. How unified is the portrayal of Jesus throughout the four gospels?

7. What apparent difficulties arise from the variety between the Gospels?

8. What are the distinctive emphases of each of the four gospels?

## Application Questions

1. How should the life-changing accounts of the person and work of Jesus Christ affect the way we live?
2. How should the literary character of the Gospels influence the way we read them?
3. How do the Gospels help us understand the historical narratives in the Old Testament?
4. How can we trust that the Gospels are reliable when they were written by fallen human beings?
5. How might the diversity amongst the Gospels help us to appreciate the diversity of the church?
6. How might the Gospels help us refute and reject erroneous doctrines like the belief that Christ's return in glory has already occurred?
7. What assurance and hope does the future coming of the kingdom give us? How should this hope impact the way we live presently?
8. How does Jesus being the Messianic King of Israel impact your life?
9. What can Jesus' sufferings teach us about the way we should view difficulties, trials and sufferings in our own lives?
10. How does your life display that you are loved by God?
11. What are some ways you can care for the poor and strive to meet their needs?
12. Which gospel is your favorite to read and why?
13. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?