

INTERPRETING
THE GOSPELS
AND ACTS

HANDBOOKS FOR NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS
John D. Harvey, series editor

Interpreting the Gospels and Acts: An Exegetical Handbook
David L. Turner

Interpreting the Pauline Letters: An Exegetical Handbook
John D. Harvey

Interpreting the General Letters: An Exegetical Handbook
Herbert W. Bateman IV

Interpreting Revelation and Other Apocalyptic Literature: An Exegetical Handbook
C. Marvin Pate

HANDBOOKS FOR NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS

INTERPRETING THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

An Exegetical Handbook

David L. Turner
AUTHOR

John D. Harvey
SERIES EDITOR

 **Kregel**
Academic

Interpreting the Gospels and Acts

© 2019 by David L. Turner

Published by Kregel Academic, an imprint of Kregel Publications, 2450 Oak Industrial Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-6020.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations in printed reviews.

The Greek font GraecaU and the Hebrew font New JerusalemU are both available from www.linguistsoftware.com/lgku.htm, +1-425-775-1130.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the New American Standard Bible®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®). ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-8254-2760-2

Printed in the United States of America

19 20 21 22 23 / 5 4 3 2 1

*To my students at GRTS, especially my teaching
assistants Todd Frederick, Jennifer McCormick-
Bridgewater, Chris McKnight, Kyle Rouse, Seth
Stadel, and Leta Von Klompenberg*



CONTENTS IN BRIEF

Series Preface	15
Preface	17
Abbreviations	21
1. The Genre and Structure of the Gospels and Acts	27
2. The Historical Setting of the Gospels and Acts.....	69
3. The Theology of the Gospels and Acts	105
4. Preparing to Interpret the Gospels and Acts	151
5. Interpreting Passages in the Gospels and Acts	197
6. Communicating Passages in the Gospels and Acts	231
7. From Text to Sermon: Two Examples	253
8. Selected Resources.....	323
Glossary	355



CONTENTS

Series Preface	15
Preface	17
Abbreviations	21
1. The Genre and Structure of the Gospels and Acts	27
<i>New Testament Narrative Genre in General</i>	27
<i>Various Views of Gospel Genre</i>	29
<i>Sui Generis</i>	29
Loose Collections of Oral Traditions	30
<i>Aretalogies</i>	30
<i>Midrash</i>	31
Quasi-Old Testament Narratives	32
Apostolic Recollections.....	32
Greco-Roman Biographies.....	33
The Genre of Acts	34
Relating the Historical, Literary, and Theological Features of the Gospels and Acts.....	35
<i>Embedded Genres</i>	36
Prosaic and Poetic Language	36
Intertextuality.....	38
Parables	39
Apocalyptic	43
Wisdom	45
Speeches.....	48
Psalms	49
Letters	52
<i>Narrative Genre and the Individual Features of the Gospels and Acts</i>	53
Mark.....	53

Matthew.....	55
Luke-Acts	57
John	61
<i>The Fourfold Gospel Tradition</i>	63
2. The Historical Setting of the Gospels and Acts	69
<i>Sources</i>	69
The Bible	69
Second Temple Judaism	70
Archaeology and the Physical World	73
<i>The Gospels and Acts in Greco-Roman History</i>	74
Historical Outline of the Second Temple Era	76
Key Historical References in the Gospels and Acts	77
<i>The Gospels and Acts and Second Temple Judaism</i>	79
The Temple and the Priesthood.....	80
The Synagogue.....	83
Rabbis.....	84
<i>Groups within Judaism</i>	85
Pharisees	85
Scribes	86
Elders.....	87
Sadducees.....	88
Sanhedrin.....	90
Essenes	91
Politically Oriented Groups.....	92
<i>Jewish Feasts and Festivals</i>	93
<i>The Individual Settings of the Gospels and Acts</i>	95
The Historical Setting of Matthew	95
The Historical Setting of Mark.....	97
The Historical Setting of Luke-Acts	99
The Historical Setting of John	101
3. The Theology of the Gospels and Acts.....	105
<i>Introduction</i>	105
<i>Understanding the Discipline of Biblical Theology</i>	106
Theological Disciplines	106
Biblical and Systematic Theology.....	107
Problems with Biblical Theology	109
Biblical Theology and the Theological Interpretation of the Bible	111
Conclusion	111
<i>Jesus and the Spirit in the Theology of the Gospels and Acts</i>	112
Overview of Key Texts	113
Three Phases	115

<i>The Distinctive Theology of Matthew</i>	122
Matthew and the Old Testament	123
The Kingdom of God in Matthew.....	124
The Church and Mission to All the Nations.....	128
<i>The Distinctive Theology of Mark</i>	129
A Passion Narrative with an Extended Introduction?	130
Limited Recognition of Jesus.....	131
The Failure of the Disciples and the Ending of Mark	133
<i>The Distinctive Theology of Luke-Acts</i>	136
Jerusalem and Rome	137
Evangelizing the Outcasts.....	140
<i>The Distinctive Theology of John</i>	143
Signs and Faith	144
The Future in John	146
<i>Summarizing the Theology of the Gospels and Acts</i>	150
4. Preparing to Interpret the Gospels and Acts	151
<i>Establishing the Text: Textual Criticism</i>	151
History of New Testament Textual Criticism.....	152
Classifying Genealogical Relationships.....	154
Evaluating the Evidence	155
Principles of Textual Criticism	158
Suggestions for Text-critical Analysis	159
Suggested Methodology	161
The Ending of Mark	161
The Adulteress in John 7:53–8:11	164
The Western Text of the Book of Acts	166
<i>Translating the Text: Theory and Practice</i>	169
Linguistics and Semantics.....	170
Linguistics and Bible Translation	173
Case Study	175
Current Issues.....	178
Conclusion	179
<i>Studying the Text: Critical Methods</i>	180
Form Criticism: Oral Traditions about Jesus	181
Source Criticism: Written Stories about Jesus	184
Redaction Criticism: Composing the Gospels.....	188
Narrative Criticism: The Gospels as Literature	191
5. Interpreting Passages in the Gospels and Acts.....	197
<i>Translating the Text</i>	198
Segmenting the Text.....	198
Translation	198
<i>Exegeting the Text</i>	203

Structure and Syntax	204
Visual Display	207
Words	215
<i>Doing Theology with the Text</i>	224
Biblical Theology	225
Systematic Theology	227
Ministry Theology	228
6. Communicating Passages in the Gospels and Acts.....	231
<i>Introduction</i>	231
<i>The Original Point of the Passage</i>	233
<i>The Current Point of the Passage</i>	235
The Relationship of Exegesis and Application	235
Speech Act Theory	236
Genre, Meaning, and Significance	237
Guidelines for Applying the Gospels and Acts.....	239
Description and Prescription, Precedent and Norm.....	241
<i>Lectio Divina</i>	241
<i>Homiletical Packaging</i>	242
Defining Expository Preaching.....	242
Deductive and Inductive Preaching.....	244
Genre-based Preaching	246
Other Sermonic Approaches.....	246
<i>Bridging the World of the Passage and World of the Reader</i>	248
Case Study: Acts 2:37–47	249
7. From Text to Sermon: Two Examples	253
<i>Introduction</i>	253
<i>Mark 4:1–20</i>	254
Establishing and Translating the Text.....	254
<i>Textual Criticism</i>	254
<i>Translation</i>	255
Analyzing the Text.....	257
<i>Genre</i>	258
<i>Syntax and Literary Structure</i>	259
<i>Vertical Reading</i>	264
<i>Horizontal Reading</i>	266
<i>Key Words</i>	268
Setting the Text	270
<i>The Sea of Galilee</i>	270
<i>The Region of Galilee</i>	271
<i>Sowing and Harvesting</i>	273
Thinking with the Text.....	275
<i>Intertextuality</i>	275

<i>Biblical Theology</i>	277
<i>Historical Theology</i>	279
<i>Systematic Theology</i>	280
Teaching the Text	280
<i>The Point of the Passage</i>	281
<i>A Homiletical Paraphrase</i>	283
<i>Homiletical Packaging</i>	285
<i>John 1:1–18</i>	288
Establishing and Translating the Text.....	288
<i>Textual Criticism</i>	288
<i>Translation</i>	291
Analyzing the Text.....	295
<i>Genre</i>	295
<i>Syntax</i>	296
<i>Structure</i>	300
<i>Key Words</i>	302
Setting the Text	304
<i>Historical and Cultural Background</i>	304
Thinking with the Text.....	306
<i>Intertextuality</i>	306
<i>Biblical Theology</i>	307
<i>Historical Theology</i>	310
<i>Systematic Theology</i>	313
Teaching the Text	314
<i>The Point of the Passage</i>	314
<i>Homiletical Packaging</i>	316
8. Selected Resources.....	323
<i>Introduction</i>	323
<i>Bibliographies</i>	324
<i>Electronic Resources</i>	325
<i>Establishing the Text</i>	326
<i>Editions of the Greek New Testament</i>	328
<i>Synopses of the Gospels</i>	329
<i>Introductory Works</i>	329
<i>Grammar and Syntax</i>	331
<i>Lexical Resources</i>	332
<i>Historical-Literary-Cultural Setting</i>	334
<i>Dictionaries and Encyclopedias</i>	336
<i>Commentary Series</i>	336
<i>Commentaries on the Gospels and Acts</i>	339
Matthew.....	339
Mark.....	341
Luke.....	341

John	342
Acts.....	343
<i>Biblical Theology</i>	344
Biblical and New Testament Theology.....	344
Matthew.....	346
Mark.....	346
Luke-Acts	347
John	348
<i>Systematic Theology</i>	349
Orthodoxy	349
Roman Catholicism.....	350
Lutheranism	350
Anglicanism	350
Reformed.....	351
Arminian.....	351
Pentecostal	351
Evangelical	352
<i>Communication</i>	352
Glossary	355



SERIES PREFACE

THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT communicated their witness to the good news of Jesus Christ using a variety of types of literature (literary genres). Those different types of literature require different principles and methods of interpretation and communication. Those principles and methods are best understood in the context of a series of handbooks that focus on the individual types of literature to which they apply. There are three basic literary genres in the New Testament: narrative, letter, and apocalypse. Other subgenres are present within those basic types of literature (e.g., parable), but narrative, letter, and apocalypse provide the framework for those subgenres.

The four volumes in this series will offer the student of Scripture the basic skills for interpreting and communicating the message of the New Testament in the context of the various literary genres. The four volumes are:

- *Interpreting the Gospels and Acts (Matthew–Acts)*
- *Interpreting the Pauline Letters (Romans–Philemon)*
- *Interpreting the General Letters (Hebrews–Jude)*
- *Interpreting Revelation and Other Apocalyptic Literature*

Each volume is designed to provide an understanding of the different types of literature in the New Testament, and to provide strategies for interpreting and preaching/teaching them. The series is intended primarily to serve as textbooks and resources for seminary and graduate-level students who have completed at least a year of introductory Greek. However, because an English translation is always provided whenever

Greek is used, the series is also accessible to readers who lack a working knowledge of Greek. For that reason, upper-level college students, seminary-trained pastors, and well-motivated lay people should also benefit from the series.

The four volumes cover the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Each volume (a) includes a summary of the major themes present in the New Testament books it covers; (b) sets methods of interpretation in the context of the New Testament books to which those methods apply; (c) goes beyond exegesis to exposition by providing strategies for communicating each type of New Testament literature; (d) provides step-by-step examples which put into practice the methods and strategies set out in each volume in the context of an overall exegetical-homiletical framework.

In order to enhance the usefulness of the series, the length, style, and organization of each volume is consistent. Each volume includes the following elements:

- *The nature of the literary genre (including important subgenres)*
- *The background of the books (historical setting)*
- *The major themes of the books*
- *Preparing to interpret the books (textual criticism, translation)*
- *Interpreting passages in the context of their genre*
- *Communicating passages in the context of their genre*
- *From exegesis to exposition (two step-by-step examples)*
- *A list of selected resources and a glossary of technical terms*

Authors are given freedom in how they title each chapter and in how best to approach the material in it. Using the same basic organization for each book in the series, however, makes it possible for readers to move easily from volume to volume and to locate specific information within each volume.

The authors in this series represent a variety of theological backgrounds and educational institutions, but each is committed to handling God's Word accurately. That commitment reflects a key element in living the Christian life: the functional authority of Scripture. Whatever theological position we might hold, we submit ourselves to the authority of the Bible and align our understanding of life and doctrine to its teaching. It is the prayer of the authors and the publisher that these handbooks will enable those who read them to study the Bible, practice its teachings, and share its truth with others for the advance of Christ's kingdom purposes.

—JOHN D. HARVEY
Series Editor



PREFACE

THE PUBLICATION OF INTERPRETING THE GOSPELS AND ACTS: AN EXEGETICAL HANDBOOK completes Kregel's four-volume set of Handbooks for New Testament Exegesis, which complements the six-volume set of Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis. I thank John Harvey and Herb Bateman at Kregel for the opportunity to contribute to a series devoted to biblical exegesis, the central passion of my professional life.

A prerequisite for doing good exegesis is realizing that it does not occur in a vacuum. Exegetes must be self-conscious of the subtle ways in which their own historicity influences their methods and conclusions. Accordingly, brief comments about my background and goals should be useful to those who exegete this book about exegesis. I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ personally during a Bible study in Romans when I was a senior in high school. My first teachers in the faith soon made sure that I received a *Scotfield Reference Bible*. When I look at that treasured Bible today, I notice that the especially worn pages in one section reveal that the Pauline corpus was my canon within the canon. My first formal studies in Bible and theology at both the undergraduate and graduate level also stressed Paul and led ultimately to a ThD dissertation on Romans 5:12–21. I came to love Paul's thought and the genre in which he expressed it, his letters. The classical dispensational theology I received early on also lionized Paul, and it tended to relegate the Gospels and Acts to the status of an appendix to the Old Testament that provided the *historical* setting for Paul's theology of grace. All this to say that I acquired my interest

in the Gospels and the other narrative books of the Bible later in my life and ministry.¹

The furor generated among evangelicals by the publication of Robert Gundry's Matthew commentary in 1982 first drew my attention to the genre of the Gospels and their *theological* message. A study trip to Israel soon afterward led me to love the land of the Bible and to resolve to understand more accurately the role played by historical geography and social history as a complement to grammatical-syntactical exegesis. Reflection on dispensationalism led me to what has become known as its "progressive" version and a greater appreciation of the theological unity of the whole Bible, centering in the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus (not Paul).² Early work on the Gospel according to Matthew showed me that my grasp of Second Temple Judaism was totally inadequate, leading me to PhD studies at Hebrew Union College. Perceptive readers will note all these influences in the pages of this book.

In 1539, when he was only thirty years old, John Calvin published his commentary on Romans. Calvin's letter to his friend Simon Grynaeus forms a sort of preface to the commentary, one that expresses Calvin's basic approach to biblical exegesis. At the beginning of the letter, Calvin says,

I remember that three years ago we had a friendly discussion about the best way of interpreting Scripture. The plan which you particularly favoured was also the one which at that time I preferred to any others. Both of us felt that *lucid brevity* constituted the particular virtue of an interpreter. Since it is almost his only task to *unfold the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to expound*, he misses the mark, or at least strays outside his limits, by the extent to which he leads his readers away from the meaning of his author.³

Calvin went on to say near the end of the letter, "It is, therefore, presumptuous and almost blasphemous to turn the meaning of Scripture

-
1. My experience was much like that of Jonathan Pennington, who candidly explains why he once preferred the straightforward doctrinal teaching in Paul's letters to the often implicit "moral of the story" in the Gospels. See *Reading the Gospels Wisely* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 36–38. Pennington's discussions of why we need the Gospels (38–49) and why they are the keystone in the archway of the biblical canon (229–58) are highly recommended.
 2. David L. Turner, "Matthew among the Dispensationalists," *JETS* 53 (2010): 697–716.
 3. John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 1. Italics added. For further discussion of Calvin's exegetical method, see T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 49–68.

around without due care, as though it were some game that we were playing.”⁴ It is my hope that these exegetical ideals—brevity, clarity, and accuracy—are furthered and modeled in this exegetical handbook.

I am grateful for the good providence of God that has brought many gifted people into my life. First and foremost, I am continually reminded of the loving and sacrificial support of my wife Beverly in all that I do, including the writing of this book during a very hectic season of our life together. I am thankful to all those who taught me Greek grammar and exegesis through the years, including George L. Lawlor, Homer A. Kent Jr., James L. Boyer, John A. Sproule, S. Lewis Johnson Jr., and Adam Kamesar. I have been blessed with the opportunity to teach the Gospels to great students in a positive, collegial setting at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. I dedicate this book to those GRTS students, especially to those who have served as my teaching assistants in recent years: Todd Frederick, Jennifer McCormick-Bridgewater, Chris McKnight, Kyle Rouse, Seth Stadel, and Leta Von Klompenberg.

—DAVID L. TURNER
Passion Week, 2018

4. Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 4.



ABBREVIATIONS

REFERENCE WORKS AND PERIODICALS

<i>ABD</i>	Freedman, D., ed. <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
<i>AJT</i>	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BDAG</i>	Danker, F. W., et al., eds. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000.
<i>BDB</i>	Brown, F., S. Driver, and C. Briggs, eds. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1906.
<i>BDF</i>	F. Blass and A. DeBrunner. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Translated and revised by R. W. Runk. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>DBSJ</i>	<i>Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal</i>
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>

Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow, <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i> (reprinted, New York: Judaica, 1992).
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., and R. Scott. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon with a Supplement</i> . Revised by H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon, 1968.
NA ^{28rev}	Barbara and Kurt Aland, et al., eds. <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> . 28th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
NIDOTTE	Willem A. Van Gemmeren, ed. <i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NIDNTTE	Moisés Silva, ed. <i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
TDNT	Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . 10 vols. Translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–72.
TheolSt	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UBS ^{5rev}	Barbara Aland, et al., eds. <i>The Greek New Testament</i> . 5th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014.
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

OLD TESTAMENT

Gen.	Genesis	Nah.	Nahum
Exod.	Exodus	Hab.	Habakkuk
Lev.	Leviticus	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Num.	Numbers	Hag.	Haggai
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Zech.	Zechariah
Josh.	Joshua	Mal.	Malachi
Judg.	Judges	Ps./Pss.	Psalms
1–2 Sam.	1–2 Samuel	Prov.	Proverbs
1–2 Kgs.	1–2 Kings	Song	Song of Solomon
Isa.	Isaiah	Eccl.	Ecclesiastes
Jer.	Jeremiah	Lam.	Lamentations

Ezek.	Ezekiel	Esth.	Esther
Hos.	Hosea	Dan.	Daniel
Obad.	Obadiah	Neh.	Nehemiah
Mic.	Micah	1–2 Chr.	1–2 Chronicles

OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

1–2–3 Macc.	1–2–3 Maccabees	Sir.	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
Bar.	Baruch	Tob.	Tobit
Jdt.	Judith	Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

NEW TESTAMENT

Matt.	Matthew	1–2 Thess.	1–2 Thessalonians
Rom.	Romans	1–2 Tim.	1–2 Timothy
1–2 Cor.	1–2 Corinthians	Phlm.	Philemon
Gal.	Galatians	Heb.	Hebrews
Eph.	Ephesians	Jas.	James
Phil.	Philippians	1–2 Peter	1–2 Peter
Col.	Colossians	Rev.	Revelation

JEWISH PSEUDEPIGRAPHIA

<i>Apoc. Abr.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch)</i>
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch)</i>
<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>Let. Aris.</i>	<i>Letter of Aristeas</i>
<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>

PHILO

<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>De vita contemplative (On the Contemplative Life)</i>
<i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum (Against Flaccus)</i>
<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Quod Omnis probus liber sit (That Every Good Person is Free)</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium (On the Embassy to Gaius)</i>
<i>Spec. 1, 2, 3, 4</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus (On the Special Laws) I, II, III, IV</i>

JOSEPHUS

<i>A. J.</i>	<i>Antiquitates judaicae (Jewish Antiquities)</i>
<i>B. J.</i>	<i>Bellum judaicum (Jewish War)</i>
<i>C. Ap.</i>	<i>Contra Apionem (Against Apion)</i>
<i>Vita</i>	<i>Life</i>

DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The customary abbreviations are used, with 1–11Q portraying the number of the Qumran cave, the number following Q portraying the number of the manuscript; superscript a, b, c, etc. multiple copies of a text in one cave. Multiple fragments of the same manuscript are enumerated f. 1, f. 2, f. 3, etc. The final numbers in an abbreviation (e.g., 5.12) refer to the column and line. Individual abbreviations follow:

1QS	<i>Serek Hayachad (1Q28, Rule of the Community)</i>
1QS ^a	<i>Serek Hayachad (1Q28^a, appendix to 1QS)</i>
4Q176	<i>4QTanhumim (comments on passages about consolation)</i>
4Q259	<i>4QRule of the Community, a partial copy of 1QS with a calendar</i>
4Q266	<i>Damascus Document (4QD^a)</i>
CD	<i>Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document</i>

MISHNAH, TALMUD, AND
RELATED RABBINIC LITERATURE

General abbreviations:

<i>m.</i>	Mishnah	<i>γ.</i>	Jerusalem Talmud
<i>t.</i>	Tosefta	<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud

Individual tractates:

<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakot</i>	<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Ketub.</i>	<i>Ketubot</i>	<i>Shabb.</i>	<i>Shabbat</i>
<i>Mak.</i>	<i>Makkot</i>	<i>Ta'an.</i>	<i>Ta'anit</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megilla</i>	<i>Yad.</i>	<i>Yadayim</i>
<i>Mid.</i>	<i>Middot</i>	<i>Yebam.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i>
<i>Neg.</i>	<i>Nega'im</i>		

Other Rabbinic Works:

S. Olam Rab. Seder Olam Rabbah

EARLY CHURCH AUTHORS

<i>2 Clem.</i>	<i>2 Clement</i> (debatably attributed to Clement of Rome)
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i> (<i>Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew</i>)
<i>Cons.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Consensu evangelistarum</i> (<i>Harmony of the Gospels</i>)
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i> (<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>)
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Doctr. chr.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> (<i>Christian Instruction</i>)
<i>Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> (<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>)
<i>Incomp. Nupt.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Incompetentibus nuptiis</i> (<i>On Adulterous Marriages</i>)
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus Haereses</i> (<i>Against Heresies</i>)
<i>Hom. Matt.</i>	Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in Matthaeum</i> (<i>Homilies on Matthew</i>)
<i>Marc.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Adversus Marcionem</i> (<i>Against Marcion</i>)
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Praep. ev.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Praeparatio evangelica</i> (<i>Preparation for the Gospel</i>)
<i>Praescr.</i>	Tertullian, <i>de Praescriptione haereticorum</i> (<i>Prescription against Heretics</i>)
<i>Quaest. ev.</i>	Augustine, <i>Quaestionum evangelicarum libri II</i>
<i>Scorp.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Scorpiace</i> (<i>Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting</i>)
<i>Serm.</i>	Augustine, <i>Sermones</i> (<i>Sermons</i>)
<i>Smyrn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrnaeans</i>
<i>Stom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromata</i> (<i>Miscellanies</i>)

NEW TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

<i>Acts Paul</i>	<i>Acts of Paul</i>
<i>Gos. Pet.</i>	<i>Gospel of Peter</i>
<i>Gos. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>

ANCIENT GRECO-ROMAN AUTHORS

<i>Cleom.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Cleomenes</i>
<i>Diog. L.</i>	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Vitae philosophorum</i> (<i>Lives of Philosophers</i>)
<i>Geogr.</i>	Strabo, <i>Geographica</i> (<i>Geography</i>)
<i>Hist. plant.</i>	Theophrastus, <i>Historia plantarum</i> (<i>Enquiry into Plants</i>)
<i>Inst.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institution oratoria</i> (<i>Institutes of Rhetoric</i>)
<i>Nat.</i>	Pliny the Elder, <i>Naturalis historia</i> (<i>Natural History</i>)

<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssea</i> (<i>Odyssey</i>)
<i>Rust.</i>	Varro, <i>De re rustica</i> (<i>On Agriculture</i>)
<i>Thuc.</i>	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>Thucydides</i>

TEXT-CRITICAL SIGLA

Abbreviations relating to the text of the Hebrew Bible are those used by and explained in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibel Gesellschaft, 1967–77), xliv–lv. Abbreviations relating to the text of the New Testament are those used by and explained in Barbara Aland, et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 5th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014).

ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

CEV	Contemporary English Version
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
JPS	The Jewish Publication Society Tanach
KJV	King James Version
LB	The Living Bible (Kenneth Taylor)
Message	The Message (Eugene Peterson)
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New Electronic Translation
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version

THE GENRE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

The Chapter at a Glance

Although other theories of Gospel genre have been promoted, it seems most likely that the Gospels and Acts are quite similar to ancient Greco-Roman *bioi*. The Gospels and Acts creatively present historical events in terms of their theological and pastoral relevance for the church. The narratives of the Gospels and Acts contain other types of literature embedded as subgenres. The Gospels and Acts must be related to the narrative of the Old Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT NARRATIVE GENRE IN GENERAL

“**GENRE**” AS AN ENGLISH LEXEME DERIVES FROM FRENCH, and in turn from the Latin *genus*. Typical glosses for the word genre include “type,” “sort,” “kind,” or “class.” Plato and Aristotle spoke of literary genre in ancient times. Today, genre theory is a vast area of scholarship as it relates to literature, let alone other communicative endeavors such as spoken discourses, prayers, dramatic performances, and film. Literary genres are abstract mental conceptions of entities one encounters empirically; situations give rise to genres. Genres entail conventional features that readers have come to expect in various situations. Discussions of genre are thus descriptive rather than prescriptive. Taxonomies vary from one theorist to another when it comes to classifying genres, super-

genres, and subgenres. Current genre theory emphasizes the social and ideological context of the process or action of writing as well as its end product or form.¹

The complexity of genre theory aside, it seems clear that the understanding of a text's genre is crucial for its interpretation. As E. D. Hirsch put it, "An interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything that he subsequently understands."² One's understanding of *what* a text means (exegesis) is to a great degree determined by one's understanding of *how* that text conveys meaning (genre). Cooperative competence in generic conventions and expectations is necessary for effective acts of literary communication; both the original author and the subsequent readers of a text need to be aware of how such a text should be interpreted, given its internal literary features.³

Here is a helpful way of construing genre's role in the interpretive process:⁴

Broad Genre
(imprecise, heuristic, open to refinement)



Intrinsic Genre
(a set or contract of expectations)



Expectations further refined by reading



Textual meaning
(reader shares semantic content intended by author)

-
1. Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151–76. For an overview of current studies, see Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Composition* (Anderson, SC: Parlor, 2010); Amy Devitt, *Writing Genres* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2008).
 2. E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 74. Plato (*Republic* 392d) and Aristotle (*Poetics* 1447a–1448a) spoke of various types of writings and the appropriate characteristics of each.
 3. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 337–38.
 4. Adapted from R. A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 39. Burridge is summarizing Hirsch, *Validity*, 80–81.

VARIOUS VIEWS OF GOSPEL GENRE

Literary scholars present widely diverging approaches to the question of genre. Views range from the idea that every communicative textual act represents its own genre (*sui generis*) to the approach that insists that all communicative acts are intertextual: Each must of necessity be understood in light of its similarities and differences from other textual communications.⁵ Those who believe the biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve might be inclined to the latter approach, viewing human creation in God's image as enabling effective cooperative communication between God and humans. Such communication is hampered by sin after humans rebel against God (Gen. 3), yet it is still possible by the grace of God.

The question of the genre or genres of the Gospels and Acts has been debated for centuries. Currently the view that the Gospels are to be related to Greco-Roman biographies (βίαι) has been accepted by many scholars, but through the history of New Testament interpretation many views have surfaced, including the following more prominent ones:

Sui Generis

The view that the uniqueness of the person, teaching, and redemptive work of Jesus Christ necessitates a new and unique kind of literature, the Gospels, is rather common.⁶ Kee described Mark as a unique literary creation, "a new genre of literature for which, as a whole, there was no precedent."⁷ Among the problems with the *sui generis* view is the generic resemblance of the Gospels to other ancient forms of literature, including the narratives of the Hebrew Bible and Greco-Roman biographies. Perhaps the most serious problem with the view is linguistic: the necessary interrelatedness of literary genres, what E. D. Hirsch called "the genre-bound character of understanding."⁸ A unique genre cannot be imagined by an author, and even if it could be imagined, it would be impossible for a reader to understand it. In the end the *sui generis* view is a *non sequitur*, since unique subject matter does not logically require its own unique communicative genre.

5. E. D. Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976), 69–71.

6. Robert Guelich, "The Gospel Genre," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 173–208.

7. H. C. Kee, *Jesus in History: An Approach to the Study of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, 1977), 139.

8. Hirsch, *Validity*, 76.

Loose Collections of Oral Traditions

Some who held the *sui generis* view understood the Gospels to be relatively random collections of smaller units of orally transmitted traditions or snippets of written traditions about Jesus. Such vignettes would be arranged somewhat loosely with little or no attention to literary concerns. K. L. Schmidt influentially distinguished the Gospels as naively assembled folk tales (*Kleinliteratur*) from compositions with literary sophistication (*Hochliteratur*).⁹ Rudolf Bultmann spoke of the Gospels as *Kleinliteratur* that developed from Christian proclamation. Mark as the first Gospel began a unique literary phenomenon, one so dominated by Christian faith that the Gospels are only with difficulty described as a genre at all.¹⁰ The onset of redaction critical studies of the Gospels, which demonstrated the creative editorial work of the respective evangelists, showed that the Gospels were truly literary documents. The rise of narrative criticism only confirmed what redaction criticism had begun to show. The results of these methods led most scholars to abandon the view that the Gospels were merely loose collections of Jesus traditions.

Aretalogies

Ancient accounts of the exploits and miracles of a heroic divine-human figure (θεῖος ἀνὴρ) are known as aretalogical literature. In such accounts, the protagonist has been imbued with extraordinary virtue (ἀρετή) and manifests divine power through miracles. In ancient times, such works were found in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the wider Greco-Roman world. They included such details as the hero's conspicuous birth, asceticism, wisdom, trials, and martyrdom. A commonly discussed aretalogy is Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (c. A.D. 225), a work about a philosopher and teacher who flourished in the late first and early second centuries. Morton Smith and other scholars attempted to understand the Gospels as dependent on such works, but several critiqued the association of the two.¹¹ Clearly the miracles of Jesus were an important part of the Gospels' witness to Jesus, and no

9. K. L. Schmidt, "Die Stellung der Evangelien in der allgemeinen Literaturgeschichte," (1923), reprinted as *The Place of the Gospels in the General History of Literature*, trans. B. R. McCane (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 24, 27, 68.

10. Rudolph Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), 371–74; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1952), 1.86.

11. See e.g., Morton Smith, "Prolegomenon to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, the Gospels, and Jesus," *JBL* 90 (1971): 174–99, and the critique by H. C. Kee, "Aretalogy and Gospel," *JBL* 92 (1973): 402–22.

doubt some early readers of the Gospels were familiar with aretalogical literature, but there is much debate over what constitutes aretalogy as a genre and whether such a genre actually existed, let alone whether this putative genre served as a model for the Gospels.

Midrash

The term *midrash* comes from מִדְרָשׁ, which describes seeking or asking. It has come to refer to a wide spectrum of textual interpretation.¹² Jewish *midrashim* are typically categorized as *halakhic* (close textual exegesis of details in Torah texts) and *haggadic* (a homily based on a biblical text or figure).¹³ The origins of midrash are perhaps as early as the Chronicler's reworking of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. In terms of the genre of the Gospels, the haggadic or homiletical *midrashim* are most relevant.

Those who attempt to connect the Gospels with midrash draw an analogy between the imaginative retelling of biblical stories in Jewish midrash and the way in which the Gospels allude to the OT, as well as the way in which (assuming Markan priority) Matthew and Luke use Mark in composing their respective narratives. Similarity of *method*, however, even if it is granted, does not amount to identity of *genre*. The Gospels are not as a whole interpretations or elaborations of the OT.¹⁴ Certain scholars argued, however, that individual pericopes within the Gospels were created without historical basis. Goulder argued that pericopes were creatively composed as a lectionary to correspond to the three-year cycle of OT texts read in the synagogue.¹⁵ Gundry held that Matthew created certain pericopes as counterparts to stories found in Mark or Luke. For example, he understood the story of the magi (Matt. 2:1–12) as a fictional embellishment of Luke's narrative of the angelic annunciation to the shepherds (Luke 2:8–20).¹⁶ As an evangelical with a

12. Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature*, reprinted (New York: Judaica, 1992), s.v. מִדְרָשׁ (325) and s.v. מִדְרָשׁ (735–36).

13. H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 254–68. Jacob Neusner's functional taxonomy differs in that he views midrash as prophecy, paraphrase, or parable. See his *What Is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). Neusner wryly comments that the word midrash “presently stands for pretty much anything any Jew in antiquity did in reading and interpreting Scripture” (xii).

14. Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 77–78.

15. M. D. Goulder, *The Evangelists' Calendar* (London: SPCK, 1978); Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974). See the response by Leon Morris, “The Gospels and the Jewish Lectionaries,” in *Gospel Perspectives III: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, eds. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 129–56.

16. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Narrative and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 26–31. Gundry supported his approach in a theological postscript (623–

high view of Scripture, Gundry argued that Matthew's audience would have known which parts of Matthew were rooted in historical tradition and which were midrashic embellishments. This contention, however, was unproven, if not unprovable. Gundry's analogy between Jewish midrash on ancient canonical texts and Matthew's use of recent synoptic tradition was not widely persuasive.¹⁷

Quasi-Old Testament Narratives

Since the authors of the Gospels were familiar with the Old Testament (OT) and viewed Jesus as its fulfillment, it seems plausible that the Gospel narratives would resemble the OT narratives. Further, since the authors of the Gospels viewed Jesus as fulfilling in some sense the roles of Moses and the prophets, it would not be surprising if their accounts of Jesus resembled OT accounts of prophetic figures. Various scholars have written to demonstrate such similarities.¹⁸ Although some OT books contain sections that narrate the lives of noteworthy individuals, there are no clear parallels to the lengthy Gospel narratives as entire compositions wholly devoted to the words and deeds of Jesus.

Apostolic Recollections

The oral testimony of eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται) and early ministers (ὑπηρέται) of Jesus traditions was important to the author of the Gospel according to Luke 1:2. The early church likewise highly valued such sources. According to Eusebius (c. A.D. 325), Papias (c. A.D. 125) placed higher value on testimony received from contemporaries of Jesus's apostles than from books (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.4).¹⁹

40) and responded to critics in the preface of his second edition, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), xix–xxx.

17. A great deal of debate arose in response to Gundry's views, especially in evangelical circles. See e.g., David L. Turner, "Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism, and the Current Inerrancy Crisis," *GTJ* 4 (1983): 263–88; Turner, "Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism, and Inerrancy: The Debate Continues," *GTJ* 5 (1984): 37–45. See also R. T. France, "Jewish Historiography, Midrash, and the Gospels," in *Gospel Perspectives III*, 99–127.
18. See e.g., Meredith G. Kline, "The Old Testament Origins of Gospel Genre," *WTJ* 38 (1975): 1–27. One might add that the biographical material in rabbinic sources can arguably be rooted alongside the Gospels in the OT narratives. On this view see Philip Alexander, "Rabbinic Biography and the Biography of Jesus," in *Synoptic Studies: The Ampleforth Conferences of 1982 and 1983*, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 19–50. Burridge supplies literary and Christological reasons for the absence of anything resembling a sustained biography of any of the esteemed rabbinic sages (*What Are the Gospels?* 331–40).
19. In this text Papias spoke of such traditors as those who had "followed" the presbyters (παρηκολουθηκώς τις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις) and of their testimony as a living and abiding

Eusebius speaks of the Gospels according to Matthew and John as recollections (ὑπομνήματα) written down only after attention was first given to preaching and teaching (*Hist. eccl.* 3.34.5). Similarly Eusebius cites Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180) to the effect that Mark as Peter's interpreter composed his Gospel from Peter's preaching, and Luke as Paul's companion recorded Paul's preaching in Acts (*Hist. eccl.* 5.8.3). The oral transmission of Jesus's words and deeds has been much discussed of late, with emphasis on both original eyewitness testimony and subsequent community control of Jesus traditions.²⁰ Scholars tend to distinguish between an earlier oral period and a later period when written Gospels were produced, but recently Walton and Sandy have argued that oral and written Gospels existed side by side into the second century.²¹

Greco-Roman Biographies

Although previous scholars had drawn attention to the similarities between the Gospels and Greco-Roman biographies,²² the work of R. A. Burridge has more recently brought this view into near consensus. Burridge compares the Gospels to Greco-Roman biographies, including works earlier than the NT by Xenophon and Isocrates (fourth century B.C.) and works later than the NT by Tacitus and Plutarch. His study compares four generic features of each:

1. Opening features (whether there is a title, nature of the prologue or preface)
2. Subject (how the protagonist is portrayed, verbal subjects, allocation of space)

voice (τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης). See Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. with ET by K. Lake (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 293.

20. Kenneth Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Themelios* 20 (1995): 4–11; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).
21. John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 241–47.
22. See e.g., Clyde Votaw, "The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies," *AJT* 19 (1915): 45–73, 217–49, reprint *The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies in the Graeco-Roman World*, introduction by J. Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970); Philip Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Charles A. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); Talbert, "The Gospel and The Gospels," in *Interpreting the Gospels*, ed. James L. Mays (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 14–26; Lawrence M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel* (London: Routledge, 1997).

3. External features (mode of presentation, length, structure, scale, literary units)
4. Internal features (style, tone, quality, content, social setting, purpose)²³

Burridge concludes that the similarity of all four Gospels to ancient biographies demonstrates that they should be viewed as a sub-genre, βίοι Ἰησοῦ, that has affinities with βίοι of ancient philosophers. The differences between the four Gospels are not generic; all four Gospels resemble each other sufficiently to view them as of one genre. Mark represents the initial stage of the subgenre, with Matthew and Luke as a second stage adding infancy narratives and clearer structure. John with its emphasis on Jesus's discourses and dialogues may also be viewed as part of this second stage. Certain of the noncanonical "gospels" (e.g., the unpreserved "Jewish-Christian" gospels of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites) represent a third stage, while others that lack narrative (e.g., the *Gospel of Thomas*) represent another genre altogether.²⁴

One may grant the impact of the OT narratives on the way the respective evangelists wrote their Gospels. It is also important to note the crucial role played by eyewitnesses and community **tradents** in passing on reliable testimony of Jesus's words and deeds. Yet as ancient *written* literature, the Gospels should be viewed as βίοι Ἰησοῦ. Others before Burridge argued for this view, and his refinement of the view has merited generally positive reviews. The biographical nature of the Gospels will be assumed in this handbook.

The Genre of Acts

Acts presents generic complexities that continue to divide scholarly opinion. The intentional pairing of Acts with Luke implies some sort of generic unity or at least compatibility of the two books. Their respective plots, points of view, and theological themes are closely related. Yet the books circulated separately, and each can be understood as a discrete composition in its own right. Some scholars have viewed Acts along with Luke as βίος, yet a greater number take it as a history or monograph.²⁵ Burridge acknowledges that Acts is similar to the

23. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 105–232.

24. *Ibid.*, 240–47.

25. Craig Keener explores at some length various views of the genre of Acts, including travel narrative, biography, novel, and epic. He concludes that Acts is a work of ancient historiography. See *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012–15),

Gospels in certain ways, but also notes how Acts focuses on more than one individual and covers a wider scene.²⁶ On the other hand, it seems clear that the internal linkage of the two books renders any generic differences to secondary importance. Acts presents the sequential exploits of the followers of Jesus, the subject of the Third Gospel's βίος. Acts is a quasi-biography of the church, a corporate protagonist in literary terms. In a theological sense, Acts presents the ongoing βίος of Jesus, who from heaven sends the Spirit to empower his followers, just as the Father had empowered him at his baptism. As Luke's Gospel presented what Jesus empowered by the Spirit *began* to do and teach (Acts 1:1), so Luke's Acts presents what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through his Spirit-empowered followers, the church. "The conjunction of the Gospel and Acts in a single work does at least suggest a biographic emphasis in much of the larger historic project."²⁷

Relating the Historical, Literary, and Theological Features of the Gospels and Acts

Scholars who view the Gospels as imaginative documents produced to meet the later church's needs rather than to transmit historically reliable Jesus traditions are featured from time to time in popular news accounts. Such scholars think the Gospel stories tend to reflect the situations and controversies of the post-A.D. 70 church rather than the historical Jesus. At the opposite end of the theological spectrum, conservative evangelicals have at times been reluctant to view the Gospels as theologically motivated, because of apologetic concerns over the historicity of the Gospel traditions. Evangelicals have rightly responded in defense of the historical reliability of the Gospels,²⁸ but stressing historicity alone may diminish the theological import of the Gospels.

Others have neglected the theological witness of the Gospels and derived theology from the epistles of the NT, especially those of Paul. This history vs. theology dichotomy is false, whether in a conservative de-theologizing context or in a liberal de-historicizing context. The Gospels narrate what really happened but do so for theological and pas-

1.51–89. David Aune took a similar view in *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 77–11, 116–41.

26. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 237–39.

27. Keener, *Acts*, 1.61. For additional discussion on the genre of Acts as it relates to Hellenistic literature, see Todd C. Penner and Carolyn Vander Stichele, eds., *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003); Thomas E. Phillips, "The Genre of Acts: Moving toward a Consensus," in *Acts within Diverse Frames of Reference* (Atlanta: Mercer, 2009), 46–77.

28. E.g., Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*; Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001).

toral reasons. According to Luke's prologue, Luke did careful research in order to ascertain the reliability of oral and written traditions so that Theophilus might be taught reliable truths about Jesus. If one may extrapolate from Luke to the Gospels in general, their procedure was to transmit the Jesus traditions they had received with a view to meeting the needs of the church, which included the historical basis of faith in Christ.

The Gospels are not comprehensive biographies or exhaustive histories of Jesus. A perusal of any Gospel synopsis or harmony dispels that notion. The Gospels are theological interpretations of selected traditions that the authors accepted as reliable accounts of historical events that occurred during the life and ministry of Jesus. Historical fidelity leads to the overall continuity in the Synoptic Gospels' accounts. Literary creativity and theological selectivity account for the differences between the accounts. If John 20:30–31 provides a model, the theological purposes of the evangelists guided their editing of tradition, leading to literary narratives, not historical chronicles. Their purpose was not to satisfy intellectual curiosity by compiling historical data but to disciple the church by bringing selected episodes from the life of Jesus to bear on the church's needs. The Gospels continue to teach the church today by narrating reliable words and deeds of Jesus. The Gospel authors faithfully present story as history and creatively interpret history as story.²⁹

EMBEDDED GENRES

The narratives found in the Gospels and Acts contain examples of several other conventional genres. Such embedded genres (or sub-genres) include parables, apocalyptic, discourses or speeches, psalms, wisdom, and letters. Before considering these embedded genres it is also appropriate to look into two other related matters that are basic to understanding the Gospels.³⁰

Prosaic and Poetic Language

One of the most basic ways of speaking about language and discourse is to distinguish between prose and poetry or, more broadly, between prosaic and poetic language. Distinguishing between the two is not primarily a matter of whether there are formal features such as meter and rhyme. Theories vary, and the difference may not be hard and fast, but a key point is the extent to which vivid images occur. Such images are drawn from the physical world shared by the author and readers,

29. Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000).

30. Chapter 2 will include discussion of form-critical categories (e.g., pronouncement stories, conflict stories, miracle stories) that describe Jesus-stories that circulated orally.

and influence readers to supplement their rational capacity with their imaginations. Aristotle thought that poetic imagery engaged common people and made learning more enjoyable to them (*Poetics* 4.1). Even the most bland, prosaic discourse will eventually use picturesque speech or figurative language to make a point. Commonly prose includes metaphorical language in which an abstract idea is compared to a concrete image. In many literary genres, including narrative, readers extend to authors the freedom to write with poetic license

For the most part, narratives in general and the Gospels in particular are written in expository, linear prose. Poetic “flashes,” however, heighten the prose when the authors utilize word pictures, perhaps better described as picture-words. Students of the Gospels will do well to read with alertness and sensitivity to such poetic flourishes. The following surveys commonly encountered figures from the standpoint of the logic of the play between the words:

- Comparison: A *metaphor* describes one entity in terms of another (Matt. 5:14; 7:6; Mark 1:17; John 10:7, 11). A *simile* does so by using “like” or “as” (Matt. 3:16; Mark 6:34; Luke 11:44; John 15:6).
- Substitution: *Metonymy* describes an object by using something closely associated with it (Matt. 16:19; Luke 16:29). *Synechdoche* does so by substituting a part for the whole or *vice versa* (Matt. 6:21; 8:20; 16:17).
- Understatement: *Euphemism* uses subtle language for something that is harsh or profane (Luke 1:34; John 11:11). *Litotes* or *meiosis* uses a double negative to understate the corresponding positive idea (Acts 1:5; 20:12; 21:39; 27:14).
- Overstatement: *Hyperbole* speaks with intentional exaggeration to make the point strongly (Matt. 5:29; 7:3–5; 19:24; 23:24; John 21:25). *Personification* overstates the capacity of inanimate objects by attributing human characteristics to them (Matt. 6:24; 11:19; Luke 19:40). *Apostrophe* directly addresses such objects as if they were human (Matt. 23:37; Mark 11:14).
- Interrogation: *Rhetorical questions* are asked not to acquire answers but to invite the reader to join the discourse (Matt. 21:40; Mark 3:23; 8:37; Luke 15:4; John 11:9).
- Opaqueness: Occasionally writers or speakers intend to be mysterious or difficult to understand (Mark 4:11; John 6:52–65).
- Reversal: Through *irony* and *sarcasm* what is apparently meant turns out to be the opposite of what is really intended (Matt. 22:15–16; 23:32; 27:29; Mark 7:9).³¹

31. Thorough hermeneutics textbooks treat the distinction between prose and poetry. On biblical imagery see Leland Ryken, et al. eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove,

Intertextuality

The OT is the seminal text for the NT. It is apparent from even a casual reading of the Gospels that they regularly refer to the OT in various ways in order to ground their narratives in the larger biblical metanarrative of the Bible. All four Gospels connect with the meta-narrative in their first chapters. Apart from the history of Israel, with its covenants and prophetic promises, the Gospels would be unintelligible. Competence in working with the various ways the authors of the Gospels embed the OT in their narratives is essential.³²

Richard Hays provides a simple yet helpful summary of the spectrum of the use of the OT in the Gospels, whether overt (quotations), implicit (allusions), or faint (echoes).³³ Quotations are often introduced by an introductory formula (e.g., “as it is written,” or “in order that it might be fulfilled”) and involve a complete OT clause. Allusions do not use introductory formulas and contain less of the OT, often just a phrase or an explicit reference to a key person, place, or event. Echoes are even less clear and therefore are more subjective and debatable. Echoes may involve subtleties of wording or phraseology that suggest analogies or other similarities between the OT and NT characters, contexts, or events.

Identifying intertextual references is a matter of reading the NT alertly with knowledge of the OT. English study Bibles will supply marginal notes that point to intertextual references in both the OT and NT. Both editions of the Greek NT commonly used in academic contexts, the United Bible Societies’ edition and the Nestle–Aland edition, provide marginal notes as well as comprehensive tables of intertextual relationships. Beale writes helpfully on the basic issues and complexities involved in the NT use of the OT.³⁴ The following points summarize the nine-step method he suggests for studying this material:

IL: InterVarsity, 1998). The classic work of E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech in the Bible*, was first published in 1898 and has been reprinted many times.

32. One way to determine the credibility of commentaries and other resources for the study of the Gospels is to examine the degree of their awareness and the skill of their treatment of intertextuality. An indispensable resource for this material is G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).
33. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 10–13. In this work Hays explains and advocates a “figural reading” of the OT in light of the gospel of Jesus. This approach is sometimes described as reading the Bible backwards to discern how the OT narrative, with its characters, institutions, and events, anticipates or prefigures the NT. The approach appears to be similar to what has traditionally been called typological hermeneutics.
34. G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 1–40.

- Identify the OT passage and determine whether it is a quotation or allusion.
- Analyze the broad NT context in which the OT reference occurs, as well as the broad and immediate context of the OT reference itself.
- Survey how the OT text was understood in Second Temple and later Jewish writings and compare that to the NT use.
- Carefully note the textual differences, including variant readings, between all the examples of the OT reference in the Greek NT, the Hebrew Masoretic text, the LXX, the DSS, the Targums, and the ancient Jewish literature.
- Analyze the text form used by the NT author and why it likely was chosen, as well as the NT author's hermeneutical approach to the OT, the theological point being made, and the way in which the usage functions rhetorically.³⁵

Parables

Parables are perhaps the most familiar of the genres embedded in the Gospels. Aristotle described parables as realistic fictional comparisons, as opposed to fables, which he viewed as unrealistic or impossible (*Rhetoric* 2.20). Typically defined in literary terms as extended metaphors, they have been aptly described in countless Sunday schools as “earthly stories with heavenly meanings.” Snodgrass’s term “stories with intent” is succinct and helpful.³⁶ The two parts of the definitions above imply two basic qualities of parables—as *earthly* stories they are *realistic* and as stories intended to convey *heavenly* meaning they are *symbolic*. Parables vary in length, but even the shorter ones imply a comparative story or narrative that furthers the author’s purpose. In the OT one encounters parabolic texts occasionally; Isaiah’s song of the vineyard is used by Jesus as a springboard for the parable of the wicked tenant farmers (Isa. 5:1–2/Matt. 21:33; cf. Judg. 9:7–15; 2 Sam. 12:1–4; 2 Kgs. 14:9; Isa. 28:23–29; Ezek. 19:1–14; 31:2–9). The word *mas̥hal* (מָשָׁל) is commonly used for riddles and proverbs; less frequently it introduces a parabolic text (e.g., Ezek. 17:2–8). Rabbinical writings from times after the NT also commonly use parables to explain the Torah and to teach wisdom.³⁷

35. Beale, *Handbook*, 41–54, 133–48.

36. Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

37. See e.g., Gary Porton, “The Parable in the Hebrew Bible and in Rabbinic Literature,” in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine, et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 206–21; Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 55–128.

In the Gospels, Jesus frequently used parables to explain various aspects of the kingdom of God. The word παραβολή occurs forty-six times in the Gospels, usually referring to Jesus's parabolic teaching.³⁸ His parables are not always explicitly called parables in their immediate contexts (e.g., Matt. 11:16; 18:12; 20:16; 21:28; 25:1, 14). Parables are often introduced with the formula "the kingdom is like . . ."³⁹ Parables are fictional, yet apart from occasional hyperboles they are true to the life of first-century Israel. Blomberg has shown that the distinction attempted by some biblical scholars to distinguish rigidly between parables and allegories is misguided.⁴⁰ As will be seen below, the question of genre is crucial for interpretation.

Depending on how a few difficult texts are understood, there are around thirty parables in the Gospels. They are listed below based on where they occur:

- *Parables of the Triple Tradition* (4)
 1. The Sower (Matt. 13:3–23; Mark 4:1–20; Luke 8:5–15; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 9)
 2. The Mustard Seed (Matt. 13:31–32; Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 20)
 3. The Wicked Tenants (Matt. 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–11; Luke 20:9–18; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 65)
 4. The Budding Fig Tree (Matt. 24:32–36; Mark 13:28–32; Luke 21:29–33)
- *Parables of Matthew and Luke* (6)
 5. The Children in the Market (Matt. 11:16–17; Luke 7:31–32)
 6. The Leaven (Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20–21; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 96)
 7. The Lost Sheep (Matt. 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–7; *Gos. Thom.* 107)
 8. The Wedding Feast (Matt. 22:1–14; Luke 14:15–24; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 64)
 9. The Head of the House and the Thief (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 21, 103)
 10. The Steward (Matt. 24:45–51; Luke 12:42–48)

38. At times παραβολή has a different nuance, as in Luke 4:23. Cf. Heb. 9:9; 11:19.

39. See Matt. 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1; Mark 4:30; Luke 13:18, 20. Cf. other " . . . is like . . ." parabolic formulas in Matt. 7:24, 26; 11:16–17; Luke 7:31–32; 12:36.

40. Craig S. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 33–81; Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 145–50, 199–203.

- *Parables of Matthew Alone* (9)
 11. The Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24–30; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 57)
 12. The Hidden Treasure (Matt. 13:44; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 109)
 13. The Pearl (Matt. 13:45–46; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 76)
 14. The Net (Matt. 13:47–50; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 8)
 15. The Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:23–35)
 16. The Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1–16)
 17. The Two Sons (Matt. 21:28–31)
 18. The Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1–12)
 19. The Talents (Matt. 25:14–30)
- *Parables of Luke Alone* (8)
 20. The Two Debtors (Luke 7:41–42)
 21. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37)
 22. The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 63)
 23. The Alert Slaves (Luke 12:36–38)
 24. The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)
 25. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32)
 26. The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–8)
 27. The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31)
- *Parables of Mark Alone* (2)
 28. The Quickly Growing Seed (Mark 4:26–29)
 29. The Master's Journey (Mark 13:34–36)
- *Parables of John Alone*⁴¹
 30. The Good Shepherd (John 10:1–5)
 31. The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1–6)
 32. The Woman in Labor (John 16:21)

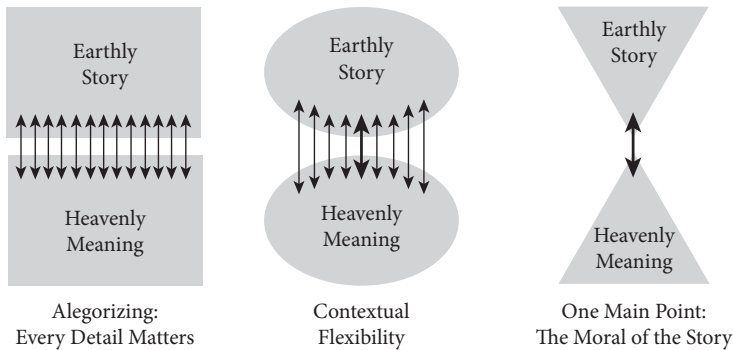
When it comes to interpreting parables, the history of the church is instructive.⁴² In the early church, parables were often interpreted in an atomized fashion, with each detail understood spiritually with inadequate attention to the context. A commonly cited example of this tendency is Augustine's exegesis of the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37. Ignoring the contextual setting of the parable as

41. Scholars debate to what degree *παροιμία* in John (10:6; 16:25, 29; cf. 2 Peter 2:22) overlaps with *παραβολή* in the synoptics, and whether John's figurative stories are to be linked with the synoptic parables. Other texts in John that arguably might be included in the list above include 3:8, 29; 4:35–38; 8:35; 11:9–10; 12:24.

42. See especially Warren S. Kissinger, *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow/ATLA, 1979).

Jesus's answer to a self-aggrandizing lawyer (Luke 10:24–29, 36–37), Augustine understood the parable as an extended metaphor of redemptive history, with Adam falling from celestial glory into the clutches of the devil and his angels, who strip him of his immortality. The religion of the OT cannot help Adam, but Jesus comes along, binds up Adam's sin-induced wounds, pours baptismal grace on him, exhorts him to spiritual fervency, seats him on faith in the incarnation, and ultimately brings him to Paul and the church for safekeeping until he returns.⁴³

Three Ways of Interpreting Parables



Around the turn of the twentieth century Adolf Jülicher (1857–1938) took a diametrically opposite view, arguing for a position that is still commonly held today, that parables were intended to convey only one main point that was embodied in a single central correspondence between the parable and the kingdom.⁴⁴ Yet context renders this view dubious just as it did the atomizing interpretations commonly found in the early church. While the Gospels do not contain Jesus's interpretation for many of his parables, some are interpreted by him with attention to detail (e.g., Matt. 13:36–43, 49–50 and parallels) and others with a simple generalizing conclusion (e.g., Matt. 24:33, 42, 44; 25:13). These differing contextual indicators show that the interpretation of parables must be sensitive to the context and be open to a spectrum of correspondences ranging from one “big idea” or “moral” to multiple correspondences between the story and kingdom realities, as illustrated below.

43. Augustine, *Quaest. ev.* 2.19; *Serm.* 69.7; 81.6

44. Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesus* 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1888, 1899).

Apocalyptic

Describing apocalyptic. The term “apocalyptic” comes from Greek lexemes referring to the unveiling or disclosure of divine secrets, often pertaining to the future.⁴⁵ The term “apocalypticism” describes a worldview that is focused on such disclosure. The worldview thrives when God’s people are oppressed and have no human relief in sight. Prophetic admonition has been rejected and reform seems impossible. In such a dualistic view of history, hope is focused solely on God’s promise to some day reward the faithful and punish their oppressors in cataclysmic fashion. A great deal of literature, both canonical and noncanonical, portrays this worldview. Frequently, such literature reveals the future through symbolic dreams or visions experienced by one of the faithful. Often the seer is confused by the revelation, but God sends an angel to explain the meaning. In the Bible, apocalyptic is most clearly seen in Daniel and in Revelation, which describes itself as an apocalypse (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; Rev. 1:1). These biblical books are similar to many outside the canon, such as *1, 2, and 3 Enoch*, *2 Esdras* (*4 Ezra*), *2 Baruch*, *Testament of Levi*, and various other apocalypses attributed to biblical figures.⁴⁶

There is an ongoing debate over the relationship between prophecy and apocalyptic. Broadly speaking, the biblical prophets confronted Israel about its disobedience to the law of Moses after they received verbal oracles from God. The same prophets occasionally also received apocalyptic visions that dealt not with present ethical reform but with ultimate judgment and renewal (e.g., Isa. 24–27, 34–35; Ezek. 38–48; Hag. 2:1–9; Zech. 1–6). Apocalyptic visions in the biblical prophets are one of the ways the divine message was conveyed to God’s people. In other words, apocalyptic is one of several ways that prophecy was conveyed.⁴⁷ Daniel, whose visions are apocalyptic in nature, is called a prophet by Jesus (Matt. 24:15). The author of the NT book

45. The verb ἀποκαλύπτω occurs twenty-six times in the NT. The noun ἀποκάλυψις occurs eighteen times. Both words refer at times to revelation in a more general or non-eschatological sense (Matt. 11:25, 27; Luke 2:32; Eph. 1:17). At other times both describe an end-time revelation of God in which Jesus as Son of Man brings reversal to the earth (Luke 17:30; 2 Thess. 1:7; cf. Dan. 7:13), blessing the oppressed people of God and humbling their enemies (Rev. 1:1).

46. A standard collection of such books, along with those broadly categorized as apocrypha, is James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983). This helpful work contains introductions, annotations, and English translations of the material by numerous specialists.

47. Years ago George Ladd spoke to the question of the relationship of prophecy to apocalyptic, and his ideas are still helpful. See “Why Not Prophetic–Apocalyptic,” *JBL* 76 (1957): 192–200.

of Revelation first calls it an apocalypse (1:1) and then speaks of it in terms of prophecy afterward (1:3; 10:11; 22:7, 9–10, 18–19).

There are embedded sections of the NT that exhibit *some* of the characteristics of apocalyptic that are found in books that are otherwise of a different genre. Passages in Paul such as 1 Thessalonians 4–5, 2 Thessalonians 2, and 1 Corinthians 15:50–57 are examples of embedded apocalyptic. In the Gospels, one can point to the quotations in Mark 1:2–3 of Malachi and Isaiah regarding the restoration of Israel in preparation for the coming one as mildly apocalyptic. John the Baptist’s explicit warnings of fiery judgment on sinners are apocalyptically oriented (Matt. 3:7–12; Luke 3:9), as is Jesus’s interpretation of parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:37–43). The most obvious apocalyptic passage in the Gospels is Jesus’s Olivet or eschatological discourse, found in Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. The basic content of this discourse appears below in synopsis form.

Segment Synopsis of the Olivet Discourse			
Content	Matthew	Mark	Luke
1. Setting: Jesus leaves the temple.	24:1–3	13:1–4	21:5–7
2. Beginning of birth pains: coming wars, persecution, apostasy, require perseverance.	24:4–14	13:5–13	21:8–19
3. Abomination of desolation: temple sacrilege signals great tribulation.	24:15–28	13:14–23	21:20–24
4. Coming of the Son of Man: cosmic signs accompany the gathering of the elect.	24:29–31	13:24–27	21:25–27
5. Lesson of the fig tree: signs precede the coming of the Son of Man.	24:32–41	13:28–32	21:28–33
6. Thief in the night: the necessity of alertness.	24:42–44	13:33–37	21:34–36
7. Parable of the servant: be ready to meet the master sooner than expected.	24:45–51		
8. Parable of ten virgins: the bridegroom may delay his arrival.	25:1–13		
9. Parable of the talents: faithful stewardship of the master’s resources	25:14–30		
10. Judgment of the nations: compassionate treatment of Jesus’s little brothers and sisters	25:31–46		

Understanding the genre of apocalyptic literature is essential for its interpretation. This literature is intended to provide hope for the persecuted people of God, not a timetable of future events for curious speculators. Interpreting apocalyptic requires familiarity with the ancient agrarian world of the Bible, because that world—not the modern technological world—is the source of the symbols encountered. Self-awareness is also crucial, because one’s view of difficult apocalyptic texts will unavoidably be influenced by one’s prior view of eschatology.⁴⁸ When it comes to Jesus’s eschatological discourse in Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, one should note that its impetus was the disciples’ concern about the future of the temple because of Jesus’s ominous prophecy (Matt. 23:27–39; 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6). Whatever one believes about this passage’s teaching about yet-future events, Jesus was speaking about events that would come in the near future—the temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The question is whether the events of A.D. 70 complete the prophecy.⁴⁹

Wisdom

Definitions of biblical wisdom tend to agree that wisdom is practical intelligence enabling skillful navigation of the complexities of life in a fallen world. Yet wisdom is difficult to classify formally as a *literary* genre. The OT books generally classified as “wisdom books” are quite different, ranging from the compressed pithiness of Proverbs to the gritty realism of Ecclesiastes to the complicated narrative of Job, whose battered protagonist asks in his response to Bildad:

But where can wisdom be found?
 Where does understanding dwell?
 No mortal comprehends its worth;
 it cannot be found in the land of the living.
 (Job 28:12–13, NIV)

After explaining that wisdom *cannot* be found on earth, Job points to its one and only source:

God understands the way to it
 and he alone knows where it dwells. (Job 28:23, NIV)

48. For a thorough discussion of the genre and interpretation of apocalyptic, see C. Marvin Pate, *Interpreting Revelation and Other Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016).

49. I have summarized various views of the future in Matthew 24 and argued for an approach that understands the A.D. 70 destruction of the temple as prefiguring an ultimate time of tribulation in *Matthew*, Baker Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2008), 565–611.

Despite the pessimism found near the beginning of Ecclesiastes,

I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind! I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (1:13–14, NIV)

at the end of the book the Teacher counsels his readers,

Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.
For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.
(12:13–14, NIV)

Early in the book of Proverbs an antithetical poetic strophe bluntly states the two alternatives regarding wisdom:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:7,
NIV)

It seems then that wisdom is more of a God-centered mindset than a formal type of book, and that books of whatever sort that focus on this elusive mindset are “wisdom books.”

In the Gospels, Jesus grows in wisdom as a youth (Luke 2:40, 52), and later during his ministry he contrasts proud human “wisdom” with humble reception of his kingdom (Matt. 11:25). Later Paul and James alike affirm a similar contrast between what seems wise to humans (cf. Prov. 14:12) and what is truly wise in God’s sight (1 Cor. 1:18–31; Jas. 1:5; 3:13–18). Paul’s comment that wisdom is centered in Jesus (1 Cor. 1:24) is based in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus’s fellow residents of Nazareth cannot understand how he got his wisdom (Matt. 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:22), a wisdom that Jesus describes as being greater than the legendary wisdom of Solomon (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31). The identification of Jesus and God’s wisdom is strikingly shown when one compares Jesus’s words in Matthew, “I am sending you prophets” (23:34) with their parallel in Luke “the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send you prophets’” (11:49). Of course, in Matthew’s version of this text Jesus speaks not only of sending prophets but also of sending wise people, showing that his wisdom is carried on by his followers (cf. Luke 21:15).

The Gospel texts that most clearly tie into the OT wisdom tradition are the proverbial or aphoristic sayings of Jesus. As a literary form, proverbs are the distillation of many experiences into a few words. Such sayings induce wisdom because they succinctly present lessons from the wise observation of life. The following are among the proverbial statements of Jesus, whose wisdom is greater than that of Solomon:

- “People cannot serve two masters,
for they will either hate the one and love the other,
or they will be loyal to the one and despise the other.
You cannot serve both God and money.” (Matt. 6:24, author’s trans.)
- “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matt. 6:34, NIV)
- “Do not give dogs what is sacred;
do not throw your pearls to pigs.
If you do, they may trample them under their feet,
and turn and tear you to pieces.” (Matt. 7:6, NIV)

The above texts are examples of proverbial wisdom couched in metaphor, personification, and poetic parallelism (cf. Matt. 12:33; 15:14; 19:24). The examples below are shorter and more prosaic.

- “If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” (Matt. 12:25; Mark 3:25; Luke 11:17)
- “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Matt. 7:9; Luke 6:31, NIV)
- “No prophet is accepted in his hometown.” (Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24)
- “One sows and another reaps.” (John 4:37)

An aphorism of Jesus that continues to puzzle is found in both Matthew and Luke. From the standpoint of tradition history it is not clear whether these are two accounts of the same historical saying or two separate though similar sayings:

- ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς. (Matt. 11:19)
- καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς. (Luke 7:35).

In both contexts Jesus has been speaking about the rejection of both John's and his own kingdom ministries. In Luke's version wisdom is vindicated⁵⁰ by her own children, evidently the converts mentioned in 7:29, in contrast to the children in the mini-parable of 7:32 (explained in 7:33–34) who would not cry when John sang a dirge or dance when Jesus played the flute. Matthew's version is more enigmatic in that wisdom is said to be vindicated by its works (ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς). Matthew may refer to the ultimate vindication of Jesus, whose wisdom is validated by the results he produces (cf. 11:2, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ).⁵¹

Speeches

As will be discussed below, the teachings of Jesus are occasionally presented in lengthy discourses in the synoptics. Although the Gospel of John frequently presents Jesus's teaching in dialogues, occasionally more lengthy teachings are found (John 5:19–47; 14–17).

In common with other ancient historiographical works, the book of Acts emphasizes the speeches of its major characters. Speeches comprise roughly one-third of the content of Acts. The major speeches in Acts are the following:

- Acts 2:14–40 Peter to the Pentecost pilgrims in Jerusalem
- Acts 7:1–60 Stephen to the council in Jerusalem
- Acts 10:28–48 Peter to the household of Cornelius in Caesarea
- Acts 13:16–41 Paul to the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia
- Acts 15:13–21 James to the church leaders in Jerusalem
- Acts 17:22–34 Paul to the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens
- Acts 20:18–35 Paul to the Ephesian church elders at Miletus
- Acts 22:1–21 Paul to the crowd at the temple
- Acts 23:1–10 Paul to the council in Jerusalem
- Acts 24:1–9 Tertullus accuses Paul before Felix in Caesarea
- Acts 24:10–22 Paul before Felix in Caesarea
- Acts 26:1–29 Paul before Festus and Agrippa in Caesarea

Citing ancient sources, Keener identifies the basic outline or components of ancient Hellenistic speeches as prologue, narrative, proof, and epilogue.⁵² One may find these elements in the above speeches.

50. The aorist verb ἐδικαιώθη occurs in both versions. Evidently it should be taken in a gnomic or timeless sense, one that fits a proverbial saying.

51. See further on Jesus and wisdom Alan P. Winton, *The Proverbs of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990); Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

52. Keener, *Acts*, 1.263–64.

The speeches in Acts can be categorized in terms of their audiences and purposes. The evangelistic speeches by Peter and Paul vary based on their audiences' ethnicity and background. Such speeches to Jewish audiences seek to demonstrate through biblical quotations and allusions how Jesus is linked to the history of Israel. One of Paul's speeches is pastoral (Acts 20); his later speeches are legal defenses of his ministry. The harsh tone of Stephen's indictment speech in Acts 7 and its tragic outcome anticipate the opposition later experienced by Paul. All in all, the speeches in Acts should be viewed in the context of ancient persuasive rhetoric. Their content involves historical events presented with literary creativity for theological purposes. They provide insight into the theological point of view that informs the narrative. The fact that several of them are depicted as being interrupted before they conclude indicates their pivotal role in the volatile world depicted in Acts.⁵³

Psalms

Psalms are found in the Gospels and Acts as quotations from the OT psalms and as songs of praise embedded or inset in the Gospel narratives. Both uses of psalms occur somewhat regularly, requiring the student of the Gospels to be familiar with the features of Hebrew poetry, especially its parallelism.⁵⁴ The way the Psalms were used in Israel's worship is another key feature in understanding their use in the NT.⁵⁵

As displayed below, there are nearly forty quotations of the Psalms in the Gospels and Acts.⁵⁶ Acts contains the most quotations (11), followed by Matthew (9), Luke and John (7 each), and Mark (5). The most frequently quoted is Psalm 118. As would be expected, nearly all the quotations are applied to Jesus, especially to his Davidic roots, his crucifixion, and his resurrection. Jesus is depicted as quoting the Psalms around a dozen times. He finds Judas in Psalm 41 (John 13:18), as does Peter in Psalms 69 and 108 (Acts 1:20). Remarkably, the devil is portrayed as quoting Psalm 91 in Matthew's and Luke's narratives of Jesus's temptation.

53. For a succinct summary of the nature and role of the speeches in Acts, see Darrell Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007). Keener discusses the relation of the speeches in Acts to other ancient speeches at some length (*Acts*, 1.258–319).

54. C. F. Burney, *The Poetry of Our Lord* (Reprinted, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008). The book was originally published in 1925.

55. For a thorough approach to interpreting the Psalms, see Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007).

56. This number and the table above are based on the "Index of Quotations" found in the UBS⁵ Greek NT, 858–59. The Psalms chapter numbers come from the English Bible.

Quotations of the Old Testament Psalms in the Gospels and Acts		
Psalm	Gospel/Acts Passage	Content
2:1–2	Acts 4:25–26	Rulers are gathered together against the Lord's anointed.
2:7	Acts 13:33	God endorses his son.
8:2	Matt. 21:16	God ordains praise from infants.
16:8–11	Acts 2:25–28, 31	God's holy one will not undergo decay.
16:10 LXX	Acts 13:35	God's holy one will not undergo decay.
22:1	Matt. 27:46 Mark 15:34	Why have you forsaken me?
22:18	John 19:34	Casting lots for Jesus's garments.
31:5	Luke 23:46	Into your hands I commit my spirit.
35:19; 69:4	John 15:25	They hated me without a cause.
41:9	John 13:18	He who eats my bread lifts his foot up against me.
69:9	John 2:17	Zeal for your house consumes me.
69:25	Acts 1:20	Let his home be desolate.
78:2	Matt. 13:35	Parables and things long hidden.
78:24	John 6:31	He gave them bread from heaven to eat.
82:6	John 10:34	I said, "You are gods."
89:20	Acts 13:22	David the servant of God.
91:11–12	Matt. 4:6 Luke 4:10–11	Angels will guard and prevent striking a foot on a stone.

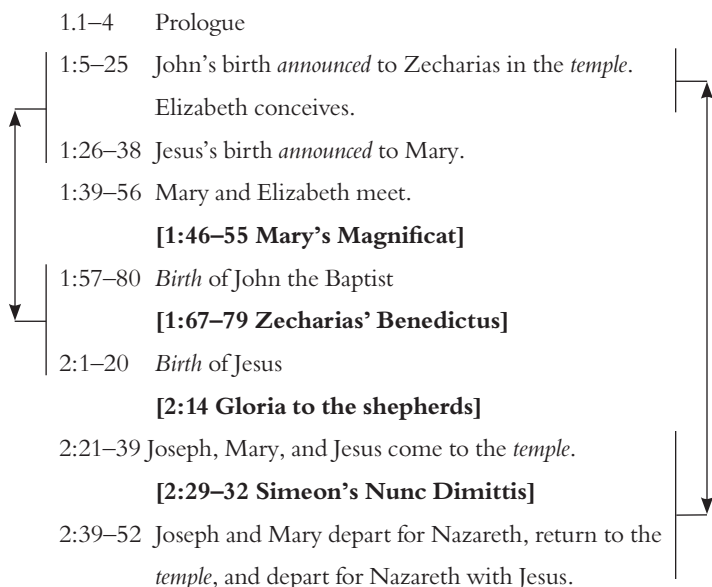
Quotations of the Old Testament Psalms in the Gospels and Acts		
Psalm	Gospel/Acts Passage	Content
109:8	Acts 1:20	Let another man take his office.
110:1	Matt. 22:44; 26:64 Mark 12:36; 14:62 Luke 20:42–43; 22:69 Acts 2:34–35	The LORD says to my Lord, “sit at my right hand.”
118:22	Luke 20:17 Acts 4:11	The rejected stone becomes the cornerstone.
118:22–23	Matt. 21:42 Mark 12:10–11	The rejected stone becomes the cornerstone.
118:25–26	Matt. 21:9 Mark 11:9–10 John 12:13	Hosanna to the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
118:26	Matt. 23:39 Luke 13:35; 19:38	Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
132:11	Acts 2:30	One of his descendants will be set on his throne.

Psalms also appear in the Gospels and Acts in the form of songs by people in the narrative. Such psalms are seen in the OT as well, in texts such as Moses’s songs (cf. Rev. 15:3) of the sea (Exod. 15:1–21) and of Israel’s history (Deut. 32:1–43), Deborah’s song (Judg. 5:1–31), and Hannah’s song, which seems to be the model for Mary’s *Magnificat* (1 Sam. 2:1–10; Luke 1:46–57).⁵⁷ It seems that the inset songs in the Apocalypse are also instances of this literary technique.⁵⁸ As shown below, Luke skillfully embeds four songs into his infancy narrative (Luke 1–2). The songs apparently function theologically to make explicit what is implicit in the narrative—God is faithfully fulfilling his promises to Israel.

57. James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992). Watts also discusses inset songs in 2 Samuel 22, Isaiah 38:9–20, Jonah 2:3–10, Daniel 2:20–23, and 1 Chronicles 16:8–36. His study closes with historical, literary, and methodological conclusions.

58. E.g., Revelation 4:8, 11; 5:9–10, 12, 13; 15:3–4.

Narrative Inset Psalmody in Luke 1–2



Letters

One typically would not think of letters playing a role in the Gospels and Acts, but there are three references to letters in Acts. According to 9:2, Paul sought letters from the high priest in Jerusalem to the synagogues of Damascus to authorize persecution of Jewish followers of Jesus. There are also two actual letters in Acts, one from the Jerusalem church leaders to recent Gentile converts (Acts 15:22–30), and another from Claudias Lysias, the Roman commander in Jerusalem, to Felix the governor in Caesarea (Acts 23:26–30). The Acts 15 letter is relevant for understanding the process of assimilation of Gentiles into the early church and Pauline theology. The Acts 23 letter is a window into the power struggles of the Romans and the Jewish leaders of the province of Judea. Exegetical commentaries on Acts will introduce these issues in more depth. The typical structure and function of Hellenistic letters is well known and has been discussed by other volumes in this series.⁵⁹ A structural analysis of these two letters follows:

59. Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Interpreting the General Letters* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 19–56; John W. Harvey, *Interpreting the Pauline Letters* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 21–44.

Two Hellenistic Letters in Acts		
Letter Structure	Acts 15:22–29	Acts 23:26–30
Opening (author, recipients, greetings)	15:23—χαίρειν, the greeting used here and in Acts 23:26, is also found in James 1:1.	23:26
Body (opening, middle, ending)	15:24–29—The opening identifies the occasion of the letter as unauthorized “Judaizing” of Gentile converts (cf. Acts 15:1–5). The rest of the body describes the Spirit-led solution to the matter.	23:27–30—The letter acknowledges that Paul as a Roman citizen deserves protection from a murder plot caused by a Jewish legal disagreement. It also mentions the likelihood of further accusations against Paul in Caesarea.
Closing (Final comments, greetings, benediction)	At the end of 15:29, the word Ἐρωσθε ends the letter as a farewell wish.	This abrupt letter likely had no closing, although some ancient manuscripts include the closing Ἐρωσθε or Ἐρωσο the end of 23:30.

NARRATIVE GENRE AND THE INDIVIDUAL FEATURES OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

Burridge points out that the opening of a literary work contains the initial features (e.g., title, opening words, prologue or preface) that get the reader’s attention and begin to convey the genre of the work. Additional features such as the topics chosen and how they are structured contribute to the reader’s process of construing (decoding) the author’s intended (encoded) genre and meaning.⁶⁰ In this section, we survey the openings, structure, and content of the Gospels and Acts in order to gain heuristic insight into their distinct ways of telling the story of Jesus.

Mark

Mark begins by describing his project as the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:1). Mark’s mention of the name of his protagonist,

60. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 107–9, 115.

Jesus, is in keeping with the openings of many Greco-Roman βόι.⁶¹ The word “gospel” is not a title referring to the genre of his book⁶² but rather to its contents: the book is about the good news centering in Jesus Christ, which more likely speaks of the good news *about* him than of the good news he preached.⁶³ This good news is immediately validated and contextualized by its linkage to a composite prophetic text (Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:30; cf. Exod. 23:20) about a messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness. This messenger is abruptly introduced (asyndeton) in 1:4 as John the Baptist. John’s ministry in 1:4–8 is the gospel-beginning spoken of in 1:1, and 1:14–15 forms an inclusio when John’s imprisonment leads to Jesus beginning to preach the gospel of God. Taken as a whole then, Mark’s opening portrays John’s ministry as the beginning of the prophesied good news about Jesus. This good news entails a sort of new exodus that restores the historic people of God to his favor by repentance and baptism. Judging from this opening, one would expect Mark’s composition to show how Jesus accomplishes the restorative agenda of the biblical prophets.⁶⁴

After a rather abrupt opening, Mark’s narrative proceeds to emphasize the works of Jesus more than his words. This focus on action leads to the near-absence (see the eschatological discourse in Mark 13) of teaching discourses. Mark’s focus on action is often triggered by the adverb εὐθὺς,⁶⁵ commonly translated “immediately,” which summons the reader’s attention to a new episode or a surprising turn of events. Mark is oriented to geography,⁶⁶ with Jesus’s Galilean ministry (1:14–9:50) concluding with a trip to Judea east of the Jordan (10:1–31), leading to entering Jerusalem and the events of the passion week (11:1–16:8). The pivotal point of the entire Gospel is 8:27–38, where at Caesarea Philippi near the end of the Galilean ministry, Jesus asks his disciples two ques-

61. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 129–30, 189.

62. The four Gospels were first described by the term εὐαγγέλιον in the middle of the second century of the common era. See BDAG, s.v. εὐαγγέλιον, #3; R. H. Gundry, “Εὐαγγέλιον: How Soon a Book?” *JBL* 115 (1996): 321–25.

63. Despite 1:14, Mark emphasizes the works of Jesus more than his words, so the genitives in the phrase Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ should be understood respectively as subjective and objective: the good news about Jesus Christ began (1:1) just as Malachi and Isaiah indicated it would with a wilderness messenger (1:2–3) who turned out to be John the Baptist (1:4–8). See further R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 31–32.

64. See further Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 111–20.

65. See 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 42; 2:8, 12; 3:6; 4:5, 15, 29; 5:2, 29, 42; 6:25, 27, 45, 50, 54; 7:25; 8:10; 9:15, 20, 24; 10:52; 11:12; 14:43, 45, 72; 15:1.

66. See e.g., 1:9, 14, 28, 39; 3:7–8; 4:35; 5:1, 20, 21; 6:21, 45, 53; 7:24, 31; 8:10, 13, 27; 9:30; 10:1, 32–33, 46; 11:1, 11, 15, 27; 14:3, 26, 28, 32; 16:7.

tions about his identity. The first concerns who people think Jesus is, and the second who the disciples themselves think he is. The disciples' response to the first question shows that Jesus was generally perceived to be a prophetic figure. Peter's response to the second question is direct and simple: "You are the Messiah." At this point, Jesus for the first time plainly tells the disciples that he will be rejected and killed by Israel's leaders, but will rise again.⁶⁷ He responds caustically to Peter's objection to this new teaching, telling the disciples that they as well as he must take up the cross if they are to expect eschatological reward from God. This teaching leads to the trip to Jerusalem and the narrative of Jesus's final days there. If that narrative ends at 16:8 instead of 16:20, as will be discussed in chapter 4, Mark is the only Gospel with no postresurrection appearances of Jesus.

The contents of Mark may be analyzed as follows:

- I. Opening (1:1–13)
- II. Galilean ministry (1:14–9:50)
- III. The trip to Jerusalem via Judea east of the Jordan (10:1–52)
- IV. The Passion Week in Jerusalem (11:1–16:8)

Matthew

Matthew opens with a genealogy that roots Jesus in Israel's history, and in so doing, roots Israel's destiny in Jesus. Focus on the ancestry of the protagonist is also a common feature of Greco-Roman βίοι.⁶⁸ Matthew 1:1 points explicitly back to Abraham and David and implicitly to the promises associated with them (e.g., Gen. 12:1–3; 2 Sam. 7:8–17). This initial identification of Jesus prepares the reader for Matthew's stress on Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's history, law, and prophets (Matt. 5:17–21). The historical and theological importance of Abraham and David is underscored by the *inclusio* structure of 1:1–17, as the visual below indicates. Reaching even further back into the OT, the genealogy begins with a formula (Βίβλος γενέσεως) that echoes the first two genealogies of the book of Genesis (LXX Gen. 2:4; 5:1). As 1:17 makes clear, Matthew depicts Israel's history as three sets of fourteen⁶⁹ generations:

67. This initial passion prediction is anticipated in Mark 3:6, 22, and leads to additional predictions in 9:31; 10:33–34, 45; 14:22–25.

68. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 141.

69. Matthew's choice of the number fourteen to organize his genealogy is explained in various ways. Matthew might have chosen the number to approximate the time involved in the periods he summarizes. Fourteen is twice seven and may take on the sense of completion

Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

Son of David, Son of Abraham (1:1)from Abraham to David (1:2–6) *Promise Enacted*from David to the exile (1:7–11) *Promise Delayed*from the exile to Jesus, David's son (1:12–16) *Promise Fulfilled***Abraham to David to the exile to the Messiah (1:17)**

Generations of Jesus the Messiah

Matthew's first few scenes show how the birth and early days of Jesus's life actually transpired, with additional emphasis on Jesus's Davidic lineage (1:20) and biblical fulfillment (1:23; 2:6, 15, 18, 23). None of the material in Matthew 1–2 has parallels in Mark. By Matthew 3, however, the story begins to be roughly parallel to Mark's account of a Galilean ministry (Mark 1:14–9:50) leading to a trip to Jerusalem and the stress on the final week of Jesus's life (Mark 11:1–16:8).

One way of looking at the structure and content of Matthew calls attention to its similarity to Mark. Matthew uses the pivotal expression “from that time Jesus began” (ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς) to signal two key transitions in the narrative, the beginning of Jesus's public ministry in 4:17 (cf. Mark 1:14–15) and the move toward Jerusalem and the passion in 16:21 (cf. Mark 8:31). With this pivotal expression in mind, Matthew may be analyzed simply as follows:

I. Preliminaries (1:1–4:16)

II. Public ministry in Galilee (4:17–16:20)

III. Movement toward Jerusalem and the passion (16:21–28:20)

The above approach helpfully depicts chronological and geographical aspects of the life of Christ, but it overlooks a key difference between Matthew and Mark.

Matthew's narrative is unlike Mark's in that Matthew greatly stresses the teaching of Jesus in five discourses,⁷⁰ each ending with the transitional expression “and it happened when Jesus had finished” (καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς; 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). This

or fullness sometimes associated with the number seven. If ancient gematria is involved, one arrives at the number fourteen by adding the numerical values of the letters of David's name in Hebrew. In any event, it is clear that Matthew's genealogy of Jesus is primarily a theological statement.

70. In Burridge's analysis, the five discourses amount to 31.5 percent of Matthew's content (*What Are the Gospels?* 191). Acknowledging the importance of these discourses for the structure of Matthew does not necessarily lead to the conclusion of Bacon that Matthew's five discourses correspond to the five books of Moses. See B. W. Bacon, “The ‘Five Books’ of Matthew against the Jews,” *The Expositor* 15 (1915): 56–66.

expression leads the reader from the previous discourse back into the flow of the narrative. Recognizing that Matthew alternates narratives that feature Jesus's deeds with discourses that feature Jesus's words results in a more detailed outline of Matthew:

- I. Prologue: background for Jesus's ministry (1:1–2:23)
- II. Early days of kingdom word and deed (3:1–7:29)
 - A. Narrative: transition from John to Jesus (3:1–4:22)
 - B. Discourse: Sermon on the Mount (4:23–7:29)
- III. Kingdom ministry continues (8:1–11:1)
 - A. Narrative: miracles and discipleship (8:1–10:4)
 - B. Discourse: mission and suffering (10:5–11:1)
- IV. Growing opposition to the kingdom (11:2–13:52)
 - A. Narrative: unbelief increases (11:2–12:50)
 - B. Discourse: parables of the kingdom (13:1–52)
- V. Opposition continues in Galilee (13:53–19:2)
 - A. Narrative: the passion looms (13:53–17:27)
 - B. Discourse: values of the kingdom (18:1–19:2)
- VI. Opposition culminates in Jerusalem (19:3–26:2)
 - A. Narrative: controversy in Judea and Jerusalem (19:3–23:39)
 - B. Discourse: judgment on Jerusalem and Christ's return (24:1–26:2)
- VII. Epilogue: Jesus's death, resurrection, and commission (26:3–28:20)

The literary interdependence of Matthew and Mark (discussed in the next chapter) factors into the matter of Matthew's structure. If, as many scholars believe today, Matthew depended on Mark, it seems clear that Matthew diminished Mark's stress on Jesus's deeds in order to emphasize Jesus's teachings. If the opposite dependence is held, Mark deleted much of Jesus's teaching in order to portray Jesus as a man of action. Either way, Matthew's emphasis on Jesus as a teacher is a distinctive that should be recognized in any attempt to outline or describe its structure.⁷¹

Luke-Acts

The opening of Luke's Gospel is a formal preface describing the book and its agenda. As such, Luke's opening is unlike the openings of Mark and Matthew. Other ancient works, including Hellenistic Jewish books,

71. Likewise, it is appropriate that any analysis of Mark should stress its depiction of Jesus as a man of action. Craig Blomberg attempts to synthesize the two approaches to Matthew's structure presented here. See *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 22–25, 49.

have similar prefaces (e.g., Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.1–4; 2 Macc. 2:19–32; Sir. prologue; *Lett. Aris.* 1–8). Luke 1:1–4 is carefully and skillfully written in dense, elevated prose intended to explain the setting of the Gospel, Luke’s painstaking approach to writing it, and his goal in doing so. Luke makes it clear that his Gospel is not the first such book to be written. Rather, he writes after many have undertaken to compile an “account”⁷² of events related to Jesus. Further, such narratives have been written in light of the oral testimony of eyewitnesses to the events. Luke adds his own contribution to this previous oral and literary corpus only after his carefully investigating the matter. His goal to provide an accurate account, one leading to certainty for Theophilus⁷³ regarding what he has been taught. One other area of the preface deserves comment—the way Luke describes the contents of his and the other accounts as “things that have been accomplished among us” (Luke 1:1, ESV). The term “accomplished”⁷⁴ may well imply that Luke regards his content as the unfolded or fulfilled plan of God. A hint about fulfillment here would be in keeping with the emphasis on the fulfillment of God’s promises elsewhere in Luke–Acts, beginning with Luke’s infancy narrative (e.g., 1:17, 20, 31–32, 55, 57, 70–73; 2:25–26, 29–32, 34, 38).

Acts 1:1–5 links Luke’s second volume to his first by referring again to Theophilus and recounting several events from the Gospel. It is noteworthy that this prologue or dedication begins by styling Luke’s Gospel as “all that Jesus began to do and teach.” This expression provides insight into the genre of the Gospels as Jesus’s words and deeds that proclaimed and demonstrated the reign of God. The expression may also imply that as Luke’s Gospel narrates what Jesus began to do and teach while he was on earth, so Acts narrates what Jesus continues to do and teach after his ascension through the gift of the Spirit to the church.

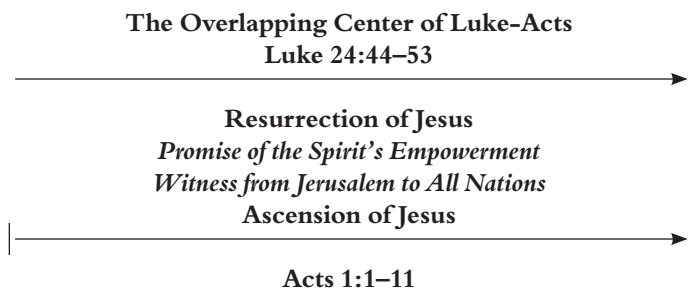
Acts 1:6–11 continues the narrative of 1:1–5 by depicting Jesus’s reiteration of his instruction for the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised coming of the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) that would empower them for witness to all the nations (Luke 24:47–48; Acts 1:8). The narrative also reiterates Jesus’s ascension from Bethany and the disciples’ return to Jerusalem (Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:9–12). Acts 1:10–11 adds the words of two angels who promise the disciples that

72. The word is διήγησις, which commonly refers to an orderly historical narrative (BDAG, s.v. διήγησις, 245). The word may refer to either oral or written narratives, but here the latter may be in view since the narrative is apparently based on orally transmitted eyewitness reports.

73. Although the description of Theophilus as “most excellent” may not in itself imply elevated social status (BDAG, s.v. κράτιστος, 565), the word does convey status in Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25. Luke dedicates his Gospel as well as Acts to this man, evidently a Christian who needed assurance about his previous Christian instruction. Theophilus was likely Luke’s patron.

74. The word is πεπληροφορημένον, a perfect passive participle, implying God’s agency in fulfilling the divine plan. BDAG, s.v. πληροφορέω, 1. a., 827.

they will see Jesus will come again from heaven just as they have seen him go into heaven.



The compositional unity of Luke-Acts is shown by their interwoven openings and by their overlapping center. These factors, along with the content of the two volumes, lead us to discuss the overall structure of Luke-Acts as well as the individual structures of Luke and Acts.

Luke's brief preface is followed by a background narrative that leads to the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1-2) and prepares the reader for the ministry of John. As in Mark and Matthew, John's ministry transitions into Jesus's ministry following Jesus's baptism and reception of the Spirit. After his temptation, Jesus public ministry begins in Galilee. Relatively soon in that ministry Jesus asks the crucial question about his identity (9:18-20; cf. Mark 8:27-29; Matt. 16:13-19), predicts his passion (9:22), and sets his face for Jerusalem (9:51). Luke's unique extended travel narrative ensues (9:51-19:27).⁷⁵ Jesus eventually enters Jerusalem for the events of the passion (19:28). This analysis leads to the following outline:

- Preface (1:1-4)
- I. Preliminaries: Jesus and John the Baptist (1:5-4:13)
- II. Galilean ministry (4:14-9:50)
- III. Journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44)
- IV. Passion and postresurrection appearances in Jerusalem (19:28-24:53)

Readers of Acts who take its full title (The Acts of the Apostles) at face value will be misled. It is clear that the book does not cover the ministries of the apostles as a whole (although see 1:13-26). Two major protagonists stand out, Peter in Acts 1-12 and Paul in Acts 13-28. Paul is mentioned as early as Acts 7:58, and his dramatic turn to Jesus

75. In contrast to Matthew's and Mark's relatively brief treatment, Luke devotes over a third of his Gospel to the travel narrative. This section of Luke contains a great deal of his distinctive theology.

is narrated in Acts 9. His mission begins in Acts 13, and it is endorsed by Peter in 15:7. Despite this emphasis on Peter and Paul, it is doubtful that their respective ministries are key to the structure and content of Acts. Luke's stress on the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the end of the earth transcends the human messengers who spread it. The theme of expansion begins in 1:8 (cf. Luke 24:47) and it is reinforced by additional texts in the ensuing narrative (2:41; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:4; 19:20). The expansion is not simply *biographical* (from Peter to Paul) and *geographical* (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth). It is also *ethnic*, from Jews to Samaritans to Gentiles. Keeping all these factors in mind leads to the following analysis:

- I. Opening: review of Luke (1:1–11)
- II. The Promised Spirit arrives: Peter leads the church (1:12–2:42)
- III. Witness in Jerusalem: growth and persecution (2:43–8:3)
- IV. Witness expands: Samaritans, Paul, and Gentiles (8:4–12:25)
- V. Witness in Asia and Greece: Paul's three mission trips (13:1–21:16)
- VI. Witness in Rome: Paul's arrest and trials (21:17–28:20)

The overall content and structure of Luke-Acts is shown by literary ties and parallels between the two books. Acts 1:1 intentionally connects with Luke 1:1, and Acts 1:1–11 recapitulates the narrative of Luke, especially 24:44–53. Comparison of the story lines of the two books yields a number of parallels. The following lists some of the more obvious parallels:

- Connected prefaces (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1)
- Overlapping center (Luke 24:44–53; Acts 1:1–11)
- Descent of the Spirit (Luke 3:21–22; Acts 2:1–4)
- Fulfilled prophecy (Luke 4:18–19/Isa. 61:1–2; Acts 2:17–21/Joel 2:28–32)
- Rejection and persecution (Luke 4:24, 28–29; Acts 12; 22:22)
- Jerusalem temple (Luke 19:45–48; Acts 4:13–18)
- Gentiles (Luke 2:32; 4:25–27; Acts 13:47; 28:28)
- Samaritans (Luke 9:52; 10:33; 17:16; Acts 8:5–25)
- Miracles (Luke 4:31–37; 7:22; Acts 3:2–10)
- Use of Isaiah 6 (Luke 8:10; Acts 28:26–27)
- Use of Isaiah 49:6 (Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47)

The role of Jerusalem in the overall composition is another important factor in Luke-Acts. Luke's Gospel's infancy narrative begins in Jerusalem with Zecharias in the temple and ends with Jesus there

(1:8; 2:46). Jesus's temptations culminate at the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 4:9–12). Jesus focuses on Jerusalem beginning in Luke 9:51, and arrives there in 19:41, and Luke's narrative remains focused on Jerusalem until Acts 8:3. Accordingly, Jerusalem is at the heart of twenty-four consecutive chapters of Luke-Acts, and it remains the hub of the church even after Paul's mission emanates from Antioch in Syria.⁷⁶ As will be developed more fully in chapter 3, the centrality of Jerusalem is rooted in Luke's theology of promise and fulfillment (e.g., Luke 1:54–55, 68–75; 2:11, 25–32, 38), based on such OT texts as Micah 4:2 (NIV):

“The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

John

Luke Timothy Johnson's description of the Fourth Gospel as “stylistically simple yet theologically dense”⁷⁷ goes double for the prologue to the Gospel. The prologue resembles the form and function of a poem or exordium in Greco-Roman rhetorical schemes.⁷⁸ As such, it does not simply begin the Gospel but gains the readers' attention by winsomely introducing them to the main themes that are to come. John's prologue is commonly compared to the entry hall or foyer of a magnificent edifice. Its beauty engages those who enter the building, yet it hints that the best of the architect's work remains to be seen.

The Synoptic Gospels' openings all have reference to a beginning of sorts—Matthew to Jesus's genealogy, Mark to the beginning of the good news about Jesus, and Luke to the initial eyewitnesses who have handed down the Jesus traditions. John's reference, however, is to the very beginning of the world and to Jesus as the one who began it (1:1–5). John's initial statement, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος (1:1), combines an allusion to Genesis 1:1 with a key term (ὁ λόγος) that would be suggestive for Jewish and Greek readers alike. Jewish readers would likely associate ὁ λόγος with God's creative and redemptive power (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9; Ps. 33:6; 148:5; Isa. 45:23; 55:10–11; Prov. 8:22–31). Greeks familiar with philosophical thought would

76. Among the numerous references to Jerusalem later in Acts, see especially 8:14–25; 9:26–30; 11:2–18, 22–30; 12:25; 15:2; 16:4; 19:21; 20:16, 22; 21:4–13; 21:15–23:30.

77. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 532.

78. Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 19. See the discussion and additional ancient sources cited by Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1.338–39.

understand ὁ λόγος as the rational principle that gave structure to the world.⁷⁹ To varying degrees, Jews were aware of and influenced by Greek thought, and perhaps under its influence had begun to associate God's wisdom and the preexistent Torah with God's creative action.⁸⁰ In any case, John's teaching about Jesus would transcend the reader's preunderstanding. Jesus is both the transcendent, eternal creator of the world and the human revelator of the glory of God.

Jesus's forerunner, John the Baptist, is mentioned twice; the dual reference (1:6–8, 15) frames the center of the prologue (1:12–13) and prepares the reader for the first scenes of the narrative where John's followers become Jesus's followers (1:19–51). At the conceptual center of the prologue, 1:12–13, John shows that the irony of unbelief (1:9–11) is offset by God's act of giving life to those who do believe in him. The allusion to Moses (1:14, 17; cf. Exod. 33:12–34:8) adds to the intrabiblical texture of the prologue. Jesus reveals fully the God whom Moses only glimpsed. God's gracious revelation through Moses's Torah is completed by God's ultimate gracious revelation through the Word-become-flesh who is in the closest imaginable relationship with the Father (1:17–18).

John's unique narrative of Jesus is framed by two texts that speak of belief and unbelief in Jesus, 1:12–13 and 20:30–31. The individual episodes of John's plot provide examples of people who follow Christ in faith (e.g., 1:34–51; 2:11; 4:7–42; 9:35–38) and those who do not (e.g., 2:18–20; 5:16–18; 10:31–39). There is also an ambiguous middle ground occupied by those who do not fully follow Jesus (2:23–3:15; 6:66; 7:12–13, 40–41, 50–52; 12:42–43; 19:38–39). As John 20:20–31 indicates, there is a relationship between Jesus's miraculous deeds (called "signs" and "works") and faith. Jesus insists that his miracles are simply the Father's working through him (5:17; 17:4). Some are enraged by this claim (5:18), and others seem to misunderstand it, seeing the miracle but not understanding the message it demonstrates (3:2; 6:2, 14, 26). As John's narrative comes to the end of Jesus's public ministry, the irony of many people seeing Jesus's many signs but not believing in him is palpable, recalling that of Isaiah's ministry to Israel (12:37–50; cf. Isa. 6:1–10; 53:1).

Unlike the synoptics, John's Gospel has Jesus make multiple trips to Jerusalem, and Jesus clears the temple on the first trip, not the last one. This difference is visualized in the following chart:

79. E.g., Heraclitus, according to *Diog. L.* 9.1.1; Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*; Stoicism, according to *Diog. L.* 7.1.134.

80. See the adept discussion of the background of the Johannine λόγος in Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1.339–63.

Genre and Geography in the Gospels			
	The Synoptics	John	
Preliminaries	Mark 1:1–13 Matt. 1:1–4:11 Luke 1:1–4:13	1:1–18	
Galilean Ministry	Mark 1:14–9:50 Matt. 4:12–20:34 Luke 4:14–19:27	Cycles from Galilee to Jerusalem	
		Galilee 1:19–2:12 4:1–5:4 6:1–7:9	Jerusalem 2:13–3:36 5:1–4:7 7:10–10:39
Trip to Jerusalem	Mark 10:1–52 Matt. 19:1–20:34 Luke 9:50–19:40	11:1–12:11	
Passion Week	Mark 11:1–16:8 Matt. 21:1–28:15 Luke 19:1–24:43	12:12–20:31	
Meeting in Galilee	Mark 16:7 Matt. 28:7, 16–20	21:1–25	

Analyses of the Fourth Gospel typically note the transitions from Jesus’s public signs and works (John 1–12) to his private farewell discourse (John 13–17) to his passion (John 18–20). The story proper seems to end at 20:31 where Jesus’s post-resurrection appearance to Thomas leads to an editorial comment on the role of Jesus’s signs in the purpose of the book. However, there is an epilogue of sorts in John 20 where Peter is restored to ministry following his denials and the relationship between Peter and the beloved disciple is clarified.

The following outline incorporates key themes of John as discussed above:

- I. Prologue (1:1–18)
- II. The book of signs (1:19–12:50)
- III. The book of glory (13:1–20:31)
 - A. Farewell discourse (13:1–17:26)
 - B. Passion (18:1–20:31)
- IV. Epilogue (21:1–25)

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL TRADITION

Modern scholarly analysis has tended to emphasize the differences between the four Gospels. Although it is helpful to discern the individual

voices of each Gospel, it is also necessary to stress how this diversity occurs in an overall unity—"the Gospel."⁸¹ Around A.D. 180 Irenaeus compared the four Gospels to the four zones and four winds of the world and spoke of the Gospels as four pillars supporting the church. He viewed the four Gospels as the Gospel in four aspects bound together by one Spirit.⁸² This ancient testimony resonates with evangelical Christians who value the theological unity and canonical authority of the Bible.

Each of the four Gospels presents a narrative about Jesus that begins in Galilee and culminates in Jerusalem. A forerunner promised in the OT points the way to Jesus the Messiah. Endowed by the Spirit, Jesus begins a ministry of proclaiming and demonstrating the reign of God. He chooses his inner circle of twelve apostles who walk in his steps and begin their own ministries. There is much resistance, especially among the entrenched leaders of Israel, the Torah-experts, and those who control the temple. Jesus announces that he will be arrested and crucified in Jerusalem, but that he will rise again. He will meet his disciples and renew their commission for ministry all over the world. The following points are among the key areas emphasized by the fourfold tradition, albeit in a manner unique to each Gospel:

- John the Baptist's ministry (Matt. 3:1–15; Mark 1:2–11; Luke 3:2–17; John 1:6–8, 19–28; 3:22–30)
- The wilderness voice (Isa. 40:3 in Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23)
- Jesus endowed with the Spirit (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–34)
- Jesus's twelve apostles (Matt. 10:1–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16; John 6:70–71; 20:24)
- Hearing without understanding (Isa. 6:9–10 in Matt. 13:14–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40)
- The kingdom of God (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; John 3:3, 5)
- Feeding the multitude (Matt. 14:13–21; Mark 6:32–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–13)
- Jesus enters Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:29–38; John 12:12–19)
- Blessing the one who comes in the name of the Lord (Ps. 118:25–26 in Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9–10; Luke 19:38; John 12:13)
- Jesus's temple action (Matt. 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22)

81. For various essays on the unity and diversity of the Gospels, see Peter Stuhlmacher, ed., *The Gospel and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

82. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.8; cf. *Did.* 8:2; 15:4; 2 *Clem.* 8:5; *Mart. Pol.* 4:1.

- Judas betrays Jesus (Matt. 10:4; 26:14–16, 25, 47; 27:3; Mark 3:19; 14:10–11, 43; Luke 22:3–6; John 18:1–11)
- Jesus arrested and tried by the Jerusalem leaders (Matt. 26:47–68; Mark 14:43–65; Luke 6:16; 22:47–53; John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 21–30; 18:3)
- Peter denies the Lord three times (Matt. 26:31–35, 69–75; Mark 14:26–31, 66–72; Luke 22:31–34, 55–62; John 13:36–38; 18:16–18, 25–27)
- Jesus tried and condemned by Pilate and crucified by Roman soldiers (Matt. 27:2, 11–35; Mark 15:1–24; Luke 23:1–33; John 18:28–19:23)
- Jesus’s resurrection (Matt. 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10)

By the fourth century the church had distilled the fourfold Gospel into the second paragraph of what is known today as the Apostles’ Creed:

*I believe in Jesus Christ, [God’s] only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
 and born of the virgin Mary.
 He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to hell.
 The third day he rose again from the dead.
 He ascended to heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
 From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

Scholars commonly analyze the similarities and differences between the Gospels, especially those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in word-for-word detail. Although such close microanalysis of the individual Gospels undoubtedly has its place, it is also helpful to look at the Gospels from a wide angle, so to speak, as a sort of literary scenic vista, taking in their similarities and differences at a macro level.⁸³ Microanalysis of the synoptic problem will be explained in the next chapter. The following macroanalytical chart displays both the differences between the individual Gospels and the unity of the fourfold Gospel testimony to Jesus, the Gospel in four aspects bound together by one Spirit.

83. Burridge’s analysis (*What Are the Gospels?* 194–96) is again helpful. His conclusion concerning the structure of the Gospels notes their overall chronological sequence and geographical progression, interspersed with topical material inserted for literary reasons. In the case of John, the geographical progression is clearly more complex.

The Structure of the Four Gospels: A Comparative Chart					
MARK	"Title" 1:1	Preliminaries 1:1–13 John the Baptist (1:2–8) Baptism of Jesus (1:9–11) Temptation of Jesus (1:12–13)	Public Ministry 1:14–10:52 Galilee (1:14–9:50) To Jerusalem (10:1–52)	Passion 11:1–15:47 Triumphal Entry (11:1–11) Temple Events (11:12– 13:37) Last Supper, etc. (14:1– 42) Arrest/Trials (14:43– 15:15) Crucifixion/Burial (15:16–47)	Resurrection, etc. 16:1–8 [9–20] Appears to Women (16:1–8) [Appearances (16:9–14)] [Commission (16:15–18)] [Ascension, etc. (16:19–20)]
MATTHEW	Genealogy / Infancy 1:1–17 / 1:18–2:23	Preliminaries 3:1–4:11 John the Baptist (3:1–12) Baptism of Jesus (3:13–17) Temptation of Jesus (4:1–11)	Public Ministry 4:12–20:34 Galilee (4:12–18:35) To Jerusalem (19:1–20:34)	Passion 21:1–27:66 Triumphal Entry (21:1–11) Temple Events (21:12–26:16) Last Supper, etc. (26:17–46) Arrest/Trials (26:47–27:26) Crucifixion/Burial (27:27–66)	Resurrection, etc. 28:1–20 Appears to Women (28:1–10) Cover-Up (28:11–15) Commission (28:16–20)
LUKE	Preface /Infancy 1:1–4 / 1:5–2:52	Preliminaries 3:1–4:13 John the Baptist (3:1–20) Baptism of Jesus (3:21–22) Genealogy of Jesus (3:23–38) Temptation of Jesus (4:1–13)	Public Ministry 4:14–19:27 Galilee (4:14–9:50) To Jerusalem (9:51–19:27)	Passion 19:28–23:56 Triumphal Entry (19:28–44) Temple Events (19:45–22:6) Last Supper, etc. (22:7–46) Arrest/Trials (22:47–23:25) Crucifixion/Burial (23:26–56)	Resurrection, etc. 28:1–20 Appears to women (24:1–12) More Appearances (24:13–44) Commission (24:45–49) Ascension (24:50–53)
JOHN	Prologue 1:1–18	Preliminaries 1:19–34 John's Identity (1:19–28) John's Testimony (1:29–34)	Public Ministry 1:35–12:11 Galilee (1:35–2:12) Jerusalem (2:13–3:36) Galilee (4:1–54) Jerusalem (5:1–47) Galilee (6:1–71) Jerusalem (7:1–10:39) Transjordan (10:40–42) Judah/Bethany (11:1–12:11)	Passion 12:12–19:42 Triumphal Entry (12:2–19) Belief/Unbelief (12:20–50) Last Supper/ Upper Room (13:1–17:26) Arrest/Trials (18:1–19:16) Crucifixion/Burial (19:17–42)	Resurrection, etc. 20:1–21:25 Appears to Mary (20:1–18) More Appearances (20:14–31) Epilogue Appearance (21:1–14) Peter Reinstated (21:15–19) Beloved Disciple (21:22–25)

Chapter in Review

In this chapter we discussed noteworthy views of the genre of the Gospels and Acts, concluding that the Gospels are quite similar to ancient Greco-Roman biographies (*bioi*), while Acts is much like Greco-Roman histories. Further discussion of this narrative genre addressed the role of historical events, pastoral theology, and literary techniques in the composition of the Gospels. We concluded that the Gospels and Acts creatively present historical events in terms of their theological and pastoral relevance for the church. Sub- or embedded genres such as poetry, parables, and apocalyptic were also addressed, as was the prominence of OT citations and allusions in the Gospels' and Acts' presentations of the words and deeds of Jesus. We also presented distinctive features of each Gospel and Acts individually and discussed how the story line of the Gospels and Acts must be related to the overall narrative story line of the OT.