

*How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*  
Session 6: Gospel: One Story, Many Aspects  
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*In the New Testament the motif of Kingdom of God appears well over hundred times – Leland Ryken*

**Challenge of the Gospels:**

We have 4 Gospels of Jesus written by different authors who have selectively adapted and arranged the sayings and events surrounding the life of Jesus into distinctive accounts written with a specific purpose.

Exegesis of the four gospels, therefore, requires us to think both in terms of the historical setting of Jesus and the historical setting of the authors.

1. **Broader Historical context of Jesus** - 1<sup>st</sup> century, Palestinian Judaism, the Jews were eagerly looking for the Messiah who will deliver them into the Kingdom of God. For the Jews, eschatology is not the end days, rather is the new beginning of God's rule.
2. **Particular Historical context of Jesus' saying** – who were the audience? A small group of disciples (as in transfiguration) or just the 12 disciples (as in the last supper), or the popular masses in general (sermon on the mount), or antagonistic audience (as in Pharises and teachers), or seekers (Nicodimeus)
3. **The historical context of the individual authors and their reason for writing it.** The historical context of each author that prompted him to write a gospel in the first place. Mark portrays Jesus as the suffering servant because Mark was born out of one of Rome's first persecution of Christians in which Peter was crucified.

**Literary Context:**

1. Think Horizontally – "...when studying a pericope in any one gospel, it is usually helpful to be aware of the parallels in the other gospels."
2. Think Vertically – "... when reading or studying a narrative or teaching in the Gospels, one should try to be aware of both historical contexts that of Jesus and that of the evangelist."

**Think Horizontally:**

- The basic reasons for thinking horizontally are two. First, the parallels will often give us an appreciation for the distinctives of any one of the gospels. After all, it is precisely their distinctives that are the reason for having four gospels in the first place. Second, the parallels will help us to be aware of the different kinds of contexts in which the same or similar materials lived in the ongoing church.

**Looking at the Gospel as a whole:**

- "The evangelists were authors, not merely compilers!"
- "Thus they were authors in the sense that, with the Spirit's help, they creatively structured and rewrote the material to meet the needs of their readers. What concerns us here is to help you to be aware of each of the evangelist's compositional concerns and techniques as you read or study."

**Organizing Principle: Eschatological Kingdom of God**

It is important to look at the Gospel from the kingdom lens so that we do not make one aspect of the Gospel into the whole of the Gospel, rather we see Gospel's depiction of the Kingdom of God as relating to all of our lives, instructing us to be cross bearing, culture creating, followers of Christ the King into the Kingdom of God.