

SECTION I—INTRODUCTION

—ABOUT THIS COMMENTARY—

The Text Speaks

Volume 1 and *Volume 2* told the story of Jesus as a revolutionary campaign. They walked scene by scene through his movement—first as a strategic field manual (*Volume 1*), then as a narrative retelling (*Volume 2*). They showed what Jesus did, where he went, and why his actions mattered in their historical, political, and theological context.

This volume is different.

Volume 3 is a commentary—but not in the traditional sense. It doesn't just explain the text. It listens. It slows down. It draws attention to the way the Gospel writers themselves structured, emphasized, and delivered their message. It looks at the tools they used—key words, repeated motifs, literary framing, intertextual echoes—and then follows the thread of meaning they were weaving.

In this volume, we are not just asking “What happened?” but also “How did the authors want us to understand what happened?” What was Jesus really saying in this parable, this exorcism, this confrontation? Why did the evangelists preserve and arrange his sayings the way they did? Why did one phrase or miracle get repeated, reshaped, or emphasized?

This is a deeper dive—not just into Jesus' actions, but into his words.

What This Volume Offers

This volume combines narrative insight with literary, linguistic, and theological commentary. For each scene in the Gospel story, you'll find:

- Exegetical highlights from Greek, Hebrew, and reconstructed Galilean Aramaic.
- Narrative analysis, exploring the literary structure of each pericope and its placement in the campaign.
- Text-critical notes, noting major manuscript variations or translation issues where relevant.
- Historical and Second Temple Jewish context, to clarify how the message would have been heard by its original audience.
- Thematic connections, both across Gospel texts and into the larger biblical narrative.

Whereas *Volume 1* gave you geography, chronology, and strategy, and *Volume 2* walked you through the lived experience of Jesus' movement, *Volume 3* now brings the text itself to the forefront. It's an invitation to

study the Gospels with open eyes, listening for both the divine voice and the human artistry behind the words.

This is not a verse-by-verse technical commentary. It's a scene-based literary and theological companion, organized according to the same six phases and 28 scenes that give shape to the first two volumes, making these insights easy to locate. Each section builds on the campaign arc laid out earlier, but now focuses on how the message was crafted—not just what was said.

A Gospel Study Companion

This volume is designed to be used in several ways:

- As a companion to reading the Gospels—whether in English or the original languages.
- As a resource for teaching or preaching, offering literary structure and textual and theological insights on each scene.
- As a study tool for those wanting to go deeper into Gospel criticism, narrative theology, or first-century linguistics.
- As a continuation of this Jesus project, for readers of *Volume 1* and *Volume 2* seeking to go from story into Scripture itself.

You don't need a seminary degree to use this book. Each section is written to be accessible while remaining rooted in sound scholarship. Some discussions will go deeper for those interested—but the majority of the volume aims to be clear, direct, and geared toward application.

What Comes Next

Section II provides the commentary following the same structure, chronology, and headings as the previous volumes. Section III then contains supplemental material, bibliography, and references for further study. This will include a step-by-step guide to “exegeting” a Gospel text—that is, dissecting it and breaking it down like a professional scholar—for further engagement with the text, which you can use for teaching, writing, or personal exploration.

In time, these resources may expand—especially as new discoveries in archaeology, epigraphy, and manuscript studies continue to deepen our understanding of Jesus' world and of the texts and fragments that make up the Gospels. But for now, this volume is designed both to stand alone as an all-in-one tool for deep Gospel study and as a companion to *Volume 1* and *Volume 2*.

You'll see me use some different abbreviations or designations that you may not be familiar with. One of those is OT, which refers to the Old Testament, and then the NT, or New Testament. Another designation that I'll use frequently is LXX. This is the Roman numeral for 70, and it

designates the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. While the OT was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and Jesus spoke Galilean Aramaic, the NT as we now have it was written in Koine Greek. So, whenever the NT writers quote the OT, they don't typically quote the Hebrew/Aramaic version of it, but instead the Greek version of it. Thus, when I cite a quote or reference to the OT, I will add the designation LXX to the citation to indicate that I'm referring to the Greek version of the OT.

Why It Matters

The Gospels aren't just ancient stories. They are revolutionary texts.

They were written not merely to inform, but to provoke. To disrupt. To call readers into allegiance to a new King and a new Kingdom. And they were written carefully—with theological intent, literary precision, and prophetic clarity.

If we only read the Gospels devotionally, we risk missing that edge. If we only read them academically, we risk missing the life. This volume tries to bridge the gap—to read the Gospels as ancient writings, revolutionary proclamations, and living texts all at once.

Let it challenge you. Let it open new angles. Let it remind you that the real Jesus wasn't just announced—he was narrated, remembered, and proclaimed by those who knew that his story had to be told in full.

Welcome to *Volume 3*. The campaign continues.