

SECTION I—INTRODUCTION

—ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK—

Why This Series is Necessary

Since the moment the Son of God entered humanity as Jesus of Nazareth, he became and forever remains both fully divine and fully human. This is a foundational truth affirmed by the Bible and nearly two millennia of Christian tradition. Yet from early on, much of Christian thought has leaned heavily toward emphasizing Jesus' divinity while often neglecting his humanity. There has long been an unspoken fear that focusing too much on Jesus as a man would somehow diminish his status as God. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, failing to fully embrace Jesus' human side distorts the very core of his mission and message.

This three-volume series is designed to reclaim the full picture of Jesus—both his divinity and his humanity—and in doing so, to reveal his mission in its true depth. It challenges the tendency to reduce Jesus' purpose to either a purely spiritual salvation or a political movement. The reality is that Jesus' mission was both eternal and earthly, both cosmic and immediate. He did not come merely to prepare people for the afterlife—he came to inaugurate, in his own words, the Empire of God here and now, “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). His work was not just about securing individual souls for eternity but about overthrowing the present world order and establishing a new civilization based on love, justice, and self-sacrifice.

Yet, for many Christian readers, approaching Jesus in this way may feel uncomfortable. It is common to dismiss this perspective as the “social gospel,” as if recognizing the deeply political nature of Jesus' actions somehow undermines his role as the divine Savior. But this creates an artificial divide—one that forces a false choice between seeing Jesus as the Son of God who came to save humanity or as a figure deeply engaged in the realities of this world. The Gospels themselves do not present this as an either-or choice.

The truth is that Jesus was—and is—the rightful King of heaven and earth. His mission was a revolutionary movement in the truest sense. It was a direct challenge to every power structure that stood in opposition to God's rule—whether human or spiritual, religious or political, earthly or cosmic.

This is not an interpretation imposed onto the Gospels—it is embedded in the text itself. Consider three glaringly obvious facts from the life of Jesus that are undeniably central to the Gospels:

1. **Jesus was executed by crucifixion—a punishment reserved for political insurrectionists.** Rome did not crucify religious figures for their beliefs, even if they sought to establish a new religious movement. Crucifixion was a brutal punishment reserved for those who challenged imperial rule. Jesus knew this. He lived in a time when other self-proclaimed “messiahs” from Galilee attempted to overthrow Rome and were swiftly crushed. The fact that Jesus died in this manner tells us how both Rome and the religious authorities perceived him—not as a mere teacher, but as a threat to their power.
2. **The titles “Lord” and “Messiah” were deeply political.** Today, we often use these terms in purely religious ways, but in Jesus’ time, “Lord” was a title for rulers, including Caesar himself, and “Messiah” evoked the expectation of a kingly figure who would liberate Israel. Many of Jesus’ contemporaries assumed he was another revolutionary leader like the Maccabees, one who sought to overthrow Rome.
3. **Jesus’ central proclamation—the “Kingdom of God” (or, as I call it, the “Empire of God”)—was an inherently political message.** In a world where Caesar ruled and claimed divine status, for Jesus to announce the arrival of God’s reign was a direct challenge to the prevailing order. His teachings, parables, and miracles were not just moral lessons or spiritual metaphors; they were acts of defiance against a system that oppressed the poor, exploited the vulnerable, and distorted God’s justice.

To read the Gospels without recognizing this reality is to miss the full weight of Jesus’ challenge—not just to Rome and the religious elite, but to the very powers of Sin, Death, and Chaos that he came to overthrow.

So why does this matter? The implications are enormous.

First, Jesus had to be human for his work of salvation to be complete. The Bible makes clear that his ability to save humanity was directly tied to his full participation in human life (Hebrews 2:17). His mission wasn’t just about offering a divine rescue plan—it was about stepping fully into human weakness, temptation, and suffering in order to redeem us from within.

Second, the Son of God did not become human merely out of necessity—he chose to. He took on flesh because he wanted to—because his love for us was so deep that he chose to share in our suffering, our struggles, and even our shame. He did not remain distant, untouched by the human experience. Instead, he fully entered into it,

making himself relatable, accessible, and intimately connected to our reality.

Third, Jesus' life itself was a blueprint for how we are called to live. If we only emphasize his divinity, we risk treating him as an unreachable figure, a distant God who came simply to perform miracles and die for our sins. But if we take his humanity seriously, we recognize that his actions, strategies, and decision-making show us how to follow him.

With all this in mind, this series is written to highlight three essential truths:

1. **Jesus is far more relatable than we often think.** He experienced hunger, exhaustion, rejection, grief, and anger. He navigated friendships, betrayal, and the struggles of daily life. Seeing Jesus in his full humanity deepens our connection to him in profound ways.
2. **Jesus' brilliance as a strategist is often overlooked.** Having set aside his divine powers, he carried out his mission not through supernatural shortcuts but through extraordinary wisdom, careful planning, and a radical yet calculated approach to changing the world. His movements, his confrontations, his teachings, and even his final sacrifice were all part of a deliberate strategy. This series explores the sheer genius of how he carried out his messianic campaign.
3. **If we only focus on Jesus' divinity, we miss his true calling for us.** Christianity has often reduced Jesus' mission to a purely spiritual endeavor: he came, he died, he saved us so that we could go to heaven. But this narrative, while containing truth, ignores the actual life of Jesus and what the Gospels reveal about his purpose. His mission was not just about getting people to "believe" in him—it was about calling people to "follow" him.

And there's a big difference.

When we see Jesus only as a divine Savior who secures our place in heaven, we reduce the Gospels to a collection of important teachings with no direct bearing on our daily lives. Our faith becomes passive—we "believe" in Jesus, but we don't necessarily follow him.

But Jesus wasn't just preaching about the afterlife. He was bringing heaven to earth. He was establishing a new Empire, a new civilization—one built on love, self-sacrifice, justice, and the complete overthrow of Sin, Death, and Chaos.

To take Jesus' humanity seriously means to take his life and mission seriously. The Gospels aren't just stories about what he said and did—

they are a campaign dossier, a strategic record of how he brought about a radical transformation in the world. Jesus did not wander aimlessly through Galilee and Judea. He moved with precision, with intent. He infiltrated hostile territories, confronted corrupt leadership, gathered followers, trained them, and built a movement that would outlast Rome itself.

When we recognize this, we realize that Jesus' life is not just something to believe in—it's something to step into. We are not just called to admire him but to join his movement. Because the Gospel is not just the good news that Jesus saves *in the future*. It is the good news that Jesus reigns *even at this moment*. And that we, too, are called to take part in the victory of his Empire—here and now.

What This Handbook Is About

This handbook is the first of three volumes exploring the life and messianic campaign of Jesus. It serves as a tactical guide to his mission, presenting his movements in a clear, structured, and chronological framework. Rather than viewing the Gospels merely as theological reflections or moral teachings, this volume approaches them as a campaign record—a strategic account of how Jesus mobilized his movement, engaged with both religious and political authorities, and established the Empire of God in the face of overwhelming opposition.

Jesus' mission was not random or improvised. Every decision—where he traveled, whom he confronted, when he retreated—was deliberate. He was not merely a preacher of religious truths but a revolutionary leader executing a carefully orchestrated offensive against the forces of Sin, Death, and Chaos, along with their earthly proxies in governments, religious institutions, and oppressive systems.

This handbook systematically traces Jesus' campaign through 28 strategic scenes, divided into six phases, reflecting the evolution of his mission. Each scene includes:

- **Campaign Chronology**—A structured timeline of Jesus' movements, tracking his strategic advances across Galilee, Judea, and beyond.
- **Contextual Analysis**—Historical, political, and religious insights into the forces shaping his mission.
- **Strategic & Tactical Insights**—A closer look at how Jesus advanced his campaign, outmaneuvered his opponents, and laid the foundation for his Kingdom.

- **Key Questions for Reflection**—Encouraging deeper engagement with the implications of Jesus' actions and their relevance today.

What This Handbook Includes

More than a timeline, this handbook is a strategic report on Jesus' life, revealing the calculated acts, bold offensives, and tactical retreats that defined his campaign. By integrating historical context, political realities, and military-style strategy, it offers a fresh perspective on his mission.

Inside, you'll find:

- **A Fully Mapped Chronology**—Jesus' movements meticulously tracked through the four Gospels, showing his strategic decisions, retreats, and calculated advances.
- **Geopolitical & Military Context**—How Jesus navigated Roman occupation, Jewish revolutionary movements, and Herodian rule, positioning himself as a disruptor.
- **Climate & Terrain Factors**—How seasonal weather, geography, and ancient infrastructure shaped his travel, the spread of his message, and the risks of his campaign.
- **Key Strategic Questions**—Insights into why Jesus chose specific locations, engaged (or avoided) certain confrontations, and timed his actions for maximum impact.
- **Jewish Messianic Expectations**—How Jesus subverted prevailing ideas of the Messiah, challenging both Rome and the Jewish elite while redefining kingship and divine authority.
- **Tactical Moves & Parables as War Rhetoric**—Jesus' parables, miracles, and public debates analyzed not just as moral lessons, but as covert calls to allegiance within his movement.
- **Rome's Perception of Jesus as a Threat**—Why Pilate deemed Jesus dangerous enough to execute, and how his movement fit within Rome's pattern of crackdowns on insurrectionists.
- **A Ground-Level Perspective on Jesus' Life**—A boots-on-the-ground reconstruction of how Jesus and his followers navigated daily life amid taxation, oppression, and shifting alliances.
- **People, Places, and Cultural Insights**—Essential descriptions of key figures, locations, and concepts that shaped Jesus' world, providing deeper historical and contextual background.

Whether you're a scholar, student, or follower of Jesus, this handbook will challenge you to see the Gospels not just as stories, but as a strategic blueprint—a record of how Jesus built his movement and how we are called to follow in his steps.

How This Handbook is Divided

This handbook is structured to present Jesus' life and mission as a strategic campaign, mapping out his movements with precision and clarity. Following this introductory section (Section I), you'll find yourself in the heart of this book: the chronological presentation of Jesus' life and mission (Section II). Here, Jesus' life is divided into six major "phases," each representing a key stage in his messianic offensive. These "phases" mark the broad shifts in strategy—from the early mobilization of his followers to his final confrontation in Jerusalem and ultimate victory over Sin, Death, and Chaos through the cross and resurrection. Each "phase" captures the overarching trajectory of his insurgency against the ruling powers, both human and cosmic.

Within these "phases" are twenty-eight "scenes," which highlight specific engagements, movements, and tactical shifts in Jesus' campaign. These "scenes" function as individual operations, each advancing his mission in a calculated way—whether by expanding his influence, challenging religious and political authorities, or preparing his disciples for the coming storm. Some "scenes" involve direct action, such as the cleansing of the Temple or his confrontations with the Pharisees, while others focus on strategic retreats, key teachings, or significant turning points in his movement.

At the end of this handbook (Section III), you'll find supplemental material that provides essential background for understanding the Gospels and Jesus' world. These sections explore the historical, cultural, and political landscape of first-century Judea, offering critical insights into the figures, locations, and themes that shaped Jesus' campaign. This final section ensures that readers not only follow the strategic arc of Jesus' mission but also grasp the deeper context and implications of his revolutionary movement.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide to the life of Jesus, offering both a chronological roadmap and a strategic analysis of his campaign. Whether you're a scholar, a student, or an interested reader, here's how to get the most out of this work:

- **Keep this Handbook Close to Your Bible**—While reading the Gospels, keep this handbook open. Here, you can find information and commentary on the biblical texts as you read the story of Jesus in chronological order.
- **Read the Gospels Chronologically Side-by-Side**—The four accounts provide different perspectives, emphasizing unique details that form a more complete picture of his strategy, teachings, and challenges. This handbook provides references to every single Gospel chapter and verse, aligning these chronologically so that you can read Jesus’ story in chronological order and see these connections more clearly.
- **Follow Jesus’ Campaign From Start to Finish**—The events of Jesus’ life are presented in historical sequence, numbered according to the “scenes”—28 in total, divided into six “phases”—allowing you to see how his movement evolved, from its earliest mobilization to its climactic confrontation in Jerusalem.
- **Use the Strategic Notes**—Each numbered “scene” includes insights into climate and geography; social, religious, and political context; and strategic and tactical insights, helping you understand why Jesus made certain moves and how his actions fit within the larger historical setting.
- **Engage with Key Strategic Questions**—Throughout this handbook, key tactical and theological questions appear, inviting you to reflect on Jesus’ decision-making and the revolutionary nature of his message.
- **Explore Connections to Additional Resources**—This handbook is the first volume in a three-volume work on Jesus published with **Hekhal Publishing Co.** (www.hekhal.co), which delve deeper into specific aspects of his mission, such as his role as a messianic disruptor, engagement with Rome, and redefinition of kingship.
- **Listen Along with the Podcast Series**—This work is directly tied to the podcast series by Dr Tyson Putthoff, ***What the Bible Actually Says*** (www.bibleactuallysays.com) where episodes will unpack key events, figures, and themes in historical and theological depth.
- **Apply the Insights Practically**—Whether for teaching, research, or personal study, this handbook provides a clear and structured approach to Jesus’ life, challenging traditional assumptions and offering a more dynamic, historically-grounded perspective.