

THE BIBLE FOR THE REST OF US

HOW TO READ AND INTERPRET THE BIBLE
IN ORDER TO FINALLY MAKE SENSE OF IT!



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PART 1 - BIBLE BASICS

Notes:

“The Word of God may, in one respect, be compared to the earth. All things necessary to life and sustenance may be obtained by scratching the surface of the earth: but there are treasures of beauty and wealth to be obtained by digging deeper into it. So it is with the Bible. “All things necessary to life and godliness” lie upon its surface for the humblest saint; but, beneath that surface are ‘great spoils’ which are found only by those who seek after them as for ‘hid treasure.’” -- E.W. Bullinger, 1899

1 - WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

Isn't it a 'good book'?

Isn't it the all-time bestseller?

Isn't it life's instruction manual?

Isn't it a love letter from God?

Isn't it the Word of God?

or...

...is it an often-confusing collection of ancient documents?

2 - QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE:

- The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word '_____' and literally means 'books.'
- There are ___ books that make up the English Bibles used by Protestant Christians. ___ books in the Old Testament and ___ in the New Testament.
- Roman Catholics and a few other branches of Christianity include some ancient Jewish books written in the time between the last Old Testament book was written and when the New Testament begins. These books are called the _____ ("secondary scripture") or _____ ("hidden") books.
- "_____" is an older word for "Covenant" [more on "Covenant" in the next lesson!]
- The Bible was written by over ___ different authors.
- The Bible takes place on ___ different continents: _____, _____, and _____.
- The Bible was written over the course of about _____ years.
- The Bible was originally written in _____, _____, and _____.

3 - QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE:

The entire Bible can be roughly divided into 5 main literary sections.
Note: This is a VERY broad generalization of the Bible that is meant to show the narrative flow of Scripture overall.

I. Introduction: Creation and the Fall – _____

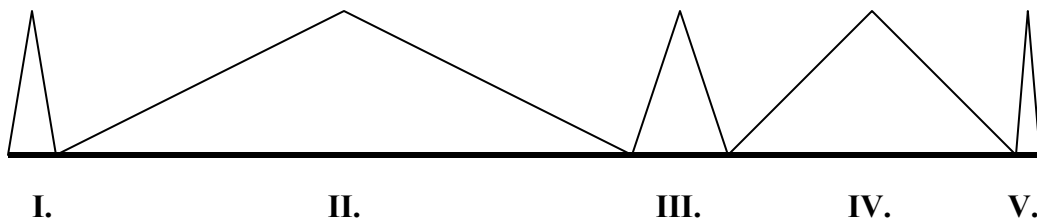
II. The Covenant with Israel – _____

III. The New Covenant – _____

IV. The End Times [The Church Age] – _____

V. Conclusion: The New Creation – _____

Literary flow of the Bible:



4 - "SHOULD I START AT THE BEGINNING?"

While there are different schools of thought on how best to read the Bible, it is important to understand that the Bible tells one grand story—sometimes called a *metanarrative*—composed of many smaller sections. Many people start out planning to read the Bible cover to cover like any other book and end up getting bogged down in Levitical Law and give up in frustration. Others, simply start in the New Testament and rarely venture back into the Old Testament—with the exception of Psalms and Proverbs (this is evident in almost all copies of the NT where Psalms and Proverbs are included). However, to do this is to ignore the majority of God’s revealed word!

One of the best ways to read the Bible is to get a study Bible (preferably a Life Application Study Bible) that has good

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commentary notes and introductions to each book at the beginning and read through it following along with the study notes for clarification.

Another way to read through the Bible is in its actual chronological, rather than canonical, order. This allows you to trace the development of God's plan more easily. However, because some books' dates are unknown, it's not always possible to break each one down into its exact chronological order. Fee and Stuart provide the following reading order for those wishing to pursue this path:

Old Testament: History and Prophets

Genesis,	Amos,	Lamentations,
Exodus,	Hosea,	Daniel,
Leviticus,	Isaiah,	Haggai,
Numbers,	Micah,	Zechariah,
Deuteronomy,	Zephaniah,	Esther,
Joshua,	Nahum,	1&2 Chronicles,
Judges,	Habakkuk,	Malachi,
Ruth,	Joel,	Ezra-Nehemiah
1&2 Samuel,	Jeremiah,	
1&2 Kings,	Ezekiel,	
Jonah,	Obadiah,	

Old Testament: Wisdom Literature and worship

Job,	Ecclesiastes,	Psalms
Proverbs,	Song of Solomon,	

New Testament

Mark,	Galatians,	Jude,
Matthew,	Romans,	Hebrews,
Luke,	Colossians,	1&2 John,
Acts,	Philemon,	Gospel of John,
1&2 Thessalonians,	Ephesians,	3 John,
James,	Philippians,	Revelation. ¹
1&2 Corinthians,	1 Timothy,	
	Titus,	
	2 Timothy,	
	1&2 Peter,	

¹ Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, How to Read the Bible Book by Book, 2nd ed. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 2002. p.443-444

5 - WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

The short answer: A lot of different people over a period of 1,500 years or so!

The not-so-short answer:

Of the world's religious holy books, only the Bible claims to be of both human and divine origins simultaneously. When Jesus issued the Great Commission to his disciples (Matt. 28:19), he told them to spread the Gospel to all nations "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." Here we have the basis for Apostolic authority. Jesus then told them to wait in Jerusalem and that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Here we have the basis for Inspiration. Putting these two passages and others like them together, we see that the Apostles were specially chosen by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit to teach the message of God's redemption to all of mankind. As time passed, the Apostles' teachings were written down so that successive generations could have them. This was necessary to preserve the purity of their message. This is why the term 'canon' is even used of the New Testament—because the Apostolic teaching was to be the 'standard' by which the Christian is to live (the word *canon* simply means *standard* and was originally a term of measurement in the ancient world). But what were the criteria that the early church used in recognizing which books were authentic, inspired, and therefore canonical and which weren't?

By Jesus' day, the books of the Old Testament were already recognized as Scripture and were commonly referred to as "The Law and the Prophets." They consisted of the 39 books in our Bibles today except that in the Hebrew Bible many of the books we know as separate were originally combined (i.e. 1 and 2 Samuel was just Samuel, Ezra and Nehemiah were one book, and the minor prophets were known as The Twelve) this is why Hebrew Bibles only contain 24 books—but the material is the same. Because Jesus recognized, taught from, and quoted the Hebrew Scriptures as inspired by God the early church had no problem accepting them as Scripture. But what about the New Testament books, how did they come to be seen as inspired and authoritative?

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In order for a book to be inspired, it had to have been written either by a known Apostle, or a known companion of an apostle, or have early apostolic support. This was necessary because the Apostles were the ones directly chosen by Jesus for the task, and they were the ones who were with him from the beginning of his ministry and were in a unique position to know exactly what he had taught. Paul is the exception. However, he was specifically called upon and empowered by the risen Christ at his conversion and was recognized by the other Apostles as being in a position of authority (2 Peter 3:15-16). Thus, Apostolic authority became the basic criterion by which books were included or excluded from the canon. The many books that were rejected, such as the recently popular “Gospel of Thomas” mentioned in the film *Stigmata* as well as the various other ‘lost writings’ of *The Da Vinci Code* fame never had the authenticity required in order for a book to be considered Scripture because they were written much too late and didn’t originate from the pen of a recognized Apostle or Apostle’s companion. Such books weren’t one day simply rejected by a group of old priests or bishops—they were never accepted by more than an isolated handful of Christians in the first place. And more than that, they contradicted the teachings of the books that were *known* to be authentic and written by the Apostles and their companions. Thus when the Bible was canonized in the 5th century by the church councils, it was simply a matter of stating what the church had known and accepted from the beginning. The books that had always been seen as Scripture were affirmed, and the ones with dubious and questionable origins were left aside. The Church chose to err on the side of safety by using the motto “when in doubt, throw it out.” This meant that any writing claiming to be Scripture must have had a history of Apostolic endorsement and must not contradict the ones that were known to be authentic.

In this way, the Church was able to pass on the authoritative teachings that Jesus had commanded to be taken to the ends of the earth. Since the scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are the words of God to his people for all time. This is the basis for the authority of the Canon. Insofar as the Church is faithful to the original teachings of Jesus, passed on by his Apostles, it acts authoritatively.

6 IN WHAT SENSE IS THE BIBLE "GOD'S INSPIRED WORD"?

What is the nature of the Bible with regard to what it teaches? Is it 'Inerrant' ("without error")? Is it 'Infallible' ("unable to be wrong in any detail")? Is it 'Authoritative' ("the ultimate authority for the believer")? Not all Christians agree on what the exact nature of the Bible is and many books have been written about the above descriptions.

_____ (Bible-believing) Christians believe that the Bible is God's Word to mankind and is, therefore, Inerrant, Infallible, and Authoritative by nature—*However*, we must qualify these claims so as to avoid common misunderstandings:

As Christians, we believe that the Bible is 'Inspired' by God. As Evangelical scholar Carl F. Henry has stated:

Inspiration is that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit whereby the sacred writers were _____ in their production of Scripture, being restrained from _____ and _____ in the choice of words they used, consistently with their disparate personalities and stylistic peculiarities.²

The Bible was not "dictated" by God with the authors serving as nothing more than ancient courtroom stenographers. This is closer to what Muslims believe about the Qur'an than what Christians believe about the Bible. No, the Bible is both human and Divine and is the product of the Holy Spirit guiding the individual authors in their writing so that what they wrote was exactly what God wanted written.

However, it is important to understand what the Christian doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture *does not* teach. Inspiration *does not* mean that the English (or Spanish, or any other translation) Bibles that we have today are inspired in and of themselves. This is a common misunderstanding and needs to be clarified to all believers.

What were inspired were the _____ and the _____ from their pen or the pen of their scribe. Our translations of the Bible can be said to be the Inspired Word of God insofar as they accurately reflect what the authors

² From "The Nature and Scope of Inspiration" by Carl F. Henry in The Expositor's Bible Commentary on CD-Rom. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 2002

originally wrote. There is no “inspired” modern translation—KJV, NIV, ESV, NLT—all of these are translations of the original Inspired Scriptures into modern language. Many errors and false accusations against the Bible’s reliability have come about by people ignoring this distinction.

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7 - WHY ARE THERE SO MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF BIBLES?

“Why so many different translations?”

The Bible wasn't written in Shakespearean English! It was compiled over thousands of years in the languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine [common] Greek. However, since it is God's revelation to all mankind, the Bible has always been translated into the various languages people speak. Even before the time of Jesus, the Old Testament was translated from its original Hebrew into Greek [called the _____, or _____ for short] and Aramaic [called the Targumim]. Then, when the New Testament was written, it was quickly translated into various languages so that believers everywhere who didn't speak Koine [pronounced COIN-eh] Greek could read the Gospel message. Eventually, a scholar named _____ translated the entire Bible into _____. This became the standard of the church until the time of the Protestant Reformation, when people such as Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, and others began to translate the Bible into the languages of ordinary people. This practice continues today all over the world. The Bibles that we read are all translations. However, since English is an ever-changing and extremely complicated language, there are differences in every translation.

There are basically two schools of thought when it comes to Bible translations—“_____” and “_____”. The first seek to keep the word order and syntax of the original language in place as they translate into English. The second seek to convey the meaning of the passage as it would have been heard by the original audience, even if this means paraphrasing the original language into English. Bible translations all fall somewhere in between these two schools of thought. The Bibles that we see in bookstores can be loosely arranged on the following scale:

Word for Word < -----> Thought for Thought

NASB, KJV, NKJV, RSV, ESV, NRSV, HCSB, NIV, TNIV, NJB, REB, GNB, LB*, NLT, MSG

*The Living Bible was a paraphrase of the ASV written by Ken Taylor into language for young people. Therefore, it is technically not a translation of the Biblical texts because it was not based on any of the original languages.

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8 “WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?”

So why does it matter which translation we use? Each one has its own strengths and weaknesses. However, because every translation involves a lot of *interpretation* of the original, there will be slight (and sometimes not so slight!) differences in how they translate certain passages. Below is an example of how a few popular translations render *1 Corinthians 7:36*. Note the differences:

^{NAS} “*But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter...*”

^{KJV} “*But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin...*”

^{NKJV} “*But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin...*”

^{ESV} “*If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed...*”

^{NRSV} “*If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée...*”

^{NIV} “*If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to...*”

^{NLT} “*But if a man thinks he ought to marry his fiancée because he has trouble controlling his passions...*”

This is why it is best, when studying Scripture, to use at least _____ different translations and compare them to find out the possible meanings of the passage.

9 - "THE KING JAMES ONLY CONTROVERSY" (A QUICK NOTE ABOUT THE KJV AND NKJV)

The King James Version (or Authorized Version) of the Bible has dominated the English language ever since it was published in 1611. As a result of its widespread popularity there are certain Christians today who believe that the KJV is the only true translation of the Bible and all others are flawed and should be rejected. This is known as the "King James Only" debate. In their book "How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth," Greek scholar Gordon Fee and Hebrew scholar Doug Stuart offer the following advice regarding the KJV and its updated version, the New King James Version (NKJV):

The KJV for a long time was the most widely used translation in the world; it is also a classic expression of the English language. Indeed, it coined phrases that will be forever embedded in our language ("coals of fire," "the skin of my teeth," "tongues of fire"). However, for the New Testament, the only Greek text available to the 1611 translators was based on late manuscripts, which had accumulated the mistakes of over a thousand years of copying. Few of these mistakes—and we must note that there are many of them—make any difference to us doctrinally, but they often do make a difference in the meaning of certain specific texts. Recognizing that the English of the KJV was no longer a living language—and thoroughly dissatisfied with its modern revision (RSV/NRSV)—it was decided by some to "update" the KJV by ridding it of its "archaic" way of speaking. But in so doing, the NKJV revisers eliminated the best feature of the KJV (its marvelous expression of the English language) and kept the worst (its flawed text). *This is why for study you should use almost any modern translation rather than the KJV or NKJV.*³

³ Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, How to Read the Bible For All It's Worth, 3rd ed. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 2003. p.40

10 - THE 'LITERAL VS. FIGURATIVE' DEBATE

“If our reading of nature’s record conflicts with our understanding of the Bible’s words, we know we have erred in our interpretation of either or both. To ignore what the record of nature tells us about gravity of stars or creation dates would be just as foolish as ignoring what Romans tells us about propitiation or justification.”⁴

“So do you take everything in the Bible literally?” How many times has the Bible-believing Christian been asked this question! For some people, one’s answer to this question becomes the litmus-test of a true Believer. For others, it determines whether someone is educated or merely superstitious. But many fail to realize that the question itself is flawed. To take a metaphor as literal is to miss its ‘literal’ truth! When John said of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God...”, are we to suppose that Jesus had four feet and wool? No. Why? Because John was speaking _____ truth in a _____ fashion. When we read a passage in Scripture it is always important to ask ourselves what type of _____ we are reading and whether or not the author is trying to speak literally or otherwise. This is especially important in certain areas of the Bible where there is so much controversy regarding its interpretation.
Examples: Gen. 1-12, the Prophets, Revelation.

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⁴ Hagiopan, David G., ed. The G3N3SIS Debate. Crux Press, Mission Viejo. 2001. p.73

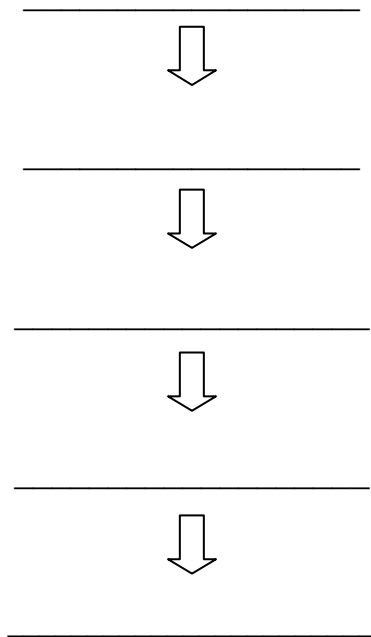
11 SO HOW SHOULD WE INTERPRET THE BIBLE?

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“Whoever wants to penetrate the texts of the Bible theologically and reach their core of truth must interpret them in the way in which they themselves demand to be interpreted and be prepared to tailor the method of interpretation to fit the individual character and individual significance of the texts.” – Peter Stuhlmacher, NT Scholar⁵

“It is wholly incomprehensible to think that thousands of years ago God would have felt constrained to speak in a way that would be meaningful only to westerners several thousand years later. To do so borders on modern, Western arrogance.” – Peter Enns, OT Scholar⁶

In order to become capable readers of Scripture, we have to recognize the process by which its meaning comes to us from God. Most mistakes in Biblical interpretation stem from ignoring one of the following links in the chain below:



We must also take into account the different genres of literature found in Scripture. Failure to do so results in all kinds of interpretation errors. The main genres contained throughout the Bible are: Narrative, Poetry, Ancient Near East History, Covenant Treaty, Law, Instruction, Wisdom, Allegory, Prophecy, Apocalypse, Parable, Gospel, Epistle, and Prayer. In

⁵ Cited in Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 2nd ed. P&R, Phillipsburg. 2002. p.9

⁶ From Peter Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament. Baker, Grand Rapids. 2005. p.55

addition, within these genres are various sub-genres such as Lament, Imprecatory Prayer, Benediction, etc.

This sounds like a lot to learn...and it is! But God has called us to love Him with all our minds (Matt. 22:37), has called and equipped some in the Body of Christ to be teachers (Eph. 4:11), and has promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us in wisdom and learning (John 16:12-15).

Remember, there are Christians in the world who daily risk their lives just to have even *one page* of scripture in their language...how fortunate we are to live in such a Bible-saturated society—and how sad it is that we as a whole are so Biblically illiterate!

“It is the doctrine of inspiration, that God inspired not only the people who spoke but also the words they spoke, that distinguishes the evangelical view of Scripture, and also forces us to wrestle with issues of hermeneutics. Inspiration maintains that God indeed “spoke these words and said...” But it does not maintain that he dictated all these words. To the contrary it recognizes, indeed argues, that these words are also the words of people in history...None of the words was spoken in a vacuum. Rather they were all addressed to, and conditioned by, the specific historical context in which they were spoken.

To see Scripture as both human and divine creates its own set of tensions...God did not choose to give us a series of timeless, non-culture-bound theological propositions to be believed and imperatives to be obeyed. Rather he chose to speak his eternal word this way, in historically particular circumstances, and in every kind of literary genre. God himself, by the very way he gave us this word, locked in the ambiguity...”

-Gordon Fee, NT Scholar⁷

“The whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation is culturally conditioned. It is all written in the language of particular times, and evokes the cultures in which it came to birth. It seems, when we get close up to it, as though, if we grant for a moment that in some sense or other God has indeed inspired this book, he has not wanted to give us an abstract set of truths unrelated to space and time. He has wanted to give us something rather different, which is not (in our post-enlightenment world) nearly so easy to handle as such a set of truths might seem to be.”

-Bishop N.T. “Tom” Wright, NT Scholar⁸

⁷ Fee, Gordon, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Hendrickson, Peabody) 1991. pp.30-34 [also cited in Ben Witherington’s “The Living Word of God”]

⁸ Wright, N.T., “How Can the Bible be Authoritative?”

http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Bible_Authoritative.htm

Notes:

PART 2 THE HEBREW BIBLE, OR "OLD TESTAMENT"

"Indeed, many passages and images of the New Testament are virtually impossible to understand without recourse to their Old Testament background. This is particularly true of books like Matthew, Hebrews, and Revelation, but to a lesser extent it is also true of the whole New Testament...Why did Jesus have to die? What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus is the second Adam? What is the significance of Jesus' dying just before the Jewish festival of Passover? Why is there so much warfare imagery in the Book of Revelation? Finding the answers to such questions depends in large measure on a thoroughgoing acquaintance with the Old Testament."

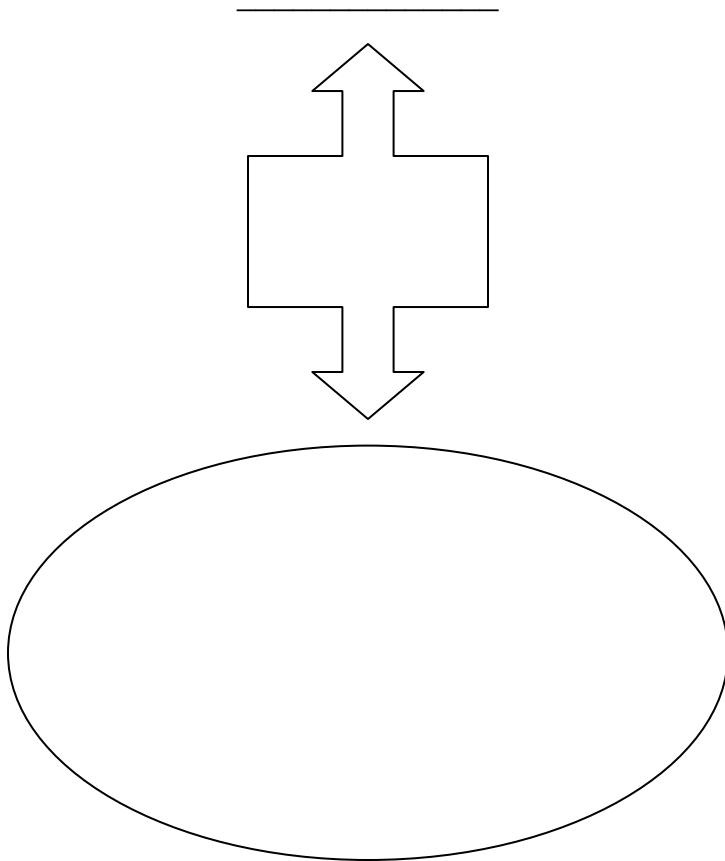
– Tremper Longman III, 1998.

1 - QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT

- The Old Testament makes up roughly _____% of the entire Bible.
- The OT was originally written in _____ and a few parts in _____.
- The OT is also known as the _____.
- The OT is divided into three main sections: _____ (teaching), _____ (prophets), and _____ (writings).
- The order of OT books in our Bible is different from the order in _____ Bibles.
- The OT was written over a period of almost _____ years.

2 - A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE OT:

“One of the chief causes for reader of this testament to lose their way is this: a failure to recognize the unity of Scripture. God does have a plan that stretches from Genesis to Revelation. It is this road map of his ‘promise-plan’ that will keep us oriented, no matter where we go in the two testaments. That plan finds its first formal announcement in Genesis 12:2-3, especially in the clause, ‘all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’ It is this theme that is elaborated with a host of related subthemes, by which also forms the focal point and centripetal force that unites all of its seemingly disparate subjects and events.”⁹



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⁹ Walter C. Kaiser, “The Old Testament Documents” IVP, Downers Grove. 2001. p.217

3 - OT STEREOTYPES ABOUT GOD:

Many people have the idea that the God of the OT is an angry vengeful God, while the God of the NT is peaceful and loving as shown through Jesus. This stereotype has been around since the first few centuries of Christianity. In fact, around 140 AD a church leader named _____ rejected the OT and issued his own version of the NT which removed everything having to do with the God of the OT because Marcion felt that the OT God was an evil God. The church rightly recognized his heretical teachings and disfellowshipped him in 144 AD. But since then there have been many who, not understanding the OT, have fallen into similar assumptions about God as presented in the OT.

In his book, "Making Sense of the Old Testament," Tremper Longman III makes the following point about our often-skewed understanding of Scripture:

"We must beware of falsely stereotyping both the God of the Old Testament and the Jesus who is presented in the New. The God of the Old Testament is not an arbitrary and purely dark figure, and Jesus is not all flowers and light and soft goodness. Yahweh never capriciously nor arbitrarily punished anyone. On the contrary, the witness of the Old Testament is consistent that he is a 'merciful and gracious God...slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness' (Exod. 34:6). He punished only after repeated rebellion and insistent warnings. And he always had a heart for the salvation of his people even when they grossly offended him.

Perhaps the most powerful passage in this regard is presented by the prophet Hosea. In view of Israel's repeated sins, God determines that the time has come to follow through on his repeated threats to punish them. But as he does so, he heart is rent: "Oh how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Adman and Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy" (Hos. 11:8-9). In light of this speech it is hard to maintain that the God of the Old Testament is a heartless despot. The decision to punish his people tore him apart emotionally. We have a difficult time comprehending this passage in part because we often forget that our God is a God of intense passions. Of course, he cannot be swept away by the power of his emotions, but he is an emotional being. Though Israel deserves eradication, his compassion simply will not allow him to follow through."¹⁰

¹⁰ Tremper Longman, "Making Sense of the Old Testament" Baker, Grand Rapids. 1998. p.57

4 - THE OLD TESTAMENT IN A NUTSHELL (A REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY SHORT OVERVIEW!)

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GENESIS – (“Origins”) Starts at the beginning of creation in general and then very quickly moves on to discuss God’s dealings with humanity. First 12 chapters record God’s dealing with humanity in general. Chs.12-50 deal with God’s covenant people, through whom He promises to bless all of humanity. Traces the covenant from Abraham to his son Isaac to his son Jacob (who is renamed Israel). The book ends with the story of Jacob’s son Joseph and his rise to power in Egypt where he eventually brings his whole family, who are to become the Israelites, or Hebrews. The Israelites/Hebrews are the people who are descended from Jacob/Israel’s twelve sons.

EXODUS – (“Way Out”) Tells of how the Israelites became slaves in Egypt and were led out by Moses, an Israelite who was raised as a high-ranking Egyptian and then called by God to lead Israel out of slavery. God performs signs/judgments through Moses and eventually brings them out of Egypt and into Arabia by miraculously parting the Red Sea so that they may cross. God leads them through the desert to Mt. Sinai where He speaks with Moses face to face for 40 days and gives him the Torah (law) that all of Israel must live by. God renews His covenant with Israel and they agree to follow it.

LEVITICUS – (“About Levites”) This book is basically the rulebook for Israelite worship and a manual for the Priests, all of whom were from the tribe of Levi. It contains instructions and laws ranging from the sacred (how sacrifices should be performed) to the secular (how to wash the dishes and clean the house! Literally!)

NUMBERS – (“Numbers!”) Israel sets out to enter the Promised Land but ends up rejecting God by refusing to enter it after hearing scary reports of it from spies who scouted it for 40 days. As a consequence, they are forced to wander in the desert until everyone except the two men who had wanted to obey (Joshua and Caleb) had died and the next generation had arisen. This book records Israel’s wandering in the desert for the 40 years that they were there and the troubles they faced along the way. The name derives from the lists of the people given in the beginning and middle of the book. It ends with Israel ready to finally enter the promised land.

DEUTERONOMY – (“The 2nd Law”) This is Moses’ farewell to the Israelites. In this book, Moses stands before the people and reiterates the covenant that they have sworn to obey. There is a rededication of the people and the choosing of Joshua as Moses’ successor. The book ends with Moses’ death.

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THE _____ BOOKS

JOSHUA – This book is named after Moses’ successor and Israel’s new military leader, Joshua. It chronicles the partial conquest of the promised land of Canaan by Israel. Israel was commanded by God to utterly destroy not only the inhabitants of the land, but also their goods and livestock. This was a one-time act of judgment that God had told Abraham about back in Genesis 15. Its purpose was to judge the inhabitants of the land for their complete wickedness while at the same time fulfill God’s promise to give Abraham’s descendants the land.

JUDGES – This book is named after the various leaders of Israel during the period after their conquest of Canaan. These Judges were people whom God called to deliver Israel from the oppression of their enemies. This is the darkest period in Israel’s history due to the fact that the people lived in near-anarchy. Repeatedly we read that “everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”

RUTH – This short book tells the story of the woman Ruth who lived during the time of the Judges. Ruth was not an Israelite, but rather was a Moabite, a descendant of Lot’s incestuous relationship with his daughter back in Genesis. However, Ruth was faithful to God and dwelled among the Israelites. She eventually was taken in marriage by Boaz and became the great grandmother of King David.

1&2 SAMUEL – These were originally only one book, Samuel, and were named after the last Judge in Israel’s history. The people wanted to be governed by a king like all the nations around them. God, through Samuel, warned them that He was to be their king and that a human king would only bring trouble in the end but the people wouldn’t listen. Finally, God allowed Saul to be king over Israel. Saul was a poor king and eventually turned away from God. So God allowed David to take his place as king. 1 Samuel ends with Saul’s death and 2 Samuel picks up with David being crowned. 2 Samuel follows the reign of David from his early years as a good and faithful king, to his commission of adultery with Bathsheba, to his exile and persecution by his wicked son, into his final reigning years of poor leadership and apathy over sin in his own family.

1&2 KINGS – Also originally considered one book, Kings follows the history of Israel and its various leaders. It begins with the account of David’s son Solomon’s rise to the throne and his reign which was considered Israel’s Golden Age. It was during Solomon’s reign that the nation was at the height of its power and that the Temple, which would become the embodiment of God’s dwelling and protection of the nation was completed. Midway through 1 Kings, after Solomon’s death, the nation splits into two parts, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. 2 Kings begins with the ministry of Elijah the prophet and his dealings with the wicked kings that ruled during this time. The book follows the fate of the kings of Israel up until it is destroyed by Assyria and then follows the

fate of the kings of Judah up until it is destroyed and the people are taken captive by Babylon.

1&2 CHRONICLES – Again, these books were originally one account that was written at a later date by the Chronicler (historian) of Israel. These books basically retell the history of Israel beginning with a long list of genealogies of the nation who have returned from captivity in Babylon, and continuing to recount everything that happened from David to the Babylonian exile. Much of the material parallels and is verbatim or near verbatim of Samuel and Kings.

EZRA – Named after the Jewish Scribe Ezra, this book tells of Israel’s release from Babylon in two groups. The first group was led by Zerubbabel and upon returning started to rebuild the Temple that had been destroyed. The second group was led by Ezra and returned to find that the people in the first group had not discontinued their sinful practices of their ancestors, which was one of the main reasons they had been exiled in the first place.

NEHEMIAH – The sequel to Ezra, this book tells how Nehemiah, an Israelite official returned to Jerusalem and led the people in rebuilding the wall of the city. During this time, Ezra renews the covenant the God made with the people in Exodus and Nehemiah establishes various policies with the people to ensure their future obedience to God.

ESTHER – This book takes place 30 years prior to the events in Nehemiah. The Israelites are in captivity in Persia, which overthrew Babylon. Esther is an Israelite woman who catches the eye of the king of Persia and he takes into his harem. The book tells the story of the plan of Haman, a Persian official, to commit genocide against the Israelites. With the guidance of her uncle Mordecai, Esther reveals Haman’s plot to the king and Haman is killed and Israel is saved.

JOB – This book tells the story of how God allows Job, His faithful servant, to be tested through suffering at Satan’s hands. The book begins with a behind-the-scenes look at how Satan gains God’s permission to test Job. The bulk of the book records Job’s suffering and his conversation with three of his friends over why God would allow such misery to befall someone so righteous. Eventually, a young man by the name of Elihu shows up and rebukes Job’s friends for their poor advice, and rebukes Job for his attitude towards God. In the end, God shows up and gives Job the proper perspective while rebuking Job’s three friends (interestingly, Elihu is rebuked by God at all). The story ends with all of Job’s losses being restored in abundance.

THE _____ / _____ BOOKS

PSALMS – The Psalms are a collection of Israel’s worship songs and poems. They vary in form from laments to praises to petitions. Most of them were written by King David, who was a skilled musician. The

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longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119, which is an acrostic poem focused on the value of knowing God's Word and living by it.

PROVERBS – This is a collection of proverbs, or little wisdom sayings, some of which were written by King Solomon. These are general statements about life that reveal the nature of humans and their relationship to God rather than doctrinal statements of what is true in every circumstance.

ECCLESIASTES – This book, written by “The Preacher”, who was most likely King Solomon, is a long treatise on how the only thing that matters in life is one's relationship with God. The book follows the Preacher's disillusionment with material wealth, power, and knowledge as being the source of ultimate worth or happiness.

SONG OF SONGS – Sometimes called “The Song of Solomon”, this is an erotic poem about the love of a young man (possibly Solomon) for his bride and vice versa. The poem is very explicit in its depiction of sexuality and shows that sex is a gift from God meant to be used only in the context of a lifelong commitment between wife and husband. Many see the poem as an allegory for God's love for Israel, or Jesus' love for the Church.

THE _____ BOOKS

ISAIAH – Named for the prophet Isaiah, the book records the prophecies he gave to the nation of Judah before its destruction. Many of Isaiah's later prophecies are prophecies of the coming Messiah. The main Messianic material is found in chs. 52-53, in which Isaiah is given a vision of the Messiah as God's suffering servant.

JEREMIAH – Named after the prophet Jeremiah who prophesied under Judah's last five kings before the exile. The main purpose of Jeremiah was to turn the people back to God in repentance. Jeremiah ch. 31 contains the prophecy of the New Covenant, which God would make through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and which would complete the covenant He made with the people in Exodus.

LAMENTATIONS – This book is a series of acrostic poems which record Jeremiah's lamenting of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The purpose of the book is to show that people invite disaster when they turn away from God and that God suffers by this as well.

EZEKIEL – Ezekiel was an Israelite priest who prophesied to the Jews in captivity in Babylon. The purpose of his prophecies was to announce God's judgments over the nations who have rebelled against him, including Israel. Ch. 36 parallels Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant.

DANIEL – Tells the story of the prophet Daniel and his friends who were in captivity in Babylon and how Daniel rose to power because of his faithfulness to God despite persecution. Most of the book records visions

Notes:

that God gave to Daniel about the immediate as well as distant future of Israel. Chs.7 and 9 depict the coming Messiah as the “Son of Man” who will one day be worshipped by all nations.

THE _____ (THE _____ PROPHETS)

HOSEA – This book tells the story of the prophet Hosea and his prophecies. The purpose of the prophecies is to show God’s love for His people who are undeserving of it. It takes place during the time before the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed.

JOEL – The prophet Joel was sent to warn the southern kingdom of Judah of God’s impending judgment and to urge them to repent before they are destroyed.

AMOS – Amos was a farmer who God called to go prophecy to the Northern Kingdom of Israel concerning their terrible abuse of the poor among them. Amos is known as the poor man’s prophet.

OBADIAH – Obadiah’s prophecies were directed towards Israel’s enemies as well as Israel itself. Obadiah’s purpose was to show that God judges those who have oppressed his people.

JONAH – This book tells the story of Jonah’s resistance to preach to the wicked city of Nineveh. Although most people associate this book with a whale, the purpose was to illustrate that God cares about all of humanity, not just Israel.

MICAH – Micah prophesied to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel. His purpose was to warn God’s people to repent lest they be judged by God.

Nahum – Nahum prophesied to Assyria that they would be judged by God for their idolatry, arrogance, and oppression.

NAHUM – Nahum is one of the few books of the Bible addressed to a gentile nation. Nahum prophesied to the people of Ninevah, the capital of the mighty Assyrian empire. The southern Kingdom of Judah had seen the northern Kingdom of Israel be destroyed by Assyria and Nahum’s warning of judgment on Assyria would have been comforting to the tiny nation of Judah who lived in the shadow of Assyrian might.

HABAKKUK – Habakkuk is full of the prophet pleading to God on behalf of all the evil and destruction around him. The purpose of Habakkuk’s prophecies was to show that God is still in control of the world despite the apparent triumph of evil.

ZEPHANIAH – The purpose of Zephaniah’s prophecies was to shake the people of Judah out of their complacency and urge them to return to God.

Notes:

HAGGAI – Haggai called the people to rebuild the temple after they returned from captivity. He rebuked them for their living comfortably while God’s house was in ruins.

ZECHARIAH – Zechariah’s prophecies focused on the coming day of the Lord and the reign of God’s Messiah.

MALACHI – The final prophet in Israel until the time of John the Baptist 400 years later, Malachi confronted the people with their sins and challenged them to renew their relationship with God.

5 - KEY POINTS IN O.T. HISTORY

PRE-HISTORY

Creation – Gen. 1-2

The Fall of mankind – Gen. 3

Humanity’s downward spiral – Gen. 4-6:9

The Great Flood – Gen. 6:10-9:17

THE PATRIARCHS

God’s choosing of Abram - Gen. 12-14

The Blood Covenant with Abram – Gen. 15

Abram becomes Abraham – Gen. 16-20

Isaac’s birth and life – Gen. 21-24

Jacob’s birth and life – Gen. 25-35 (Jacob becomes Israel in 32)

Joseph and his brothers – Gen. 37-50

THE EXODUS

Moses brings the Israelites out of Egypt – Exod. 2-18

God’s Covenant with Israel – Exod. 19

The 10 Commandments – Exod. 20

The building of the Tabernacle – Exod. 35-40

ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) – Lev. 16

Israel refuses to enter the Promised Land – Num. 14

Moses’ summary of Israel’s dealings with God – Deut. 1-30

Joshua becomes the new leader of the people – Deut. 31

Moses’ death – Deut. 34

ISRAEL IN THE PROMISED LAND

The battle with Jericho – Josh. 2-6

The partial conquest of the land – Josh. 7-24

Joshua’s death – Judg. 2

Ehud the Judge – Judg. 3:12-30

Deborah the Judge – Judg. 4-5

Gideon the Judge – Judg. 6-8

Jephthah the Judge – Judg. 11

Samson the Judge – Judg. 13-16

Israel's anarchy – Judg. 19-21
The story of Ruth – Ruth 1-4
Samuel the Prophet – 1Sam. 1-4

ISRAEL'S MONARCHY

Israel's request for a king and Saul's anointing – 1Sam. 8-14
Saul's rejection and David's anointing – 1Sam 15-16
David and Goliath – 1Sam. 17
David's rise and Saul's downfall – 1Sam. 18-2Sam. 6 [1Chr. 11-16]
David's Mighty Men capture Jerusalem – 1Chr. 11:4-47
God's Covenant with David – 2Sam. 7:1-17 [1Chr. 17]
David's adultery with Bathsheba – 2Sam. 11-12
David's commission to Solomon to build the Temple – 1Chr. 28
David's death and Solomon's succession to the throne – 1Kgs. 2-3
Solomon's prayer for wisdom – 2Chr. 1:1-13
Solomon builds the Temple – 1Kgs. 6 [1Chr. 3-5]
The dedication of the Temple – 1Kgs. 8-9:9 [1Chr. 6-7]
Solomon's death – 1Kgs. 11:41-43

THE DIVIDED MONARCHY

The kingdom divides into – 1Kgs. 12 [2Chr. 10]
Elijah's ministry – 1Kgs. 17-19:18
Elisha's call to ministry – 1Kgs 19:19-21
Elijah taken up in flaming chariot– 2Kgs. 2:1-12
Elisha's ministry – 2Kgs. 2:13-8:15
Elisha's death – 2Kgs. 13:14-21
Jonah's Ministry – Jon. 1-4
The fall of Israel – 2Kgs. 17:6-41
King Josiah reforms Judah – 2Kgs. 22-23:30 [2Chr. 34-35]
The first deportations to Babylon – 2Kgs. 24:8-17
The fall of Judah – 2Kgs. 25 [2Chr. 36:15]

THE EXILE & RETURN

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo – Dan. 3
Daniel and the Lions' Den – Dan. 6
Daniel's vision of the Son of Man – Dan.7:9-14
Esther's rescue of the Jews – Esther 1-10
The return of the first exiles – 2Chr. 36:22-23 [Ezra 1]
Rebuilding of the Temple – Ezra 4:24-6:22
Return of the last exiles – Neh. 7
The people renew the Covenant – Neh. 8-10

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PART 3 “SO HOW DOES IT FIT TOGETHER?” (SOME ISSUES INVOLVED IN INTERPRETING THE HEBREW BIBLE)

The Old Testament is often taken for granted by those who were raised hearing its stories as children and in Sunday School classes using videos (or for some of us, flannel-boards!). Many grow up having heard these stories and often, unfortunately, they don't take the time to go back and read them afresh and study them in-depth. This can lead to misunderstandings which affect our overall view of Scripture and Theology.

One of the most famous stories, the story of creation in Genesis 1, is also one that raises the most questions among Christians and non-Christians alike. So it's only fitting that we begin our discussion “In the Beginning.”

1 “WHAT ABOUT THE DINOSAURS?!” GENESIS 1 REVISITED

Day – יום (Yom) In Hebrew, the word for “day” has a couple of different meanings: 1) Daylight hours 2) a 24-hour day 3) an extent of time 4) “when” and 5) wind/storm.¹¹ Given the different possible meanings, are the “days” in Gen.1 to be seen as literal 24 hour days? Look at the structure of the “days”:

The 1 st “Yom”	The 4 th “Yom”
The 2 nd “Yom”	The 5 th “Yom”
The 3 rd “Yom”	The 6 th “Yom”
The 7 th “Yom”	

The three main Evangelical views regarding Gen.1:¹²

- _____
- _____
- _____

¹¹ Holladay's “A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament” pp.130-131

¹² For more on the scientific issues in the book of Genesis check out “The Genesis Question” by Hugh Ross as well as “The Genesis Debate: Three views on the days of creation” edited by David G. Hagioapan.

2 “SO, CAN I EAT SHRIMP OR GET A TATTOO??” (INTERPRETING THE LAWS OF TORAH)

ANCIENT LAW AND MODERN LAWS:

“Ancient law gave guiding principles, or samples, rather than complete descriptions of all things regulated. That’s what the preacher must get across when preaching Old Testament law to a modern audience. Ancient people were expected to be able to extrapolate from what the sampling of laws did say to the general behavior that the laws in their totality pointed toward. That’s our task, too. Ancient judges were expected to _____ from the wording provided in the laws that did exist to all other circumstances, and not to be foiled in their jurisprudence by any such concepts as “technicalities” or “loopholes.” When common sense told judges that a crime had been committed, they reasoned their way from whatever the most nearly applicable law required to a decision as how to administer proper justice in the case before them. Citizens of ancient Israel, and especially its judges, had to learn to extrapolate from whatever laws they had received from Yahweh to whatever justice-challenging situation they were dealing with. The number of laws dealing with any given application of justice might be few, but that would not prevent justice from being applied.”¹³

3 “SO HOW DOES TORAH FUNCTION FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY THEN?”

“How can the employee please the boss if they employee does not take the trouble to learn what the boss wants done and what the boss has prohibited? In the new covenant, believers please God by following _____ with the help of God’s _____, who prompts and prods thinking and action that would otherwise be merely human with all its sinful limitations. Can the Holy Spirit use our knowledge of the Old Testament law to inform our perspectives and give us not only examples but a general framework for sensing what sort of thinking and behavior would please God under the new covenant? Of course he can – and indeed, that is just how he, the author of the old covenant law, expects us to view the material that he authored via his prophet Moses...

“That is, then, what the Old Testament law does for us as the Spirit uses it. Those who follow Christ must recognize that the Pentateuchal law is not _____ (that is, most of it has not been brought over into the new covenant from the old and therefore its commands that were direct commands to the Israelites are not direct

¹³ Taken from Doug Stuart’s chapter on Preaching from the Law in Gibson, Scott, ed. Preaching the Old Testament. Baker, Grand Rapids. 2006. pp. 87-99

commands to us). But this does not mean that the law somehow ceases to be the Word of God for us. On the analogy of the way that Old Testament narratives or Old Testament wisdom teachings guide us even though they don't necessarily contain direct commands to us, the law continues to have direct relevance and usefulness even though we are under a newer covenant...

“Especially important is the fact that the law is a place where we can find out the kinds of standards that the same God who currently expects us to know him and obey him originally placed before his chosen people so that they might know him and obey him. In other words, the principles of the law have not become irrelevant to the life of the believer just because of the passage of time. What the law continues to do for us is to give us _____ about what God expects in human behavior, principles that are hugely helpful in guiding us as we _____ to the Holy Spirit’s leading to _____ Christ...”¹⁴

Notes:

¹⁴ Ibid.

Notes:

PART 4 - THY KINGDOM COME!

(AN INTRO TO THE NEW TESTAMENT)

“[The] unity of the NT stands upon confession of the _____ of Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the gospel and the great mystery of faith: the eternal second person of the Trinity became incarnate in Jesus Christ, died upon the cross for our sins, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven...

The kingdom or reign of God in the world is an important link between OT and NT theology. The promised messianic reign of the OT is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in and through whom the kingdom is present. It also has a future fulfillment at Christ's coming and glory...Scripture declares that God's universal reign will be achieved at Christ's _____. This reign, however, has already broken into history in the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.”¹⁵

“When he spoke of the scripture needing to be _____ (e.g., Mark 14:49), he was not simply envisaging himself doing a few scattered and random acts which corresponded to various distant and detached prophetic sayings; he was thinking of the entire _____ at last coming to fruition, and of an entire world of hints and shadows now coming to plain statement and full light.”¹⁶

¹⁵ From “The Theology of the New Testament” by Samuel J. Mikolaski in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 1.

¹⁶ From “The Last Word” by N.T. Wright. HarperSanFrancisco, San Francisco. 2005. p.43

Notes:

1 - QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT

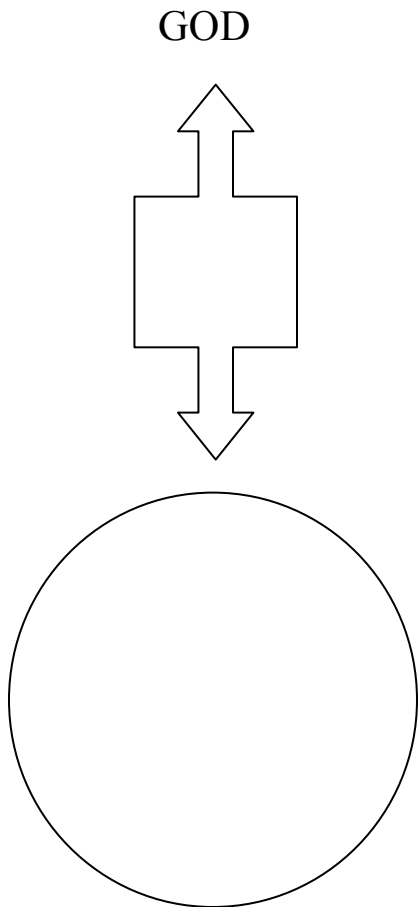
- There are ____ books that make up the N.T.
- The 4 _____ (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) all tell the story of Jesus' life from 4 slightly different perspectives.
- Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the '_____', Gospels because they have a lot of material in common—much of it even verbatim. ('Synoptic' means "____.")
- Acts is the sequel to _____.
- 13 books in the NT were written by the Apostle _____, who was once the church's fiercest enemy before his conversion.
- ____ books are believed to be written by Jesus' disciple John: John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation.*^λ
- All of the N.T. after the book of Acts (with the exception of Revelation) consists of _____ (_____) written by Apostles and church leaders to various people or congregations.
- There are hundreds of quotes and allusions to ____ in the N.T.
- There's no "s" on the end of _____ !!!

*^λ Some Evangelical NT scholars believe that the Gospel of John was composed by (or on the basis of the testimony of) Lazarus, the "one who you [Jesus] love" (John 11:3). In his book, What Have They Done With Jesus?, Ben Witherington writes:

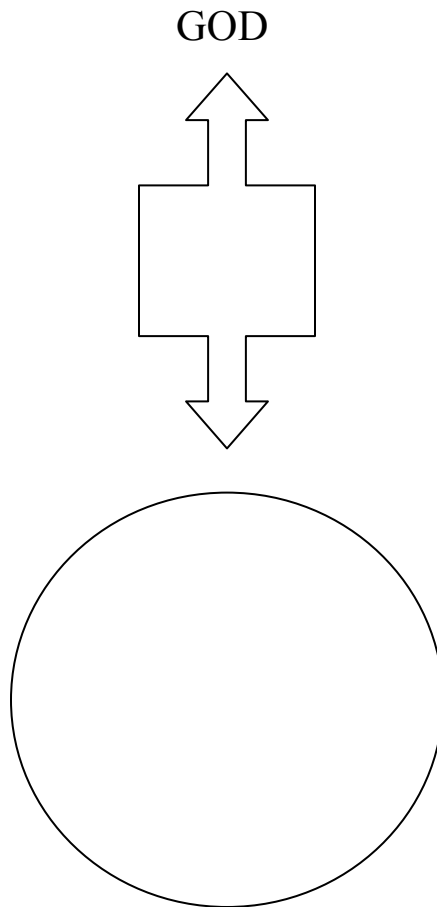
"[The Beloved Disciple] had direct access to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, so that he could follow Jesus in after his arrest, as John tells us in 18:15. Would a Galilean fisherman have had such access, or is it more probable that a Judean follower of Jesus – one who lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem – would? Surely in terms of historical probabilities the latter is more likely. Consider as well the fact that the synoptics are quite clear that while the Twelve had deserted Jesus and were not present at his crucifixion, the Beloved Disciple is clearly there near the cross. If those accounts are right, then the Beloved Disciple cannot be one of the Twelve. Or again consider the tradition suggested in John 21:22-23 that the Beloved Disciple would not die until Jesus returned. Surely such a tradition would be more likely to arise about a person who both had been raised from the dead by Jesus and had lived to a considerable old age. On the basis of cumulative evidence, I conclude that it is likely that the Beloved Disciple was a Judean eyewitness and disciple of the ministry of Jesus, who could testify to what Jesus said and did, particularly when he was in the vicinity of Jerusalem; and the most likely candidate to be this disciple is the one whom John 11:2 says Jesus especially loved – Lazarus...In my view, the theory that best incorporates the data suggests that Lazarus, the Judean disciple, is the source of this gospel material, some parts of which reflect his hand more directly than others, and that someone else edited and preserved the traditions he wrote down – perhaps John of Patmos." (pp.147-152)

2 - THE NEW COVENANT COMPARED TO THE OLD COVENANT

The Old Covenant:



The New Covenant:



Notes:

3 - THE NEW TESTAMENT IN A NUTSHELL (A REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, SHORT OVERVIEW!)

THE _____

MATTHEW – Matthew is focused on showing Jesus’ fulfillment of the OT prophecies and depictions of the Messiah. The author is believed to be the disciple, Matthew, who was a former tax-collector whom Jesus called to follow him. Matthew’s Gospel is divided into 5 sections by large discourses given by Jesus. Some believe this is Matthew’s subtle attempt to offer an NT parallel of the Torah, the 5 books of Moses, thus depicting Jesus as the new Moses. Matthew chs. 5-7 comprise the famous “Sermon on the Mount.” The book contains a striking *inclusio* – it begins with the nations (represented by the astrologers from the east) coming to worship the King of the Jews and ends with the King of the Jews sending His followers out into all the nations to spread the message of His Gospel (a.k.a. the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20).

MARK – Mark’s Gospel is the shortest of the 4 Gospels and many believe it was the first one written. The author is believed to be John Mark, who was Peter’s traveling companion. Mark is fast paced (note how many times the words “immediately” or “as soon as” appear throughout the book) and tells the basic message of Jesus. The most interesting feature of Mark’s Gospel is that it doesn’t include an account of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, as the other Gospels do. [Note: the KJV and other older translations include 16:9-20, however, this ending is not in the original and most reliable Greek manuscripts of Mark and are later additions. Most newer translations note this by offsetting the text in question in brackets or footnoting the information.]

LUKE/ACTS – The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts comprise one 2-volume work written by one of Paul’s traveling companions, Luke. Luke’s account of Jesus’ life and the rise of the early church and spreading of the Gospel message throughout the Mediterranean world are filled with historical details that only an eyewitness would likely know. Luke 15 contains the parable known as the Prodigal Son, one of the most well-known of Jesus’ parables. Acts tells the story of Saul’s conversion and being renamed Paul by the resurrected Jesus.

JOHN – John’s Gospel was written for one reason: “so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, you may have life in his name” (20:31). John follows Jesus’ ministry, not chronologically like the others, but rather thematically. This Gospel is centered around 8 miracles performed by Jesus, six of which are only found in John. Chs. 14-17 comprise the “upper room discourse” where Jesus explains His purpose in being

crucified and promises to send the Holy Spirit after His ascension. John's Gospel, unlike the others, does not record a genealogy or birth narrative, a calling of the disciples, or parables.

ROMANS – Paul's letter to the church in Rome is seen as the most 'theological' of all his letters. Paul states his purpose in writing in the first chapter: "So I am eager to preach the good news to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek..." (1:15-16). The rest of the letter follows this thought as Paul shows how God has revealed Himself to Jews and Gentiles alike in order to free them from the bondage of Sin.

1CORINTHIANS – The church in Corinth was experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit to a large degree. However, there were people in the church who were causing many problems because of their immaturity and sometimes, blatant sin. Paul writes to encourage the faithful, challenge the immature, and rebuke the sinful in Corinth. Most of the teachings on the gifts of the Spirit are found in this letter in chs. 12-14.

2CORINTHIANS – Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth is an example of Paul using rhetorical techniques to make his points. There were some among the Corinthians who were challenging Paul's authority as an Apostle and claiming that because he was suffering so much, he surely couldn't have divine approval. Paul uses heavy sarcasm in this letter, referring to himself repeatedly as "foolish" and his opponents as "super-apostles."

GALATIANS – The churches in Galatia were wrestling with the issue of how non-Jews were to act in order to become Christians. There were some, known as the "Judaizers" who were pressuring Gentile believers to get circumcised and to obey the laws of the Torah before they could be considered true believers. Paul, himself a Pharisee of the highest pedigree, declares that to do this is to add something to what Jesus has already provided for salvation, and is therefore a mockery of the Gospel.

EPHESIANS – The phrase that dominates Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus is "in Him" (or 'in Christ'/ 'in the Lord'). Paul shares with the Ephesian believers that since they have come to faith and have united themselves with Jesus, they share in His glory and have become the body of Christ. This is why he stresses how important it is to remain unified and to continue to abide in Christ rather than live in sin.

PHILIPPIANS – Paul writes to the church at Philippi to encourage them by using the example of Jesus coming to earth as a model for humility and self-sacrifice. Paul tells them that though he has achieved much from a human perspective, it is all worthless when compared to the

value of knowing Jesus. He encourages them to continue to run the race with perseverance.

COLOSSIANS – Paul writes to the church at Colosse in order to give them a true understanding of who Jesus really was—God in the flesh! False teachers were a constant source of danger to the churches and Paul wants the Colossian Christians to be aware of them and to be able to detect errors when it comes to claims about Jesus. Paul concludes by giving practical advice for the believers in their city and encourages them in prayer.

1THESSALONIANS – The church at Thessalonica was a very young church so Paul writes to them in order to give them assurance and guidance. One important topic for them was the return of Jesus—when would it take place? What about people who died before he returned? These are some of the questions Paul sought to answer in this letter.

2THESSALONIANS – Paul writes his second letter to the Thessalonians in order to comfort them to challenge them that though Jesus would return at some point, they were not to become idle in waiting for Him. Some had neglected their normal day-to-day life using the excuse that they were simply waiting on Jesus who would return at any moment. Paul challenges them to live responsibly and to continue to persevere in spite of persecution or suffering.

1TIMOTHY – Paul’s two letters to Timothy as well as his letter to Titus are commonly referred to as the “Pastoral Epistles” because Paul is writing to two church leaders. In 1 Timothy, Paul gives the young leader guidance on how to oversee the ministry of the churches.

2TIMOTHY – This is one of Paul’s final letters. He writes from prison in Rome to encourage Timothy to continue the work of the Gospel. This is Paul’s farewell letter to Timothy and is filled with passion and urgency as Paul seeks to pass the torch to his young friend.

TITUS – Titus was a leader of the churches on the island of Crete. Like his first letter to Timothy, Paul’s letter to Titus gives him practical advice on how to lead and equip the churches so that they will grow in faith and avoid false doctrines.

PHILEMON – The letter to Philemon is the shortest of Paul’s letters—only 1 chapter! In it, Paul seeks to convince Philemon, a member of the Colossian church, to forgive his slave Onesimus and accept him as a brother in Christ rather than a slave—an incredible statement for Paul to make in an age when slavery was a cultural norm. Onesimus had fled from Philemon and somehow met Paul. Paul evidently led Onesimus to the Lord and was now sending him back to Philemon along with this letter

Notes:

so that they would be reconciled and so that Philemon could show the church that the Gospel transcends social categories and institutions.

THE _____

HEBREWS – The letter to the Hebrews is the only letter in the NT whose authorship is completely unknown. Some have attributed it to Paul, but this is only speculation. However, the message of the letter is definitely Apostolic. The author of Hebrews seeks to show how Jesus was the fulfillment of the OT priesthood and sacrificial system. Hebrews contains some of the strongest warnings against turning away from the Gospel message in the NT.

JAMES – James was Jesus’ half brother and the leader of the church in Jerusalem—he’s not to be confused with James the disciple who was killed early in the book of Acts. James’ letter is written to the church everywhere as an encouragement to endure persecution and to put into practice what Christians say they believe. James’ focus is on internal integrity being the mark of the true Christian’s life.

1PETER – Peter, like James, writes to Christians scattered throughout the Roman empire for the purpose of encouraging them to persevere in their faith despite persecution and hardship. Peter emphasizes the necessity of being God’s holy people, just as Israel has always been called to be.

2PETER – Peter’s final letter was written shortly before his execution in Rome. In this letter he writes to all the churches in order to send them a final warning to be on the lookout for false teachers and to be filled with knowledge of God so that they can expose such errors as they arise. Peter ends the letter with a final call to the church to live holy lives while awaiting the final judgment and to grow in grace and knowledge of God and His Word.

1JOHN – The Apostle John was the last surviving Apostle and the only one to not be martyred for his faith (he was exiled to the island of Patmos instead!). 1John is his letter to all Christians, urging them to abide in Jesus (as per Jesus’ teaching in ch.15 of his Gospel) and to live lives of holy devotion while avoiding the false teaching that would eventually become known as gnosticism (the idea that true fellowship with God can be attained through secret knowledge or *gnosis* in Greek). 1John has been called the Letter of Love in the NT because the word ‘love’ appears 52 times in just 5 chapters.

2JOHN – 2 John, like 1John, was written to encourage Christians in love and to warn against false teachers. The “Elect Lady and her Children” in v.1 is most likely a title for the local church to whom John is writing.

Notes:

3JOHN – 3John is a letter from John to Gaius commending him for his support of traveling ministers who spread the Gospel throughout the Roman empire.

JUDE – Jude was the brother of James (the head of the Jerusalem church) and half-brother of Jesus. His letter is written to all Christians for the purpose of reminding them to keep on their guard against heresy or false teachings. Jude warns false teachers and apostates of the judgment that awaits them, should they continue to oppose and distort the Gospel.

REVELATION – The most well known (and most misunderstood) book of the NT, Revelation, was written by John while he was in exile on Patmos. John has a vision from God of Jesus' message to the churches throughout the Roman empire and then a vision of all of redemptive history as it began unfolding when Jesus ascended to Heaven after His resurrection. The genre of the book is Apocalyptic, whereby world events and spiritual realities are portrayed through symbols and epic stories. Though there have been many interpretations of Revelation, the main message can be summed as an encouragement to the early church to "maintain their faithful witness in spite of persecution and temptation, and they will inherit the kingdom of God."¹⁷

¹⁷ Summary given by Dr. Sean McDonough, NT professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in his "Exegesis of Revelation" course.

PART 5 - MISUNDERSTOOD OR MISTRANSLATED PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE

There are many passages in Scripture whose actual meaning or significance is often lost because they are not read in context or have been misunderstood due to a certain translation decision. Here are just a few examples of such:

1 - "HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT?" PROVERBS 22:6

מִמֶּנָּה לֹא־יִסּוּר כִּי־יִזְקִינַן גַּם דַּרְכּוֹ עַל־פִּי לַנֶּעַר חֲנֹךְ
(mimmennah lo'-sur kiy-yazqiyyn gam darko al-piy lana'ar ch'nok)

from it he will not turn if he grows old even his way according to a youth raise up

2 - A MAN "AFTER" GOD'S OWN HEART? - 1SAM. 13:14

(Cf. 2Sam. 7:21, 1Chr. 17:19, Acts 13:22)

Notes:

The importance of the _____

3 “GOLIATH WAS HOW TALL?” 1SAMUEL 17:4

Hebrew text (MT): “six cubits and a span”
Septuagint (LXX): “four cubits and a span”
Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS): “four cubits and a span”

The importance of _____ and the _____

4 - WHO KILLED GOLIATH? - 2SAM. 21:19 VS. 1CHR. 20:5

2Sam 21:19 Elhanan killed Goliath - את גלית
Goliath the

1Chr. 20:5 Elhanan killed the brother of Goliath – אחי גליה –
Goliath the
brother of

את or אחי ?
the the brother of

1Chronicles preserves the original account. The Samuel error almost certainly arose from a scribe mistaking the א for a ת. (This is an understandable mistake when writing on leather or papyrus that may contain specks, spots, or blemishes!) But by comparing the accounts we can see which one is correct and identify the _____ in _____. This is one example of why Text criticism is an important discipline in Biblical studies—to be able to see the _____ as God inspired it. Textual issues that make as big a difference in the reading of a certain passage as this one are extremely rare, however, and do nothing to discredit the notion of Biblical Inspiration.¹⁸

[Interestingly enough, newer translations, such as the TNIV, have made this particular correction already and put the textual issue in a footnote.]

¹⁸ For more on OT textual issues, we recommend getting a copy of Walter C. Kaiser’s book “The Old Testament Documents: Are they reliable and relevant?” by Inter Varsity Press.

Notes:

**5 - "LEFT BEHIND?" MATTHEW
24:40-41**

_____! _____! _____!

**6 - "SNAKE HANDLING?" - THE
LONGER ENDING OF MARK**

The importance of _____ and text-critical findings

7 - "IS PAUL STILL A SLAVE TO SIN?" ROMANS 7:14-25

The importance of literary context and _____

Romans 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance....²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Romans 7:14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

8 - "LUKEWARM CHRISTIANS" - REVELATION 3:15-16

The importance of HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .

APPENDIX A: TYPES OF TEXT CRITICAL ERRORS

Adapted from John Walton's
"Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament" (Zondervan, p.92)

LETTER CONFUSION – Two letters look alike (Jer. 15:14 עבר/עבר)

HEARING CONFUSION – Two words or letters sound alike ('to him' לו' / 'not' לֹא) Psa. 100:3 compare NIV and NASB

HOMEOTELEUTON – two lines end in the same word resulting in the scribe's skipping a line (cf. NET notes on Judges 16:13-14)

HOMOIOARCTON – the scribe's eye skips a word due to it beginning with the same letter as a following word (cf. NET notes on Joshua 2:15)

HAPLOGRAPHY – Letters written once instead of twice (Judges 20:13 "sons" is missing from what should read בני בנימן)

DITTOGRAPHY – letters written twice instead of once

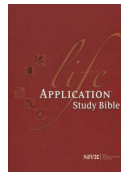
WORD DIVISION – Words divided incorrectly

LETTER METATHESIS – Letters mistakenly reversed, making a different word (Psa. 49:11 קבר or קרב)

MARGINALIA – Words mistakenly inserted from margin to text or inserted in an incorrect position (cf. NET notes on Josh. 2:15)

APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDED STUDY BIBLES

Life Application Study Bible (NIV or NASB)



One of the overall best study Bibles for the money. Combines background and theological insight with applicational insight for one's daily life.

Zondervan Study Bibles (TNIV or NIV)



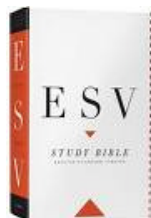
A great balance of background notes, illustrations, and cross-references make this an excellent study Bible for the money. Not as in-depth on life application notes, but good background info, timelines and charts make up for it.

Quest Study Bible (NIV)



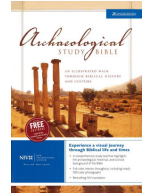
A perfect study Bible for those new to Biblical studies or those with questions regarding certain hard-to-understand passages or concepts. Thousands of questions sent in by readers are answered in the blue margin on each page by various Biblical scholars and teachers.

ESV Study Bible (ESV)



This is one of the most comprehensive study Bibles on the market at this time. One of the best features is the Appendices section in the back which contains over 200 pages of articles and essays on various aspects of Biblical studies. Though slightly Reformed in theological orientation, the notes reflect scholarship and theological views from across the spectrum of Biblical Christianity. It also includes access to the online version for free.

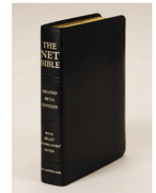
Archaeology Study Bible (NIV)



[HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!!]

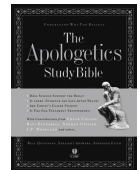
Produced in partnership by Zondervan and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, this Study Bible is the best source of background information on the world of Scripture currently in print. Full color articles contain insight that is unavailable anywhere outside of commentaries and scholarly resources.

NET Bible w/ CD-ROM (NET)



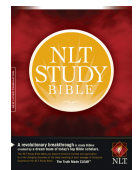
A completely new translation by scholars done entirely online, the NET Bible contains over 60,000 translation, background, and application notes submitted by scholars and teachers from all over the world. A downloadable version is available for FREE at www.bible.org/netbible. The print version contains incredible satellite maps of the Holy Land.

The Apologetics Study Bible (HCSB)



Though it has fewer notes than any of the others, Holman's contains many excellent articles and notes on intellectually interpreting and defending the faith as well as introductory biographical sketches of famous Apologists in Church history. It is a good study Bible for those who like the HCSB translation or are interested in Apologetics.

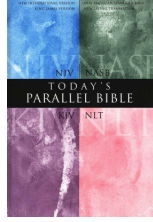
NLT Study Bible (NLT)



The study notes in this one provide excellent insight from a wide range of evangelical scholarship and theological positions. It is recommended over the *NLT Life Application Study Bible* for those who prefer the NLT's more readable translation.

Parallel Bibles

Today's Parallel Bible (NIV, NASB, KJV, NLT)



This Bible offers the best range of translations from across the spectrum. NASB and KJV seek to be word-for-word translations, whereas the NLT seeks to convey the overall meaning of the text in understandable language. The NIV lies somewhere in the middle of these.

TNIV (or NIV) / The Message Remix Parallel Bible



A more convenient size makes this a good parallel Bible that can be carried anywhere. The TNIV translation is an excellent update of the NIV and the Message Remix, while not a reliable Bible translation, often gives a fresh perspective on the text, particularly the narrative sections of Scripture. (Available in various bindings)

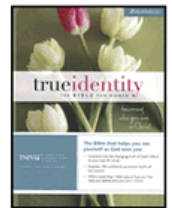
Devotional Bibles

Strive (TNIV)



A great Men's devotional Bible without all the clutter of normal devotional Bibles. The text is presented in paragraph format to make for easier reading with excellent articles and discussion questions throughout. (Available in various bindings)

True Identity (TNIV)



Like the Strive Bible, the True Identity Bible contains good devotional articles and discussion questions aimed at women, while also avoiding all the clutter and fluff of other women's devotional Bibles. (Available in various bindings)

Interlinear Bibles

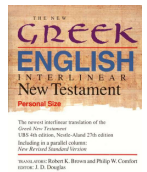
The Interlinear Hebrew-English OT

Ed. By John Kohlenberger, III



A great one-volume interlinear containing the Hebrew text (BHS 4th ed.) with word-for-word translation beneath each line. Also contains the NIV in a parallel column.

The New Greek/English Interlinear NT



An excellent interlinear containing the Greek text (USB 4th ed.) with word-for-word translation beneath each line. Also contains the NRSV in a parallel column. (Available in various sizes)

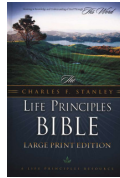
APPENDIX C:

NON-RECOMMENDED STUDY BIBLES

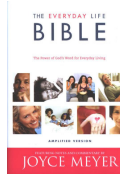
Study Bibles by Individual Christian Teachers, Authors, or Theological Viewpoints

A good study Bible should provide more insight than a single individual author can contribute. It should also provide notes that are as objective as possible and that are not aimed at reading something into the text, but rather at getting the true meaning out of the text. Study Bibles that have the names of famous Christian authors, teachers, or speakers are often lacking in solid background notes, or reflect the theological bias of the individual editor or theological point of view. Thus, one's money is better spent on a study Bible other than the ones below:

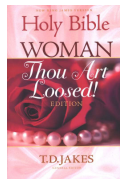
Charles Stanley's
Life Principles
Bible
(NKJV)



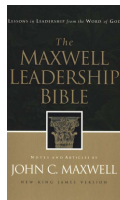
Joyce Meyer's
Everyday Life
Bible
(Amplified)



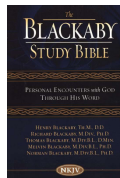
T.D. Jakes
Woman Thou Art
Loosed
Bible
(NKJV)



The Maxwell
Leadership
Bible
(NKJV)



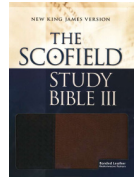
The Blackaby
Study Bible
(NKJV)



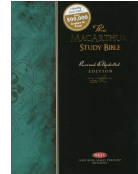
The Ryrie
Study Bible
(various translations)



The Scofield
Study Bible
(various translations)



The MacArthur
Study Bible
(various translations)

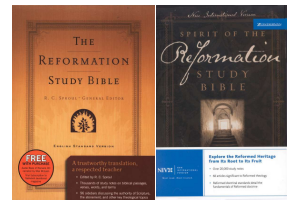


The Dake Annotated
Reference Bible
(KJV)

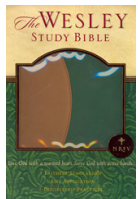


[Strongly discouraged]

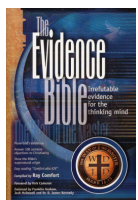
The Spirit Of the Reformation
Study Bible (NIV)
or
The Reformation Study Bible
(ESV)



The Wesley Study Bible
(NRSV)



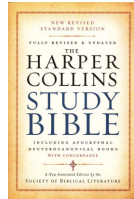
The Evidence
Bible
(NKJV)



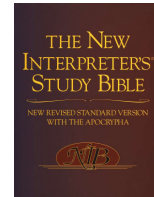
Study Bibles by Liberal Non-Orthodox Scholars

While these study Bibles contain many helpful literary and historical notes, they often operate from the view that Scripture is not Inspired in the orthodox sense of the word and contains errors, historical inaccuracies, false authorship, and/or other marks of a purely human product. They adopt scholarly assumptions from 19th-20th century European frameworks such as the Documentary Hypothesis for the Old Testament and the Q Hypothesis for the Gospels—both of which are largely unnecessary by-products of post-Enlightenment skepticism. Theological and applicational notes are also kept to a minimum.

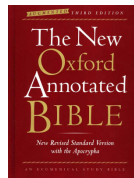
The Harper Collins
Study Bible
(NRSV)



The New Interpreter's
Study Bible
(NRSV)



The Oxford/New Oxford
Annotated Bible
(RSV or NRSV)

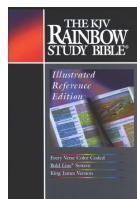


**Out of the more liberal study Bibles on the market, this one is the most orthodox*

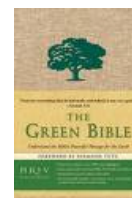
Gimmick Study Bibles

Some publishers, seeking a niche market, publish Bibles with certain “gimmicks”. Study Bibles should contain insight and background information in addition to any devotional or inspirational information. But many Bibles on the market simply contain little actual study material. For example, some attempt to color-code verses in Scripture based on subject matter. However, many passages of Scripture cannot be simplified in such a way and speak to numerous subjects or situations. Others separate the texts from their context in order to fit a reading plan with a certain period of time, such as a year. One’s money is better spent on a good study Bible such as the ones on the first two pages.

The KJV Rainbow
Study Bible
(KJV)



The Green Bible
(NRSV)



One Year Devotional
Bibles
(various translations)



The American Patriot's
Bible (NKJV)

