

Reference Materials for Bible Study

Annotated Bibliography

Concordances

There are two types of concordances. An "exhaustive" concordance contains every word of scripture and indexes every verse where a particular word appears. "Complete" concordances, or concordances that are not exhaustive do not contain every word.

Goodrick, Edward W. and John R. Kohlenberger III. *The NIV Complete Concordance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981.

This is complete only to the extent that it has every location of every word indexed, but it is not exhaustive. About 950 words are not included. Each entry contains the phrase around the word, and the appendix lists four pages of words omitted in the concordance.

Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*.

Perhaps the most well-known exhaustive concordance in the English language. It includes every word in the King James text and employs a numbering system by which you can look up the Greek or Hebrew word used in the text and its definition.

Thomas, Robert L., ed. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1981.

It lists every word including some of the context around the word in the biblical text, and includes the Strong's numbering system. The concordance is abridged to a Hebrew and Greek dictionary in the back, which references standard Hebrew and Greek lexicons. The dictionary gives definitions, translations, and transliterated English spellings of each word. It also notes variations in verse division between the Greek New Testament, English Bibles, and Hebrew Bibles.

Young, Robert. *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984.

This concordance comprehensive and exhaustive. It's often preferred for word studies because passages for the English words are arranged under the Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic words that they translate. Each entry also includes a brief definition of each Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic word.

Topical Concordances:

A topical concordance lists all of the passages that deal with a particular topic, even if that word does not appear in the passage. For example, passages dealing with death may not contain the word "death." This makes topical concordances very useful in finding passages that deal with a topic but do not have that word in the passage.

Joy, Charles R. *Harper's Topical Concordance*. New York: Harper & Row, 1940.

Organizes biblical terms thematically. It has been very popular and is based on the King James Version of the Bible.

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Topical Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.

This topical index covers over 20,000 topics and subtopics and includes the text of the scripture passages indexed. It is based on the New King James Bible. Includes many topics not found in the older *Nave's Topical Bible*.

Nave, Orville J. *Nave's Topical Bible: A Digest of the Holy Scriptures*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.

Perhaps the best-known of topical Bibles. First published in the early 20th century, it has been reprinted and republished numerous times. It covers over 20,000 topics and 100,000 Scripture references. The full King James biblical text is included with each reference.

Bible Handbooks and Introductions:

Bible handbooks and introductions give a brief overview and introductory material on the Bible and on each book of the Bible. They may include historical, cultural and literary backgrounds of each book of the Bible as well as an overview of the themes in a book.

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

This is more apologetic in nature. It gives pertinent background information on the Old Testament as a whole, and on each book of the Old Testament. What distinguishes this introduction is its commitment to the Old Testament as part of the inspired word of God. It takes to task the unanswered questions and presupposition of modern liberal scholarship that has often treated scripture as nothing more than a mere human product.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981.

Provides cultural and background information for the New Testament and for each book of the New Testament, including authorship, dates, occasion, and relevant cultural information. There is also a brief commentary on each book of the New Testament.

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

First published in 1924. It has been a long time favorite due to its simple layout and readability. Contains a brief commentary on each book, as well as pertinent background information such as date, authorship, and pertinent archaeological discoveries. Also includes a section on how we got the Bible and church history.

Hill, Andrew W. and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.

This introduction addresses the Old Testament as a whole and by major sections and individual books, exploring interpretation, geography, archaeology, and history; theological and literary elements; and the formation of the OT canon and its relationship to the New Testament. Contains helpful timelines and maps as well as a bibliography for further study on each section.

Shackelford, Don, ed. *New Testament Survey: An Introduction and Survey of the New Testament by the Faculty of Harding University School of Religion Searcy, Arkansas*. Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 1987.

Begins with an introduction to the world of the New Testament, and scripture as the inspired word of God. Provides cultural and background information for the New Testament and for each book of the New Testament, including authorship, dates, occasion, and relevant cultural

information. There is also a brief commentary on each book of the New Testament, an outline of each book, and class discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

Bible Dictionaries

Bible dictionaries give definitions, background information, history, and other information in and related to the Bible. They can cover anything from a particular person in scripture, a particular biblical custom, background on an ethnic group, chronology, or an introduction to a biblical book.

Bromiley, Geoffrey W., ed. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979.

This four volume work, often referred to as simply ISBE, covers concepts, books, people, places, key words, major doctrines, history, geography, customs, archaeology, etc. Includes photographs, many in color, maps, diagrams, line drawings and other helpful information. Each entry contains a bibliography.

Douglas, J.D., ed. *New Bible Dictionary*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1982.

Over 2000 entries that include books, people, places, key words, major doctrines, history, geography, customs, and recent advances in the fields of biblical studies and archaeology. Includes helpful maps, diagrams, and illustrations. Each entry contains a bibliography.

Evans, Craig A. & Stanley E. Porter. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000.

A more recent reference that takes advantage of the new information that has come to light in recent years about the ancient Mediterranean world. Over 1300 pages of information dealing related to the New Testament. Includes entries on archaeology, art, customs, Hellenistic Judaism, Rabbinic literature, Roman military, etc. Each entry has an up to date bibliography.

Languages, Word Studies:

The references included here are ones that do not necessarily require knowledge in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek to use.

Mounce, William D. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

This tool makes use of the advances made in Hebrew and Greek language study in recent years. It contains accurate, in-depth definitions and is keyed to several translations, including the KJV and newer translations. Each entry discusses both Hebrew and Greek words as applicable. It also uses both the Strong's and the Goodrick/Kollenberger numbering systems.

Vincent, Marvin R. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965.

This four volume is laid out as a verse-by-verse commentary rather than an index. It highlights important words in the biblical text, and comments on their meaning, background, and usage of various words and idioms.

Vine, W.E. Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., eds. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words: A Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testaments in One Volume*. New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996.

This is combination of two originally separate works, Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words and Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament. Each entry has an English word, followed by the various Hebrew or Greek words translated by that word. Each entry includes the range of meaning for the word, examples of how it is used, and any peculiarities in the word.

Bible Atlases

Bible atlases usually contain more than just maps. They often contain pertinent historical and geographical information on events associated with a map and time period.

Brisco, Thomas C. *Holman Bible Atlas*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998.

Full color maps, photographs, and illustrations. Includes movements of peoples, events and battles. Includes helpful articles and essays regarding various periods of biblical history. Also includes a section on the Hellenistic period, between the Old and New Testaments. Includes a helpful index.

Lawrence, Paul. *The IVP Atlas of Bible History*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006.

This full color atlas makes use of the rich resources available today on the history, geography and archaeology of the Bible and presents the latest findings in history and archaeology in a readable style. There are many color photographs, panoramic reconstructions, chronological charts, and other helpful material. There is also a section on how the Bible came to be and one on the languages of the Bible.

May, Herbert G. *Oxford Bible Atlas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Includes maps, black and white photographs, articles, and essays dealing with various events in biblical history.

Commentaries

The better commentaries are usually ones written by multiple authors. The ones below are all written and published by Restoration Movement authors.

ACU Press Commentaries, Everett Ferguson, general editor. ACU Press, Abilene, TX.

This series was originally known as the Sweet Series, until ACU took over the copyright. Various authors. New Testament is complete, and there are various Old Testament books.

College Press NIV Commentaries, ed. Jack Cottrell & Tony Ash. College Press, Joplin, MO

Various authors in Churches of Christ and Christian Churches.

Coffman's Commentaries, by Burton Coffman. ACU Press, Abilene TX.

Written by Burton Coffman, who was a preacher, teacher, and professor in Churches of Christ. Covers every book of the Old and New Testament.

Gospel Advocate Commentaries, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, TN

This is perhaps the oldest commentary in Churches of Christ. Some were written by David Lipscomb, the most recent volumes by Guy Woods.

Old Testament Survey Series, by James Smith. College Press, Joplin, MO.

This five volume set written by a Christian Church author covers the entire Old Testament. It is more of a section by section, paragraph by paragraph commentary.

Truth for Today Commentaries. Eddie Cloer, ed. Resource Publications, Searcy AR.

This series is still in progress, most authors are associated in some way with Harding University. Written by various authors, many by David Roper.

Commentaries by Homer Hailey: Job, Isaiah, Daniel, Minor Prophets, Revelation

Homer Hailey has produced some excellent commentaries that have been favorites for many years in churches of Christ.

Commentaries by Jim Mcguiggan: Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Roman, 1 Corinthians, Revelation

Jim Mcguiggan has been a favorite author and speaker in Church of Christ for many years.

Commentaries by Jimmy Allen: Romans, Hebrews, 1 Corinthians.

These are more laid in outline form. They are basically his notes for teaching his classes at Harding University

Note on Translations:

The best Bible translations will be committee translations, rather than a translation by one person. There is less likelihood that there will be much theological bias in committee translations. For in-depth studies, multiple translations are preferable.

Here are some of my humble and personal observations concerning some of the still available English translations.

KJV - King James Version, 1611. Before the KJV, the Geneva Bible was the most prominent English translation. Due to its literary style, it rivaled the Geneva Bible for nearly a decade until it won out in popularity. The King James was a committee translation that used a combination of Latin texts and Greek and Hebrew texts available at the time. They used Tyndale's translation as a base, and so did not endeavor to make a new translation, but to improve what was already there. It was designed to be more of a dynamic translation rather than a literal one. Since 1611, the KJV has underwent several revisions. There are a few transnational problems with the KJV, but the greatest criticism of it simply stems from the fact that it is nearly 400 years old and uses archaic language.

Examples: earned=plowed, wot=know, suffer=permit, script=wallet/bag, let=restrain, etc... The King James over all still remains a favorite of many people today.

ASV - American Standard Version, 1901. Considered to be one of the most literal translations in the English language. The intent was to revise and improve the KJV. One of its criticisms was that it was too literal, which made it hard to read. One assessment of the ASV was that it was good Greek and poor English. It still retained a lot of archaic language. One of the characteristics of the ASV is that it moved away from the old Jewish tradition of rendering the name, "Yahweh" as LORD. The ASV rendered it consistently as Jehovah. To my knowledge, Star Bible is the only publisher that still prints the ASV.

RSV - Revised Standard Version. The Revised Standard version sought to revise and improve the ASV. Archaic language was replaced by modern English. Jehovah was returned to LORD. The New Testament was published in 1946, the Old Testament in 1952. It was based on what is now considered to be a superior text. Took advantage of recent textual discoveries. It used modern language and idioms. It was widely favored, though some rejected it violently. Some claimed it to be part of a communist plot, others denounced it because it was bound in red covers, some burned it publicly.

NIV - New International Version, completed in 1978. This translation project involved not only scholars, but literary stylists as well. This became the most popular English Bible available. Unlike other translations before it, this did not seek to revise the Tyndale/KJV line of translations, but was produced from scratch starting with the best Greek and Hebrew manuscripts available. Literary stylist also worked on the project to ensure that it was readable and used good English, punctuation, spacing, paragraphs, etc. This is one of the reasons this translation has become so popular. There are a few poor translations of various verses, such as using the word "grace" for "Sheol" or "I have been a sinner since birth" in Ps 51:5.

NASB - New American Standard Bible, completed in 1971. This translation took advantage of advances in textual and archaeological research. It is a more literal translation, but still retained archaic language when addressing deity. The 1995 update has removed all archaic language. One of the criticisms of this translation is it is not laid out in paragraphs, its lack of consistent interpretive notes in the margin when you would expect it. Another criticism is over consistency. In other words, if a word is translated a certain way in one verse then it is always translated that way in every verse.

TEV - Today's English Version. Completed in 1976. A thought translation, not literal. One of the things that make this translation stand out is its use of modern English. The major criticism against it is its accuracy.

NKJV - New King James Version. Completed in 1982. This version sought to be as true to the King James tradition as possible. This was not to be a new translation, but a revision that updated archaic language while still remaining true to the King James tradition. As a result, much of the advances in textual criticism was not employed in

favor of retaining the "excellencies" of the King James Bible. Because this "sounds like" and has the "feel" of the King James Bible, many prefer this version.

TANAKH - Completed in 1982. This is the standard Jewish translation of the Old Testament. It employed the best in Jewish scholarship. The books are ordered and classified according to the Jewish system (eg: Torah, Prophets, Writings). One of the hallmarks of this translation is its brutal honesty. When the scholars did not understand a word or passage, it would state so in a footnote.

NRSV - New Revised Standard Version, completed in 1989. Two things stand out about this translation. It is the first to use gender-neutral language when the text clearly intends for a masculine to refer to both men and women. (eg: man=human). Another thing that stands out is that this is the first English translation to make use of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In spite of being a very accurate translation, the gender-neutral feature has led to a negative assessment by some. In the New Testament, it translates "Messiah" for "Christos."

Online Resources:

<http://www.biblestudytools.com> - Searchable Bible versions, commentaries, concordances, etc.

<http://www.e-sword.net> - You can download and install this and additional modules for free. It include many Bible versions, commentaries, topical concordances, word studies, Bible dictionaries, maps, photographs, and more!

More...

If you are interested in digging deeper and knowing what the standard reference works are in the field of biblical studies, whether it is language, history, etc., then here are a couple of places to start.

Danker, Frederick W. *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003.

A guide for students and scholars to the standard reference works in biblical studies, including concordances, primary Hebrew and Greek texts, grammars and lexicons, Bible dictionaries and versions, commentaries and a host of contextual tools for studying the world of the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls.