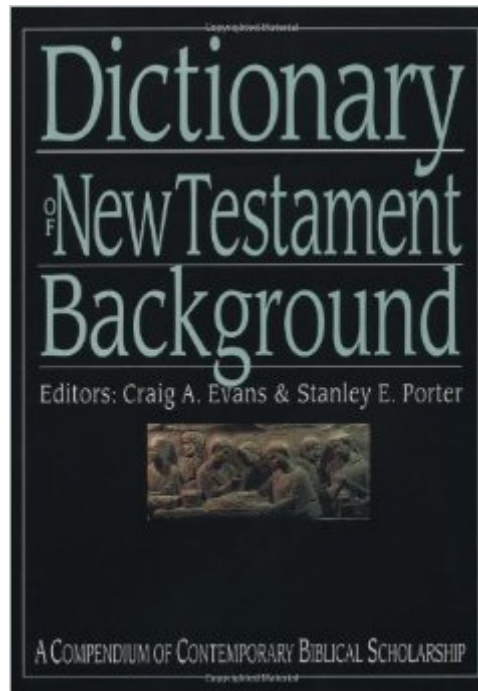


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# Dictionary Of New Testament Background (The IVP Bible Dictionary Series)



## Synopsis

2001 ECPA Gold Medallion (Reference Works) The Dictionary of New Testament Background joins the Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, the Dictionary of Paul and His Letters and the Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments as the fourth in a landmark series of reference works on the Bible. In a time when our knowledge of the ancient Mediterranean world has grown by leaps and bounds, this volume sets out for readers the wealth of Jewish and Greco-Roman background that should inform our reading and understanding of the New Testament and early Christianity. The Dictionary of New Testament Background takes full advantage of the flourishing study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and offers individual articles focused on the most important scrolls. In addition, the Dictionary encompasses the fullness of second-temple Jewish writings, whether pseudepigraphic, rabbinic, parables, proverbs, histories or inscriptions. Articles abound on aspects of Jewish life and thought, including family, purity, liturgy and messianism. The full scope of Greco-Roman culture is displayed in articles ranging across language and rhetoric, literacy and book culture, religion and cults, honor and shame, patronage and benefactors, travel and trade, intellectual movements and ideas, and ancient geographical perspectives. No other reference work presents so much in one place for students of the New Testament. Here an entire library of scholarship is made available in summary form. The Dictionary of New Testament Background can stand alone or work in concert with one or more of its companion volumes in the series. Written by acknowledged experts in their fields, this wealth of knowledge of the New Testament era is carefully aimed at the needs of contemporary students of the New Testament. And its full bibliographies and cross-references to other volumes in the series will make it the first book to reach for in any investigation of the New Testament in its ancient setting.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The importance of a work such as this one cannot be stressed enough. In order to truly understand the New Testament, one must understand the world into which it was born. The Dictionary of New Testament Background gives the reader a comprehensive survey of the historical, social, religious, and literary context of the New Testament documents in a single volume. Like the three previous dictionaries in the IVP series (Jesus, Paul, Later NT), this one is arranged alphabetically by topic, with plenty of cross-references. Most articles are 1,000 to 7,500 words in length, although a few contain 10,000+ words. In addition, each article is supplemented with a bibliography to guide the reader into a fuller treatment of a given topic. The scholars who worked on this project are first-rate, most of them having published extensively in their field. Students of the New Testament will undoubtedly recognize the names of many of the contributors. The editors, to their credit, also drew from scholars in other disciplines such as archaeology, history, and classics, therefore ensuring the high quality of scholarship that the reader finds in this work. The amount of information contained in this one is tremendous, but not overwhelming, and always relevant. It is also clearly written and up-to-date. All students, from the beginner to the scholar, will find this dictionary to be a useful resource in New Testament study. There is nothing negative that I can say about it. Sell your shirt and buy it.

The 'Dictionary of New Testament Background' is actually the fourth volume in a series that includes: 'Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels' 'Dictionary of Paul and His Letters' 'Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments' While part of a series, each volume (including this one) is largely adequate as a stand-alone reference. This volume has taken a much different approach to the subject matter than previous volumes. 'It attempts to situation the New Testament and early Christianity in its literary, historical, social and religious context. This volume is concerned with archaeology, geography, numismatics, related writings, various historical figures, political institutions, historical events, peoples and culture. It is not tied to specific writings of the New Testament, as is the case with the three previous dictionaries. 'Taking full advantage of major strides in research, particularly in the areas of archaeology, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and linguistic and cultural studies, this work incorporates essays every major topic, and most minor topics, that have

to do with formulating a greater understanding of the cultural, societal, economic, religious, linguistic, and historical background of New Testament times. This is a pivotal time in the history of the world, regardless of one's religious interest or orientation, and this dictionary covers topics that will be of interest to the scholar without theological interest as well as those who are looking to increase their background knowledge for purposes of reading the New Testament. The editors are Craig Evans, professor of religious studies and director of the graduate programme in biblical studies at Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia, and Stanley Porter, research professor in New Testament at the University of Surrey Roehampton, London. Together these editors bring a background of scholars from Jewish and early Christian studies, as well as classical history and scriptural/textual studies. These editors led the team of over 200 scholars from around the world to put together this 1300+ page collection of essays and articles. The articles range in length -- some no longer than 500 words to others of 10,000 words or more. The length is determined based upon the complexity of the subject and/or the relevance for New Testament research. Each article includes bibliographic information for further research, and most are cross-referenced for further reading within this volume. Perhaps the best use of this text is in addition to bible study or education planning -- this is not a narrative, sit-down-and-read-it kind of text, although I have found myself many times picking it up for a quick reference, only to find myself an hour later still reading through the links to other topics. Because this is part of a multi-volume set, the reader may be disappointed occasionally if one looks for certain topics (for instance, 'Gospel') and finds there is no such listing. This would be because the topic is covered in other volumes. I would have argued for a bit different organisation -- inclusion of non-canonical writings under their titles, for instance, just as Dead Sea Scrolls are included (for instance, there is an article of general introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls, but also some 36 other articles on specific Dead Sea Scrolls included under their title names, whereas the article on 'Apocryphal Gospels' includes reference to many of these gospels, but none merits its own article later). This is a very minor criticism, however, of a generally excellent book.

This volume is in the huge series from IVP on all areas of the bible. This book is a must have for any series pastor or student of the NT. I have used this several times in my study for sermons, papers, or just general questions I have had regarding background issues and the NT. I gave it 4/5 stars due to the need for a second edition. The editors at IVP have already processed the printing of a 2nd edition of Jesus and the Gospels, and I think it's time for a second edition of this volume as well. That being said, you cannot down play the significance of this volume and the series.

Like the other three volumes in this series (Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Dictionary of the Later New Testament), Dictionary of New Testament Background is an excellent compendium of generally moderate to conservative scholarship on just about every major topic touching on the New Testament. The articles do a good job integrating the material with the New Testament. For example, the article "Circuses and Games" has a valuable discussion of Paul's use of athletic metaphors. This work is 1300 pages and so is an excellent value for the money. (The bibliography for each article tends to be a bit lengthy. I don't imagine the typical reader will have access to many of the books and articles cited.)

I have purchased most of these books for my husband and they are all very good and helpful. I cannot elaborate on content, but he is a religion major and all of these have been super helpful and chalk full of information.

While this is a recent purchase, I have looked up several topics and have been very satisfied at the scholarship and thoroughness. For example, there were 7 pages of explanation on Messianic ideas and their development in the time of our Lord. Any Bible teacher of the Gospels would especially benefit in preparations by gaining valuable background information.

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