

Study Guide for *The Bible: An Introduction, Second Edition*

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PART 1: WHAT IS THE BIBLE, AND HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

Chapter 1: The Bible: A Gradually Emerging Collection

Review Questions (pg. 17)

1. What does it mean to call the Bible a “canon”?
2. What purpose does a canon serve for a group?
3. When did the Hebrew Bible begin to take a relatively firm shape? Why then?
4. What is the Apocrypha? Why is it not part of the Hebrew Bible?
5. How did Marcion influence the church to develop a canon?
6. Looking back, what criteria did the church (sometimes unconsciously) use to identify the books that should be authoritative, that is, should be part of the canon?
7. How did Jerome influence the stabilization of the canon?
8. How did Martin Luther influence the formation of the canon?

Resources:

- ❖ The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/>
- ❖ Sadducees: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12989-sadducees>
- ❖ Marcion: Jason DeBuhn, “Marcion and the Invention of the New Testament.” Bible and Interpretation Website 2014: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2014/01/bed388006.shtml>

Chapter 2: From Then to Now: The Transmission of the Bible

Review Questions (pg. 30)

1. How do we know that the text of the Hebrew Bible we have today is much like the text that some Jews were reading in the first century?
2. What ancient manuscripts do scholars see as the most important evidence for what New Testament authors actually wrote? Why do they think these are so important?
3. What are some unintentional changes that came to be part of some copies of biblical texts? What are some intentional changes? Explain how each got into the text.
4. What are some criteria textual critics use to decide what the earliest available text was?
5. Tell about translation strategies and give examples of translations that use various strategies.
6. Why is it important to know that the King James Version relies on the Textus Receptus?

Resources:

- ❖ James D. Tabor, “Older is Not Always Better: Remembering Westcott and Hort,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2009: http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/tabor_357913.shtml

- ❖ Codex Sinaiticus: <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx>
- ❖ Gospel of Thomas: <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gthlamb.html>

Chapter 3: Inspiration: The Claim That God Speaks in a Text

Review Questions (pg. 45)

1. When did Israelites begin looking to texts as a prominent place to hear God's word?
2. How did Christians in the first four centuries deal with the problem of finding historical, geographical, or factual mistakes in the Bible?
3. What led those who came after Luther and Calvin to begin to redefine inspiration?
4. Describe the beginnings of the Fundamentalist movement. What moved them to define inspiration as they did?
5. What is the rationale for defining inspiration in the ways Fundamentalists did in the twentieth century?
6. What are two basic ways to think about what it means to say the Bible is inspired?

Resources:

- ❖ James W. Aageson, "Reading Biblical Texts: Truth, Fact, and Myth," Bible and Interpretation Website (a condensation of the author's book published in 2000): http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/aageson_biblicaltxt.shtml
- ❖ Philo of Alexandria: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12116-philos-judaicus>
- ❖ Origen: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11306b.htm>

PART 2: WHAT IS THE STORY OF THE HEBREW BIBLE?

Chapter 4: The Pentateuch, Part 1: Genesis

Review Questions (pg. 76)

1. What are the distinctive characteristics of each major source that makes up the Pentateuch?
2. Why is it important to identify the genre of a document correctly?
3. Explain how parables can be true and yet not factual. How might this help you read other parts of the Bible (for example, the first chapters of Genesis)?
4. How are the creation accounts in Genesis and Enuma Elish alike? How are they different?
5. Why does Genesis include the story of "the fall"?
6. Compare the flood story in Genesis with the flood story in the Epic of Gilgamesh. What does this comparison show about what Genesis wants to say about God?
7. What is the point of the story in which Noah curses his grandson Canaan?
8. What in the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah suggests that it is about violence and injustice against the defenseless?

9. Why do the ancestors of the Israelites always get their wives from some place other than Canaan?

Resources:

- ❖ Robert R. Cargill, “Forget about Noah’s Ark; There Was No Worldwide Flood,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2010: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/flood357903.shtml>
- ❖ Mark Elliott, “Biblical Archaeology and Its Interpretation: The Sayce-Driver Controversy,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2003: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/The_Sayce_Driver_Controversy.shtml
- ❖ Gordon Wenham, “Pentateuchal Studies Today,” Themelios 22.1 (1996): 3-13: http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_pentateuch_wenham.html
- ❖ Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Fall: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P1C.HTM
- ❖ Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (book 2, chapter 1) on the fall: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iv.ii.html>
- ❖ The rabbinic commentary *Genesis Rabbah*: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>

Chapter 5: The Pentateuch, Part 2: Exodus through Deuteronomy

Review Questions (pg. 103)

1. Why might the “eye for an eye” command be seen as an advance in justice?
2. What is the narrative function of the conversations between God and Moses?
3. Why was the golden calf story included in the narrative of Exodus?
4. What do the punishments God brings on Israel say about the covenant relationship between God and Israel?
5. What do commands in Leviticus imply about coming into the presence of God?
6. Why do the books of the Torah give commands that make Israelites so different from those around them?
7. How does Deuteronomy say that the fortunes of the nation of Israel are tied to obedience to the law?
8. How could the people view the Law as a gift from God?

Chapter 6: The Israelites Tell Their Story: Interpretations of National Disasters

Review Questions (pg. 138)

1. Why does the book of Joshua tell the stories of Israel’s conquest of Canaan the way it does?
2. How do stories in the book of Judges reflect the Deuteronomistic pattern? How important is this pattern to the central point of the book?

3. What is the function of the book of Ruth? What does it say about the attitude of some Israelites toward non-Jews?
4. According to the interpretation of the authors of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, why do the nations of Israel and Judah fall? What does this interpretation tell readers about the purpose of these books?
5. Why do 1 and 2 Chronicles sometimes change parts of the stories found in 1 and 2 Kings?
6. How do the Deuteronomistic writings interpret the destruction of the northern kingdom and the defeat and exile of Judah?

Resources:

- ❖ Philip Davies, “Minimalism, ‘Ancient Israel,’ and Anti-Semitism,” Bible and Interpretation Website: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Minimalism.shtml>
- ❖ Mark Hamilton, “Who Was a Jew? Jewish Ethnicity During the Achaemenid Period,” *Restoration Quarterly* 37 (1995): 102-17: http://www.acu.edu/sponsored/restoration_quarterly/archives/1990s/vol_37_no_2_contents/hamilton.html
- ❖ Efraín Velázquez II, “The Persian Period and the Origins of Israel: Beyond the ‘Myths,’ ” Bible and Interpretation Website 2009: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/persian.shtml>
- ❖ The Center for Online Judaic Studies: <http://cojs.org/>

Chapter 7: “Thus Says the Lord”: Israel’s Prophetic Tradition

Review Questions (pg. 172)

1. How are the eighth-century classical prophets similar to and different from their immediate predecessors (such as Elijah and Elisha)?
2. Why did Amos find the worship of the temple in Jerusalem unacceptable to God?
3. What do the names of Hosea’s children symbolize? What does their renaming symbolize?
4. Why do many people say that Micah 6:6-8 summarizes the message of the eighth-century prophets? Is there any major theme missing from this summary?
5. Why do interpreters think that the book of Isaiah contains material that was written over a span of two to three hundred years?
6. Why does Jeremiah buy some farmland just as the nation of Judah is about to fall?
7. What are the central messages of Ezekiel’s visions of the chariot-throne of God?
8. What critiques of Israelite prophecy come to expression in Jonah?
9. How do the stories in Daniel address the time period in which the book was written?
10. How does national trouble help the prophets talk about the relationship between God and the people of Judah?

Resources:

- ❖ Julia M. O'Brien, "Who Cares about the Prophets?" Bible and Interpretation Website 2010: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/who357922.shtml>
- ❖ J. David. Pleins, "The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible." Bible and Interpretation Website: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/hebrewbible.shtml>
- ❖ Don C. Benjamin, "Jeremiah: Confessions or Laments?" Bible and Interpretation Website 2010: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/jerem357905.shtml>

Chapter 8: An Alternative Worldview: Israel's Wisdom Literature and Esther

Review Questions (pg. 184)

1. What themes that are typical of Israelite literature does Wisdom literature not include?
2. What ideas about the way things happen in the world does the book of Job challenge?
3. How do the writers of the wisdom tradition think God relates to the world?
4. What is the practical purpose of the book of Esther?
5. What view of the presence of God do we see in Esther?
6. What do we see about the different ways Jews related to non-Jewish culture through Esther and the later additions to it?

Resources:

- ❖ The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature: <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>
- ❖ The Evolution of the Satan: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13219-satan>
- ❖ Purim: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12448-purim>

Chapter 9: Israel's Response to God: The Psalms and the Song of Solomon

Review Questions (pg. 194)

1. How are the Psalms different from the poetry in the prophetic writings?
2. Name three kinds of psalms and tell about their distinctive characteristics.
3. Why do you think the editors of the Psalter included the imprecatory psalms?
4. What does the Song of Solomon say about human nature?

Resources:

- ❖ L. W. King's *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, Luzac's Semitic Text and Translation Series, vol. 12 (London: Luzac and Co., 1902): <http://www.etana.org/sites/default/files/coretexts/14907.pdf>
- ❖ Bernard of Clairvaux on Song of Songs: <http://archive.org/details/St.BernardOnTheSongOfSongs>

Chapter 10: Between the Testaments: From Alexander the Great to the Time of Jesus

Review Questions (pg. 221)

1. Why did Alexander and his successors promote Hellenization?
2. What led to the Maccabean Revolt? What was its purpose?
3. How is the development of various religious parties in Judaism related to the political developments after the success of the Maccabeans?
4. Why did the people of Judea hate Herod?
5. Why were there so many revolts in Judea during this period of time?
6. Compare the origins of the three main religious parties in Palestine.
7. Compare what the three main religious parties in Palestine identified as authoritative Scripture and how they went about interpreting those recognized texts.

Resources:

- ❖ Paul V. M. Flesher, “What Did a Synagogue of Jesus’ Time Look Like?” Bible and Interpretation Website 2011: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/fle358001.shtml>
- ❖ Anthony J. Tomasino, “Diversity and Unity in Judaism before Jesus,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2004: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Tomasino_Diversity.shtml
- ❖ Plutarch, “Alexander”, Translated by John Dryden: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/alexandr.html>
- ❖ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.4-6, trans. William Whiston: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2848>
- ❖ Source: Suetonius, “D. Octavius Caesar Augustus” [148] in *The Lives of the Caesars*, trans. Alexander Thomson, M.D.: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6400/6400-h/6400-h.htm>
- ❖ Shema: http://www.come-and-hear.com/berakoth/berakoth_2.html
- ❖ The Qumran Visualization Project: <http://www.virtualqumran.com/images.html>
- ❖ Digital Dead Sea Scrolls: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/>

PART 3: WHAT IS THE STORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Chapter 11: The Gospels: Their Composition and Nature

Review Questions (pg. 236)

1. Why do the various New Testament Gospels tell the same story about Jesus in different ways?
2. Compare the stories the Gospels tell about Jesus to the stories Genesis tells about its important characters.
3. What does Matthew 12:22-32 show about the influence of interpretation on how a person tells about and understands an event?
4. Which Gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels? Why are they given that designation?
5. Discuss how the Watson essay in For Further Reading helps you evaluate various claims of people about the historical Jesus, especially the more sensational ones.

Resources:

- ❖ Paula Fredriksen, “From Jesus to Christ. The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2000:
http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/fredricksen_JesustoChrist.shtml
- ❖ Craig Keener, “Will the Real Historical Jesus Please Stand Up? The Gospels as Sources for Historical Information about Jesus,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2010:
<http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/keener357924.shtml>
- ❖ Francis Watson, “Inventing Jesus’ Wife,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2012:
<http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/wat368023.shtml>
- ❖ Gospel of Thomas: Stephen Patterson and Marvin Meyer, *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 1994):
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/thomas-scholars.html>

Chapter 12: Four Views of One Jesus: Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John

Review Questions (pg. 275)

1. Why do the four Gospels give different understandings of Jesus?
2. What does Mark mean when he has Jesus say that the kingdom of God is “near”?
3. How did a message of a coming kingdom sound in Roman-dominated Palestine?
4. Why do some scholars think Mark presents the twelve disciples as such failures?
5. Why are the genealogies of Matthew and Luke so different?
6. What are the main things Matthew wants readers to think about Jesus from reading the Sermon on the Mount?
7. What do Matthew’s fulfillment quotations say about the way he reads the Hebrew Bible? Are there parallels among other groups within Judaism?
8. What does the Magnificat show about Luke’s understanding of what the mission of Jesus is about?
9. Name some stories and sayings of Jesus that point to Luke’s concern for the outcasts and the poor. How do these stories make these points?
10. Compare the ways Matthew and Luke talk about Jesus “fulfilling” Scripture.
11. What are some of the ways the Gospel of John has Jesus identify himself with God?
12. Compare the way Jesus teaches in John with the way he teaches in the Synoptics.
13. Discuss John’s use of the expression “the Jews.”

Resources:

- ❖ Philip Jenkins, “Hidden Gospels,” Bible and Interpretation Website:
<http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/hiddengospel.shtml>

- ❖ Jay Williams, “Mark, The Gospel of Radical Transformation,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2008: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/williams.shtml>

Chapter 13: The Story Continues: The Acts of the Apostles

Review Questions (pg. 291)

1. How does Luke understand the events on the day of Pentecost that mark the beginning of the church?
2. Why is the story about Cornelius so important in Acts? How do various elements of the way it is told support the point it wants to make?
3. Why does Luke in Acts have believers in Christ go on trial before so many Roman judges?
4. What does it mean to Luke to say that the church is an institution of the “last days”? Why is this important to him?
5. Why does Luke, writing near the end of the first century, give so much attention to validating the spread of the church to Gentiles?
6. Why is it important for Luke to have Paul reach Rome and why does Luke stop the story before we know the outcome of Paul’s trial? What does this tell us about Luke’s purposes in writing Acts and about the literary and historical nature of Acts?

Resources:

- ❖ Joseph B. Tyson, “When and Why Was the Acts of the Apostles Written?” Bible and Interpretation Website 2011: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/actapo358006.shtml>
- ❖ Suetonius, “Nero Claudius Caesar” in *The Lives of the Caesars*, trans. Alexander Thomson, M.D.: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6400/6400-h/6400-h.htm>

Chapter 14: The Pauline Letters: Apostolic Advice to Early Churches

Review Questions (pg. 327)

1. What are some of the reasons it is difficult to understand clearly the message of an ancient letter?
2. How does recognizing that some writings within the New Testament are letters influence how you think about the advice they give?
3. Why does one Pauline letter give advice that seems to contradict what he says in another letter?
4. Why did it create problems when people in Paul’s churches stopped worshiping gods other than the God of Israel?
5. How does Paul interpret persecution for the Thessalonians?
6. What kind of definition of spirituality does Paul give the Corinthians?
7. How does Paul describe the afterlife for believers in 1 Corinthians?
8. How can you tell that 1 Corinthians was not as convincing to its recipients as Paul had hoped?

9. Describe the problem that Galatians addresses. What is Paul's basic response?
10. What does Philippians demonstrate about the place of women in the earliest Pauline churches?
11. What does Philippians show about how long it took for the church to begin to make rather exalted claims about Christ?
12. What combination of purposes leads Paul to write Romans?
13. What does Paul think the justice of God demands as a response to people doing evil?
14. What does Paul say about the election of Israel in the time after Christ?

Resources:

- ❖ Paula Fredriksen, "From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus," Bible and Interpretation Website 2000:
http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/fredricksen_JesustoChrist.shtml
- ❖ Jerry L. Sumney, "Who Are Those 'Servants of Satan'?" Bible and Interpretation Website 2000: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/PaulOpponents_Sumney.shtml

Chapter 15: The Disputed Pauline Letters: Continuing Advice in Paul's Name

Review Questions (pg. 343)

1. What did it mean when the people 2 Thessalonians opposes said, "The Day of the Lord is here"?
2. When is it most likely that the "man of lawlessness" lived? What makes you think so?
3. What meanings does Colossians draw out of the ritual of baptism?
4. How does Colossians say one's spiritual life comes to expression?
5. What is the basic topic of Ephesians? What do the tone and perspective of this discussion tell you about the date of the book?
6. How did the position of the "widows" influence what 1 Timothy says about women in roles of leadership?
7. How does 2 Timothy use examples of good people and bad people?
8. Why does 2 Timothy think various members of society should conform to cultural expectations?

Resources:

- ❖ Bruce Chilton, "James, Jesus' Brother," Bible and Interpretation Website 2002:
http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Chilton_James.shtml

Chapter 16: Hebrews and the General Epistles: Messages for Broader Audiences

Review Questions (pg. 361)

1. Discuss the literary form of the book of Hebrews.
2. Why does Hebrews evaluate the Mosaic covenant as it does?
3. Compare what James means by the word *faith* with what Paul means when he uses the term.

4. How does 1 Peter envision the way that members of the church relate to the world around them?
5. How does 2 Peter try to help readers believe in a second coming of Christ?
6. How is the perspective of Jude different from the Pauline letters?
7. What arguments does 1 John provide to lead his readers to reject Docetism?

Resources:

- ❖ Bruce Chilton, “James, Jesus’ Brother,” Bible and Interpretation Website 2002:
http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Chilton_James.shtml
- ❖ 1 Clement: Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans.:
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-roberts.html>
- ❖ Jubilees: R. H. Charles, trans. <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

Chapter 17: Revelation: John’s Apocalyptic Vision

Review Questions (pg. 382)

1. What is the basic purpose of apocalyptic literature?
2. Why do apocalyptic writings use *ex eventu* prophecy?
3. Why does apocalyptic use such strange and extravagant imagery? How hard do the writers think this will be for their intended readers to understand?
4. What kind of persecution did most of the original readers of Revelation probably face?
5. What does the series of sevens (seals, trumpets, bowls) tell you about the way the narrative of Revelation works?
6. What characteristics of God does Revelation bring to expression in judgment? Why does the author welcome the exercise of those characteristics?
7. What are the functions of the image of Jesus as the slaughtered lamb in Revelation 5?
8. Why does John use such veiled images to deliver his message in Revelation?
9. What is the central message of Revelation?

Resources:

- ❖ The Book of Enoch: http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/enoch/ENOCH_1.HTM