



Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Set: Old Testament

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Many today find the Old Testament a closed book. The cultural issues seem insurmountable and we are easily baffled by that which seems obscure. Furthermore, without knowledge of the ancient culture we can easily impose our own culture on the text, potentially distorting it. This series invites you to enter the Old Testament with a company of guides, experts that will give new insights into these cherished writings. Features include • Over 2000 photographs, drawings, maps, diagrams and charts provide a visual feast that breathes fresh life into the text. • Passage-by-passage commentary presents archaeological findings, historical explanations, geographic insights, notes on manners and customs, and more. • Analysis into the literature of the ancient Near East will open your eyes to new depths of understanding both familiar and unfamiliar passages. • Written by an international team of 30 specialists, all top scholars in background studies.

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Editorial Review

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The Bible is a work of immense complexity. When we speak of the Bible, we generally are referring to a collection of individual books that form the sacred scriptures of the Christian Church and were written over the course of many centuries by different authors, in different languages, for different purposes, and under varying political and social circumstances. However, the first 39 books found in most English translations of the Bible have been canonized by Jews and Christians alike and comprise the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament, respectively. They are religiously significant to two traditions, a fact that can come into play with respect to questions of interpretation and meaning. Two new reference sets, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible* and *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, will help interested readers navigate one of the most widely read books of all time. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* focuses its attention on the text of the books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Our distance from the thought of the biblical writers and the world in which they lived and wrote is arguably the greatest impediment to understanding these texts. After a brief essay that introduces each book, a verse-by-verse commentary follows. Drawing upon linguistic analysis, archaeological evidence, history, other ancient Near Eastern literatures, and the like, the commentary provides the historical and cultural background against which the texts can be read and understood. Like *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, the commentary set strives to be both accessible and scholarly. And nearly every page has one or more color illustrations, making it, too, a visually engaging set. Because of ambiguities in the biblical texts, gaps in the historical and cultural record, scholarly differences assessing existing evidence, and differing approaches to textual criticism and historical method, final judgments as to questions of interpretation and meaning are often elusive. This does not mean that scholarly conclusions are not drawn. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* strives to include these varying viewpoints but is honest and straightforward in stating that the conclusions it presents reflect a critical and theological position that is rooted in historic Christianity and is conservative/evangelical. Recommended for theological collections and research libraries.

--Christopher McConnell

Review

“This is an impressive and rich resource for scholars, students, seminarians, and interested lay readers. The volumes, with their insightful and perceptive commentaries, updated footnotes, wonderful illustrations, and sidebars---all judiciously researched---contain a veritable thesaurus of enlightening information relating to the Hebrew Bible within the cultural, ideological, and religious world of the ancient Near East.

Notwithstanding their traditional approach to Scripture, I heartily recommend this series with enthusiasm.” -- Shalom Paul

“This is a unique and important commentary. It is a milestone in the collection and comparative interpretation of ancient Near Eastern texts, pictures, and other archaeological materials as well as geographical, historical, and cultural information as they relate to the Old Testament. There is nothing else like it available today. The interpretations provided are usually cogent and convincing. Where there is legitimate debate, the explanations generally show due caution. There will always be disagreements between scholars on such matters, but the many comparative and archaeological resources assembled in these volumes make it a veritable gold mine for those who desire to take the ancient context of the Lord’s work and word seriously in their study, teaching, and preaching of Holy Scripture.” -- Richard E. Averbeck

“As a pastor, I am certain that the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament* is a

deeply valuable tool for ministry. With rock-solid scholarship, relevant commentary, and gripping visual illustrations, this will be a great tool for believers for years to come.” -- Kevin G. Harney

“This tool is a rich gift to everyone who seeks to teach the Scriptures.” -- John Ortberg

“Biblical commentaries have traditionally explicated the text verse-by-verse. By contrast, evidence from the wider archaeological, institutional and literary context has typically been organized thematically. John H. Walton and his collaborators have combined these two methods, presenting the context verse-by-verse. They have done so in a responsible manner, which will satisfy both maximalists and minimalists as well as the majority of Bible readers who find themselves between these two extremes.” -- William W. Hallo

“The publication of the Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament marks a major step forward in the systematic integration of the textual and artifactual evidences from the ancient Near East that inform the context of Scripture. This important reference work will serve as an essential starting point for an ancient “contextual criticism” of the Hebrew Bible, enabling scholars, pastors, and laity to access the rich data from over one hundred and seventy years of explorations and excavations in the Near East. Readers will find the visual materials particularly valuable, since often these are scattered in many diverse places. While there will always be disagreements concerning the interpretations of the data, the collection in a single source will be a boon to all.” -- K. Lawson Younger, Professor

From the Back Cover

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Nancy Jones:

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