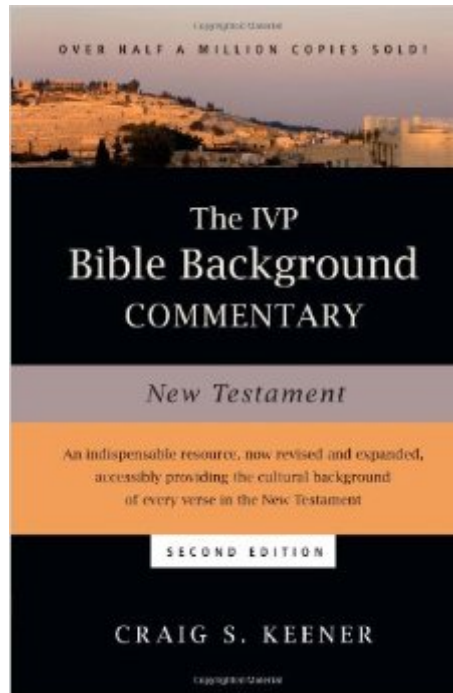


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The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament



Synopsis

Voted one of Christianity Today's 1995 Books of the Year! Preaching's Preacher's Guide to the Best Bible Reference for 2014 (New Testament General) This revised edition of the standard reference work in its field has been expanded throughout to now provide even more up-to-date information by Craig Keener, one of the leading New Testament scholars on Jewish, Greek and Roman culture. To understand and apply the Bible well, you need two crucial sources of information. One is the Bible itself. The other is an understanding of the cultural background of the passage you're reading. Only with the background can you grasp the author's original concerns and purposes. This unique commentary provides, in verse-by-verse format, the crucial cultural background you need for responsible--and richer--Bible study. It includes a glossary of cultural terms and important historical figures, maps and charts, up-to-date bibliographies, and introductory essays about cultural background information for each book of the New Testament. Based on decades of in-depth study, this accessible and bestselling commentary is valuable for pastors in sermon preparation, for Sunday-school and other church teachers as they build lessons, for missionaries concerned not to import their own cultural biases into the Bible, for college and seminary students in classroom assignments, and for everyday Bible readers seeking to deepen and enhance their study of Scripture.

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Customer Reviews

The New Testament Bible background commentary by Craig Keener has been a standard reference

work for many years. The new second edition only makes this commentary more valuable. Keener has done a thorough revision of the original and has expanded his treatment of many passages. The goal has remained the same: “The sole purpose of this commentary (unlike most commentaries) is to make available the most relevant cultural, social and historical background for reading the New Testament the way its first readers would have read it” (p. 14). Thus, Keener is not seeking to offer theological commentary on the New Testament, but rather background material that will aid the reader in coming to theological conclusions. Although it is not his main focus, Keener also makes literary observations from time to time (for example, inclusio or chiasmic structures “see his final chart at the end of the book entitled, “A Chiasmus: Acts 2:22-36”). Keener’s audience remains the same as the first edition. He writes for “busy pastors and other Bible readers who have fewer resources and less time available” (p. 19). As a result, Keener omits most references that scholars and more curious Bible readers would find useful. With this target audience in mind, Keener’s New Testament background commentary begins with a 36-page introduction on how to use the commentary and why there is a need for such a commentary. As in the first edition, Keener has retained an introductory section discussing the significance of the gospels, as well as, New Testament letters. Each New Testament book is also preceded by a brief introduction. The glossary (also included in the first edition) has some new additions, such as “magic” and “Pilate,” while some definitions have been expanded such as “Satan” and “Son of God.”

I have huge respect for Craig Keener’s work ever since his 2003 two-volume commentary on the Gospel of John. It was largely instrumental in researching for my own book about John’s Gospel, and I believe has become the primary resource for Johannine studies. So when IVP sent me this brand new second-edition 800-page New Testament commentary, I was quite excited. As a reference book, it doesn’t disappoint. Scholarly and interesting, each book of the New Testament is given a short introduction detailing authorship and setting, and then a verse-by-verse commentary. The verses are clustered and topical, so it’s easy to page through the book looking for topics of interest. Be aware that Keener’s emphasis differs from other commentaries; he is less interested in providing simple exegesis than in painting a picture of the first-century setting whereby a saying or statement can be understood. Note the title: this is a “Bible Background Commentary.” It is about the cultural background and what was going on in Bible days that colored the writings we read two thousand years later. It’s this focus that gives this reference book its unique niche. A few examples of Keener’s focus will help explain what makes this a

must-have resource for sermon development or (in my case) writing Bible commentary: Matthew 5:22, about the fires of Gehenna • for someone who calls his brother a fool: Keener doesn't delve into the history of Gehenna but speaks to its metaphorical meaning as the opposite of paradise, and how some Jewish teachers envisioned eternal torture while others believed the wicked would be burned up.

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