Historical and Cultural Background Study

Exegetical Method

- **Purpose: Going behind the text**

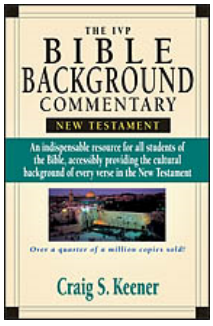
Steps:

1. determine whether the cultural milieu of your passage is basically ANE for OT and Jewish, Greco-Roman, or some combination of both for the NT
2. determine the meaning and significance of persons, places, events, institutions, concepts, customs, culture, practices and historical events in the passage

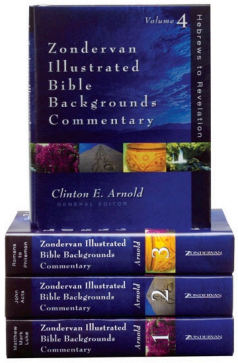
3. gather parallel or counter-parallel texts from Jewish or Greco-Roman sources that may aid in understanding the historical-cultural context
4. evaluate the significance of the background date for understanding your text – be careful that you do no import later tradition into the text
5. analyse how the understanding of the background could help you in the understanding of the text and how you apply what you know.

Some good resources

- IVP Bible Background Commentary - NT

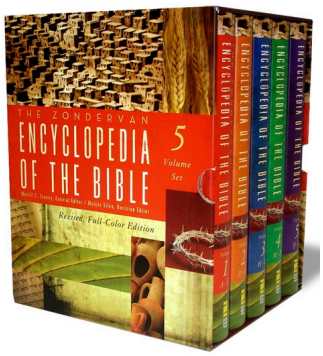


- Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Dictionary – NT – 4 vols (Clinton Arnold)

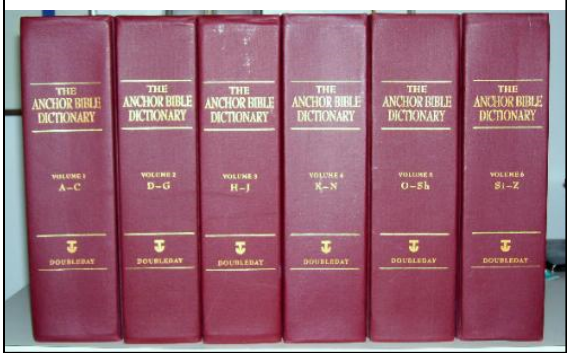


Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible – 5 vols – Revised, Full-Colour edition

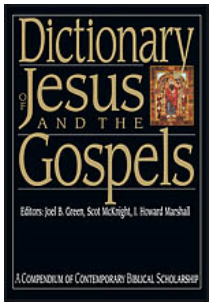
(Moises Silva)

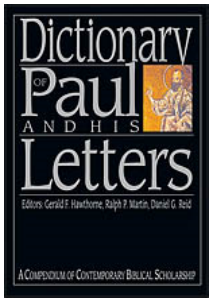


- Anchor Bible Dictionary – 6 vols



IVP Dictionary Series





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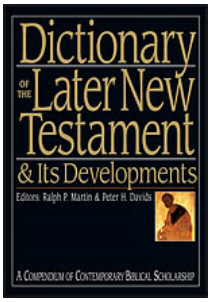
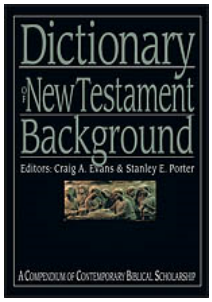
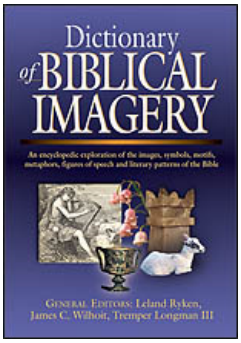
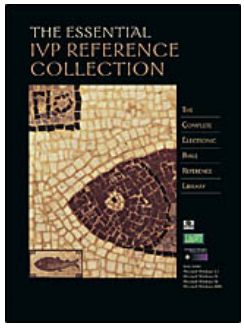






- Dictionary of Biblical Imagery

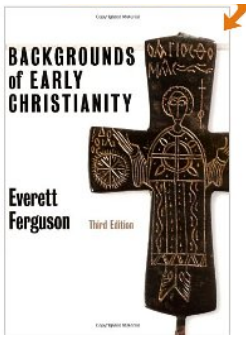
Software



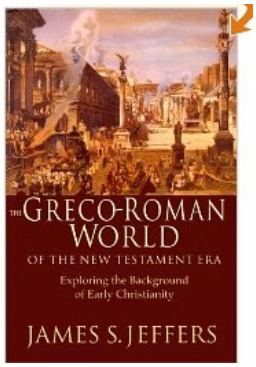
The IVP Reference Collection

Introductory Books

- Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 3rd edition

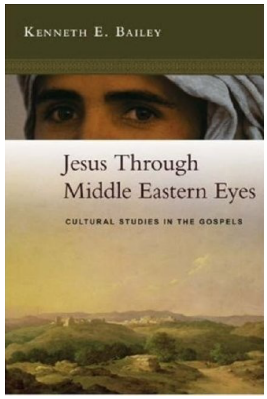


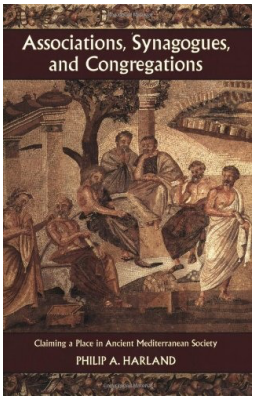
- James Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity

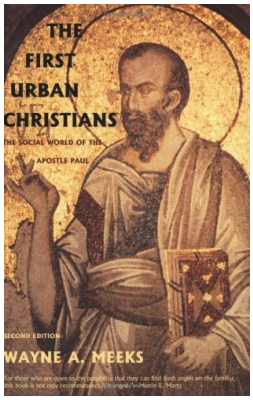


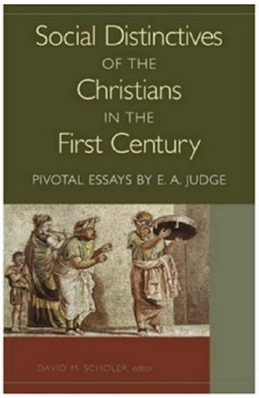
Specific Monographs – Social World of the NT

- Religious practices
  - Jewish
  - Greco-Roman
- Social practices
- Cultural practices





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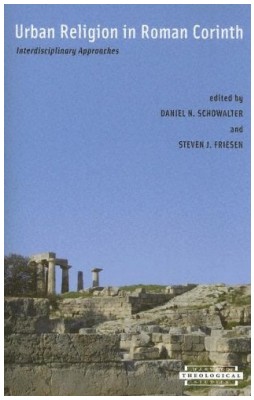
DAVID M. SCHOLER, editor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Interdisciplinary Approaches
edited by
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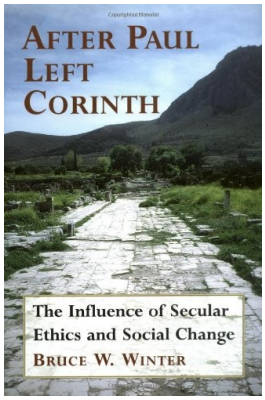
and
STEVEN J. FRIESEN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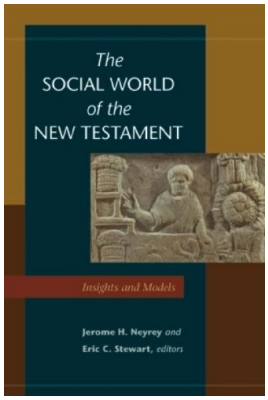
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Insights and Models
Jerome H. Neyrey and
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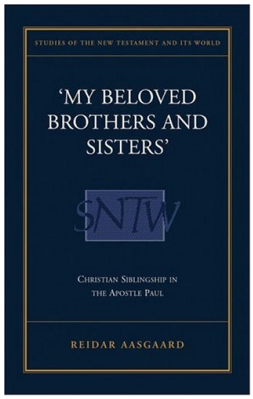
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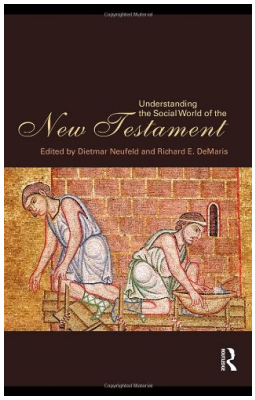
REIDAR AASGAARD


Understanding
the Social World of the
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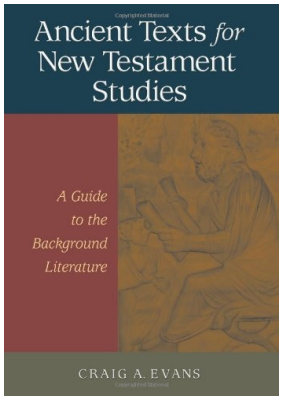
Edited by Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris



Using ATLAS

- http://search.ebscohost.com/
- Login ID:
- Password:

1 Tim 2:9-10

- Refer to handout

Examples

- Letter to the church in Laodicea in Revelation
- Mark 7 – tradition of the elders
- Luke 15:1-2/19:1-10 – tax collector
- Acts 19:23-34 – Artemis cult
- Archaeology and the Corinthians

Exercise

- Philemon

Imagine you belong to the following social location in the church that meets in the house of Philemon. After you have heard the letter being read, what would be your response? How do you think this letter would affect and impact you?

- Philemon
- Master of other household
- Slaves in the household
- Onesimus

Questions

- Paul's letter placed Philemon in a difficult situation.
  - What would be the social implication if Philemon responded positively to Paul's letter?
  - How would this affect the slavery institution in the Greco-Roman world?
  - Did Philemon respond positively to Paul?