*An Annotated List of Biblical and Theological Sources Potentially Useful for Sunday School and Bible
Study Teachers/Discussion Leaders/Students*

**NOTE FROM PASTOR JOHNNY:** When I first started my Master of Divinity (basic degree for pastors, a three-year program involving: blblical languages, biblical studies, christian education, church administration, counseling, ethics, hermeneutics, missions, philosophy, preaching, and theology (both biblical and systematic)), a wise professor warned us about “sets” of books, particularly “sets” of commentaries. He urged us to buy individual books and commentaries because “sets” are uneven because the levels, knowledge, wisdom, and skills of the individual authors are uneven. My list is not an attempt to be exhaustive in providing a huge list, but to recommend from my perspective the best books (for your use) I have found in each category. There are some books that have more technical details or may be more interesting because of their speculative or controversial approaches to the subject matter, but I have tried to steer clear of those. AND, keeping in mind affordability and availability, I have indicated web references where you may find PDFs of some of the out-of-print books.

**WARNING:** Please note that just because I recommend a book doesn’t mean that I agree with ALL of it. I often learn from books with which I disagree in part. Some books have less confidence in matters of history and science than I do. That doesn’t mean that I can’t be directed to them by the Holy Spirit and glean the valuable insights without being drawn into unproductive discussions. So, please don’t make the same mistake some of my seminary students did and think that I think every book reflects exactly how you should interpret a passage. I have tried to draw from new and old, devotional and scholarly, conservative and, at times, what some would call liberal. But I believe that all of these books have something to commend them.

**AVAILABILITY:** Even when the books are still in print, they may be very expensive. I suggest checking with your local library to see if they might be available through Interlibrary Loan (if the local library doesn’t have them), scouring the shelves at Half-Priced Books and searching at Amazon to see if you can find a used copy. We also have local seminaries like Trinity, American Baptist Seminary of the West, and North Park that might have used copies on sale if they have been used as textbooks. As for out-of-print/public domain works, as already noted I will indicate web references. Free downloadable or free to view online references are marked with an asterisk (**\***) followed by author and title in red. I did provide some hint as to what is currently available in both new and used editions where possible.

**BIAS AND CAUTION:** Because of the availability of resources on the web, you will notice that this list focuses strictly on edited print sources. On the web, you never know what you’re getting because everything on the web is RUSHED and usually, lightly edited. So, if you can get hold of any of these sources, you will be thankful.

**General Resources on the Bible**

***The Holman Bible Dictionary*** (This is a one-volume dictionary with lots of pictures (many of them color plates) and reasonably concise articles. If you can find a first or second printing, there are three articles by yours truly. The best part of these first two editions is that editor Trent Butler offers up a suggested meaning for almost every name of persons and cities that is covered in the volume. Unfortunately, after the third printing, they went a different direction.)

*\*Buttrick, G.A. (ed.)* ***The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*** (This standard reference work contains four (4) volumes plus a later supplementary volume. It is the most thorough reference work available on biblical subjects. Although it is expensive, you can access it in the church office (on the shelf behind Pastor Johnny’s desk). Archaeologically speaking, some of the articles are dated and have been supplemented by new findings. In terms of biblical knowledge, this was published before interpreters started paying close attention to the text using linguistics and literary theory so it may see problems where modern interpreters see no problems at all.)

**The Mercer Dictionary of the Bible** (This one-volume work was published by Mercer University Press in association with the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion. I was privileged to write at least eight (8) of the articles while I was serving as the Secretary of the Pacific Coast Region of the NABPR. Its strength is that it is much more up-to-date in terms of archaeological findings and linguistic-literary approaches. Its weakness is that the editors and some of the writers have been accused of not being fundamentalist enough and that, as a one-volume, it is not comprehensive. But it is useful and I am not ashamed of my contributions, though I would handle some of them differently today to make them even stronger (of course, we had word limits even then).

**Books about How the Bible Came to Us**

NOTE: Some of these may be disturbing to those of you who think that the Holy Spirit gave us every Bible book all at once and that the copying of texts was uniform throughout its handling. If you struggle with these books, remember that, ultimately, we have the Bible because the Holy Spirit inspired it in mortal humans, had it written, edited, and transmitted by mortal humans, and preserved it by mortal humans. As such, we can expect to find differences, but not errors.

Collins, John J., Craig A. Evans, and Lee Martin McDonald (eds), ***Ancient Jewish and Christian Scriptures: New Developments in Canon Controversy*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020). This is a complicated book about a complicated subject. Even though it is difficult, I highly recommend Chapters 1 and 7. As such a new book, the cheapest way to get this volume is by Amazon Kindle or Barnes and Noble Nook for $25. Amazon has new books for $30 and B&N for $40.

Gignilliat, Mark S. ***Reading Scripture Canonically: Theological Instincts for Old Testament Interpretation*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing, 2019). Although I could have put this one either under Biblical Interpretation or Old Testament Theology, the first four chapters in this volume provide the best summary of how the Bible came to be collected, preserved, and considered authoritative that I’ve read. New copies can be purchased for $22 from bookshop.com, Amazon, and Barnes & Noble. Amazon has a Kindle eBook for $17. I haven’t seen any used copies as of this typing.

Jobes, Karen H. and Moises Silva, ***Invitation to the Septuagint*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Press, 2000). Don’t bother looking at this if you aren’t curious about the history behind the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was in use during Jesus’ time. Again, the first 68 pages provide valuable insights to everyone. This one can be picked up used on abebooks.com for $11, biblio.com for $15, or other sites for ca. $20. These are hardbound.

McDonald, Lee Martin and James A. Sanders (eds.), ***The Canon Controversy*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing, 2002). I find myself continuing to go back to my ebook (Kindle) version of this volume, particularly the learned article by the late University of Dallas NT professor William R. Farmer (Chapter 19—"Reflections on Jesus and the New Testament Canon”) and the introduction by Eugene Ulrich, OT professor at the University of Notre Dame) (Chapter 2—“The Notion of a Canon”). Almost all of the used copies of this book are as expensive as the $55 paperback on Amazon. I bought the $36 Kindle eBook.

Wurthwein, Ernst. ***The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1979). Much of this work is replete with details that may not be helpful to you, but the first 46 pages are invaluable in terms of understanding the materials with which and upon which the Old Testament scriptures were written and how they were copied and preserved. It’s an expensive book, but if you can borrow it from a library to read or afford one of the $19 used paperbacks from Amazon, it’s worth it.

**Books on Interpreting the Bible (also knowns as Biblical Hermeneutics)**

Some books on interpreting the Bible are more relevant to specific books, passages, or types of literature in the Bible. I will put those in what I believe to be the most appropriate places. Those books identified by an \* at the beginning of the reference were available free to read online or to download at the time of typing this list.

Best, Ernest, ***From Text to Sermon*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1978). Although this book is directed toward interpreting the Bible specifically for preaching, the first chapter (entitled “Scripture”) provides a solid perspective on the way interpreters view and, as a result, apply scripture to preach (and, of course, teach) to today’s believers. I totally disagree with his approach to the parables of Jesus, and I stand with a large group of interpreters who think his approach is too limiting. But other than the fact that some of the perspectives he shares are more liberal than my view and his almost naïve perspective on the parables, this is a solid book. A pdf of this volume can be downloaded as part of a free trial from an online repository of theological books, but there are numerous used copies of it about.

Bonchek, Avigdor, ***Studying the TORAH: A Guide to In-Depth Interpretation*** (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004). Even though this was written by a Jewish scholar and deals strictly with the Old Testament, his methodology for studying is the closest to what I do. Admittedly, it may be more useful for those who read Hebrew, but some of his techniques are well worth using even in an English translation. Chapters 1 and 3-6 are brilliant! Amazon has used editions for $15 up, but other used sites have exorbitant prices. Amazon also has a Kindle ebook for $36, nearly the same price as a new paperback on that site.

**\***Farrar, Frederick D. ***A History of Interpretation*** (London: Macmillan, 1886). Obviously, I wouldn’t list this marvelous old book if it wasn’t freely available. It is downloadable from Google Books (<https://archive.org/details/historyinterpre02farrgoog> -- if that doesn’t work, just go to archive.org and search by the book title), but why should you care about a 600+ page book that expands on six lectures given at Oxford University in 1885? You should care because the very first lecture delineates the way interpreters from ancients through the 19th century have MISINTERPETED the Bible. Other lectures go into more detail on Dr. Farrar’s analysis of interpretation through the ages. The wording is archaic, but the insights are invaluable.

**\*?**Fee, Gordon D. ***Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*** (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991). Gordon D. Fee is one of the few overtly Pentecostal scholars in today’s world of academia. This volume is not concerned with tongues or their interpretation as much as interpretation of the New Testament. It may not be easy to find this volume, but if you can borrow it or at least find a PDF of Chapter 1 “Hermeneutics and Common Sense,” it would be worthwhile to do so. I’ve never downloaded from the following site, but you are supposed to be able to download an eBook version at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/606853cbf837c344b6ef6456/t/6068aa806ebe2b3d5412cb1b/1617472128461/%7BEbook+PDF+Epub+%7BDownload%7D+gospel-and-spirit-issues-in-new-testament-hermeneutics-by-gordon-d.-506.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/606853cbf837c344b6ef6456/t/6068aa806ebe2b3d5412cb1b/1617472128461/%7BEbook%2BPDF%2BEpub%2B%7BDownload%7D%2Bgospel-and-spirit-issues-in-new-testament-hermeneutics-by-gordon-d.-506.pdf).

**\*?**Fisher, Fred L. ***How to Interpret the New Testament*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966). In this volume, my former New Testament professor (and “boss” when I taught seminary) emphasizes: 1) the general context of the passage, 2) the textual differences in manuscripts and versions, 3) determine the translation you’ll use, 4) look behind the text to the background, 5) study the important words, 6) examine the literary and rhetorical forms, 7) be sure your grammar is straight (he diagramed the Greek sentences when he translated to make sure he wasn’t twisting what it actually said), 8) discover the theological insights in the text, and 9) apply them to life. Interestingly, I know of a professor at a major conservative seminary (Gordon-Conwell) who designed the New Testament Hermeneutics course so that each of nine weeks followed Fisher’s nine steps. Before his death, Dr. Fisher provided manuscript copies of three of his books and the copyright was under his control for this book. So, I will provide scans of portions of the book from time to time.

McKnight, Scot, ***The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 2008, 2016, 2018). This book is so simple as to almost be devotional. The author may not have the same views as you do, but this book will make you think and will bless you more than challenge you. I wish every believer would read this book. If just the majority of his insights were followed, our congregations would be more harmonious. It is too new to be available cheaply, but the good news is that it tends to go on sale from time-to-time because the publisher really believes in it.

**\***Ramm, Bernard. ***Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics for Conservative Protestants*** (Boston, MA: W. A. Wilde Company, 1956). I didn’t discover this volume until AFTER I had completed my first magisterial degree. I believe it is still the best book on how to interpret/study the Bible for everyone. The introduction (well worth reading) can be downloaded for free at: <http://rediscoveringthebible.org/RammHermeneutics.pdf>. The whole book can be “borrowed” (read online) for free at: <https://archive.org/details/protestantbiblic00ramm>.

**Books on Biblical Archaeology**

Coogan, Michael D. and Mark S. Smith, ***Stories from Ancient Canaan*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012). This second edition of translations from the Ancient Ugaritic (early Phoenician/Canaanite literature) helps us to understand what the people around Israel believed. The translations are extremely readable, though the demonstrate the fragmentary nature of the source materials. Some of the materials may be found in the two-volume set by James B. Pritchard described below.

Finegan, Jack. ***Light from the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of Judaism and Christianity*** (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959). Whereas the book by Thompson described below uses a biblical chronology, this volume uses a chronology of world history. It is harder to cross-reference with the Bible unless one knows some basic history, but it offers a good overview of each period. The index of scripture references is helpful, as is the fact that it can be downloaded free at: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.280801>.

Frank, Harry Thomas, ***Bible, Archaeology, and Faith*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1971). Alas, you’d need to find this one at a used bookstore or online. It isn’t old enough to be public domain and isn’t published in a new edition. However, it has the advantage of having more illustrations / maps / photographs than the other volumes and a lengthy index cross-referencing with scripture (though it isn’t an exhaustive index from my experience). It was very popular at its time, so it may be available through libraries.

Hays, Christopher B. ***Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014). How are the writings in the Bible different from or similar to other writings in the Ancient Near East? This volume provides English translations of documents outside the Bible which either help us understand the ideas of peoples around Ancient Israel or provide an echo or inspiration for material in the Hebrew Bible.

Longenecker, Bruce W***. In Stone and Story: Early Christianity in the Roman World*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Press, 2020). This beautiful full color volume is almost a coffee table book of Roman Era archaeology. It’s relatively new, but as I typed this, I saw that Amazon had a couple for under $10. Longenecker, a professor at Baylor University, considers the rival religions faced by early Christianity, the social structures of Roman society, and the economics/realities of family life. An index of scriptural references helps you find material of relevance to what you’re studying.

Pritchard, James B. (ed.) ***The Ancient Near East: A New Anthology of Texts and Pictures: Volumes I and II*** (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958). These volumes were my introduction to Egyptian hymns, the Code of Hammurabi, legal texts and documents from Assyria and elsewhere, and the Baal saga (so that we can understand the rival religion to Israel’s), among many others. Although this is an old book, it is still being sold in new editions.

Miller, Donald G. ***The Way to Biblical Preaching*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1957). Yes, I know this is about “preaching,” but it is about expository preaching. It can be purchased online for about $7 at this URL (<https://www.thriftbooks.com/a/donald-g-miller/675025/>). If you don’t like the way I preach, this book is partially responsible.

Thompson, J. A. ***The Bible and Archaeology*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1962). Although not as up-to-date as one could want, there is a lot of good information in this volume, chronologically divided according to the History of Israel as the ancient nation. This book is generally more conservative than the one edited by George Ernest Wright below.

**\***Vaux, Roland de. ***Ancient Israel: Volume 1 Social Institutions/ Volume 2 Religious Institutions*** (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965). This two-volume set blends together archaeological and biblical references almost seamlessly. It has helpful indices so that one can find what one needs and also features Pere de Vaux’s insights and conclusions. Subscribers to scribd.com (I never know whether that is a pirate or legitimate website) can download for free, but it can be read free online at: <https://archive.org/details/ancientisraelits0000vaux>. The latter is a one-volume edition of what I have in two volumes.

Wright, George Ernest and David Noel Freedman (eds.) ***The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961). This volume, a collection of articles originally compiled in honor of archaeologist Nelson Glueck, provides as much information on what we don’t know as what we do know. Archaeologists tend to be skeptical of biblical accounts as literal history, but the archaeological finds they describe do help us to understand the general cultural situation surrounding the biblical accounts. I think you’ll find the articles on “Sodom and Gomorrah,” “The Writing of an Old Testament Book,” “What are Cherubim?” “The Musical Instruments of Israel,” and “Manna of Sinai” to be intriguing.

***Biblical Theology: Old and New Testament***

NOTE: Biblical Theology recognizes that Israel’s understanding of God and the Church’s understanding of God developed during the course of the nation’s and the early church’s on-going relationship with God. Systematic Theology attempts to put all of the biblical theologies together into a coherent whole by subject. Biblical Theology allows the particularity of the biblical revelation to be considered while Systematic Theology categorizes, collates, and builds upon the overarching theological understandings. These are the books on Biblical Theology that have influenced me most, but I doubt you could say that I am in total agreement with any of them.

Although the classic works in Old Testament Theology would be Walther Eichrodt’s two-volume ***Theology of the Old Testament*** in The Old Testament Library series (where he considers the development of Israel’s theology by topic) and Gerhard von Rad’s two-volume ***Old Testament Theology*** published by Harper & Row (where he considers the development of Israel’s theology with one volume dealing with literary genres other than prophecy and another dealing just with prophecy), these are rather more expensive and technical than worthwhile to Sunday School or Bible Study Group teachers.

Many New Testament Theologies have different objects than we would as Sunday School teachers as they are concerned about modernizing/demythologizing/dissecting rather than learning. So, names like Bultmann, Fuller, Jeremias,

**\***Beecher, Willis J. ***The Prophets and the Promise*** (Fort Worth, Texas: Seminary Book Store, 1947). This book is actually comprised of lectures given at a seminary in 1902-1903, but the volume I have was published in 1947. If you’ve ever wondered about all of those scripture passages in the Old Testament and why they were interpreted as messianic prophecies/promises, this is one of the best books on the subject. His chapter on “The Promise and the Patriarchs” may sound a lot like my preaching on those passages. That should be proof of the impact since I first became aware of this volume in 1967. I also appreciated his chapter on “The Prophet as a Giver of Torah” and the one on “Messianic Expectation and Hope.” The entire book can be downloaded at: <https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/OTeSources/23a-Prophets/Beecher-Prophets-Promise/Beecher-ProphetsPromise.pdf>.

Birch, Bruce C., Walter Bruegemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen, A Theological ***Introduction to the Old Testament*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2005). The authors of this book are a veritable “Who’s Who” of the most prominent and influential Old Testament scholars of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. They address the Hebrew Bible thematically, taking the literature concerning each era as presenting basic theological truths and defending them. This is a deep and insightful book. I particularly liked the balanced approach in considering the nature of evil and humanity’s free will, as well as suffering tied to that free will. The consideration of wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, Song of Songs) as the discovery of a sacred equilibrium between “settled faith” and new experience was particularly relevant to me. But don’t buy, beg, borrow, or ”steal” (just kidding) this book unless you want to drill deep in your understanding of the Old Testament and what it means for your faith.

**\***Bright, John. ***The Authority of the Old Testament*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1967). When Bright did a lecture series while I was doing my first graduate degree, I was one of less than a dozen students permitted to be involved in an additional seminar with him. So, admittedly I am biased, but this book was formative for me. Bright was willing to wade into some of the ugly atrocities and misperceptions of Israel as an Old Testament people and attempt to bridge the gap to how Christians are to understand the Old Testament in the light of the new. The chapter on preaching from the Old Testament is just as relevant to you who are teaching on the Old Testament. You can download a PDF of this mid-20th century volume at: <http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-2/PDF%20Books/00057%20Bright%20The%20Authority%20of%20the%20OT..pdf>.

**\***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. ***The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1953). I read this book after I had studied with Bright and after I had read The Authority of the Old Testament. The Kingdom of God is the most coherent way of presenting the consistent message of God calling humanity that I can remember. His understanding of certain portions of biblical history may not be the same as yours, but this book is a real blessing. In fact, I just realized that I need to re-read it for my spiritual growth. You can read this online at: <https://archive.org/details/kingdomofgodbibl00brig>.

Brueggemann, Walter. ***The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith***  (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1977). Much like John Bright’s The Kingdom of God, Brueggemann pulls Old Testament and New Testament themes together. When doing so, both would see the church as the New Israel, but rather than the generic idea of a kingdom, Brueggemann deals with the promises of God compared with the problem of not receiving those promises as expected. Brueggemann structures his theology around God’s promise to give this wondrous land to Egypt and shows how scripture responds to the loss of or mismanagement of the promise. Naturally, the pattern of promise/potential being squandered by God’s people has meaning for the church, too. This was an invaluable book for my dissertation and I still enjoy looking back at it. The newest edition costs $25 in paperback at Amazon, but they have a used one of my edition for $2.

**\***Clements, Ronald E. *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (Greenwood, South Carolina: Attic Press, 1978). Because of its relatively small size, some have suggested that Clements’ approach to Old Testament Theology is more of a prologue or introduction to an Old Testament Theology than a full-blown effort. [Confession of bias: One of the most exciting moments of my second magisterial degree was being part of a forum where we listened to this marvelous British scholar describe his research on “covenant” for this book and being able to ask questions about it immediately thereafter.] His approach is built around understanding the dimensions of faith within Israel as the people of God and demonstrating how their understanding of God was shaped by the dual foci of law and promise. The good news is that Dr. Clements has allowed the book to be downloaded free of charge in PDF form at: <https://theologicalstudies.org.uk/book_ot-theology_clements.php>.

Craigie, Peter C. ***The Problem of War in the Old Testament*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1981). Is there anything in the Old Testament that causes modern believers more problems than God’s commands to kill everyone opposing Israel on various occasions? The late Dr. Craigie is not going to win any fans among modern day right-wing political “hawks,” but he does address the issues from a thorough-going theological standpoint. Even though he was the external reader who approved my Ph.D. dissertation, we don’t see eye-to-eye on every point, but it’s a stimulating approach. It is still in print for $16.95 at the publisher’s website.

Fisher, Fred L. ***Prayer in the New Testament*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster, 1964). Yes, that’s my old professor again. Get used to seeing his name in this bibliography. This is one of the more powerful of his books because he is considering the doctrine and practice of prayer with a combination of Biblical Theology (examining Jesus’ prayers, the model prayer, the forms of prayer in the Bible, and the practice of prayer in the early church). At the urging of myself and others, Dr. Fisher retrieved his copyright when the book had been out of print for three years and had a manuscript version of the book made available to his students. So, if someone will absolutely commit to using it, I will scan my manuscript copy for distribution. Since Dr. Fisher has gone to be with the Lord and wanted this distributed anyway, I don’t have any qualms about doing this.

Fosdick, Harry Emerson, ***A Guide to Understanding the Bible: The Development of Ideas within the Old and New Testaments*** (New York, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938). This one might get me in trouble. Harry Emerson Fosdick was one of the more liberal U.S. Protestant pastors of the early-to-mid 20th century. He was accused of “spiritualizing away” some of the historical aspects of the text, so be careful on that score, but some of his explanations are so clear and relevant that I can’t help but recommend this as a resource. He divides the subject matter into: The Idea of God, The Idea of Man, The Idea of Right and Wrong, The Idea of Suffering, The Idea of Fellowship with God, and The Idea of Immortality. If, for nothing else, Chapter IV on “The Idea of Suffering” is worth the effort to find this book. It can be downloaded at: <http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-2/Religion-Online.org%20Books/Fosdick%2C%20Harry%20Emerson-A%20Guide%20to%20Understanding%20the%20Bible.pdf>.

Jacob, Edmond, ***Theology of the Old Testament*** (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1958). This French theologian takes a topic by topic approach to Old Testament Theology. He considers: the characteristics of God (largely as depicted in the names of God), the actions of God, the opposition to God, and the triumph of God. If I were teaching OT Theology in college, I might use this as my textbook. Amazon has copies for as little as $6.40 at the time I’m typing this.

Ladd, George Eldon, ***A Theology of the New Testament*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1974). This one hasn’t hit public domain yet. When I initially bought this volume, I was disappointed because he didn’t have more of a cross-section approach to issues in New Testament Theology. Rather, he looks at the theologies close to book-by-book or genre by genre. Ironically, I think this is how it should be done as I’ve matured (hopefully). I think Udo Schnelle’s *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing, 2009) does a better job with this approach, but it is newer, significantly larger, and more expensive, so I’m not listing it as a recommendation. Ladd was a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and I consider him to be a solid New Testament scholar in every book except for Revelation. You can borrow the ebook for 14 days via the following URL: <https://archive.org/details/theologyofnewtes0000ladd>.

Morris, Leon, ***The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1965). This treatise by the famous Fuller Seminary theologian and New Testament scholar, Leon Morris, is an eloquent testimony to the beauty of, not merely substitutionary atonement, but satisfaction theory as well. The discussion may be too academic for many, but I would be remiss to list books that I recommend in Biblical Theology without considering this important work of Christology. Again, there are some places where I believe he grossly overstates his case, but there is lots more of value than of problematical nature. I’ve never used the following site, but it seems to have a positive trust rating, so I’ll give you the URL: <https://kupdf.net/download/leon-morris-the-apostolic-preaching-of-the-cross_58c9fb45ee34352a776a843d_pdf>.

Rowley, H. H. ***Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning*** (London: S.P.C.K., 1967). I practically lived with this book when I was in graduate school. It blends biblical theology, sociological observation, and archaeological knowledge together into a useful unity. This is not a full-blown “theology” per se, but a theological exploration of how Israel worshipped in: the patriarchal age, from Exodus to the building of the temple, during the temple era, and in the era of the synagogue. It also features a nice exploration of psalmody and music along with considerations of the prophetic movement and the forms of spiritual expression and manifestation. It may not necessarily help you with specific passages, but it will help you understand the general practices for each era. You need to find this in a library. Sadly, there is no eBook and paperback editions begin at $40 on Amazon.

Schweizer, Eduard, ***The Church as the Body of Christ*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1976). My copy listed here is a second printing of a 1964 volume. The 1964 volume can be read online at: <https://archive.org/details/churchasbodyof00schw>. The theological presentation begins with an understanding of the significance of the human body in God’s plan. From that anthropological perspective, it moves to a Christological perspective on Christ’s body given for many, and then moves to an ecclesiological conclusion discussing how the church is indeed the body of Christ. It also has a great exposition of the poem/hymn in Colossians 1, as well.

Snaith, Norman H. ***The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*** (New York, New York: Schocken Books, 1975). The most used chapters for me were “The Holiness of God” and “The Righteousness of God.” This book is the simplest volume I can think of in trying to delineate Israel’s theology topically rather than chronologically. I couldn’t image daring to write this as succinctly as Dr. Snaith did. You can find a free download of an earlier edition than the one I have at: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.101143>.

Stagg, Frank, ***New Testament Theology*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1962). This was my “go-to” New Testament Theology textbook when I was teaching pastors with little or no college training in a seminary extension (non-degree) program. It is simple, concise, and uses that topical approach I preferred earlier in my career. Stagg’s topics were: the purpose of the Bible, the plight of the human being as sinner, the importance of Christology, the way of salvation, the significance of death with Jesus’ resurrection, the Kingdom of God, the people of God, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the ministry of the church, Christian life and ethics, and the purpose of everything defined in eschatology (last things). Unfortunately, it is out-of-print and I don’t trust any of the eBook sites that have it. But if you can find a used copy to buy, it would probably be the most useful NT Theology for a small group study/Sunday School leader. Amazon has used copies around $20.

Terrien, Samuel. ***The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology*** (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1978). The first major article I translated from the French was by a French Old Testament scholar named Samuel Terrien. This book came out in the latter part of the 20th century and followed in the tradition of trying to find one key theme to wrap all of biblical theology around. Some theologians used the idea of covenant, some used the acts of God, some used the speech of God, some used the people of God, but Terrien chose Presence, as in the Presence of God. It’s a great book, especially since it deals with God’s Presence when we think He is absent (or “elusive” as Terrien paints him). I was working on a Ph.D. with emphasis in Old Testament and within my OT Theology class, I responded to this with the belief that biblical theology needs two foci: a) Presence as Terrien presents it, but balanced by b) Authority as God demonstrates it. The world will never see my dual-foci theological treatise, but Terrien’s still blesses me every time I turn to him. There are a few copies of the old hardbound available for $11 (it was only $20 originally), but the new paperbacks are still over $40.

**Introductions to the New Testament**

Here’s where things get tricky. The most useful volumes often have controversial components to them. A lot of people think all of the books of the Bible were created inerrantly from the beginning. In reality, God is the guarantor of the Bible’s inerrancy. That means that we have God’s inerrant Word despite copying problems, material added in later (at the Holy Spirit’s urging), and some authors continuing the work of the named authors as time went on. As long as you trust that God was at work in giving us His miraculous printed word in its current form, you shouldn’t be bothered, even if you occasionally read someone who doesn’t think biblical history is cut and dried, black and white (history is written to make a point and the Holy Spirit guided the biblical writers in what to put in and what to leave out in terms of historical details like numbers, time passing etc.). Even some great scholars with impressive and valuable insights occasionally word things unhelpfully. With that in mind, here are some introductions to the New Testament you might find useful.

Geisler, Norman L. ***A Popular Survey of the New Testament*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing, 2007). This survey of the New Testament, in my opinion, oversimplifies complex realities in the way God granted us the New Testament. The good news, though, is that it won’t shake anyone’s faith or be too complicated. Geisler is a fundamentalist with a high view of scripture. The book is beautifully illustrated and features many useful maps and diagrams. Amazon has it for $16 to $18 dollars, depending on edition and vendor. If you don’t have an introduction to the New Testament, this is a good place to start.

Hester, H. I. ***The Heart of the New Testament*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Academic Publishers, ebook, 1980, original 1948). The Southern Baptist Convention commissioned Hester to write this introduction to the New Testament based on his popular The Heart of Hebrew History. The goal was to ignore all of the critical issues and provide a basic foundation and outline for the New Testament writings. The good news is that it is Christ-centered and simple to read. The bad news is that it is dated and doesn’t provide the rich archaeological background or great literary analysis available in other volumes. I used it in college and got rid of it when I was in seminary (and those who know me know that I almost NEVER let go of a book). Still, it offers a nice background of the period between the testaments and really does a good job of constantly reminding the reader as to why the New Testament’s presentation of Christ is so vital. The Kindle edition is currently $10.

Martin, Ralph P. ***New Testament Foundations Volumes I and II*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1975). Having briefly met Martin when he was a professor at Fuller and we were both participating in a colloquium of seminary professors in Southern California, I have the utmost respect for his work and writings. I must warn you, however, that his first volume on the gospels is as complicated as Geisler’s is not. He hits on all the issues and brings criticism and faith together in what is, for me, a very satisfactory way. He also has several diagrams, but he also follows the British school of a rigorously thorough (sometimes overdone) pace. The second volume, dealing with Acts, the letters, and Revelation is a bit more accessible, but may indeed be more complicated that you will want to use with your students/participants. I want you to be aware of this resource in case you want to try something meaty, but it isn’t my first recommendation for Sunday School teachers.

Nienhuis, David R. ***A Concise Guide to Reading the New Testament: A Canonical Introduction*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing, This is a great introduction to the New Testament. It doesn’t gloss over issues nor does it overcomplicate them. It is short and insightful and urges one to read more than dissect the New Testament text. It freshened my perspective on the New Testament in reading it last year and I think anyone could be blessed by it. He deals with the gospels in distinct chapters with distinct approaches to demonstrate why we need four gospels. He definitely handles it differently than the classic Introduction to the New Testament and I really appreciate that.

**Introductions to the Old Testament**

Some of these may be problematic for some of you, but I have to list some of the best Introductions to the Old Testament—even if they don’t all have the same confidence in all aspects of the Word that most of us do. Remember, the Bible does NOT say that Moses wrote all of the first five books of the Bible. The Bible doesn’t say that a book named after a character was necessarily written by that character (for example, 1 and 2 Samuel, Job, or Jonah). So, if I recommend it, it means that there is something that really works well, not necessarily that everything works well. Traditionally, fundamentalists have avoided the so-called J, E, D, P (documentary hypothesis) because they don’t believe one can believe the Bible to be without errors or wholly trustworthy unless Moses wrote all five books (including his death report, apparently). Yet, the fundamentalists have a point in that many scholars who hold to the J, E, D, P theory use it to discredit the historicity of some biblical accounts. I can’t agree with that, though it appears that the Holy Spirit uses some symbolism to shape the historical narratives beyond our human understanding of what history should be.

Brueggemann, Walter, ***An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). What? Brueggemann again? Taking the biblical books in the order and division of the Hebrew Bible (same books, different order to the Catholic and Protestant Old Testament), Brueggemann moves quickly away from trying to ascertain what secular historians might consider verifiable historical fact (an important move since liberal Christians have been trying to “prove” historical narratives to skeptical historians for centuries and Brueggemann rightly observes that even the methodology of secular historians is not disinterested) and considers both the themes and concerns that caused first the Jews and then the Christians to receive these texts as inspired, authentic, and reliable. For me, the most valuable part of his approach is that he finds clear patterns of theological teaching and import, even when there is literary, historical, and scientific dissonance in the presentation. I don’t always come to the same conclusions as Brueggemann, but he makes me think and rethink my positions so often that it improves both my study and prayer life. I’m afraid this one will set you back around $25 on Amazon, though.

Childs, Brevard S. ***An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1979). Though I have the paperback published later rather than the hardbound with the information listed here (and the paperback is available via Amazon for circa $13), I want to commend this introduction for one primary reason: Childs recognizes that despite the way the scripture developed, it is most important that we take it as scripture and examine why God’s people have taken it as scripture. Many approaches to the Old Testament tend to dissect texts into tiny pieces and debate the finer points of the pieces, but Childs calls interpreters back to examining the whole message and presentation of the text rather than focusing on the pre-history. He doesn’t always explain things or come to the same conclusions based on the same evidence as I would, but this approach was and is a necessary corrective to the excesses of the so-called historical-critical method of study.

Harrelson, Walter, ***Interpreting the Old Testament*** (New York, New York: Holt, Rinehard & Winston, 1964). Written by a Vanderbilt University professor, this is a great example of the way interpreters sometimes spend more time trying to “get behind” the text than dealing with it. It is packed full of information from a historical-critical perspective. It may not be for everyone, but it is a very readable perspective for viewing the Old Testament from what most of us would call a more liberal perspective. Despite my reservations, I still use it as a reference work. Used copies are available for as little as $5.

Hester, H. I. ***The Heart of Hebrew History*** (Liberty, Missouri: The Quality Press, 1962). For decades, students at almost every Southern Baptist college or university used this book for their Old Testament Survey classes (yes, including me). The reason is that Hester doesn’t deal with any of the issues of how the biblical books came to us. Rather, he ignores archaeological data that is inconvenient to his position and offers a “just the text, ma’am” approach to the biblical material. He doesn’t ask any deep questions and, from the time I read it in college, I described it as the “grocery list approach” to biblical study. This book is essentially a 300+ page outline of the Old Testament with some standard historical background alluded to (though not explored fully). This could be an invaluable resource to those who have never read the Old Testament through, but doesn’t offer a great deal to those who have read the OT through more than once. Amazon has it available for $10 as an eBook for those who don’t have a feel for the flow of Israel’s history as depicted in the Bible.

Kaiser, Otto***, Introduction to the Old Testament: A Presentation of it Results and Problems*** (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1975). This introduction may shock some of you in its belief that the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bibe) represents an interweaving of various traditions: a Yahwistic tradition (called “J” because of the way the Germans pronounce “J” as “y” and its emphasis on the divine name, Yahweh (or, German Jahweh from which some English speakers derive “Jehovah”), a collection of Priesty writings (using a distinctive writing style from that of the Yahwist material), some fragments of Elohistic history (which emphasizes the names “El” and “Elohim” for God instead of “Yahweh”), and Deuteronomy (which means “second law” and seems to be a reworking of Moses’ traditional materials starting from around the time of Josiah’s kingdom). This book does a marvelous job of introducing the different types of literature (historical, legal, prophetic, and saga), reports, poems, prayers, and songs to those unfamiliar with the larger field of Old Testament Studies. Much of this volume is helpful as a general background, but it doesn’t help one much with individual passages.

LaSor, William Sandford, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, ***Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament: 2nd Edition*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1982). This is a more conservative approach than that of Kaiser, Harrelson or Brueggemann above. However, it does offer some balanced observations on the way the Bible came together and new discoveries in archaeology compared to the original edition (heavily biased). This is a large book and contains lots of information. It offers a conservative look at the issues, but also has some practical help on some individual passages. Naturally, commentaries (**please avoid** Bible Handbooks as they are way too superficial—especially the old ***Halley’s Bible Handbook***)

**Books Primarily for Studying Specific Books of the Bible**

**Genesis**

I use a multitude of books on Genesis, but I’m limiting this list to those which are more concerned with the message than the history of Genesis. I chose these because they get to teaching/preaching points right away. I could offer other ideas on request.

Brueggemann, Walter, ***Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982). Available as a Kindle book for around $14, I recently bought it because I had loaned my hardcover out and it was never returned. This was the second book by Brueggemann I had read and that was only about two months before I met him at a Society of Biblical Literature conference. When I read it, this commentary seemed daring in that it looked at the way the texts held together and what their significance was more than looking at bare-bones history. He basically divides the book of Genesis into two parts: 1) Genesis 1-11 where God calls the world into being and 2) Genesis 12-50 where God calls a special people to impact and minister to that world as God leads them. The book is full of patterns and expository jewels and Brueggemann isn’t afraid to do a little preaching along the way.

**\***Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, ***A Commentary: Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments: Volume I: Genesis-Deuteronomy*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1944). Originally published in 1871, this was the first commentary I owned. I discovered it while researching in my college library and was thrilled with the attention that the three scholars paid to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament combined with an awareness of the need to balance our interpretation of the text with science and history. Generally, the King James Version is printed across the top of the page in moderate print with the comments in footnote-sized fine print on the bottom of the pages. The treatment of the initial creation account removed my fear that science might discredit the Bible once and for all. Yes, I still use my copy and you can download a free pdf (and this site is definitely reliable) at: <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/free-resources-pastors/163438-free-ebook-commentary-critical-and-explanatory-on-the-whole-bible.html>.

Stevens, Sherrill G. ***Layman’s Bible Book Commentary*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1978). Written prior to the fundamentalist takeover of The Southern Baptist Convention, the 24 volume Layman’s Bible Book Commentary was designed to avoid all of the controversial issues and focus on what the average layperson might need to get out of the text. Stevens and I collaborated on some Sunday School literature as he was finishing this book and I told him two ways I thought his commentary was useful: 1) it offers a useful outline of content and theological themes and 2) it is organized so well that it can provide a checklist for the thorough teacher to make sure she or he hasn’t missed anything. Amazon still has some used copies for less than $10 each.

**Exodus**

Of course, the work of Robert Jamieson in the commentary cited under Genesis continues to be solid work in the Exodus portion, but to that commentary, I add these three books for your consideration.

Honeycutt, Roy, “Exodus” in Allen, Clifton J. (ed.) ***Broadman Bible Commentary Volume 1 Revised: Genesis-Exodus*** (Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1973). Clyde Francisco re-wrote the Genesis portion of this volume after The Southern Baptist Convention voted that the first edition be removed from sale and re-written. Oxford scholar G. Hinton Davies had questioned some of the historicity of Genesis and Francisco had to correct that to clarify a more conservative (but not too conservative) position. But as much as I liked Dr. Francisco as a professor (and even had a Genesis seminar with him), I don’t think this is his best work. On the other hand, Roy Honeycutt’s Exodus portion of this commentary hits all the high points and does a particularly good job of blending natural and divine causes into the plague narratives. This volume is available as part of the online library through Logos or in used form for less than $10 from Amazon.

Childs, Brevard S. ***The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary: The Old Testament Library*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1974). This is the definitive commentary on Exodus. Childs takes each passage, giving attention to: 1) his new translation of the text, 2) notes on the text and important words in the text, 3) those issues of literary tradition you may not find relevant, 4) the context of the passages in the overall context of the Old Testament, 5) how the text is used in the New Testament, 6) the history of exegesis of the text, and 7) theological reflections on the text. If I could only have one commentary on Exodus, this would be the one I would choose. Unfortunately, physical used copies are quite expensive and even the eBook sells for $22.

Trevisanato, Siro Igino, ***The Plagues of Egypt: Archaeology, History, and Science Look at the Bible*** (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005). This is a fascinating book that blends together evidence from many perspectives to verify the plague narratives in Exodus. Trevisanato’s approach is both similar and different from Honeycutt’s approach and he tends to date the events of Exodus earlier than I would date it from the archaeological evidence available, but his reconstruction of what might have occurred is plausible and well-considered. I’m not fully convinced, but then I don’t have to be. You’ll want to check with libraries first because this is very expensive for a relatively short paperback.

**Leviticus and Numbers**

Since Leviticus and Numbers are two of the most neglected books of the Bible, you won’t be surprised at the limited selection of commentaries I can recommend. Naturally, the Jamieson commentary mentioned earlier is still relevant, but you’ll want to add to that resource. One of my “go-to” commentaries on Leviticus is in Spanish, so I won’t mention it here.

Gutzke, Manford George, ***Plain Talk on Leviticus and Numbers*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981). Part of his Plain Talk series, this volume has the advantage of presenting sermons on each chapter (or, on occasion, grouping of chapters). While not as rich as the notes from Mackintosh described below, this is still a nice resource for finding the spiritual heart at the center of the passages. Used copies run anywhere from $6-$20, depending on what is available.

\*Mackintosh, C. H. ***Notes on Leviticus*** (New York, New York: Loizeau Brothers, 1880). The weakest part of this five book series on the first five books of the Bible is that Mackintosh doesn’t consider the history behind the text or too much about what the original author(s) intended. His strong point is seeing spiritual application and symbolism throughout the book. Many modern scholars would dismiss him as too “typological” or “allegorical,” but I think his work on these books (and particularly, Leviticus) is an valuable tool for your teaching. Fortunately, you can get all five volumes in his series one PDF through book ministry.org: <https://www.bookministry.org/Notes_on_the_Pentateuch_Complete.pdf>, download just this edition from google books: <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Notes_on_the_Book_of_Leviticus/ql1LAAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP9&printsec=frontcover> , or buy it in eBook form for $10 from lulu.com:

<https://www.lulu.com/en/us/shop/charles-henry-mackintosh/notes-on-the-pentateuch-genesis-to-deuteronomy/ebook/product-1dmjmmpw.html?page=1&pageSize=4>. The same would be true for his *Notes on Numbers*.

Owns, John Joseph, “Numbers” in Allen, Clifton J. (ed.) ***The Broadman Bible Commentary: Volume 2: Leviticus-Ruth*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1970). I particularly want to commend the Numbers section of this commentary. Dr. Owens served on my doctoral committee and we had some fascinating discussions on both my Master of Theology thesis on the structure of the Book of Numbers and my Doctor of Philosophy dissertation on the Balaam Oracles. Owens follows the majority of writers on Numbers who outline it by means of the three geographical stages in the wilderness wandering. I outline it in terms of establishing Israel as a functioning nation. This commentary series offers the Revised Standard Version followed by commentary on the text of each passage. Owens doesn’t ignore the traditional debates about how the book came to us, but the beauty of this commentary is that it cuts to the chase. Notice that I am not listing either of my publications in this list because they, of necessity, were far too academic to be useful in Sunday School. As noted with the first volume of the series, this is available as part of the online library through Logos or in used form at a reduced price.

Snaith, Norman H. ***New Century Bible: Leviticus and Numbers*** (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967). While many commentaries offer a fresh translation of the text, this commentary series merely reprints the old Revised Standard Version translation. But, Snaith was a capable Hebrew scholar and, in the notes below the RSV text, he points out every important word and phrase to explain what is important in the passage. The introduction does present some discussion on the documentary hypothesis, but the bulk of the book is focused on the text nearly word-for-word (as opposed to some sloppy expositors). It is difficult to find good commentaries on either of these books, but this one is a good backstop.

**Deuteronomy**

Naturally, you will still find useful material in the afore-mentioned commentary by Robert Jamieson and in the Notes on Deuteronomy corresponding with the C. H. Mackintosh books mentioned above. Although I use a variety of sources on Deuteronomy for my own study, I want to add these for Sunday School teachers.

Clements, Ronald, ***God’s Chosen People: A Theological Interpretation of the Book of Deuteronomy*** (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1969). A Cambridge professor and British Baptist minister, Clements has written a concise little volume that considers: a) the background and tradition associated with Deuteronomy, b) the idea of Israel as a covenant people, c) an understanding of the gifts of God coming from their relationship with God, d) a discussion of worship meaning and practices, and e) a theory concerning how Deuteronomy reached canonical status. When I typed this, Amazon had eight (8) used copies for $8.50 each. If you go there, ignore the ridiculous price at the top.

Craigie, Peter C. ***The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1976). I told you that you would see some names repeated. This is a very detailed commentary on Deuteronomy that takes seriously both its value and purpose in ancient Israel and its place in the Christian Bible. This is my favorite commentary on Deuteronomy and it is particularly valuable when Craigie introduces evidence from Egypt and Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls) illuminating God’s people and their understanding of their relationship with God. Sadly, this one will cost you close to $40 or more on Amazon, but in this case, you get what you pay for.

Wright, George Ernest. “The Book of Deuteronomy: Introduction and Exegesis” in George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), ***The Interpreter’s Bible: Volume 2*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1953. Written by one of the great biblical archaeologists of the 20th century, this section of this commentary set does a good job of comparing international legal texts of the ancient world with Deuteronomy and considering a historical review of the reform under King Josiah which may have led to the collation of the book. Some of you will consider this book to be liberal, but if you’re not afraid of reading people you might disagree with, this is a helpful volume. I know the Wilmette Public Library has a copy of this commentary series, so it should be easy to get it on interlibrary loan if your library doesn’t have it. Otherwise, try the Open Library at: <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6094577M/The_Interpreter%27s_Bible>.

**Joshua**

Let’s be honest. The history of the conquest as given to us in Joshua doesn’t fit neatly into the archaeological record like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. There are gaps and apparent contradictions. Part of those can be ignored is assuming correctly that we couldn’t possibly have found all of the discoveries that might support the narrative, but part of it is because the Bible doesn’t tell us everything we *want* to know in historical detail, the Bible tells us what God knows we *need* to know. As a result, certain aspects of confusion and chaos may be left out of Joshua 1-12’s idealistic view of the conquest. The latter part of the book seems more realistically chaotic and incomplete. Chapters 1-12 tell us what happens when we engage in spiritual warfare by following God’s directions and the rest of the book (and particularly Judges which follows) let us see clearly what happens when you cut corners or overtly disobey. So, be aware that even these useful books may question some of the accounts, but be like me and trust that God knew what He was doing when these books were inspired the way they were. If that’s too difficult for you to accept or consider, stick with the works by Dunn, Keil, and Maclaren cited below.

**\***Bright, John, “Joshua: Introduction and Exegesis” in George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), ***The Interpreter’s Bible: Volume 2*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1953). Dr. Bright’s introduction spends more time on the presumed literary history of the book and points out that the existing archaeological record is much more compatible with the latter part of Joshua and Judges than the unified conquest of Chapters 1-12. Readers must remember that ancient historical accounts compressed or expanded timelines, skipped over incidents and details which didn’t illustrate what needed to be shown, and sometimes zoomed in on rounded-up numbers or symbolic names to serve as symbols or metaphors. As Bright wrote in a different place, we have to understand is that in history (even relatively modern history), all we get is a kernel of what happened. The historian builds on the kernel to illustrate his point. Of course, since the Holy Spirit was inspiring the historian for Joshua, the important points that God wants us to get are there. The best news is that you can read these volumes online (but not download them) through the Open Library: <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6094577M/The_Interpreter%27s_Bible>.

Dunn, Ronald. ***Any Christian Can! Living in Victory*** (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Master’s Press, 1976). Because it is so hard to reconcile the history in Joshua with modern skepticism, many interpreters jump directly to spiritualizing the material. Remember, even if an incident happened historically (and I believe those in Joshua did happen, though we only have part of the story), it can and does have symbolic value that can teach us important theological lessons. In this devotional book on Joshua, the late Ronald Dunn jumps directly to the symbolic and the lessons he teaches are very inspiring. These are essentially sermons and don’t go chapter-by-chapter, but it’s useful. Amazon currently cites used editions from less than $5 to just under $10 before shipping.

Gray, John. ***The New Century Bible Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*** (1986). The introduction may be confusing to some with its emphasis on the literary-historical considerations of the book, but this commentary based on the Revised Standard Version translation, is very helpful in going chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse. Where some subdivide the book into two sections (1-12, 13-24), Gray recognizes that Chapters 22-24 provide summary observations that round out the book and point toward the Book of Judges. So, Gray uses a three-part division of the book. When he says, though, that Chapter 18 is a theological schematization, he doesn’t mean that the distribution didn’t occur, but that the author has shaped his account to emphasize God’s participation in the result.

\*Keil, C. F. and Franz Delitzsch. ***Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume 2: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel*** (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996). Don’t be fooled by the publication date I just typed. My volumes in this commentary series are part of a reprint more than 100 years after the original publication. I discovered these commentaries when I was in college and was immediately impressed with the amount of Hebrew words explained (simple enough even though I hadn’t yet learned to read Hebrew) and how seriously they took the historical nature of the accounts. You can download free PDFs of the 1878 editions of all the volumes at: <http://www.classicchristianlibrary.com/ot_section.html>.

\*Maclaren, Alexander. ***Expositions of Holy Scripture: Volume 2: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings I-VII*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1942). This is a book of sermons from all of the books listed in the title. The presentations are divided by chapters, but they do not cover all of the chapters and don’t cover all of the chapters represented. Maclaren chose the portions of the text best suited to preaching. This is worth reading despite its age and the good news is that you can download all of the volumes of the series for free in one ebook at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15836>. If you prefer a free PDF of this material, you can download a pdf for each of the 12 volumes from: <https://www.fulltextarchive.com/page/Expositions-of-Holy-Scripture/>.

**Judges**

In addition to the volumes by John Gray, Keil and Delitzsch, and Alexander Maclaren, one could consider the following resources. Again, some may be concerned about the idea of rounding up numbers and compressing accounts, but the point is not to question what happened, just to recognize that, as with the gospels, reliable eye-witnesses and chroniclers are not going to emphasize the same things. It appears the ancient world (to whom God first GAVE these accounts) was not as concerned about harmonious, detailed accounts as modern readers. This series of commentaries doesn’t offer original translations, but puts the King James Version and Revised Standard Version translations from the text side-by-side at the top of each page.

Boling, Robert G. ***The Anchor Bible: Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1975). This commentary series is coming out with new editions of some of the older works in the series. Some of the commentaries in this series are so academic that I wouldn’t recommend them, but Boling has done a marvelous job with this volume. The introduction is top-notch, there are 15 illustrations and four (4) maps in addition to the new translation, detailed notes on the text, and comments. These books aren’t cheap, so I remind you that many public libraries (I think even the Skokie library has these. If not, Wilmette does.) have them on their shelves.

Dunstan, Robert C. “Judges” in Mills, Watson E. and Richard F. Wilson (eds.) ***The Mercer Commentary on the Bible: Volume 2: History of Israel*** (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998). This commentary is relatively short compared to most, but it packs a lot of information in its concise introduction and short summaries of each passage. It might be the most useful summary of material for the average Sunday School teacher. One also gets very short commentaries on Joshua, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Esther in this volume. I can’t recommend all of these as being useful, but it has some value for its $20 at Walmart.com.

**Ruth**

Three very different commentaries can be added to the volumes mentioned above which cover multiple biblical books. The first is a volume in a series of very useful conservative commentaries. The second covers the book from a multitude of angles (literary and post-modern, as well as traditional). The third is a concise volume that is very traditional but features a familiar author who appears more than once on this list.

Hubbard, Robert L. ***The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Ruth*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1988). Roughly one-third of this volume is introductory material. Interestingly, Hubbard divides the text into two sections: 1) focusing on the story of Naomi’s and Ruth’s relationship to each other and 2) focusing on the lineage of Perez connecting the future lineage of David and Jesus with the Judah/Tamar story. Hubbard does cover the portions of the narrative in which Boaz appears, but is more concerned with how Boaz being goaded into action affects Naomi and Ruth. While not being one of the somewhat faddish “feminist” commentaries of the modern era, this commentary shows surprising sensitivity to the female perspective in the book and the ancient world. My copy was purchased from Half-Price Books for $16, but it looks like the usual sources for used copies (abebooks.com, amazon.com, and thriftbooks.com) run from $20-$25 at the time I typed this listing.

LaCocque, Andrew. ***Ruth: A Continental Commentary*** (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 2004). This is probably the finest commentary on the Book of Ruth of which I know. LaCocque is a marvelous French scholar (I first read his commentary on Daniel in French) and, as noted before, engages the text using many different approaches. It is only a little over $18 on Amazon right now, so those who really want to see the best in modern approaches to biblical studies might want to invest that.

Morris, Leon, “Ruth” in A. E. Cundall and L. Morris, ***Tyndale Old Testament Commentary: Judges, Ruth*** (Chicago, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1968). There are no great surprises in this volume. This commentary series is very conservative in nature and won’t cause anyone to wonder if it is too liberal or modernist for their doctrinal stance. As always, Morris is worth reading and, though the new paperback edition lists at a high mark-up, Amazon hased editions from $5 up. At the time of typing, abebooks.com has a $3 used paperback.

**1 & 2 Samuel**

Brueggemann, Walter. ***Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990). The paperback for this volume came out in 2012. This commentary doesn’t get bogged down with historical issues (like some commentaries do) and I can honestly say that the insights and applications in this book have been a blessing to me every time I’ve opened it. Even though I read almost everything Dr. Brueggemann publishes, we don’t see eye-to-eye on everything from an academic perspective, but he is vicariously a mentor to me through his powerful writing. It’s worth the price to find this used or in paperback on Amazon. New paperbacks on Amazon are circa $20.

Klein, Ralph W. ***Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Samuel*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983). I don’t recommend all of the Word commentaries, but I recommend a lot of them. Many were written by former professors or colleagues, so I’m very pleased. The pattern for the books is that every chapter of a book is covered with a specific bibliography, a new translation of the text, notes on the translation, discussions of the form/structure/setting of the passage, comments, and an overall summary. It may be a stretch for some Sunday School teachers, but I believe it would be worth it in the long run. New paperback editions sell around $30 but Amazon also has used hardcovers starting at $5.

1 & 2 Kings

Fretheim, Terence E. ***First and Second Kings: Westminster Bible Companion*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1999). This series is composed of easier-to-read commentaries designed particularly for the Sunday School teacher or Bible Study leader. Fretheim is a brilliant theologian, but he doesn’t let it get in the way of providing quick, insightful pieces on each passage. His presentation is easy-to-follow and he doesn’t get bogged down in issues that would not be of interest to the average Sunday School or Bible Study attendee. Amazon has used paperbacks as low as $8, but the new paperback is only $25 at that site.

\*Meyer, F. B. ***Elijah and the Secret of his Power*** (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1972). F. B. Meyer preached and wrote long before the 1972 of the printing I have. You can download the 1890 edition free at: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.268166>. Why should you care? You should care because these are powerful sermons from the life of Elijah and F. B. Meyer always presented significant spiritual application within each sermon. Without being “charismatic,” Meyer emphasized the Holy Spirit in everything he did. So, this book is different from most resources you would find on 1 & 2 Kings.

\*Snaith, Norman H. “Kings: Introduction & Exegesis” in George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), ***The Interpreter’s Bible: Volume 3*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1953). I know, you’ve seen this name before. I like this volume because even though the introduction covers some issues that may not be helpful to the average reader, the exegesis is solid and it is supplemented by some black and white diagrams and lists (chronologies) that are quite helpful. Although most modern commentaries offer new and annotated translations by the authors, this series (as noted before) gives you the King James Version and Revised Standard Version translations at the top of the page. The best news is that you can read these volumes online (but not download them) through the Open Library: <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6094577M/The_Interpreter%27s_Bible>. Why? Because the publisher wants people to buy *The New Interpreter’s Bible* which I, personally, found to be a disappointment.

**1 and 2 Chronicles**

Most commentaries that I’ve seen on 1 and 2 Chronicles have been disappointing to me. There is a certain amount of value in the aging commentaries I’ve mentioned already: Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, Keil and Delitzsch, Maclaren, and *The Interpreter’s Bible*, but it is an oft-neglected work

Hahn, Scott W. ***The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1-2 Chronicles*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Press, 2012). I was delighted to buy this book when it came out. The beauty is that it is less concerned with traditional academic matters and cuts right to the heart of the message. For example, Hahn addresses the repentance of David (after allowing Satan to tempt him to expand his military by taking a census in 1 Chronicles 21) and why it was important for ancient Israelites (as well as modern believers) to take note of it. “This is a dramatic turning point in Chronicles. The king performs public penance so that all can see the subordination of the earthly realm to the heavenly, the kingship to the priesthood, the leader of armies to the Lord of hosts—providing here a choice specimen of right political theology.” (p. 93) Although it is considerably shorter than the commentary listed below, every page “sings” with relevance. You could pay as much as $26 for a new paperback on Amazon, but this is definitely a “You get what you pay for” book.

\*Lange, John Robert. ***Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical with Special Regard for Ministers and Students: The Books of Chronicles*** (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1877). The original work was done by J. R. Lange, but this volume was expanded by Otto Zockler and then, translated to English. Lange divides 1 Chronicles into two major sections: 1) The Genealogical Tables (recapping the history covered in the first five books of the Bible and Joshua-1 Samuel) and 2) a history of Israel written much later than the events had happened. Like Keil & Delitzsch, it may be intimidating because all of the Hebrew words listed, but don’t get bogged down with that because, in most cases, you can skip over the actual words and understand from the context what is important about the words. The important thing for you is the word “Homiletical” in the title. That means that the commentary was concerned with “Preaching” and that means it pays attention to the message of the book. But don’t take my word for it. Download the free volume from: <https://ia800300.us.archive.org/10/items/commentaryscrip07languoft/commentaryscrip07languoft.pdf>. Instead of dwelling on introductory matters, though, go right to a passage you’re interested in (like David’s census in 1 Chronicles 21 or the Queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 9:1-12). You’ll see the English translation of the text, some detailed exegesis (possibly, with too much Hebrew for some of you, and then, a section on Evangelical and Ethical Reflections, Doctrinal and Homiletic Thoughts for each passage. It is that latter section that you may find most useful.

**Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther**

Closely identified with 1 and 2 Chronicles would be the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Esther is also often thrown in here because she may slightly precede the events in Ezra-Nehemiah. Between them, these three books continue the journey of Israel through the end and past the exile. The material and the background for that material overlaps because Ezra and Nehemiah, as persons, were contemporaries. In addition to the older resources for which I’ve provided information on downloading or reading online, I can suggest these resources.

Fensham, F. Charles. ***The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1982). Where some of the books I have recommended for Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are history and exegesis light in favor of sermon and devotional points, Fensham does a great job of presenting the chaotic time of rebuilding Jerusalem (and Israel as a nation) against the backdrop of the Ancient Near East. He also pays serious attention to the text of the scriptural books. You may have noticed that I recommend this series a lot. There’s a good reason for that. Alas, the least expensive copies of this one I can find are $25 and even the Kindle edition is $30 (the paperback is $40). But if you’re going to cover either or both of these books, this is a jewel of information.

Queen-Sutherland, Kandy, “Esther” in Watson E. Mills (ed.), ***Mercer Commentary on the Bible: History of Israel*** (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1999). Dr. Queen-Sutherland is a solid Old Testament scholar who was given little room to work with in this volume. Nevertheless, it’s nice to read what a woman has to say about such issues as Queen Vashti’s disrobing versus Esther’s robing (a nice parallel, nicely drawn). The books considers a little bit of wordplay to be found in Esther and reads as well as if giving a timely news report on the events in the book and their significance for God’s people. Again, as of typing this, one could get this book of material on Joshua through Esther for $20 at Walmart.com.

Roberts, Mark D. ***The Communicator’s Commentary: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*** (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1993). And now for something completely different! Originally having this title, the name and design of the book was changed to ***The Preacher’s Commentary: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*** when Thomas Nelson Publishers republished it. Don’t confuse it with an old commentary (easily downloadable) with the same name. The importance of this commentary is that it doesn’t try to drill deep into the passages. Instead, it uses lively illustrations and sermon/devotional interpretation to help the teacher or preacher to get in and out quickly. It doesn’t help me much in my preaching and I feel like much of the series seems too simplistic, BUT this volume does a great job with three very neglected books. You can find the Word Books edition as used books for under $5. A new Kindle ebook of the Thomas Nelson edition will cost around $13 and a new paperback around $15 on Amazon.

Swindoll, Charles R. ***Esther: A Woman of Strength & Dignity: Insight for Living Bible Study Guide*** (Plano, Texas: Insight for Living, 1997). Originally published under a different title in 1990, this is the best version of this concise study guide. Swindoll himself admitted that he had paid little attention to this book until he underwent writing this verse-by-verse approach to the text. Not only are there some solid devotional and teaching ideas in the volume, but you may find the questions for group discussion to be useful as well. It sells on Kindle as an ebook for under $6 and as a paperback for under $10 on Amazon.

**Job**

As usual, you could draw from those older works which I have indicated can be downloaded or viewed online: Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, Keil and Delitzsch, Lange, and Maclaren. I also really like the approach to Job discussed in the L.D. Johnson book described under “Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs (Solomon).” In this case, I probably have a dozen commentaries on Job and the following three books are probably the best of which I am aware:

Habel, Norman C. ***The Book of Job: A Commentary: The Old Testament*** Library (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1985). This is a scholarly work and quite thorough, but I believe it is definitely worth reading, owning, and using. Habel captures Job as a drama, but he also understands it as a book dealing with the problem of evil and the contributions the book makes for a theology of suffering, doubt, and vindication. His dramatic outline of the book takes up five pages, but it is definitely one of the best ways to get a bird’s eye view of the book’s flow. This one isn’t cheap. It’s $30 for the Kindle ebook, $40 for the paperback, an $50 for the hardbound, all on Amazon.

\*Terrien, Samuel, “Job: Introduction and Exegesis” in George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), ***The Interpreter’s Bible: Volume 3*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1953). Although this commentary by the late, great French Old Testament scholar, Samuel Terrien, is not as up-to-date as the work cited above, the introductory material is top-notch—particularly his summary of the theological propositions in the book. Since I also recommend Norman Snaith’s treatment of 1 an 2 Kings in this volume, it is worth seeking at your library , in used form, or viewing online via: <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6094577M/The_Interpreter%27s_Bible>.

Westermann, Claus. ***The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1981). Although this is not a commentary, it is a thought-provoking book. For Westermann, the question moves from how and why the book was put together to what, on the basis of the ideas presented, should we believe. Unlike Habel and Terrien, Westermann is less interested in the problem of evil as in the reality and language of suffering and the impact of continued insistence of innocence on a faith relationship. At the time of this writing, Amazon had at least a dozen copies between $9-$12 used.

**Psalms**

I have an incredible amount of books and commentaries on Psalms, but I still use material from the old commentaries like Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, Keil and Delitzsch, Lange’s Commentaries, and Maclaren’s ***Expositions of Holy Scripture***. Another easily downloadable source that I haven’t mentioned would be Matthew Henry’s Commentary. I will mention this work later and haven’t mentioned it yet because I never found it to be helpful in Old Testament study. The following are only the volumes I think you could use, despite many that I check every time I study in the Psalms.

Allen, Leslie C. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 101-150*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983). Although I have never felt that Dr. Allen’s work was as strong on the language front as works such as that by Dr. Craigie listed later, his ability to center the message on the text within the historical and literary setting is second to few. Better yet, his conclusions work much better with a conservative theological view than those of some respected scholars in the field. I’ve never read a commentary by Dr. Allen that wasn’t excellent (see the one on some of the so-called “minor prophets” listed later). Here, he follows the Word Biblical Commentary formula of: a new translation, textual notes, considerations of form, structure and setting, and an overall explanation. At the time I am typing this, I am seeing used copies of this volume running from $16 (abebooks.com) to over $60. It is high time that Thomas Nelson reprinted this commentary series, but denominational politics within the Southern Baptist Convention (owners of the publisher after purchasing Word Books) may keep it from ever happening.

Alter, Robert. ***The Art of Biblical Poetry*** (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1985). Although scholarly and a lot to digest for the layperson, this book (even read superficially) can help you understand the nature of Hebrew poetry (how it works and what to look for), not only in the Psalms and Song of Songs, but also in the prophets, Genesis, Numbers, and Ecclesiastes (among others). For those who don’t read Hebrew (and I’m assuming that most of you don’t), Alter transliterates (puts Hebrew characters into English characters so you can at least sound them out). He doesn’t deal with a lot of specific examples from the Psalms, though there is a chapter devoted to the book, but tries to tell you what you need to know about reading (and getting the most out of) Hebrew poetry. There is also a full chapter on Job and on poetry as found in prophecy and wisdom. Indeed, even though he doesn’t touch on New Testament poetry, an understanding of Hebrew poetry will help you understand poems like Mary’s “Magnificat,” the hymns in Philippians and Colossians, and portions of Revelation, as well. IF you really want a grasp of what is going on in most of the Bible with parallelism, meter, and metaphor, the under $10 you would pay for a used copy (abebooks.com, thriftbooks.com, and more) is extremely well-spent.

Anderson, A. A. ***The New Century Bible Commentary: Psalms 1-72*** and ***The New Century Bible Commentary: Psalms 72-150*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980). One rarely finds good one-volume material on Psalms (works by Kirkpatrick and Terrien cited below being arguable exceptions to the rule) because there is just so much material in the 150 chapters. Anderson reduces the usual three volumes (of 50 chapters each) to two volumes of relatively fine print. He provides 50 pages of introduction (overlapping with the material Alter presents, but with less in terms of examples) before commenting on the five major sections (called “Books”) within the psalms, chapter (psalm) by chapter. Unlike many commentaries, there is no new translation, but Anderson does comment on translation differences at times by appealing to the Hebrew which he, like Alter and many of the commentaries listed here, transliterates so that even non-Hebrew readers have some idea of pronunciation as they read. What I like most of all is his attempt to consider the nature of each psalm’s use in worship rather than becoming bogged down (as do some critical commentaries) with authorship and date (The Psalms do not just contain psalms written either by, about, or for David, but a number of other authors at a number of different time periods.).

Craigie, Peter C. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1-50*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983). Yes, there’s that name again. As with other books in this series, this volume by the late Peter C. Craigie offers a new translation, textual notes, considerations of form, structure and setting, comments on the verses, and an overall explanation. Since Dr. Craigie didn’t die until 1985, this commentary has the advantage of comparing word use from other languages (like Ugaritic, the Phoenician dialect similar to Hebrew) with what we know of the Hebrew words in the original text and Greek words in the Septuagint translation. Since Word Books was purchased by Thomas Nelson, they haven’t reprinted these in paperback form, so the used book market looks like this will cost you at least $25 and up (though churchsource.com seems to offer special offers on occasion).

\*Kirkpatrick, A. F. ***Thorndike Commentaries: The Book of Psalms*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982). Don’t be fooled by the 1982 date. Kirkpatrick originally published this commentary in 1902 and Baker released it as part of a series of classic, reprinted commentaries in the latter part of the 20th century. The beauty of this rare one-volume commentary is that its introduction deals more positively with the “Messianic Hope” presented in many psalms than modern commentaries do (Note: To be honest with the scripture, we have to figure out what the Old Testament meant to ancient Israel and to the Jews of intertestamental times before we can fairly interpret it from a Christian perspective. Some modern commentaries don’t make that final leap.). The 1902 edition can be downloaded free of charge from a Yale University scan at: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002021880423&view=1up&seq=9>.

Lewis, C. S. ***Reflections on the Psalms*** (New York, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1958). This is a deceptively thin volume. Though Lewis doesn’t deal with the text psalm-by-psalm, the insights (both devotional and apologetic) in this book are ones you’ll find yourself coming back to again and again. There’s something special about all of Lewis’ work and this has been one of the most meaningful to me. Perhaps most importantly to me was his emphasis on why praise is important as something we need rather than something God demands. Depending on the edition, you can find used copies of this from $1.50 (alibris.com) to $11.00 (christianbooks.com). But I’ve seen it in a half-dozen libraries, as well.

Tate, Marvin E. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 51-100*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1990). Dr. Tate was working on this volume at the same time I was writing my Ph.D. dissertation. His dogged thoroughness can be seen in the fact that this middle volume was published seven years after the Allen and Craigie commentaries (indeed, five years after the death of Craigie). And, even though he does not have the space dedicated to introductory material in the first volume, the page count is significantly higher than in the other two volumes by approximately 100 pages. This commentary offers lots of bang for the buck. I’ve seen this for as little as $10 used (discoverbooks.com), but you’ll probably need to pay around $25 and up to get it from other sources, particularly since the afore-mentioned denominational politics are likely to keep new editions from coming out. God forgive unprincipled church leaders who put power above scripture.

Terrien, Samuel. ***Eerdmans Critical Commentary: The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2003). You may remember in earlier listings from this author that there is a heavy emphasis on theology in his work. This work is appropriately called a “theological commentary.” That doesn’t mean he ignores the text; it features a new translation for each psalm. It also doesn’t mean that he ignores introductory material; there is much helpful and understandable information in the short technical introduction, as well as his list of theological considerations introduced in the introduction. These are: a) God’s Presence and seeming absence, b) God as Creator, c) God as Sovereign of History, d) God as judge of His enemies, e) God as protector of the poor and weak, f) God as Master of Wisdom, and g) God as Lord of Life. Frankly, if I were going to teach an elective on the Psalms in college or seminary, this would be my textbook. But even as a pastor, it’s the commentary on this book to which I turn the most. Even the Kindle ebook on this costs $40 and you can expect to pay over $50 for a physical copy. But if I could only have one commentary on the Psalms, this would be it.

Westermann, Claus. ***Praise and Lament in the Psalms*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1981). Westermann was one of the leading “form critics” in the world at the time he originally wrote this in 1965. “Critic” does not mean he didn’t believe the truth in the Bible. “Critic” means he took the Bible seriously, so seriously that he examined the scripture thoroughly for hints of how passages were used in worship and what kinds of patterns could help us explain difficult passages. Although there are many types of psalms in the Bible with many different purposes, Westermann invests his time in this book by focusing on psalms of praise and psalms of lament, the two most common types. Westermann is most concerned with demonstrating the pattern(s) for both types of psalms and explaining why each is important, so there isn’t a psalm-by-psalm analysis. Yet, his insights on the two genres are invaluable. A new version of the paperback I have costs $35 from the publisher, but only $26 from Amazon. You can usually find used copies around $15 at Amazon and other online sources mentioned earlier (abebooks.com or alibris.com).

Yates, Kyle M***. Preaching from the Psalms*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1948). I inherited this collection of sermons from my late father. There are actually only 20 psalms covered in this collection (maybe 21 since he combines Psalm 42 and 43 like most scholars), but the sermons are surprisingly relevant to this day (unexpected for mid-20th century messages). The reason for the relevance is that Yates did his homework on understanding each psalm before preaching on it. That shouldn’t be surprising since he taught Old Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (when it was still a reputable institution) prior to moving to Baylor University. Looking at several used book sites, the lowest price I found was $8.

**Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs (Solomon)**

This is a very difficult category because these are difficult books. Many Christians ignore them entirely except to find a “proof text” to support their position on one thing or another. Sometimes, the use of these proof texts can be strangely inaccurate. For example, the word “gift” in Proverbs usually refers to a bribe (commensurate with the Asian practice of giving a gift when one comes to a business meeting), but I once heard a sermon on spiritual gifts using “let your gift go before you.” Some liberal interpreters want to consider these primarily as secular sayings, ignoring the Holy Spirit’s role in collecting and developing these sayings to benefit God’s people. Some fundamentalist Christians try to avoid these books because some parts of them seem too overtly cynical to be inspired. Rather than struggle with them and have to broaden their understanding of inspiration, they just avoid them. So, whether you’re using the downloadable sources (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, Keil and Delitzsch, Lange’s Commentaries, and Maclaren’s ***Expositions of Holy Scripture***) and ***The Interpreter’s Bible*** (readable online) mentioned earlier or the sources I’m adding to the list below, you are probably going to find approaches with which you’ll disagree. Why? Because no one agrees of everything in these books. Maybe God preserved them to keep us humble. An honest interpreter will have some reservations, even about the books I recommend below.

I’ve only specified one commentary on Song of Songs. The older commentaries I’ve mentioned previously generally follow an allegorical approach that, while devotionally encouraging, may not be an entirely honest approach to the text. Martin Luther, in his lectures on the book, saw it as a tribute to the political power of Solomon’s kingdom. Out of the books recommended below, I have avoided those which predominantly follow the allegorical approach alone.

Alter, Robert. ***A Translation with Commentary: The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes*** (New York, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010). Admittedly, this is more translation than commentary, but it is the best translation of which I am aware. And, if you don’t understand why he chose the words or turn of phrase that he chose, the commentary (presented in notes below his unique translation) makes it clear. When I am translating out of these books (and I have other books by Alter), I regularly compare my translation with his to see if there might be a nuance I’m missing or an idea for expressing a word differently. So, this book is invaluable to me. Many libraries have this book and it may not be enough of a theological/devotional work within itself to justify buying it for yourself, but I mention it because I don’t work with these books without using it. Used copies around $8 to $9 dollars for the hardcopy at abebooks.com and Amazon.

\*Cook, F. C. ***The Bible Commentary: Proverbs-Ezekiel*** (New York, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1880). This older commentary (sometimes known as ***The Speaker’s Commentary*** and sometimes as ***The Holy Bible…with Commentary***) is very tied (unlike many modern commentaries) to not only the idea that Solomon wrote the book but also that the book is about Solomon specifically. The good news is that it is more interested in handling this as a historical book than as an allegory. It certainly balances some of the modern commentaries with an earlier viewpoint. The good news is that you can download a copy of all the F. C. Cook commentaries at: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/cook_fc/provez.html>.

Crenshaw, James L***. Ecclesiastes: The Old Testament Library*** (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987). Dr. Crenshaw had moved to Duke University’s divinity school by the time he completed this volume. It is an incredibly thorough treatment of this difficult book. Crenshaw does not pretend that many people wonder how such a cynical book came to be accepted as “Bible” or “canon,” but this is the most detailed overall treatment of all the commentaries I will mention on these three wisdom books. You may not end up on the same spiritual page as the author, but he provides many ways to look at this book that I believe God gave us just to teach us not to take the meaning of life and our place in it for granted. There are no easy answers in Ecclesiastes and this may well be the most well-rounded treatment. If you want a new copy, I suggest the $14 Kindle ebook from Amazon because the new volumes are $40—even on Amazon. The good news is that this set can sometimes be found in libraries so you could “try before you buy” and, better yet, Amazon’s “Look Inside” feature lets you read the entire introduction and some of the commentary to see if it’s for you.

Crenshaw, James L. ***Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*** (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981). Dr. Crenshaw, a distinguished professor from Vanderbilt University at the time of writing, has written a concise and useful introduction to not only the biblical books, but also to non-biblical wisdom literature such as “Wisdom of Ben-Sirach” to be found in Catholic Bibles. Although it is concise, it is not as slim and devotional as the work by Johnson cited below. Crenshaw lists more forms of wisdom literature and does a more thorough job of showing how the axioms of royal courts and the sayings/lists of folk wisdom permeated the cultures of the Ancient Near East. Indeed, his introduction even makes some comparisons between Chinese wisdom and the Bantu wisdom from the African continent. Further, even though this is introductory, he still gives you some meaty Hebrew word studies (transliterated into English characters so you can pronounce them) about important key words (for example, the eight (8) different words for “fool” used in these books). Now in its third edition, you can pick up a used copy for around $14-$20 dollars on online sites from Amazon to logos.com.

Johnson, L. D. ***Israel’s Wisdom: Learn and Live*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1975). This is a short, almost devotional book covering Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Johnson doesn’t worry about how many other influences than King Solomon entered into these books or why so many of these books contain usage more appropriate to centuries after Solomon than appropriate to his court. That is probably wise. We believe that God inspired the entire Bible, and we know that God sometimes leads people to use so-called “secular” illustrations to present a “spiritual” truth. In terms of dealing with the text, he does spend a little bit of time discussing the literary forms found in the wisdom literature, but not as thoroughly as one would find elsewhere (in Crenshaw, for instance). Theologically, I particularly enjoyed his short chapter, “Job: Towering Challenge to Prudential Religion.” A lot of people have problems with the fact that some portions of the Bible seem to challenge or contradict others. But even Jesus used paradox, seeming contradictions, to illustrate a truth that needs to be understood from more than one perspective. So, even though Johnson recognizes the challenge, he recognizes that we need both the prudential wisdom of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, as well as the corrective perspectives demonstrated in Job. Both thriftbooks.com and Amazon have used copies at around $8. If you don’t have anything solid on these books, this is a nice place to start, but I’d feel better recommending such a slim volume if it were under $5.

Murphy, Roland E. ***The Song of Songs: Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*** (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1990). This recommendation may not make sense in the long run, but here goes. This is probably the most scholarly commentary I have on this book. Dr. Murphy rightly observes that some commentaries do a good job with linguistic and cultural comparisons with Ancient Near Eastern civilizations but aren’t very helpful in terms of interpreting the text. Other commentaries spend almost all of their energy on trying to examine how we got the biblical book. Murphy’s commentary takes note of the material provided by those other commentaries but his volume is equally divided between an outstanding introduction and the second half with a careful translation and detailed phrase-by-phrase commentary. Most books on Song of Songs simply follow the allegorical approach (The male is Christ and female is the Church.). This is the only one I know that fairly considers both what it meant to the Jews, as well as from an allegorical perspective. This book costs at least $20 on used book sites and at least $40 for new books on Amazon and elsewhere.

O’Dowd, Ryan P. ***The Story of God Bible Commentary: Proverbs*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 2017). This relatively recent book in a series with which I have generally not been impressed would be my “Go-to” book if I were doing a study on Proverbs. It isn’t focused on background issues but it isn’t merely devotional in nature. It is very readable, contains some sermon-style illustrations, and is written expressly to help readers experience the spiritual dynamic of the book without academic distractions. New copies are available at target.com for $22 and a Kindle eBook is available for $20 (some used copies at $15). If you’re doing a study of Proverbs, any of these choices would be valuable.

Peterson, Wayne H. “Ecclesiastes” in in Allen, Clifton J. (ed.) ***Broadman Bible Commentary Volume 5 Proverbs-Isaiah*** (Nashville, Tennessee, 1971). I don’t always recommend the books of my former professors (My Th.M. and Ph.D. major professor and my Hebrew professor from my Ph.D work both wrote commentaries in the same volume and I don’t use them enough to recommend them (even though I recommended the work of one of them on Psalms.), but this is an invaluable resource on Ecclesiastes for introducing wisdom literature to a Sunday School or Bible Study group. You may not want to study Ecclesiastes, but listen to why the late Dr. Peterson (a martyr to a Southern Baptist purge where fundamentalist students used a teaching evaluation that was supposed to “improve his teaching” and “would not be used to evaluate his employment” was used as the primary leverage against him) wrote that we should study this book: 1) it appraises life realistically (making it relevant for skeptics and atheists to read it and be drawn toward the need for God), 2) deals with the acceptance of that which cannot be changed, 3) demonstrates that secularism and materialism is unsatisfactory, and 4) points out he acute need for Christ and New Testament revelation (“If the writer by some prophetic insight could have known the fullness of the revelation in Christ, his constant cry of vanity would have been replaced by shouts of rejoicing.”). Although the actual comments are restrained by space limitations (I wrote for the same publisher a few years later and adherence to “word count” was brutal), the way he organizes the material is extremely useful. As noted earlier regarding availability of this commentary series, this volume is available as part of the online library through Logos or in used form for less than $5 from abebooks.com and thriftbooks.com.

Scott, R. B. Y. ***The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*** (New York City, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1971). This classic work on the wisdom literature is easier reading than James L. Crenshaw’s introduction (see above) but meatier and not as easy as L.D. Johnson’s little book (also, see above). The good news is that it is extremely informative and has plenty of examples from the wisdom literature. It also features a wonderful discussion of the relationship between prophecy and wisdom. The bad news is that it won’t help you book-by-book or chapter-by-chapter. I’m glad it’s in my library and I use it to “center” myself in the perspectives of the wisdom tradition. I recommend it as something in-between the other two sources. A site called biblio.com has several used copies for under $5.00.

**General Works on the Prophetic Books**

When a book says it contains the words of or the “burden” of XYZ, does that mean that the entire book had to have been written by XYZ for that to be true? If it does, most of these books aren’t for you. The Bible indicates that prophets usually had disciples. We know clearly that Jeremiah had Baruch who served as his scribe, if not his editor/collaborator. Most Old Testament scholars see multiple writing styles, influence of multiple languages, and consideration of multiple eras beyond one individual’s lifespan as suggestive of multiple influences. For me, as long as we recognize that the Holy Spirit was in control of the process, it doesn’t matter how many people created, collected, edited, or adapted the material that became the Bible book. The exceptions to this would be found in “Isaiah” by A. R. Fausset in the downloadable Jamieson, Fausset, Brown (as well as Fausset’s “Jeremiah-Malachi” in the same series), “Isaiah” (and others) in the downloadable Keil and Delitzsch series mentioned earlier, and the Lange’s Commentary series (downloadable) mentioned earlier. Naturally, the sermons by Alexander Maclaren don’t worry about issues of authorship or history. Personally, I read the old ones and the new ones and expect the Holy Spirit to guide my study.

\*Clarke, Adam. ***Clarke’s Commentary: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with Commentary and Critical Notes: Volume IV: Isaiah-Malachi*** (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837). I have placed this here as a “general work” because this volume tries to cover all of the writing prophets in one volume. This commentary is extremely useful when you feel like there is a key phrase or an unusual word that doesn’t immediately communicate to you. These commentaries basically touch on a minimum of words or phrases per verse, but they are quite useful as a quick reference as one is preparing to teach or preach from a given passage. I have not found it as useful as the commentaries of Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, but I think several of you might benefit from this minimalist approach. All of the volumes of this commentary series by a respected 19th century Methodist minister can be accessed free of charge at: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/acc/jeremiah.html>.

Petersen, David L. ***The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). This is a very up-to-date survey of the prophetic books, not only with a solid introduction filled with archaeological, linguistic and stylistic (literary) information, but a breakdown of the forms (styles) of prophetic speech used by many prophets. The beauty of this book is that it doesn’t stop with explanation of the historical issues regarding each book of the Bible covered (all of the prophets) but moves on to some excellent theological applications, as well. At the end, Petersen even covers prophetic material in the books (like 1 Kings and 2 Kings) we don’t normally think of as prophetic works. At the time of this typing, new copies are $22 each on Amazon but both thriftbooks.com and abebooks.com had copies for under $10 when I created this list.

Scott, R. B. Y. ***The Relevance of the Prophets: An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets and Their Message*** (New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1944). This volume provides a lot of basic information on the idea and movements of prophecy in Ancient Israel, as well as the development of the prophetic literature. It does not attempt to take you book-by-book (so it won’t help with individual lessons), but it helps you understand the situation in which prophets operated, the idea of prophetic schools (disciples following a given prophet), the rise of writing prophets, and the role of prophets within the monarchy and beyond. It was when reading this book that I first began to “get it” about the prophets. Amazon had hardcovers (used, of course) as low as $4 and paperbacks as low as $3 when I typed this list.

Westermann, Claus. ***Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1991). This renowned Old Testament scholar from Europe was an early advocate of looking at the scripture beads within the necklace of the biblical books. This book, like his book Praise and Lament in the Psalms, looks at the way the smaller units within each passage work to convey a unified message. New editions of this class work are still available for $27 at <https://www.christianbook.com/basic-forms-of-prophetic-speech/claus-westermann/9780664252441/pd/25244>, but Amazon has a couple of used ones for $20.

**Isaiah**

Sometimes, you will find commentaries on Isaiah divided so that the latter part (Chapters 40-66) is handled separately from the first part. This is largely because the first part deals primarily with events of 8th century B.C. and the latter part deals with events from long after the 8th century prophet’s death. It depend on how you see the Holy Spirit working whether the 8th century prophet had explicit future visions or if his disciples and their disciples were inspired to build on his foundation with the blessing of the Spirit. Those 19th and early 20th century series which I previously pointed out as downloadable assume the first while most modern commentators assume the latter. Regardless, the biblical books are the wholly inspired and reliable Word of God to me, even when God accommodated Himself to the writer’s cultural and scientific understanding. Just to have something less detailed, I also include a book of sermons from Isaiah in this list.

Childs, Brevard S. ***Isaiah: The Old Testament Commentary*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). Although this commentary series had already published volumes which divided Isaiah into three volumes (one which I recommend later), Childs put his brilliant theological mind to the idea of presenting Isaiah as a theological unity as opposed to a commentary arguing ways to interpret the book and how to dissect the book into sections. He is well aware of all of the historical, linguistic, and literary issues and discusses them when relevant to the theological understanding. After dividing the book into several smaller sections, he presents shorter introductions to each smaller section and then dives into the verse-by-verse consideration of the text. Each section of the text has a new translation from Childs, textual notes, and then full commentary on each verse/section. Used copies start at $25, but even the Kindle eBook is circa $40. The same author has a book published in 2015 called ***The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2015) that I have just purchased and haven’t read yet. I expect it to be good, but am not recommending it yet because I am not positive it will be useful.

Clements, Ronald E. ***The New Century Bible Commentary: Isaiah 1-39*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980). Based on the Revised Standard Version translation, Baptist scholar Ronald E. Clements sees Isaiah as a quilt of prophecies sewn together by spiritual inspiration. His interpretation is a no-nonsense approach to considering the important phrases in each verse such that it feels like you are sitting in a group where he is reading aloud the verses and then, throwing out interesting idea after interesting idea that you may not have considered. This isn’t a radical commentary; it just feels like Clements is throwing out treat after treat. He has many other books that are deeper and of more theological importance, but this one is very solid and was very welcome in my library.

Green, James Leo, ***God Reigns: Expository Studies in the Prophecy of Isaiah*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1968). The treatment of Isaiah in this book is more like a book of sermons. They aren’t exactly sermons, but they are so close to sermons that I would expect that they have inspired many sermons. I know that this book revitalized my father’s preaching on Isaiah, and I remember being impressed with it as a young minister in my first pastorate. Because of it’s “sermonic” nature, Green doesn’t cover every chapter in the book, but the chapters he does cover are very well-done.

Westermann, Claus. ***Isaiah 40-66: The Old Testament Library*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1969). Amazon lists 50 used ones under $10 and the Kindle Edition ebook is about $20. Westermann’s translation in this commentary is excellent and his historical commentary (what it meant for the Jews) is thorough and useful, BUT he emphasizes how God raised up Cyrus and doesn’t even offer a Christological interpretation of the “Suffering Servant Songs.” So, even though there’s plenty of good material in here and I very much respect the author, I don’t recommend it if you’re only going to use one commentary.

**Jeremiah-Lamentations**

Blackwood, Andrew W. ***Commentary on Jeremiah*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1977). This is a relatively straight-forward commentary, direct and to the point. Unlike many commentaries, it does not contain a new translation, but the exposition on each passage will lead to fruitful insights and some good ideas on how to structure your teaching on this very special prophet and book. Blackwood really makes a point of considering the poetic way Jeremiah presents his message from God. A used book site called biblio.com has multiple copies of this book starting at $1.

Bright, John, ***The Anchor Bible: Jeremiah*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965). As I noted in the general introductory paragraph on the prophetic literature, some of you are bound to be uncomfortable with the section of Bright’s introduction where he discusses the composition of the book. As a historian, Bright is only looking for the kernel of history, not expecting every flourish to be “historical” as you and I might. Still, his historian’s credentials certainly make the introduction worthwhile and his careful translation and commentary through the rest of the book make this one of the first books I examine when I’m reading/studying/preaching from Jeremiah. Abebooks has copies for under $20, biblio.com has one under $10, and Amazon claims to have at least one under $4.

Brueggemann, Walter. ***Jeremiah 1-25: To Pluck Up, To Tear Down: International Theological Commentary*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1988) and Brueggemann, Walter. ***Jeremiah 26-52: To Build, To Plant: International Theological Commentary*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1991). As should be obvious, Brueggemann divides the Book of Jeremiah into two thematic sections, the first where the overwhelming message is negative and the second where there are some solid and hopeful promises (though the prophet is still dealing with lots of negative stuff). The purpose of these commentaries is not to handle critical questions but to move forward in finding the vital theological themes in the book. These two are highly recommended. Amazon has the first volume from $6 up, but Amazon’s prices on the second volume are outrageous. Fortunately, abebooks.com has volumes starting from $6 on the second volume.

**\***Clarke, Adam. ***Clarke’s Commentary: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with Commentary and Critical Notes: Volume IV: Isaiah-Malachi*** (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837). This commentary is extremely useful when you feel like there is a key phrase or an unusual word that doesn’t immediately communicate to you. These commentaries basically touch on a minimum of words or phrases per verse, but they are quite useful as a quick reference as one is preparing to teach or preach from a given passage. I have not found it as useful as the commentaries of Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, but I think several of you might benefit from this minimalist approach. All of the volumes of this commentary series by a respected 19th century Methodist minister can be accessed free of charge at: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/acc/jeremiah.html>.

Clements, Ronald E. ***Jeremiah: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988). Again, the emphasis of this commentary series is not so much the historical and hyper-critical approach as to discover the spiritual themes of the biblical book which will resonate with readers and their students/congregants when they explore the Book of Jeremiah. Clements’ writing is colorful and definitely works at putting the reader/expositor in an empathic bond with both prophet and people. Both Amazon and Barnes and Noble feature the hardcover new for $30, but the Kindle ebook is under $19.

Habel, Norman C. ***Are You Joking, Jeremiah*** (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1970). This resource is something completely different. It is not a commentary, but the poetry in this volume can produce good studies. Originally designed as modern, slang-filled poetic liturgies (aka “responsive readings reflecting on but not necessarily literally citing scripture) for youth, these poems can be used as dramatic readings, worship readings, discussion starters, or devotional reading. The poetry demonstrates how a scholar like Habel may try to introduced his biblical interpretation into communication to which, at least, 20th century youth could respond. [Note: Our youth seemed to respond to the poetry as well.] Used copies can be found at $2 at alibris.com but Amazon’s $4 used copy had just sold when I typed this and the European edition, even in new paperback is overpriced at $30 in my opinion. Although not as profound, in my opinion, the author’s ***Wait a minute, Moses!*** Is the same idea.

Hillers, Delbert R. ***The Anchor Bible: Lamentations*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1972). Although Lamentations is “historically” associated with Jeremiah because of the 7th century prophet’s reputation as “the weeping prophet,” most scholars do not believe Jeremiah actually wrote the book of Lamentations—especially as the text of the book itself does not so identify. Of course, the evidence that at least some early authorities thought it should be associated with Jeremiah can be seen in its placement between Jeremiah and Ezekiel, despite not being a “prophetic” book. There is a prophetic message within the songs of mourning, the poetry of defeat presented in the book, though. So, for convenience’s sake (and since I’m only recommending this book on Lamentations), I am including this reference here. Fortunately, unlike many of the commentaries in this series, Hillers took great pains to keep this volume from being too technical. Issues like the acrostic (alphabetical) form and its importance are handled clearly and visually. Hillers is an expert on Near Eastern covenant and treaty forms, so it is interesting to get his take on songs of mourning with spiritual significance. Amazon features used editions from $3 up and abebooks.com has them from $4 up.

Thompson, J. A. ***The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Jeremiah*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980). As years have gone on, I’ve become more and more drawn to this commentary. Thompson, an Australian Old Testament scholar, sees more in the historical references than the “kernel” that Bright builds on. In addition, though he sees many smaller “books,” “documents,” or “units” within the biblical book, his view of how they fit together is somewhat tidier than the methodology used by Bright. As a result, despite my recommendation of Bright, this might be a better starting place for most of you. New copies run from $57 on Amazon to $64 on the Eerdmans website. The Kindle edition is almost $50.

**Ezekiel**

A couple of years ago, a fellow pastor asked me if I knew any good commentaries on Ezekiel. He lamented that there weren’t any good ones of which he was aware. I told him about a scholarly work on Ezekiel’s rhetoric and audience, but could only recommend one commentary for his needs—Walther Eichrodt’s listed below. Fortunately, there is a nice option for those who want a clear, concise introduction to in the offering by Clements (below). Both of these are very nice options, but don’t forget the older volumes available for free download or online viewing. They aren’t as good (in my opinion), but they let you look at several viewpoints inexpensively. Many of the older commentaries try to interpret Ezekiel’s latter prophecies as futuristic when proper interpretation recognizes that Ezekiel’s messages make perfect sense in their historical context. [Note: I have some more expensive commentaries in my collection, but I don’t think they provide as much value for the price as these.]

Clements, Ronald E. ***Ezekiel: Westminster Bible Commentary*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1996). This volume is a beautiful combination: renowned Old Testament scholar and a book directed at the average person rather than even pastors and students. Clements gets right to the point in short discussions of each passage and the introduction is accurate, but concise. His interpretation of God’s “chariot” in Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10 is extremely well-presented. At the time of writing, theoldbookshopofbordentown.com had a new copy for $16.50 instead of the $30 from the publisher. Ebay had a used copy for $10 as a “buy now” and Amazon lists used ones from $2 up.

Eichrodt, Walther. ***Ezekiel: The Old Testament Library*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1970). As noted in the short introduction to this section, this is my go-to volume on Ezekiel. Reading this (even before I finished my first magisterial degree) was the first time that the book began to fit together for me in a coherent way. For me, Eichrodt’s approach to his new translation, as well as his textual notes and explanations are both scholarly and spiritual. This book runs $60 new in hardbound and $34 as a Kindle download. Fortunately, Amazon claims to have used paperbacks under $10.

**Daniel**

Once again there is a disparity between the general approach of many of the older (and freely accessible) commentaries I have listed and the ones I am recommending below.

Lacocque, Andre. ***The Book of Daniel*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1979). As I noted in the general notes on this prophetic section, I first encountered this commentary as Le Livre de Daniel when I was in graduate school. I was impressed with the way Lacocque took the message to Daniel’s hearers seriously and still interacted with New Testament considerations. I was delighted when I saw the English translation (cheaper than the edition I’d borrowed from the school library) and it has been my top commentary on Daniel ever since.

Towner, W. Sibley. ***Daniel: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1984). Where the commentary by Lacocque offers detailed textual notes, Towner (as do most authors in this series) concentrates on the spiritual lessons to be learned from the text. There are plenty of used copies of this volume which cost only single digits in dollars, but if you want a new copy, you’ll pay almost $20 for the Kindle ebook at Amazon or $30 at other online stores.

Hosea

In the full Bible commentaries mentioned earlier (Clarke’s, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Keil-Delitzsch, Lange, and Maclaren’s Expositions) which are freely downloadable or able to be read freely online. There are lots of discoveries and detailed studies that are not, of course, included in those commentaries, so I want to add four other possibilities to your awareness.

Anderson, Frances I and David Noel Freedman. ***The Anchor Bible: Hosea*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1996). This is the definitive scholarly work on the subject in page count, in translation, in historical and archaeological discoveries, in word studies, in comparative literature, and in careful sifting of (and recognition of patterns in) the text. This is no commentary for merely looking up a verse here and there; this is the most comprehensive work on Hosea of which I am aware. Fortunately, this set is widely held by public libraries (I believe the Wilmette library even lets you check out volumes from this set) because a new copy is circa $60 and outside of one listing on abebooks.com for $13 and one on eBay.com for $15 at the time of this writing, most are $30 and up.

Brueggemann, Walter. ***Hosea: Tradition for Crisis*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1968). Both theologically and historically, this is a fabulous study in Hosea’s understanding of and preaching of the broken covenant between God and Israel. From that understanding, Brueggemann walks the reader carefully through ways this 8th century prophet would have spoken to Ancient Israel all the way through the Exile and how it might apply to the Christian church in crisis. This isn’t a commentary and doesn’t cover the entire book. It focuses on the covenant/judgment/restoration motif in the first few chapters. Since there is a newer edition on sale than the one I listed here, you’ll probably pay up to $30 for the new edition, but there are used copies of both editions for circa $6 up on Amazon and $9 up on biblio.com.

Mays, James Luther. ***Hosea: Old Testament Library*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Knox Press, 1969). When I started my basic pastoral (first master’s) degree, I already believed in the Bible as the Word of God, infallible as inspired to provide our guidance, training, discernment, and relationship with God as per the Bible’s testimony to itself. When I discovered this commentary, the power, range, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in terms of the use of the human agent’s (or agents’) creative ability and in the value of the preservation of manuscripts to give us different readings overwhelmed me with awe. I hadn’t realized that the human agents (in this case Hosea and those who preserved his tradition/writings) used wordplay in the Hebrew to make sophisticated puns, metaphors, and sound combinations to emphasize meanings. It was upon reading this book that I became enamored with the beautiful writing of the Old Testament and decided to focus on the Old Testament in its original language. Don’t worry! The Hebrew is transliterated into English characters so you can pronounce the words and sounds (very important for word play) and even portions of Mays’ translation of the Hebrew text will help you see how the Bible is great literature, as well as irrefutable truth. Although a new paperback costs $30 on Amazon and a new Nook ebook is $19 on barnesandnoble.com, there is a used copy on thriftbooks.com for $4 and there is even a used paperback on Amazon for $1.50.

**\***Morgan, George Campbell. ***Hosea: The Heart and Holiness of God*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1974). Yes, this collection of sermons on the Book of Hosea was reprinted in 1974, but they were originally preached in the early 19th century. These sermons are worth reading now, but if you cannot find this exact collection, there is a free download of Morgan’s Expositions on the Whole Bible where the great preacher hits on a lot of the same points, downloadable free: (<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/gcm/hosea.html>). The actual book for which I provided some excerpts during our Hosea study can be found at abebooks.com ($12.50), Barnes & Noble ($15.50 for the Nook ebook), and Amazon in the $14-16 range.

**Joel**

How often have you heard sermons from the Book of Joel? Even for me it’s been very seldom. It usually only comes up when verses from Joel are quoted in Acts when describing the Day of Pentecost. Outside of commentary sets such as the older ones already cited, I can only recommend the following three.

Allen, Leslie C. ***The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1976). Although this seems like an odd combination of four books from the so-called “Book of the Twelve” or “Minor Prophets,” it works pretty well as all of them deal with God’s judgment from different perspectives and, at least the first three are books where the date for the book is debated. I’ve recommended Dr. Allen and books from this series before. Indeed, this book may be the most useful commentary of which I’m aware on the first two biblical books. As usual, used books can be found in that as I type, betterworlds.com has a used book for under $8 and abebooks.com has one for $12. New copies will cost around $34 on christianbooks.com and other sites.

**\***Smith, George Adam. ***The Book of the Twelve Prophets: Volume II: Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel, Jonah*** (New York, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928). This is the revised edition of an 1898 commentary on all twelve of these shorter books of the prophets. All of the books covered in this second volume have some usefulness, but I find I have used the sections on “Joel,” “Haggai,” and “Obadiah” the most. Betterworlds.com has a used copy of this second volume in a two volume set for $6 and abebooks.com has one for $12. However, you can download the volume in pdf format from The Gutenberg Project for free since it is public domain: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50747/50747-h/50747-h.htm>. At times, Smith’s style is very academic, but one the whole, one sees the reason for different readings in various translations and one gets a good background history (though some details may have changed with more recent discoveries—Smith didn’t have the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran to work with.) as applied to individual passages.

Thompson, J. A. “Joel: Introduction and Exegesis” in in George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), ***The Interpreter’s Bible: Volume 6*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1956). Thompson does his usual good job on the introduction and I enjoyed his commentary on the King James Version and Revised Standard Version of the biblical text. For a while, this volume, Sir George Adam Smith’s book listed above, and the Jamieson, Fausset, Brown volume were my only commentaries on this often quoted, but often neglected biblical book. It is worth seeking at your library , finding it in used form via abebooks, biblio, betterworld, or Amazon, or viewing online via: <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6094577M/The_Interpreter%27s_Bible>. Note that the chapter on “Obadiah” in the same volume was also written by Thompson.

**Amos**

Those who attended the Friday night studies on the Book of Amos might recognize that I used the first volume of George Adam Smith’s first volume of The Book of the Twelve Prophets for both Hosea and Amos. You may not have realized that I actually used the third of the three sources listed below without citing the author. It’s okay; I had the author’s permission. Also, although I have a copy of the new Amos commentary in The Old Testament Library, I still found myself going back to the older James Luther Mays commentary listed here. Again, don’t forget the free sources I’ve directed you to in earlier lists.

King, Philip J. Amos, ***Hosea, Micah—An Archaeological Commentary*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1988). Comparing the text to archaeological discoveries seemed like a fresh approach to me. I borrowed this volume from the Emory University library when I was writing my study guide listed below. It’s a great way to look at these 8th century prophets. You should be able to find a used paperback from $5 up. Amazon had more than 25 when I typed this listing.

Mays, James Luther. ***Amos: The Old Testament Library*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1969). It may be nostalgia for that first feeling of discovery, but I still prefer this edition to the new one in the series by Jorg Jeremias. The latter is okay, but I didn’t resonate as much with the translation and understanding of artistic style in the text that Mays revealed. The paperback will run you up to $30 new at Amazon or Barnes & Noble online, but the Kindle ebook is only $14 and Amazon has used paperbacks for $3 up.

Wilson, Johnny Lee. ***Wytte Media Bible: Amos*** (Tyrone, Georgia: Wytte Media LLC, 2004). This book features a new translation of the book, commentary on each verse, glossary, bibliography, and a CD-ROM with a dramatic monologue, puzzles, slides, and worksheets for group study. The new price was $19.99 with CD-ROM, but I know a guy who can get it for you for $10 ($5 if I can’t find a CD-ROM).

Wolff, Hans Walter. ***Amos:*** ***Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*** (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1974). These oversize commentaries feature the finest scholarship from all over the world. They are heavy on translation and notes, but they are laid out beautifully and extremely well-documented. There are also some great sidebars that are worth reading.

**Obadiah**

In addition to the titles by Leslie C. Allen, George Adam Smith, and J. A. Thompson mentioned under Joel, I only have one book on Obadiah that I use.

Raabe, Paul R. ***The Anchor Bible: Obadiah*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1996). I am expressly appreciative of Dr. Raabe’s approach to translation. He isn’t afraid to be wooden and word-for-word when it helps the study. There is also a marvelous section of the introduction where Obadiah is compared to Ezekiel. Though some commentaries in this series seem pedantic, Raabe’s commentary is focused on bringing out the text in a useful way. He pays particular attention to the messenger formula and how that impacts Obadiah’s role in prophecy. By the way, since I purchased my copies in this commentary series, Doubleday and Company has surrendered the books to Yale University Press. As a result, the prices for new volumes have gone up. The lowest price I’ve seen was $20 on eBay and $23 on Amazon. I occasionally find copies from this series at Half Price Books.

**Jonah**

In my study guide, listed below, I explain why some authors believe that Jonah is a folk tale or legend and some authors believe that not taking Jonah as a historical narrative undermines even the truth of Jesus’ “Sign of Jonah.” Personally, I’m not sure what happened. It was a great fish which, since it was specifically appointed by God to swallow Jonah, didn’t need to be a whale. So, I can’t use the modern biology of whales to make a judgment. I just know that a reluctant prophet was dramatically and miraculously given a second chance by God. Yes, the Hebrew style has elements of a fairy tale (I said “elements,” I didn’t say it WAS a fairy tale.) where the ship thinks, the water walks, and some events seem improbable and unrealistic. Yet, I always reserve room in my mind for God to work however God wants to work.

I share that because the author of the commentary that has blessed me most in the following list doesn’t treat Jonah as historical. The freely downloadable commentaries and sermons that I previously listed generally don’t worry about this. They simply accept it and move on. But even those who treat Jonah as “mere story” can help you see some wonderful depth in the text. So, even though I think that position is presumptuous, I am listing the commentary even though some may find it shocking.

Allen, Leslie C. ***The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1976). Except for my own study guide listed below, I’m probably closer to Dr. Allen in my interpretation of this book than any other. He points out the historical and literary issues concerning the book, but he mostly interprets in such a way that one can preach or teach effectively. One gets a sense of it in the following quotation: “If the fish stands for anything, it represents the Heilsgeschichte [German for “salvation history”] of Israel, the acts of grace and power demonstrated by Yahweh on Israel’s behalf in her past history.” (p. 181) Again, used books can be found in that as I type, betterworlds.com has a used book for under $8 and abebooks.com has one for $12. New copies will cost around $34 on christianbooks.com and other sites.

Carlisle, Thomas John, ***You! Jonah!*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1968). As with Habel’s Are You Joking, Jeremiah, this volume is also recommended as something completely different. It is not a commentary; it is a collection of poems with woodcut illustrations. All of the poems are about Jonah and his encounter with God. One of the shorter ones is called “Busybody” and reads:
“He was a man of prayer,
negatively speaking.
Frequently he
took time
to take God
to task.” (p. 30)
I’ve never read anything such as these poems that illustrated the dynamic of Jonah arguing with God so well. Four of the poems can be read without charge on this website: <https://www.bethelchurchtroy.com/poems/thomas-john-carlisle-you-jonah>. Abebooks.com has a few used copies for $13, but some website are asking in the $30 range for a 64 page book that originally cost $1 in paperback.

Sasson, Jack M. ***The Anchor Bible: Jonah*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1990). The translation in this commentary is wonderful and the interpretations work on a number of levels. Sasson doesn’t let the reader look at Jonah from one perspective. He walks the reader through the idea of Jonah as satire (a parody on prophets who are all doom and no grace?) and allegory (ever think of what the sailors and Ninevah might represent beyond their identity in the story?). To traditional interpretation, Sasson adds a sophisticated tapestry of literary forms to help the message strike home over and over. As noted earlier, Yale University Press has taken over this book line and the prices are even expensive for used copies. Fortunately, Amazon does have some new paperback editions for $40.

Wilson, Johnny Lee. ***Wytte Media Bible: Jonah*** (Bellevue, Washington: Wytte Media, LLC, 2003). This was the first study guide I published with a CD-ROM featuring slides, worksheets, maps, handouts, and a video monologue (my first experience performing in front of a green screen). The book provides a new translation with commentary and explanations such that you get a combination of the scholarly and the sermonic. Our of curiosity, I checked the used marketplace online, finding that thriftbooks.com had a copy for $10 and Amazon for $15. The high price was $38 on findbooks.com. If you want it, I know a guy who can get it to you for $10.

**Micah**

Don’t forget the free downloadable commentary sets from ages past, but here are two more that I consider useful. There is a volume that deals with multiple “minor prophets” that I can recommend, but I would rather recommend it later for the biblical books I believe the author handles best.

Hillers, Delbert R. Mays, ***Micah: Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1984). After an introduction that covers everything from the way Micah is used in Jeremiah to the newer manuscript discoveries containing Micah and other prophets from the Book of the Twelve, Hillers offers a new translation with detailed footnotes on why his might differ from those with which you are familiar. After dealing with the text, he sums up the significance of the text from passage to passage with useful commentary. Warning: If you worry about Hebrew and Greek characters, you’ll want to stay away from this one. I’ve seen it at thriftbooks.com for $14 and eBay for a $15 “buy it now” as well as used copies on Amazon for $10 up.

Mays, James Luther. ***Micah: The Old Testament Library*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1976). While this volume wasn’t as stimulating for me as the late Dr. Mays’ work on Hosea and Amos, respectively, it is still thorough and worthwhile. Each passage is handled as a mini-chapter with titles that could easily be converted to sermons: “Cannibals in the Court,” “Those Who Sell the Word Shall Lose It,” “The Divine Purge,” and “It’s You, Not Something, God Wants.” Buying a new Kindle edition at $38 or new paperback edition $40 (these are Amazon prices) would be almost twice the amount I paid for the hardbound copies. Fortunately, Amazon has a couple of copies of the used hardbound for $21 up.

**Nahum**

Childs, Brevard S. “Nahum” in Childs, Brevard S***. Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1979). The article on Nahum is very short, but very interesting. Childs demonstrates how the words of the prophet in the Assyrian Era have been placed in a context where they both warned and promised Judah during a significantly later age. If you believe the Holy Spirit could inspire biblical books in complex ways, this is fascinating. If you don’t, you probably don’t want this volume for its other discussions, either. See above for pricing.

Christensen, Duane L. ***The Anchor Yale Bible: Nahum*** (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009). When Duane Christensen and I presented back-to-back papers at the Pacific Coast Region of the Society of Biblical Literature, I was very thankful that I presented first. I love the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, but he must love it more—being totally immersed in the sounds and structure of the biblical passages found there. I would have hated to follow him. Even though he was enthusiastic about my presentation, his blew mine away. This volume has all the earmarks of the rest of The Anchor Bible series (now the Anchor Yale Bible series) with new translation, detailed notes, and commentary following a thorough introduction. However, this volume also introduces the idea of “archaeomusicology” and “logoprosodic analysis” to the text. The former is a type of musical-mathematical code found in many ancient writings (and explained in Plato) and the latter looks at such things as initial letters of lines (to find acrostics and alliteration) and the idea of meter (using morae (syllable/vowel counts), accents and stress, and simple word counts). If this sounds incredibly detailed, it’s because it is. But this type of research shows how wonderfully the Holy Spirit has put together these verses, units, and chapters so that the message is emphasized. In the words of art, philosophy, and literature, the form underscores the content. I share this to illustrate the thoroughness of Dr. Christensen’s approach, not to intimidate anyone. The $65 retail price is discounted some for new copies at the $55 Amazon price, but the cheapest used copy I found was $40 on the Amazon site. This recommendation is for people who want to dig deeply into what is, admittedly, a relatively obscure and neglected book of the Bible.

Smith, Ralph L., “Nahum” in Smith, Ralph L. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Micah-Malachi*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984). In addition to the new translation, detailed translation notes, consideration of the literary form and original setting of each passage, as well as a discussion of each passage, Smith goes the extra mile of offering a separate bibliography for each individual scripture passage. He does this for all of the books in this Micah-Malachi volume, but I first found it useful when I was working on a study of Nahum. You can find used copies for around $25 at biblio.com (but make sure you get the commentary, not the thinner paperback on biblical themes), barnesandnoble.com have a Nook ebook for $30, and Amazon has used copies starting at $11.

**Habakkuk**

Achtemeier, Elizabeth, “Habakkuk” in Achtemeier, Elizabeth***, Nahum-Malachi: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1986). Some commentaries on Habakkuk see this as a book about why God allows evil. Other commentaries treat this as a book about human doubt. Achtemeier calls it: “…a book about the purposes of God and about the realization of his will for his world.” (p. 31) Again, this commentary is about teaching and preaching, so it isn’t surprising that Achtemeier’s treatment of the second chapter is an exploration of faith and faithfulness that will preach anywhere. Used books can be found at bookdepository.com ($30), Amazon ($5 up), and a Kindle ebook is available for $14.

**\***Smith, George Adam, “The Book of Habakkuk” in Smith, George Adam, ***The Book of the Twelve Prophets: Volume II: Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel, Jonah*** (New York: New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928). This is an old-style critical commentary that is very useful for looking at individual literary units in the text. It also features interesting notes on the translation on the text. Remember, you can download the volume in pdf format from The Gutenberg Project for free since it is public domain:
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50747/50747-h/50747-h.htm>.

**Zephaniah**

**\***Fensham, F. C. “Zephaniah, Book of” in Crim, Keith (ed.) The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1962). As mentioned earlier, this set, including the Supplementary Volume cited here, is available in the church office. This article is not a commentary, but it offers a great overview with historical references. If you’re just starting a study on the book, this is a useful resource.

Smith, Ralph L. “Zephaniah” in Smith, Ralph L. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Micah-Malachi*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984). As noted above, this volume follows the commentary series in providing a fresh translation, detailed translation notes, considerations of literary form and suggestions of the original target audience for the book. Also as noted above, Smith provides a bibliography for each section and follows each section with a more detailed (and practical) comment on the relevant passages. The “Zephaniah” commentary deals with some of the issues in assigning a date to the book and Smith disagrees with those who attempt to date the book as simultaneous with the Scythian invasion believed to have occurred in the reign of Josiah and takes the unidentified enemy to be Assyria, conqueror of the Northern Kingdom and in the twilight of its imperial success. But the real value of this commentary is the emphasis Smith makes about Zephaniah’s words against syncretism and compromise with the pagan gods/religions. As previously noted, you can find used copies for around $25 at biblio.com (but make sure you get the commentary, not the thinner paperback on biblical themes), barnesandnoble.com have a Nook ebook for $30, and Amazon has used copies starting at $11.

**Haggai**

Achtemeier, Elizabeth, “Haggai” in Achtemeier, Elizabeth***, Nahum-Malachi: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1986). Even revered interpreters like Martin Luther have suggested that Haggai’s calls to rebuild the temple after the Exile are not entirely relevant today. Most of the time, the book is only preached on when it is time for a building dedication for a new church facility. Yet, Achtemeier recognizes that Haggai wasn’t merely preaching about a physical temple; he was preaching about: “God’s yearning to enter into covenant fellowship with his Chosen People once more.” (p. 97) And why do they need a new temple? It is because that is God’s chosen place of meeting with God’s People. As noted before, used books can be found at bookdepository.com ($30), Amazon ($5 up), and a Kindle ebook is available for $14.

Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers, “Haggai” in Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers, ***The Anchor Bible: Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1987). Although this volume is now part of the Yale University publishing program, the husband-wife team of Carol and Eric Meyers has produced a careful and illuminating approach to Haggai (and the first section, so-called First Zechariah, of Zechariah). After some exhaustive details on words and phrases (and considerations of how they fit into the historical period), the Meyers provide some thoughtful comments about the spiritual-theological significance of this unusual prophet. The introduction features several useful gray-scaled maps, numerous chronological charts, and a chart showing correspondences between Haggai and Zechariah. All in all, it’s more than you might have thought you could have gotten out of such a small book. Although new copies are priced at over $60, abebooks.com has some used copies in the $7-$11 range and Amazon had some used copies for $8 up.

**\***Smith, George Adam, “The Book of Haggai” in Smith, George Adam, ***The Book of the Twelve Prophets: Volume II: Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel, Jonah*** (New York: New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928). Although this is an old-style critical commentary that is very useful for looking at individual literary units in the text, it has also been useful for me in preparing sermons. Smith divides Haggai into four sections and can find teaching/preaching value in all of them. Also, unlike many commentators, he argues for the entirety of the book being put together deliberately, disputing those who want to separate part of Chapter II for their own convenience. It also features interesting notes on the translation on the text. Remember, you can download the volume in pdf format from The Gutenberg Project for free since it is public domain:
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50747/50747-h/50747-h.htm>.

Zechariah-Malachi

Many scholars believe that the twelve prophets did not originally contain a separate “Malachi,” “My messenger.” As a result, David L. Petersen (see below) treats the last nine chapters of the English Old Testament as representing one consistent tradition of prophecy. So, I have put my recommended commentaries for both Zechariah and Malachi in this section.

Conservatives who are bothered by the number of scholars who speak of two Zechariahs would be well-advised to read the section on “Unity” in Ralph L. Smith’s commentary cited below. While many critical scholars observe the differences in style and theme between Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14, it was a 17th century commentator who observed that the Bible doesn’t say that Zechariah wrote the whole book BUT Matthew 27:9 quotes Zechariah 11:12 as having been written by Jeremiah. A. R. Fausset (in his introduction to Zechariah, found with his introductions to all the prophets in Volume III of the Jamieson, Fausset, Brown commentary (Job-Isaiah) rather than IV (Jeremiah-Malachi) that some ancients thought that the last third of the prophets were all believed to have been written by Jeremiah (Volume III, xlvi). I say this to explain the division in many commentaries, not to take a side.

Achtemeier, Elizabeth, “Malachi” in Achtemeier, Elizabeth***, Nahum-Malachi: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1986). Achtemeier shapes her interpretation of the dispute where God answers His people as a court case—essentially God on trial. Her concern for preaching material can be discerned when her commentary contains quotations like this one from G. Campbell Morgan (see below): “Heaven’s windows…swing upon love’s hinges.” (p. 77) As noted before, used books can be found at bookdepository.com ($30), Amazon ($5 up), and a Kindle ebook is available for $14.

Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers, “Zechariah 1-8” in Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers, ***The Anchor Bible: Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1987). After noting the useful charts and maps in the first part of this volume (see above), I must note that the second half features several pages of photographs related to archaeological discoveries which illuminate the history surrounding this book. The thoroughness regarding the translation, detailed notes, and comments continues in this half of the volume. Although new copies are priced at over $60, abebooks.com has some used copies in the $7-$11 range and Amazon had some used copies for $8 up.

**\***Morgan, G. Campbell. ***Wherein Have We Robbed God: Malachi’s Message to the Men of Today*** (New York, New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1898). If someone wants to know how to preach these passages (or teach them) from a master pulpiteer, this is the volume to consider. These five sermons were originally shared at Moody Bible Institute back when it was just Moody Bible School. You can download the book at no charge as scanned from the original at: <http://library.mibckerala.org/lms_frame/eBook/Wherin%20Have%20We%20Robbed%20God_%20_%20Ma%20-%20G.%20Campbell%20Morgan.pdf>.

Petersen, David L. ***Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: Old Testament Library*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995). Petersen treats the last nine chapters of the English Old Testament as a collection of three oracles, starting in Zechariah 9:1, 12:1, and Malachi 1:1, respectively. Regarding a date for delivery of the oracles, historical setting, and authorship, he states that these oracles are more like Psalms than Amos in that they could fit several settings. He also suggests that these oracles would fit the international situation of the Persian period quite well, thus communicating the sovereignty of God within an anticipated new era of God’s dealings with Israel. The commentary follows the usual passage by passage formula of the Old Testament Library series with new translation, textual/translation notes, and commentary. Although you can find new copies for $50, even the used copies aren’t cheap. Prices at ebay.com and olivetree.com start at $35 while abebooks.com starts at $25, as does Amazon with a Kindle ebook available at $18.

Smith, Ralph L. “Zechariah” in in Smith, Ralph L. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Micah-Malachi*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984). As noted above, this volume follows the commentary series in providing a fresh translation, detailed translation notes, considerations of literary form and suggestions of the original target audience for the book. Also as noted above, Smith provides a bibliography for each section and follows each section with a more detailed (and practical) comment on the relevant passages. I particularly like the way Smith handled the issue of “unity” of the book, as well as his refusal to back away from the Christian implications of the book’s messianic theology. Yes, as noted previously, you can find used copies for around $25 at biblio.com (but make sure you get the commentary, not the thinner paperback on biblical themes), barnesandnoble.com have a Nook ebook for $30, and Amazon has used copies starting at $11.

**General Works on the Gospels**

Though I’ve already listed surveys of the New Testament and theologies of the New Testament, I haven’t yet shared about more general works on the gospels. The most common general work on the gospels would be the type that tries to “harmonize” the accounts so that one can compare different perspectives and emphases on the events that form our foundation of faith. Other general books deal with the teachings of Jesus across multiple gospels.

\*Bengel, J. A. ***New Testament Word Studies: Volume One: Matthew-Acts*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1971). The publisher just cited specializes in reprints and this volume is a reprint of an 1864 German publication. Much like the Word Pictures in the New Testament series by Robertson (which will be cited with individual books later), this is more of a mini-commentary on the biblical books it covers than a dictionary of New Testament words. One examines the scriptural passages that one is studying and can see the explanation of Greek words that Bengel felt needed to be emphasized. It hasn’t been as helpful as the Robertson books to me but all of the volumes are free to peruse online at: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/jab.html>.

Bruce, F. F. ***The Hard Sayings of Jesus*** (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1983). In this volume, the famed New Testament scholar addresses the sayings by Jesus that make us feel particularly uncomfortable. Phrases about eating His flesh, plucking out the right eye, and becoming eunuchs for heaven’s sake are put in a more understandable context. These are very reasonably priced as used books at: alibris.com starting at $1.50, abebooks.com starting at $3.95, and thriftbooks.com starting at $4.50.

Fisher, Fred L. ***The Sermon on the Mount*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, Without ignoring scholarship, Dr. Fisher always had the ability to synthesize material down to the practical, straightforward level. Parts of this book seem so obvious that you wonder why it was needed while other parts will stimulate discussion and add depth to your understanding. The book concentrates on Matthew’s version of the sermon but it is informed by Luke’s version. Amazon.com has new paperbacks from $8, used from $3, while abebooks has used hardbound copies at $9 (watch out for that $50 asking price on that one copy) and biblio.com has used copies beginning under $5.

Jones, Peter Rhea. ***The Teaching of the Parables*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1982). I’ll confess my bias here. I took a seminar on Pauline Literature in the New Testament from Dr. Jones as part of my second magisterial degree (Th.M.). As challenging as that experience was, this book breaks down the barriers of academia and is more useful than some of the “classic” works on parables in the field (which I use, but do not recommend for the purposes of Sunday School teachers). I particularly like his chapter on “The Nature of the Parable” which offers some interesting and useful diagrams, as well as getting past the error of distilling parables to one lone meaning on the one hand and the error of allegorizing parables so that every single element has a meaning on the other. The rest of the book handles parables under the rubric of what they say about and their implications for the Kingdom of God. Used copies can be acquired from $5 on thriftbooks.com to $6 at amazon.com at the time of this listing.

Longenecker, Richard N. ***The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2000). While this volume isn’t as thorough as that of Peter Rhea Jones, it offers much of value. It features a history of how parables have been interpreted and it offers essays on individual parables (though not all) by different New Testament scholars from Craig Evans through Longenecker himself to Steven L. Wright. This cannot stand alone as one’s only source on the parables but it provides a nice complement to the Peter Rhea Jones book (and counterpoint to some of the older, limiting, critical works). At the time of writing, used books could be located for circa $6 on both abebooks.com and amazon.com with the latter offering new paperbacks circa $18.

**\***Robertson, A. T. ***A Harmony of the Gospels*** (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1922). This is a bold and useful effort to coordinate the various accounts in the gospels with each other. The use of spreadsheet-like columns (though the extra work it must have taken in pre-spreadsheet days must have been amazing) makes it easy to see key differences and similarities at a glance. In addition, this volume demonstrates how distinctive the Gospel of John is for both chronology and wording. We all know that, but it becomes more vivid in this work. You can still buy hardcopy versions of the book, but fortunately, the most well-known volume in English is old enough to be found online (read online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36264/36264-h/36264-h.htm> or downloaded at <https://enduringword.com/ebooks/Harmony-of-the-Gospels-Robertson.pdf>.

**\***Throckmorton, Burton H. (ed.) ***Gospel Parallels: A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels*** (New York: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1967). This useful reference tool is based on an earlier German work and has the advantage over Robertson’s work of having notations from various manuscripts and points of similarity and dissimilarity with books outside of the Bible which have been discovered after Robertson compiled his important work. I use them both. This one is also available for download if you don’t mind working from a pdf at forgottenbooks.com or <https://archive.org/details/gospelparallelss00unse>.

Matthew

Under Matthew, I will list some downloadable resources I haven’t yet mentioned (though one can obviously use those other full commentary sets like Clarke’s, Jamieston, Fausset, and Brown’s, Lange’s Commentaries, and Maclaren’s mentioned earlier.

Hare, Douglas R. ***Matthew: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1993). Hare has an ability to distill critical problems and scholarly dissonance to extremely brief discussions. Most importantly, he quickly ascertains what is most important about those discussions and moves forward to ideas that emphasize the theological and preaching points of the passage. Used books can be found for $3 up at amazon.com and $7 up at thriftbooks.com with a new Kindle edition from Amazon in ebook form for circa $15.

**\***Henry, Matthew. ***Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Volume V: Matthew to John*** (New York, New York: Fleming H. Revell, reprint of 1721 commentary). This volume was given to me by a pastor-mentor. I value it for his mark-ups and underlines as much as for the 18th century commentator’s comments. Over the years, I have found this useful in terms of organizing my overall impressions of a passage and providing an interpretation uncluttered by modern concerns. Hence, its strength is also its weakness. You should be aware of this full commentary set (strongest in New Testament interpretation) because it is readily available and one of the first resources to which young pastors turn. You can view it at no charge online at: <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=mh> or <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/>. Even apps are downloadable from the Google Play store and elsewhere.

Pattison, Peter R. ***Crisis Unawares: A Doctor Examines the Korean Church*** (Robesonia, Pennsylvania: Overseas Mission Fellowship, 1981). The title doesn’t adequately describe this book. Although it is a book directed at a Korean audience, it is a chapter-by-chapter study of Matthew that should resonate with many Asians. While it is lighter than the other books recommended here, it could be very useful if you could nab one of the four copies currently available on Amazon for circa $5.

Schnackenburg, Rudolph. ***The Gospel of Matthew*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002). This relatively short, but insightful commentary was translated by Robert R. Barr from the German publication of the late 1980s. Schnackenburg pays considerable attention to where Matthew’s narrative differs from those of the other gospels but is otherwise more concerned with what the text says. This is a straightforward work with little emphasis on Greek vocabulary, literary structure, or literary form. As such, this volume is useful as a starting point but should not be one’s “turn-key” source on Matthew. At the time this list was compiled, abebooks.com had a copy for $3.50 and amazon.com had four for $3.50. The Kindle ebook was selling for roughly $17.

Tasker, R. V. G. ***Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1961). One can count on the short commentaries originally commissioned by InterVarsity Press to focus on the text, explaining the significance and suggesting of the value of key phrases. Like the previously mentioned Schnackenburg commentary, this one doesn’t deal with the form of the text, but it also doesn’t deal with the relationship of the text to the other gospels. This is a reliable commentary for most Sunday School teachers, but it is not recommended as one’s only source. Online used sources run from $4-5 at abebooks. $5 at thriftbooks.com, or $9 at biblio.com.

**Mark**

The commentary on Mark that I use most is a classic by Vincent Taylor, but it is difficult for non-Greek readers to us, so I haven’t listed it. One should also not forget the older commentary sets listed earlier in previous listings.

Evans, Craig B. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 8:27-16:20*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2001). After the death of Robert Guelich, the author of the commentary on the first half of Mark in this series, Evans was commissioned to cover this important material. This volume, even though it only covers half of the shortest gospel book, is almost twice as thick as other books in the series. This reflects Evans thorough approach to the study. Following the format of the series: translation, detailed notes on translation, form/structure/setting of the book, verse-by-verse comments, and summary explanation, this is a powerful reference work on the book. And even though it may seem pricey at the $40+ you are likely to pay, even on the used market, it is well worth it if you plan to do a thorough series of lessons on Mark. There was ONE copy on sale at eBay for $21 when I typed this, but that isn’t likely to last.

Martin, Ralph P. ***Mark: Knox Preaching Guides*** [Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1981]. This volume is closest to a miniature Interpretation commentary. Dr. Martin shows that his scholarship is no barrier to preaching as every passage offers ideas upon which one could easily structure a lesson or sermon. For example, upon explaining “good news” (“gospel”) as used in Mark 1, he talks about expectations of: a) imperial Romans for a new emperor (or major governmental change in the provinces), b) Jews who expected Isaiah’s vision of a new age with God’s kingship in control, and c) the Dead Sea Scrolls community who used the word to describe the new order of their “pure” community in the desert. Then, he says that we need to preach the good news that: a) God provides for secular authority, b) God rules over all the confusion of current events, and c) God promises a new kind of society within the Church. One can barely go one paragraph in this little book without such ideas. Between eBay an thriftbooks.com, it was possible to find a copy from $3.50-$4.50 when I typed this.

Rhoads, David. ***Reading Mark: Engaging the Gospel*** (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2004). And now, for something completely different! This approach to scripture is not for everyone. Rhoads looks at Mark as a literature professor or book reviewer might examine a novel. This isn’t because he doesn’t take it as scripture; it is because he wants to engage the text in a systematic way from different perspectives without taking up peripheral issues. So, while he treats the text like fiction using his methodology, he insists on its historical integrity. This is not a commentary but it is “sermonic” in many places. And this author is not a casual student of the word, he has memorized the Gospel of Mark and performed it from memory more than 200 times. I’m not sure this is a recommendation of this book as much as making teachers aware that such an approach exists. At the time of this listing, Amazon had a used copy for $12 and a Kindle ebook for $21. New copies will be around $30.

Schweizer, Eduard (trans. By Donald H. Madvig). ***The Good News According to Mark*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1977). If I could only recommend one commentary to the non-Greek reader, it would be this one. Schweizer was a Swiss New Testament scholar who never failed to thrill me in the one lecture I was privileged to attend, the sermons he has written, and the studies he has published. I love the pastor sensibility combined with the scholar. It is a verse-by-verse commentary with the occasional excursus on subjects like parables, the tension between Peter and Paul in the New Testament, and Mark’s use of “immediately” along the way. He talks about literary clues in the wording and structure of the text (in simple ways), as well as differences between Mark’s accounts and other gospels (matter of fact-wise, not negatively). At the time I was typing, a new paperback was on sale marked down from $40 to $26 at pcusastore.com and amazon.com had 11 used hardbound copies at under $10.

Luke

In addition to the classic sets one can read without charge online or download free and those commentaries which are heavily reliant on Greek characters that I’m not recommending, there is a nice variety of studies on the Gospel of Luke.

**\*?**Caird, G. B. ***Westminster Pelican Commentary: Saint Luke*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1963). Yes, this scholar again! Caird is a careful scholar and his research is foundational for the clear-cut explanations, organization, and insights he provides in this short little commentary. I suggest you hold off on his introductory material and jump straight into the scriptural exposition. Due to an erroneous publication date (1863 was before the author was born), this book is available for free download about 15 years before it should be: <https://archive.org/details/saintlukepelican00cair>. That gives you a chance to download and try before you buy online for anywhere from $2 at biblio.com to $6 at abebooks.com.

Craddock, Fred B. ***Luke: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1990). One of the most prestigious professors at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia, Craddock is very familiar with all of the issues regarding scholastic inquiry on various New Testament books. Yet, he puts those to the side and zeroes in on the message of Luke without engaging in the speculation about authorship and setting that may be prominent in other publications. Craddock uses Luke’s own introduction in the first four verses as his introduction and jumps into the helpful exploration of the text almost immediately. As usual, the best deals for this commentary are to be found in the used bookstores online (abebooks.com and thriftbooks.com for $5.50-$6.00).

Geldenhuys, Norval. ***The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1975). Dutch pastor Norval Geldenhuys has written a thorough commentary with practical and insightful exposition on each passage. Plus, rather than bog down the exposition with consideration of unresolved and speculative questions or, worse yet, ignoring them, he provides several excurses to satisfy the curiosity of some readers. I like this book enough that I have used quotation from this author on sermon slides. Online, you can find $5 copies at biblio.com and thriftbooks.com.

Killinger, John. ***A Devotional Guide to Luke: The Gospel of Contagious Joy*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1980). At one point, John Killinger was considered the leading edge of evangelical pulpiteers in the U.S. His perspectives and approaches seemed so fresh that he was in great demand. This book is not a scholarly work. Killinger simply works his pulpit magic on 84 different passages in the gospel and provides a mediation and prayer thought for each one. I also like the idea that he uses the theme of contagious joy as his guiding principle in presenting the gospel. Used copies can be found circa $5 on amazon.com, eBay, and thriftbooks.com at the time of this listing.

Summers, Ray. ***Commentary on Luke*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1972). Not to be confused with the Word Biblical Commentary series, these stand-alone commentaries from former publisher Word Books (now an imprint of Thomas Nelson, Inc, in turn an imprint of Harper & Collins) do not have a new translation or detailed notes on the translation. Rather, they are focused on delivering the message phrase-by-phrase. Where Killinger (see above) emphasizes the idea of joy, Summers emphasizes the universal application of Jesus as Messiah/Savior to all of the world’s diverse populations. This is the evangelistic/missions commentary. This is very down-to-earth and clearly written—useful for students from teen up and teachers, no matter what educational or church experience level. Used sites such as: abebooks.com, amazon.com, eBay, and thriftbooks.com have copies from the low $4 to low $5.

**John**

I was tempted to do a section called Johannine Literature and throw in the gospel, the three letters, and Revelation, but there is simply too much material on this important grouping of writings believed to be associated with the writings of John, the apostle of Jesus, who is supposed to have lived to a ripe old age in Ephesus. I personally like Raymond E. Brown’s two volume commentary on the Gospel of John from the Anchor Bible series, but I feel like the average teacher would have to dig too hard to make it worth their while. My favorite book on the gospel is Udo Schnelle’s ***Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John***, but unless you’re interested in early church Christology more than a passage by passage treatment of the book, that one might be too much as well.

Brown, Raymond E. ***The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times*** (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1979). Written by a marvelous Catholic scholar (Brown was part of a group of Catholic scholars that truly brought an emphasis back to the Bible as a corrective to the emphasis on tradition in their church.) and expert on the Johannine Literature, this relatively short book looks at the way John’s books influenced the early church and the way those around John may have contributed to the books. Like the very challenging Schnelle book in the introduction to this section, this is not a commentary and doesn’t offer a chapter-by-chapter or even passage-by-passage perspective. It is simply a rather interesting overview and I would feel guilty not to mention it.

Culpepper, R. Alan. ***Interpreting Biblical Texts: The Gospel and Letters of John*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1998). Culpepper has been deeply engrossed in Johannine Literature since his graduate school days (having written his Ph.D. dissertation on the idea of a community around John that very likely shaped the final form of the literature) and taught the Gospel of John at the college and seminary level for twenty years by the time this book was written and approximately 40 years now. Culpepper illuminates the text with quotations from other scriptural texts, as well as examples from ancient literature. He uses lists, diagrams, and charts to illustrate structure and context. While I would not choose this as my only commentary on the gospel, it is one that I keep coming back to over and over. At the time of typing this, I found used copies for $6 on alibris.com, $9 on abebooks.com, and $10 at thriftbooks.com.

Hull, William E. ***Love in Four Dimensions: John 3:16—Divine Love in Human Life*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1982). As the title indicates, this is not a commentary. It is, however, a jewel of a book of sermons, all from John 3:16. For me, this book has been a blessing and a book for re-reading. Prior to this book, I thought I had looked at John 3:16 from every possible angle. Hull broadened my scope and he didn’t even look at John 3:16 from every possible level. Used, this thin paperback would run you $10 on thriftbooks.com, $12 on amazon.com, and $15 on eBay. Sadly, the publishers of this book are part of those who took over the Southern Baptist Convention and decided not to publish the volumes of those they perceived to be on the other side (Dr. Hull was one of the deans of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary before it declined under Albert Mohler). So, you might as well download the PDF from Open Library at no charge (I think): <https://cuvuwudida.ijournalsshelf.icu/love-in-four-dimensions-book-6932da.php>.

Morris, Leon H***. The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of John*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1971). Although, following the style of this commentary series, there is no new translation of the text available, this is a detailed verse-by-verse approach to the gospel, full of good information, insight, and sound doctrine. In addition to the commentary material, Morris offers nine (9) “additional notes” where he considers other issues about the text or theology of the book and one Appendix where he considers the passage on the woman caught in adultery (not in all manuscripts). Both Amazon and abebooks.com have used copies of the edition I’ve just cited for around $25. The publisher has put out a newer volume to replace this one which is much more expensive and from a scholar whom I haven’t personally read.

**Acts**

Usually grouped with Luke’s gospel, I simply felt that there was too much good material to lump them together. As with all of these, this is not an exhaustive list even of the books I use and own in my library . These are the books I believe would be helpful to most of you. As always, don’t forget the downloadable commentary sets already mentioned.

Bruce, F. F. ***The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of The Acts*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1974). Since the first edition of this commentary in 1954, this has been one of the standards of conservative commentaries. After a short introduction, the famed New Testament scholar from England’s University of Manchester offers insightful notes on each passage, followed by three indices to help readers/users zero in on the text or issue that they are researching. At the time of writing, abebooks.com and thriftbooks.com have used copies starting at $10 while Amazon has a Kindle (new eBook) edition at circa $28 and used copies starting at $13.

Campbell, Stan, John Duckworth, and Jim Townsend. ***Quick Studies in Acts-Romans*** (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook Publishing, 1992). The books in this series are a youth Sunday School teacher or a Young Adult Bible Study/Youth Group leader’s dream. I personally used a lot of ideas (and sometimes, handouts) from this volume in leading our Friday night youth group. For each chapter in the Bible, these books offer an introductory activity, questions and answers for discussion, reiteration of a teaching goal (called So What?) to help teachers zero in on why they are teaching this lesson, and a handout for possible use in the study. Although physical copies of this book are rare in the used book market, the publisher has made eBooks available for $9.99. Please see <https://books.google.com/books?id=v3eSuTnChB8C&pg=PA118&lpg=PA118&dq=Quick+Studies+in+Acts-Romans&source=bl&ots=0hFFIeeru-&sig=ACfU3U0dkFGjvM9UpbW5SXyjk0lGbRvMog&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjgjM-1t-fwAhXSLs0KHTyYC7YQ6AEwB3oECBoQAw#v=onepage&q=Quick%20Studies%20in%20Acts-Romans&f=false> to see sample pages and, if interested, click on the red button to buy the eBook for $9.99. You’ll get your money’s worth IF you are teaching a class that knows about U.S. culture. Otherwise, some of the activities won’t make sense.

Conzelmann, Hans. ***Acts of the Apostles: Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1987). Based on the 1972 German edition, this commentary follows the pattern of publishing translations from globally recognized scholars in slightly oversized editions with lots of white space. This particular commentary (indeed, the whole series) may be more than the average Sunday School teacher or Bible Study leader wants or needs, but it is such a valuable resource that I cannot resist commending it. The use of Greek text to highlight important words may be off-putting, but the good news is that this author almost always follows the Greek text with a literal translation of the Greek in English. The introduction does contain a lot of Greek texts compared to the text of Acts, but that is easily skipped over by the non-Greek reader. The commentary is informed and supplemented by the occasional excursus (often discussing parallels or questions that I had not previously considered). If you can only afford one commentary on Acts, I would recommend that you go with F. F. Bruce’s (see above), but if you can afford more than one, you might consider grabbing a used copy of this one. It seems to average around $25 for used copies on the online sites except for thriftbooks.com which had one for $13 at the time I typed this list.

Marshall, I. Howard. ***Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Acts of the Apostles*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980). Originally published by the British arm of InterVarsity Press, these small paperback commentaries are a solid resource. As noted previously, they do not offer a new translation or detailed translation notes, but the introductions generally touch most of the bases and the verse-by-verse approach to the commentary is easy-to-follow and useful. Greek words are transliterated into English characters for easy pronunciation and there are no long academic disputations to navigate. Amazon has a new Kindle ebook for $12.50, but abebooks.com and thriftbooks both had used copies from under $5 as I typed these words.

Willimon, William H. ***Acts: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988). Following the standard format of this series, Willimon tries to condense all of his commentary into relevant teaching and preaching material. Though this particular volume seems rather short compared to other volumes (and is not recommended as highly as the other volumes I’ve listed), it does have the advantage of periodic “Reflections” sections that discuss the implications of various issues on understanding the text upon which the author has just commented. Since Amazon has used copies from $2 an $4 up, this might be viable for some of you.

**The Pauline Literature**

Below are some resources that I have found useful in considering the Apostle Paul and his travels and writings as a whole. Fortunately, some of these are old enough to be available online.

Fisher, Fred L. ***Paul and His Teachings*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1974). This useful introduction to Paul and the Pauline Literature is easy-to-read and organized helpfully into a section on how the apostle’s life led to his theology combined with examination of his teachings as applied to the struggle against the Judaizers (those who wanted all Christians to be Jews) and another section on the struggle against the Gnosticizers (those who believed that, because matter is evil, Jesus only seemed to become human). Amazon has used copies for under $10 in hardbound. Alas, new copies are not available because of the denominational politics surrounding Southern Baptists.

**\***Pink, Arthur W. ***Gleanings from Paul: The Prayers of the Apostle*** (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1967). A reprint of the work of an early 20th century pastor, this work is a consideration of the prayers to be found in the Pauline Literature. Most valuable to me was the realization that Paul’s prayers in the biblical books often served as a preface as to what he would cover in the rest of the book. Although I have read other “Gleanings” books from this evangelical pastor, this is the one from which I have “gleaned” the most benefit. Three formats of eBooks are available for free download from: <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/pink/gleaningspaul.html>.

**\***Ramsay, William M. ***St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982). Although the archaeological/historical information in this volume is somewhat dated (originally written prior to 1920), this is an extremely helpful book in terms of integrating the biblical itineraries of Paul with what was known from external sources in the late 19th and early 20th century. Part tourist memoir and part devotional, this book shouldn’t be overlooked for its value. You can download it free at: [http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/WM%20Ramsay%20Paul%20the%20Traveler%20&%20Roman%20Citizen.pdf](http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/WM%20Ramsay%20Paul%20the%20Traveler%20%26%20Roman%20Citizen.pdf).

**Romans**

There are so many good books on Romans that I had trouble keeping this to a reasonable list. In addition to the free downloads and accessible commentaries online, one should also consider the following.

Achtemeier, Paul. ***Romans: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1985). The format of this commentary follows the others recommended in this series. The nice thing about Achtemeier’s approach is that he follows the idea of Lordship through the letter and, particularly, how the Lordship of Jesus Christ solves the problems of past, present, future and of daily living. On the used market, abebooks.com has copies starting at $2 an amazon.com has copies starting at $1.50.

Barrett, C. K. ***A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*** (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1957). This is a thorough and comprehensive phrase-by-phrase, verse-by-verse commentary on this book. It features a new translation from Barrett at the start of the each passage and there are notes on the translation within the discussion of the passage. I have been using this commentary since I was a young pastor and it is still the first one to which I turn when I am studying in the book. Used copies are available from abebooks.com ($5), amazon.com ($7), and biblio.com ($11).

**\***Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. ***Romans: Atonement and Justification: Expositions of Chapters 3:20-4:25*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970). This is one of the most popular volumes of sermon reprints from the famous Welsh pulpiteer in a 14 volume published set. The next volume deals with Assurance from Romans 5, the next with the concept of the “New Man” from Romans 6, the next with the Law (Romans 7-8:4), the next with the Son of God (8:5-17), and the last one I have with the “Perseverance of the Saints” (8:17-39). Gaining access to the full set is most desirable, but even reading one or two is a great advantage. The good news is that you can listen to EVERY sermon in the 14-volume set at: <https://www.monergism.com/exposition-romans-mp3-series-dr-martyn-lloyd-jones>. The volume on Romans 1 is available for download as a free pdf from the late preacher’s trust: <https://www.mljtrust.org/free-sermons/book-of-romans/>. As for physical copies of the books, the lowest used price I have found is a little under $10 at thriftbooks.com for the first volume described here (not the others).

**\***Nee, Watchman. ***The Normal Christian Life*** (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1957). The Chinese martyr’s most famous book is not a commentary. *The Normal Christian Life* is a collection of sermons/devotional considerations primarily based on Romans 1-8. I recommend this because it is a book that first challenged my late father and then (even now), me. It is about the Christian and the Holy Spirit without being, at least overtly, charismatic (no advocacy of speaking inn tongues, but no disclaimer, either). You can download a pdf free of charge at: <https://www.tochrist.org/Doc/Books/Watchman%20Nee/The%20Normal%20Christian%20Life.pdf>.

Palmer, Earl. ***Salvation by Surprise: Studies in the Book of Romans*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1975). When we lived in Bellevue, Washington and I didn’t have a preaching or teaching engagement on Sundays, we would cross the lake to hear Earl Palmer preach. To many in the latter part of the 20th century and early years of the 21st century, Earl Palmer represented the epitome of expository preaching. I had read several of his books prior to hearing him preach and I was not disappointed. In this book, he uses diagrams and clever verbal illustrations to illuminate some of the difficult concepts of this powerful letter from Paul. Regent College has just released a new paperback available at mygospelbookstore.com for $20 and amazon.com for $23. Used copies on amazon.com ($2-7), abebooks.com ($6), an thriftbooks.com ($5.50) were available when I compiled this list.

**\***Robertson, A. T. ***Word Pictures in the New Testament: Volume IV: Epistles of Paul*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1931). This set describing the Greek vocabulary and grammar of the Greek text is invaluable to the translator of the Greek New Testament. However, since the Greek words are transliterated so that they can be read aloud by English readers and since Robertson goes into detail on the root meanings and the significance of key words in the text, as well, it is useful for English readers who are non-Greek readers as well. I always try to refer to these volumes when considering a text and they invariably send me to do further research on how words are used in classical and New Testament texts. If you don’t like those tangents that I make about the meanings of words, avoid these books. Note: Robertson arranged this volume in the order in which he believed Paul wrote his letters, so instead of reading from Romans-Titus in NT order, the book is arranged from 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and Titus to 2 Timothy. Fortunately, you can read any of these volumes at no charge online at: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/rwp.html>.

**1 and 2 Corinthians**

Barrett, C. K. ***A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*** (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1968). A decade after publishing his marvelous commentary on Romans, Dr. Barrett brought out a sequels on 1 and 2 Corinthians. Originally published as “Black’s New Testament Commentaries” in the U.K., my listings for his commentaries are the U. S. versions. As with the commentary on Romans, Barrett brings a new translation and detailed notes on the text to supplement his interesting introduction, outline, and observation on the meaning of various phrases in the text. For those who are curious about the Greek words used in the text, Barrett gives a helpful index of where he discusses various Greek words. This is the commentary on 1 Corinthians that I have used the most. Online, hauntedbookshop.com has one hardbound copy for $10 and Amazon has used paperbacks starting at $8.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. ***A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*** (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1973). This volume, albeit five years after the previous, follows the same format (including new translation and notes, commentary, outline, Greek index and extremely helpful introduction). Amazon has a hardbound copy for $3 and others from $7 up while abebooks.com has a hardbound for $5 and used paperbacks slightly higher.

Best, Ernest. ***Second Corinthians: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1987). Although this volume seems shorter than most in the series, don’t be fooled. The Scottish theologian has not only given useful preaching points for each portion in the book, but added short and intriguing essays on: “Paul and the Old Testament,” “Playing the Fool,” and “Paul and His Opponents.” Best divides the book into four main sections and invests a profitable amount of time in both introductions and concluding material to the last two sections. If you can get one of the used hardbound copies on amazon.com for $5, you should do so. If you can’t, there are Kindle ebooks available between $14-15 and a used hardbound on ebay for $20.

Campbell, Stan and others. ***Quick Studies: 1 Corinthians-Ephesians*** (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook, 1992). In the same series as ***Quick Studies: Acts-Romans*** and using the same format with introductory activities, learning activities, and discussion questions for each chapter covered, this is one of the finest resources available for youth groups and Sunday School for older children and up. Not all of the introductory activities work for adults, but there are many useful ideas and some great discussion starters. The good news is that abebooks.com has several used copies at around $5, but sites such as thriftbooks.com only has one at $10. You can see sample pages online at: <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Quick_Studies_I_Corinthians_Ephesians/O6WWEZMy6PkC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Quick+Studies+in+1+Corinthians-Ephesians&pg=PA1&printsec=frontcover> and, if interested, get an eBook version. Alas I cannot find an eBook version of this one. You’ll get your money’s worth IF you are teaching a class that knows about U.S. culture. Otherwise, some of the activities won’t make sense.

**\***Filson, Floyd V. “Second Epistle to the Corinthians: Introduction and Exegesis” in in George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), ***The Interpreter’s Bible: Volume 10*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1953). Filson was a former professor of New Testament at Chicago’s McCormick Theological Seminary. As in the other portions of this series I’ve recommended, there is no new translation (all of these commentaries work off the Revised Standard Version and the King James Version) of the text, but there is a clearly written introduction to the book (including some issues the scholars debate) and phrase-by-phrase explanation of the text. Remember, if you can’t find this in your local library (or inter-library loan), you can always read it online at no charge by clicking: <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6094577M/The_Interpreter%27s_Bible>.

Fisher, Fred L. ***Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1975). This is my favorite commentary featuring “both” epistles to the Corinthian believers. Of course, I’ve already noted my bias having studied with and taught alongside Dr. Fisher prior to his death. This follows the original Word commentary format in that it uses the Revised Standard Version translation instead of providing a new one, but Dr. Fisher is as thorough in sharing what the original Greek says as he forced us to be when I took Greek and New Testament electives from him. This is a great commentary for non-Greek readers since he transliterates for easy pronunciation and never assumes that you know what a word means until he explains it to you. Plus, I’ve only found a couple of places where I don’t entirely agree with him. But that’s fair—we didn’t always agree in person, either. I was pleasantly surprised to find used copies on Amazon from $10 up and on abebooks.com from $15 up. Alas, the one copy I found on ebay.com was asking $35 for a used book.

Hughes, Philip E. ***The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1962). After a short introduction to the book, Dr. Hughes (originally a scholar from South Africa) breaks the epistle into 15 smaller sections in which he sets out expository interpretation. All in all, it’s typical of the commentary series, but in this volume, I have found it extremely helpful that he provided not only an index to scripture references found in the commentary, but also an index to characters mentioned in the text. The latter index is rather like having a program at a baseball game that lets you tell the players by their numbers. If you can’t find a used copy of this volume for under $10, you’re probably not trying. Online, used copies start at $4 on abebooks, $6 on eBay, and $5.50 on thriftbooks.com.

**\***Moffatt, James. ***The Moffatt Commentary: First Corinthians*** (New York, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890). Moffatt was, perhaps, best known as the translator of one of the earlier modern translations of the New Testament. This commentary reads like most commentaries, but it has the advantage of providing insight as to why he translated certain words as he did. For me, it is very insightful. Also, it is available for free download at <https://archive.org/details/firstepistleofpa00moff> so you can see for yourself if it’s useful.

**Galatians**

There are some other commentaries on my shelf that I personally use and enjoy, but for purposes of those teaching Sunday School, I whittled down my recommendations to the following.

Barrett, C. K. ***Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1985). Not to be confused with the commentaries recommended by Dr. Barrett in previous listings, this is not a commentary per se. It is a fascinating and useful study of the biblical book, but doesn’t really move through the book verse-by-verse. Rather, Barrett considers the book as representing three concerns: History (Chapters 1 and 2), Theology (Chapters 3 and 4), and Ethics (Chapters 5 and 6). I like it, but it won’t meet your needs if you’re looking for a detailed commentary treatment. At the time of this listing, used copies are available on Amazon, eBay, and worldofbooks.com for $7.50 and biblio.com (be sure you go to the U.S. one) for $8.50.

George, Timothy. ***The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Galatians*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994). In general, I have not been impressed with the scholarship of the ***New American Commentary*** series, this effort to provide exposition from the text of the New International Version of the Bible. Indeed, when I was in graduate school, Dr. George was a professor of Church History, not the strongest recommendation for writing a New Testament commentary. However, I have used this commentary to teach Baptist pastors in a non-credit course at a denominational facility in Des Plaines and was pleasantly surprised. Not only is it thorough, but accessible, but there is a diagram on p. 36 (part of the introduction) that expresses the idea of the “no longer, the now, and the not yet” of New Testament theology in terms of both the gospel preached by Paul and the opponents to either extreme. With used books running from $21 on eBay, $22 on biblio, and $26 on Amazon, you might want to consider the $10 eBook of this volume available on Amazon as the ***Christian Standard Commentary*** (a rebranding based on the Holman Christian Standard Bible but having the same content).

Ridderbos, Herman N. ***The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1953). This commentary was published using the text from the American Standard Version of the Bible. This Dutch scholar divides the book into: I) Paul’s Defense of his Apostolic Calling, II) Justification by Faith Alone vs. the Judaizers (3:1-5:13), and III) New Life through the Holy Spirit (5:13 to the end). This later became ***The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*** which can be found on eBay or worldofbooks.com for under $8. The edition I have will cost you at least $19 and up on Amazon.

**Ephesians**

Martin, Ralph P. ***Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1991). After a brief discussion of the greetings and thanksgiving that begins this letter, Martin divides the subject matter into: a) the Ephesian church (and by extension any church) in history, present, and future, b) the unity of the church, c) Paul’s identity in connection with the church, and d) what Christianity means for daily living. Although Martin’s points of interpretation are very well-taken, many readers will find this to be slightly shorter than desired to accommodate the discussion of the other two biblical books in this thin volume (Colossians and Philemon). Nonetheless, Dr. Martin “cuts to the chase” and hits the essentials more efficiently than most commentators. It may not be worth the nearly $30 used and $40 new that one would pay for it, though, IF you’re only looking for a commentary on Ephesians.

**\***Nee, Watchman. ***Sit, Walk, Stand*** (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973). Written prior to his martyrdom at the hand of the Maoist Chinese, this Chinese pastor uses the three verbs in the title of this volume to summarize the important themes in Ephesians: 1) Sit—our position in Christ (2:6), 2) Walk—our life in the world (4:1), and 3) Stand—our attitude to the Enemy (6:11). Although this study doesn’t really cover the entire book, the treatment of the three sections cited above makes it very desirable to read as an introduction to Ephesians as a whole. You can borrow the book free as an eBook from <https://archive.org/details/sitwalkstand00neew_0> or <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL24239142M/Sit_walk_stand>.

Talbert, Charles E. ***Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament: Ephesians and Colossians*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007). This well-written volume features tables comparing phrases and word usage between Ephesians and Colossians, as well as helpful illustrations and sidebars (smaller boxes of text explaining something from the main text) throughout the commentary. Talbert features a full discussion of Ephesians as divided into ten (10) major passages within the book, as well as a marvelous table comparing the guidelines for living in Ephesians compared to the <i>Manual of Discipline</i> for the Qumran community that was discovered as one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Talbert blends history, his love of the Greek text, and solid biblical interpretation in this value-packed volume. At the time I typed this, Amazon.com had a $21 eBook edition and some used copies beginning at $22. Even at Amazon, a new paperback copy will run about $35.

**Philippians**

Craddock, Fred. ***Philippians: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1985). Craddock starts (after the introduction and initial thanks) with Paul’s relationship to the church and a consideration of the effect Paul’s imprisonment would have had on the church at Philippi. He notes that the flow of the book is occasionally interrupted by autobiographical information and then, returns. The valuable interpretive insight in this volume is how the ethical considerations for the present and the direction for the future of the church at Philippi would be built upon the assumptions expressed earlier in the book. Used copies start at $2.50 on amazon.com and $5.50 on thriftbooks.com. A Kindle ebook can be purchased for under $17 at Amazon.

Fee, Gordon D. ***The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Philippians*** (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999). This is a short, easy-to-read commentary by a master New Testament scholar. Fee uses a triangle design illustration with Paul at one point and the Philippian church at another point with Christ at the apex. The “area” inside the triangle is reserved for the gospel. So, the division used by Fee to guide the reader through the book is: 1) Paul’s situation, 2) the situation of the Philippians, and 3) consideration of what needs to happen as a result of the two previous considerations. Amazon’s used copies start at $4 and abebooks.com has them starting at $8. A Kindle edition is available for less than $17.

Hawthorne, Gerald F. ***Word Biblical Commentary: Philippians*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983). Although this follows the formula for the Word Biblical Commentary series described above, the division of the book into subject sections by Hawthorne is nice. After the introductory matters, he divides the book into: a) News combined with Instruction, b) Diatribes against False Teachings, and c) Call for Harmony and Joyful Living.

Wilson, Johnny Lee. ***Wytte Media Bible: Philippians*** (Bellevue, Washington: Wytte Media, LLC, 2004). Although yours truly wrote much of this beside his father’s hospital bed following open heart surgery, Along with the new translation of the text and chapter by chapter commentary on the book, the CD-ROM features a video monologue with the author performing as the Philippian jailer (from Acts 16), multimedia slides to accompany the study, and downloadable puzzles, worksheets, and other handouts to enhance the teaching. Used editions online include: discoverbooks.com (has one for under $4, but it is not clear if the CD-ROM is included with the used book) and amazon.com (has two for under $5, but with used books, it is not clear if the CD-ROM is there). I know a guy who can get you a copy with CD for $10 if you’d like one.

**Colossians and Philemon**

The books are often, but not always, treated together. As a result, you’ll not some duplication of titles here, with only the specific material about Colossians and Philemon treated differently.

Erdman, Charles R. ***The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1967). The citation is for a 1967 reprint of a commentary on these two books from 1933. After the greeting, Erdman treats the main divisions of the book as: a) The Preeminence of Christ; b) Paul’s representation of Christ; c) False vs. True Faith; and d) Implications for Christian Living. The book does not feature a new translation; it’s built off the American Standard Version of the Bible. Erdman just tells you about the words that Paul uses rather than transliterating Greek letters to English or merely printing the Greek Text. So, it’s a little easier to read than many modern commentaries. Used copies of this go for $4-$5 IF you can find them (abebooks.com had two when I typed this). If you want to see if you like this author’s style, you can enjoy this as a free download of his commentary on the Pastoral Epistles at: <http://classicchristianlibrary.com/library/erdman_charles/Erdman-Pastoral_Epistles.pdf>.

Martin, Ralph P. ***Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*** (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1991). I don’t find this portion of the volume to be as useful as the portion on Ephesians mentioned above. Still, since Ephesians is so good, you should probably examine the 14 sections in which Martin divides Colossians and the four (4) sections he uses to discuss Philemon. I do like his treatment of how personal references are combined with poetic language in the introduction to Philemon, though. Again, the roughly $30 it costs for used copies and the roughly $40 or new copies may be too steep unless you consider that there is good material on all three biblical books, even though I prefer the Ephesians commentary in this volume.

O’Brien, Peter***. Word Biblical Commentary: Colossians, Philemon*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982). O’Brien follows the format for this commentary series with both books: translation, notes, form and setting, commentary. He treats 14 passages in Colossians and four (4) in Philemon. Greek characters are used when delineating the phrases to be discussed, but the writing is so clear that I don’t believe anyone will get lost reading this commentary. Unfortunately it’s hard to find with both abebooks.com and ebay.com having one copy at $45, but anywhere else, including Amazon, you’d pay up to $80 for used copies.

 Talbert, Charles E. ***Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament: Ephesians and Colossians*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007). As noted previously, this well-written volume features tables comparing phrases and word usage between Ephesians and Colossians, as well as helpful illustrations and sidebars (smaller boxes of text explaining something from the main text) throughout the commentary. Talbert features a full discussion of Ephesians as divided into ten (10) major passages within the book, as well as a great discussion about the way various scholars have handled the poetry or hymn in Chapter 1 of Colossians. Talbert blends history, his love of the Greek text, and solid biblical interpretation in this value-packed volume. At the time I typed this, Amazon.com had a $21 eBook edition and some used copies beginning at $22. Even at Amazon, a new paperback copy will run about $35.

**1 and 2 Thessalonians**

Both of the letters to the church(es) at Thessalonica (Thessalonika) follow the typical Pauline formula of beginning with a thanksgiving greeting or thanksgiving prayer, followed by a discussion of his authority, consideration of spiritual and practical issues, and ending with exhortations to practical and spiritual activities. Remember the free downloadable commentaries and resources which can be read online which I have indicated as “sets” above. Here, two out of the three resources I’m suggesting may be too “Greek-heavy” for your enjoyment.

Bruce, F. F. ***Word Biblical Commentary: 1 & 2 Thessalonians*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982). The “grand master” of New Testament studies as I was attending my seminary programs has written an informative and useful commentary on both letters. The commentary follows the Word Biblical Commentary formula: bibliography, translation, notes, form and setting (in this case, simply considered as “Structure”) and commentary. After dealing with the “prescript” (address and greeting) of both letters, he breaks down the discussion into passages covering: thanksgiving, defense, thanksgiving plans, ethical implications or practical exhortation (1 Thessalonians) and thanksgiving, encouragement and prayer, warning on the lawless one, thanksgiving and encouragement, prayer, and exhortations (2 Thessalonians). Bruce discusses the meaning of Greek terms, phrases, and grammar, but only if there seems to be a valid preaching or teaching point surrounding them. Fortunately, the volume sold well enough that used copies start at $6 on abebooks.com and biblio.com.

**\***Findlay, C G. ***The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians (Thornapple Commentaries)*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982). Baker’s “Thornapple Commentaries” were late 20th century reprints of early 20th century commentaries. This one, originally published in 1898, covers both letters but the amount of Greek text in the volume may be off-putting to some of you. Fortunately, you can still navigate the text by keeping your English or Chinese translation at your side when you read it. The commentary will help you know where you are via context, so non-Greek readers should be able to skip over it. Findlay’s scheme for the two letters is described in the following. For 1 Thessalonians, Findlay discusses the passages under these topics: address and salutation, thanksgiving, conduct of apostles with Thessalonians, desire for fellowship in person, explanation of need for current separation, news from Timothy, considerations of morality, future, dissension, and holiness, followed the conclusion. For 2 Thessalonians, he begins with salutation, followed by words about judgment, consideration of the lawless one, words of comfort and prayer, and ends with comments about idlers prior to closing. The original commentary can be downloaded free of charge at: <https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/e-books/plummer/1-thessalonians_plummer.pdf> or <https://archive.org/details/epistlestothessa00finduoft/page/n7/mode/2up?view=theater>.

Morris, Leon. ***The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1959). As one might expect in a solid commentary, the Australian scholar uses over 40 pages for introductory material where he discusses the possible purpose of the letters, as well as considerations regarding the so-called “authenticity” of the letters. Please note that those who question the full authorship of Paul are not questioning the scriptural authority of the books, just recognizing that there seems to be more than one style and more than one situation presented in the letters. So, even if the ideas and teachings go back to Paul himself, they may have been partially written, compiled, and edited by some of his followers. If such possibilities cause you to doubt the working of the Holy Spirit in putting the letters together, feel free to skip that part of the introduction. Morris discusses 1 Thessalonians under these divisions: reminiscences, considerations of relationship, exhortations, matters about the second coming, more exhortations, and a conclusion. He considers 2 Thessalonians under these headings: greetings, prayer, teaching about the second coming, thanksgiving and encouragement, meditations on God’s faithfulness, admonitions about holy discipline, and a conclusion. This is an excellent commentary of all levels of students and teachers. On the used book market, amazon.com still had several for $4 and up, while both abebooks.com an thriftbooks.com had $8 copies. If you’d prefer, a Kindle eBook is available for #15.

**1 & 2 Timothy and Titus**

These three books are generally known as the Pastoral Epistles because they were written to Paul’s associates who were pastoring churches geographically remote from the apostle. I have placed them together for my convenience.

Draper, James T. ***Titus: Patterns for Church*** ***Living*** (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978). While not a commentary on this short book of the Bible, this compilation of sermons provides a quick and simple overview of the book. Draper was a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and very much associated with those who took over the convention. The sermons are rather simplistic, but they do hit the high points rather effectively. Fortunately, used copies can be found at abebooks.com, eBay.com, and amazon.com for $4-6.

Fee, Gordon. ***New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (***Peabody, Massachusetts: William Hendrickson Publishers, 1988). This late 20th century commentary, based on the New International Version, is probably my favorite commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. Not only is Fee and excellent scholar, but he has a gift for making the text understandable. For example, he distills the purpose in writing 1 Timothy down to the idea of a “church manual” and demonstrates why he believes this is so. He condenses Titus down, not to the emphasis against false teachers (though that is present in the book) but to a discussion of the church’s role (very valuable as Crete was probably one of the new churches in the Pauline orbit at the time). He follows up by observing the personal considerations expressed in 2 Timothy. Add to that the very useful phrase-by-phrase discussions and this is a very valuable book. Abebooks.com and thriftbooks.com have used copies for $6 up, but amazon.com is charging almost the new price (not that $20 is too much for this commentary).

Scott, Ernest F. ***The Moffatt Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*** (New York, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936). Using the Moffatt Translation of the Bible to communicate the text, this commentary series was designed to speak to non-Greek readers and hence, as James Moffatt wrote in the preface to the entire series, is “Greek-less.” Despite its age and presence in the public domain, I haven’t found PDFs at any reputable sites. So, one is likely to pay $5 for a used copy from remnantbooks.org or from $12-29 on other used sites.

Ward, Ronald A. ***Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1974). This useful and, at times, inspiring commentary is good for readers of all levels. I particularly like the way he handled his approach to 1 Timothy as dealing with the threat to Timothy’s church and contrasting that with the opportunity for Timothy’s ministry, as well as his handling of 2 Timothy as a call to the renewal of Timothy’s ministry (as though, like many pastors, the young pastor has the potential for burning out or becoming lackadaisical. His approach to Titus is functional, but not as clear and incisive as with the first two letters. You should be able to find used copies readily, as thriftbooks.com has a copy for $5 and amazon.com has one for $6.

**Hebrews**

Although I find helpful insights in many of the much older works (A. R. Fausset’s commentary in the **\***Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary (<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/jfu/hebrews-2.html>) and **\***Carl Bernhard Moll’s commentary in the Lange’s Commentary set at: <www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/lcc/hebrews.html>. The latter helpfully divides the books into three main parts considering: 1) Jesus’ superiority as “Mediator” between God and humanity, 2) Jesus’ superiority as “Eternal Priest,” and 3) the superiority of the “New Covenant.” The three I have highlighted below can be categorized as: something old, something older, and something new.

Bruce, F. F. ***The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Hebrews*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1964). If you’ve scanned the list to this point, F. F. Bruce should need no further introduction, nor should this commentary series. It is generally one of the most solid commentary series from the conservative perspective. Not only have I enjoyed this commentary for general purposes, but it was reading this commentary that underscored my awareness of the “beyond,” “better than,” and “greater than” scheme of the book. You can almost outline the books as:
1:4) beyond the angels, 3:3) greater than Moses, 6:9) beyond those who fail to persevere, 7:7) Melchizedek better than Abraham (as Levitical priesthood), 7:19) new priesthood is better than the law, 7:22) Jesus’ covenant better than the old, 8:6) Jesus is mediator of a better covenant, 8:6) New covenant has better promises, 9:23) heavenly things cleansed by Jesus’ blood better than animal blood of old covenant, 10:34) believers’ “possession” or “promised land” is better than Israel’s, 11:16) heavenly dimension better than literal land of Israel, 11:35) resurrection better than suffering, 11:40) God has better things for those who persevere, an 12:24) Jesus’ blood is “more eloquent” than Abel’s. Thatnd insight has helped me navigate this book for decades. Used copies of this volume start at $10 on amazon.com and can be obtained at around $12 on abebooks.com and thriftbooks.com.

**\***Delitzsch, Franz. ***Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*** (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1868). Translated from the 1857 German edition, the edition cited is a two-volume English text. The first volume examines the first six chapters and the second volume moves from Chapter 7 to the end. Some may be uncomfortable with Delitzsch’s tendency to quote from Latin sources (early and medieval commentators) without fully translating them for the reader’s benefit prior to discussing them and use the Greek text to delineate words and phrases. This makes it difficult to use for the person who wants everything spelled out but has no knowledge of Greek and/or Latin, but even I don’t find it necessary to translate every word or phrase to glean benefit from the powerful exegesis to be found in these volumes. You can read it only courtesy of the Harvard University Library (without being a student or faculty member) at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwjrqm&view=1up&seq=7> for the first volume and <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwjrqn&view=1up&seq=11> for the second volume. You can also download Volume 1 as a PDF to keep for future use at: <https://archive.org/details/epistlecomment01deliuoft> and Volume 2 as a PDF at: <https://archive.org/details/commentaryonepis02deliuoft>.

DeSilva, David. A. ***Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2000). This is one of those commentaries I wish I had written (or, at least, I wish I was qualified enough to have written). In addition to solid biblical commentary following the themes listed below, this book is replete with delightful essays (each called “Closer Look”) on such specific issues as: Messiah, Divine Other, Perfection, Apostasy, Eternal Security, and more. The general theme is approached as: 1) God’s Word and God’s Son (1:1-2:18), the Problem of Distrust (3:1-4:13), Jesus’ role as Guarantor of God’s Favor (4:14-5:10), the Need for Perseverance (5:11-6:20), Jesus as the Better Mediator (7:1-8:13), the Decisive Removal of Sin’s Defilement (9:1-10:18), Drawing Near to God and Each Other (10:19-39), Faith in the World (11:1-12:3), Training for the Kingdom (12:4-29), and Living in Gratitude to God (13:1-25). The only disadvantage for this commentary that I can see is that it doesn’t feature the new translation and textual notes associated with other major works, albeit this is a thick, major work even without those features. For used copies, there was at least one on abebooks.com and one on biblio.com for $16, though Amazon’s used copies begin at $22. Even the Kindle eBook is $38. But if you want to invest in a very thorough study of Hebrews, the value to price ratio is definitely in your favor.

**James**

Members of the English Ministry will know that I am currently preaching through James and may have preached from it when I first arrived at GCCC. However, I keep translating and researching because old sermons shouldn’t be preached as though they themselves are the Bible—we need fresh encounters with the Holy Spirit and that requires examining the scripture text from multiple angles. God is not one-dimensional nor should our study disciplines be one-dimensional. If God had intended for us to only approach scripture from one direction, we wouldn’t have all four gospels, both the books of Kings and Chronicles, and not one but four major 8th century prophets. So, for this book, I will recommend commentaries from complex and detailed to relatively easy to understand. My “complexity” ratings will be at the conclusion of each entry in the parenthesis.

Dibelius, Martin***. James:*** ***Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1976). Typical of the commentaries in this series (which are complex enough that I haven’t recommended all of the ones I use), this volume was originally published in German (1964) before being translated and updated for this English edition. Even though it uses Greek characters for important words and phrases, the verse-by-verse approach in the latter ¾ of the book should help even non-Greek readers to understand what Dibelius is commenting upon. In addition to the new translation, analysis of the text, and commentary on verses or phrases, there are essays on subjects such as: “The Twelve Tribes of the Diaspora,” “The Perfect Law of Freedom,” “The Examples in the Letter of James,” “The Spirit Which Dwells Within,” and several more. Since James has many connections between passages which seem to hinge on catchwords, Dibelius provided a list of examples from both biblical and non-biblical books that runs for four pages. Those catchwords are in Greek, but he provides an English translation to help readers with the context. Amazon lists 32 used copies starting at $14, while abebooks.com and thriftbook.com have used copies from $18 up. (Complex)

Laws, Sophie. ***The Epistle of James*** (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hedrickson Publishers, 1987). A reprint of the 1980 Harper’s New Testament Commentary series title on James (which, in turn, was published in the U.K. as Black’s New Testament Commentary series), this volume is similar to those on Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians by C. K. Barrett listed above. It features a new translation of the text followed by phrase-by-phrase discussion. All Greek words are transliterated so that they can be pronounced by English readers. Roughly ¾ of the book is such translation and commentary with the other quarter being introductory material. Of the introductory material, almost one-fourth of that is a nice discourse on “The Characteristic Ideas and Interests of James.” Used copies can be found on eBay and at thriftbooks for under $8 and, at the time of typing this listing, Amazon ha used copies starting from $5. (Medium Complexity)

Tasker, R. V. G. ***Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The General Epistle of James*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1956). Although this short commentary doesn’t really demonstrate any attempt to develop unifying, structural principles for the book and it does not offer a new translation, it offers good discussions of various passages in the book (section-by-section) and doesn’t rely on Greek characters or Latin quotations found in some commentaries. On the simple (but not simplistic) side, this commentary warrants consideration—especially if you can only afford one. Amazon has used copies starting at $.50 with both abebooks.com and eBay featuring used copies for $2 up. (Simple)

Williams, R. R. ***The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: The Letters of John and James*** (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1965). This commentary is so simple that it assigns one “headline” to the entire book of James (“Practical Religion”) and one each to the letters called 1, 2, and 3 John (“Recall to Fundamentals,” “Truth and Love,” and “Trouble in the Church,” respectively). The text published is, of course, from the New English Bible, but the commentary is even shorter than that of Tasker listed above. Used copies are available on amazon.com, eBay, and thriftbooks.com in the $4-$5 range. (Very Simple)

1 and 2 Peter, Jude

Once again, I have tried to select only a few choices and will delineate between those which are relatively simple and the ones with a certain level of complexity. I have placed Jude in this section because it is usually covered alongside 2 Peter due to size and similarity of subject matter.

Bauckham, Richard J***. Word Biblical Commentary: Jude, 2 Peter*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983). The downside of recommending this commentary to this group is that the comments use Greek characters in discussing the important biblical words and phrases. The upside is that British scholar Bauckham puts his finest scholarship at work on two very neglected biblical books. This volume follows the general formula of the series with its short bibliography for each passage, fresh translation (passage-by-passage), translation notes, discussion of its literary form with its likely use in its original setting, and relevant commentary often followed by lengthier notes on items such as Jude’s use of the recurring phrase “these people” and controversies such as Michael and the devil. At the time of writing, both abebooks.com and biblio.com had used copies for $12. (Very Complex)

Best, Ernest. ***The New Century Bible Commentary: 1 Peter*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1971). Roughly one-third of this volume is comprised of introductory material and the rest is commentary built off key words and phrases. Greek words are written so they can be pronounced in English and the index is helpful. I used this commentary to supplement my personal study when I wasn’t actually preaching or teaching on the book, so it is quite easy-to-read. Used copies run from $5 up at abebooks.com, eBay.com, and thriftbooks.com. (Medium Introduction/Simple Commentary)

Craddock, Fred B. ***Westminster Bible Commentary: First and Second Peter and Jude*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995). This is a very enjoyable commentary that deals with the message of all three books on a passage-by-passage basis. It offers no new translation and rarely even spells out a Greek word in English characters, much less using Greek characters. Craddock is known for having preaching sensibilities, so this is a very practical commentary—very useful as a companion book for individual study, as well as a teaching guide. What I really appreciate in this volume is the structure of the three introductions for the three biblical books. Each is divided into: 1) what we already know, 2) what we wish to know, 3) a way to begin, and an outline for each book, respectively. Under “A Way to Begin,” Craddock suggests answers to the following questions: 1) what kind of literature is it, 2) who wrote the letter, 3) to whom was the letter written, and 4) for what purpose was the letter written? Most introductions attempt to answer those questions, but sometimes, it is difficult to see through the summary of other positions to get to what the author believes. Craddock reserves such exercises for more detailed volumes. On the used book market, these go for $2+ at amazon.com, $4 + at abebooks.com and thriftbooks.com, and $7+ at eBay.com. (Simple)

Kelly, J. N. D. ***The Epistles of Peter and of Jude (Harper’s New Testament Commentaries)*** (New York, New York: Harper and Row, 1969). Whether you find this as one of the Black’s New Testament Commentaries series from the U.K., Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (as cited here) from 2/3 of the way through the 20th century, or as the Thornapple Commentary reprint from later in the 20th century, this is an incredibly valuable work on all three biblical books. It features a new translation and detailed, phrase-by-phrase commentary on all three books, as well as two large introductory sections (38 pages on 1 Peter and 17 pages on 2 Peter and Jude). Dr. Kelly, an academic’s academic does not provide easy reading, even if all of the Greek terms are transliterated into English form to help one procrastinate and even if he does explain each carefully so that one doesn’t lose any meaning. Warning: You may not agree with everything the author says, but you’ll find that he is just as thorough in his analysis of these books as in his very famous work on *Early Christian Doctrines*. You’ll have to scout used book sites for this one because I’ve seen different editions of essentially the same work from $1.35 and $2 all the way to a ridiculous $165. (Medium Complexity)

Summers, Ray, “1 Peter,” “2 Peter,” and “Jude” in Allen, Clifton J. (ed.) ***Broadman Bible Commentary Volume 12: Hebrews-Revelation*** (Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1972) One of the great qualities of a scholar is her or his ability to communicate detailed insights in lively, often entertaining, and understandable ways. Dr. Summer’s Worthy is the Lamb (see below) is one of the few books that I am aware of that really does that systematically with the Book of Revelation and his treatment of all three of these letters from each book’s introduction through each passage is delightful. Each section could almost preach or teach itself. He is a Greek scholar, but he doesn’t even overwhelm the reader with transliterated Greek words. As I’m typing this, one can find used copies in the $4-6 range at abebooks.com, discoverbooks.com, and thriftbooks.com. (Simple)

**\***Wilson, David M. ***Jude: Getting Ready for the Fight: A Conversational Commentary on the Book of Jude*** (Redondo Beach, California: Grant Avenue Baptist Church, 2009). This was a book originally published by my middle brother after he preached a series of sermons on Jude for his church. He calls it a conversational commentary because he is attempting to convey the message in a less formal, rather than scholarly format. He uses clever illustrations and lively language in explaining a book that is largely overlooked and often preached only when the pastor is upset about something. If you like what you read at no charge online (<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/jude-getting-ready-for-the-fight-david-wilson-sermon-on-heresy-138258>), you can also order a printed copy of the 62-page book at lulu.com for $7.95. (Simple)

**The Johannine Letters**

I have a definite bias here because I read a lot of material while writing my book on these biblical books. Once again, I’ll put a difficulty level in the parenthesis after each entry.

Brown, Raymond E. ***The Anchor Bible: The Epistles of John*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1982). Raymond E. Brown was one of the most famous Catholic biblical scholars in the 20th Century. His introduction to the New Testament is well-respected, but his forte is the study of the fourth gospel and the letters associated with John. As usual, this commentary follows the Anchor Bible format of new translation followed by notes and comments, as well as presenting Greek words and phrases in English characters so that non-Greek readers can pronounce them easily. In addition, this one features a helpful spreasheet-style chart comparing the Gospel of John with 1 Joh, as well as noteworthy essays such as “God is Light without Darkness” and “Ethical Implications of God is Light.” I also like his appendix on John’s opponent Cerinthus, his essay on those Latin versions of the letters which seem to be addressed to the Parthians, and a marvelous little treatment on the form of letters in the ancient world. As a truly academic commentary, you may find much of the discussion to be overdone and superfluous, but the thoroughness of the book makes it invaluable. Used copies run from $25 and, since the new editions are being published by Yale University Press, I don’t expect those prices to drop. (Very Complex).

**\*Nee, Watchman. *Love Not the World*** (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970). While this book of sermons is neither a commentary on the Letters of John nor confined strictly to those letters, this is a valuable collection of sermons (some with “sword drill” or topical elements) which touch on or are inspired by both the Gospel of John and 1 John 2:15, 16, 18; 4:4, 17; 5:4, 18, and 19. As may be obvious from citing so many of his writings in this listing, this pastor’s approach really speaks to me. Although used copies can be found for $5 up, you may simply want to download the full book (it’s in the public domain) from <https://hisbiz.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/love-not-the-world-watchman-nee2.pdf>. (Simple)

Ross, Alexander. ***The New International Commentary on the Letters of James and John*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1954). In addition to being a “two-for” because of the coverage of James, this is an excellent middle-of-the-road treatment of 1, 2, 3 John. Although, as with the others in the series, the text used is the American Standard Version, Dr. Ross does cover the important Greek words (transliterated into English characters for the non-Greek reader). In addition to the introductory material on James, this volume features introductory material on 1 John, as well as a combined introduction for 2 and 3 John. The content themes for 1 John are very simple: Part I = “God is Light” and Part 2 = “God is Love.” Some of the older copies are floating around amazon.com and abebooks.com in the $3-5 range, but some sites are $20 and up. (Medium Complexity)

Wilson, Johnny Lee***. Wytte Media Bible: I, II, III John*** (Tyrone, Georgia: Wytte Media, LLC., 2005). Designed for small group study, this “commentary” features a new translation, comments passage by passage, and a CD-ROM with costumed monologue of John, puzzles (crosswords, fill-ins, matching, scrambles, and word searches), worksheets (including scripture searches and checklists), as well as PowerPoint slide shows designed to integrate the book text and the slides. Amazon.com has a used copy for under $2, but you can get one with CD-ROM and no shipping from me for $10. (Medium Complexity)

**Revelation**

Although I offered some material from the Symbolist School of interpretation during our Friday night Bible Study on Revelation, I have limited my recommendations here to the very outmoded (and almost never held at the present day) “continuous-historical” position (also known as “post-millennial”), “futurist” position (usually known as “pre-millennial”), and “preterist” position (erroneously referred to as “amillennial”).

Caird, G. B. ***The Revelation of St. John the Divine (Harper’s New Testament Commentaries)*** (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Again, this was first published as part of the Black’s New Testament Commentary series in the U.K. and it was one of the prime sources I used when compiling my notebook of millennial interpretation during a grad school seminar. Caird is a “preterist,” meaning that he interprets the book by starting with what it would have meant to its first readers and then, applies it to modern interpretation, and features plenty of historical and archaeological evidence to back up his positions. The book by Mitchell Reddish cited later has more archaeological information than this but was published more than a decade later. It follows the format of this series with new translation followed by phrase-by-phrase commentary notes. Used copies start at $15 on biblio.com and $20 on abebooks.com, but I saw them for as high as $50 on eBay. (Medium Complexity)

**\***Carroll, B. H. **An Interpretation of the English Bible: Revelation** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1948). This is the final volume in a set of sermon-like commentaries on the entire Bible by a former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. The dated nature of the series may be seen in that the author made snide remarks about airplanes equivalent to “If God had intended man to fly, he would have given him wings” and the face that he espouses this pre-WWI idea that the church is to make society better and better until we have a literal 1,000 years of peace and Jesus comes to crown history thereafter. That this interpretation was wildly optimistic and didn’t cope with the human sin problem realistically must be said, BUT many, many believers held this position prior to WWI and WWII so it is worth noting. Called the “continuous-historical” view of Revelation, it features the idea that the entire span of human history is represented in the visions of the book. Fortunately, you don’t have to buy a used copy of the reprints to get this (circa $xx), you can download the various volumes at: <https://sglblibrary.homestead.com/files/BHCarroll/BHCarrollContents.htm>, (Simple)

Ladd, George Eldon***. A Commentary on the Revelation of John*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1972). This work from a former Fuller Theological Seminary professor is what I would call a “moderate” futurist interpretation. Indeed, Ladd sees most of the book’s visions and symbols as representing events in the future, but he does not ignore what the visions and symbols would have likely meant for first-century believers. Although Ladd does a good job of going verse-by-verse in the text, he does not offer a new translation or detailed notes on the translation. Unlike many of the more popular futurist books on Revelation, this one is well-considered and well-argued. It is definitely worth considering. Used copies run from thriftbooks.com and eBay circa $10-11 and a new eBook version at $11 from Amazon’s Kindle store to up to $40. (Medium Complexity)

Palmer, Earl. ***Mastering the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Commentary by Today’s Great Bible Teachers: 1, 2, 3 John & Revelation*** (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982). These are not detailed commentaries, but practical teaching/learning guides from a master of expository preaching. Those who attended our Bible studies on Revelation may recognize that I cited this author on occasion. Used copies run from under $4 at discoverbooks.com to $5 on eBay. (Simple)

Reddish, Mitchell G. ***Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary: Revelation*** (Macon, Georgia: Smith & Helwys, 2001). Replete with CD-ROM for searchable text and useful black and white pictures, this very entertaining and informative commentary does not feature a new translation but offers an amazing array of different entry points in which to examine the issues covered in the book. Archaeological, historical, and literary evidence are all brought to bear in an attempt to understand the book on its own terms. This is the most beautiful and accessible commentary available on the subject. Even though used books are sometimes as expensive as the new paperback versions of the commentary, it is well worth the $50 one would spend on it. Amazon does have a small digital sample of the book on its site, but you don’t really see how powerful the book is compared to others of its kind from that sampling. (Medium Complexity)

Summers, Ray. ***Worthy is the Lamb: An Interpretation of Revelation*** (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951). This volume guides the reader step-by-step through a preterist view of the Book of Revelation. This view takes seriously the fact that God gave John a message to share with his readers in the 1st century which meant something to the readers of the 1st century, not just for the 20th and 21st centuries (though it does have meaning for us, as well). This book is extremely well-written and should be understandable by all. It is not a commentary in the sense of having a new translation, but it does deal with important words and phrases. It doesn’t go verse-by-verse all of the time, but it doesn’t chase rabbits in sermon form like the book listed immediately below. Though eBay did have an $11 used copy, you’re likely to pay much more. So, you’ll probably want the Kindle eBook for $7.95. (Simple)

Talbot, Louis T. ***An Exposition on the Book of Revelation*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1937). While this is not a critical commentary in the sense of handling the text on a verse-by-verse approach and offers no new translation or detailed translation notes, it is one of the more comprehensive old-school approaches to a futurist interpretation of Revelation. Complete with a chart showing the entire history of the world from Christ’s death to the new heaven and new earth (complete with Israel in the new earth), this is a helpful volume in getting the perspective from someone who thinks much of John’s vision is yet to happen. While this book is helpful, there are times that useful discussions are abandoned to follow a sermon point. So, even if you have this book, you’ll need another source to be able to do a comprehensive study. You can get an eBook version of this volume for $4.25 at solidchristianbooks.com or a Kindle Edition for slightly under $5. Used hardcover copies start at $16 at thriftbooks.com, but I have seen them as high as $64. (Simple)