

Introduction to the *NIV Study Bible*

About the *NIV Study Bible*

The New International Version of the Bible (NIV) is unsurpassed in accuracy, clarity and literary grace. The commitments that led to the completion of this version later guided several of its translators to spearhead publication of the *NIV Study Bible*. Their purpose was unchanged: to communicate the word of God to the hearts of people.

Like the NIV itself, the *NIV Study Bible* is the work of a transdenominational team of Biblical scholars. All confess the authority of the Bible as God's infallible word to humanity. They have sought to clarify understanding of, develop appreciation for, and provide insight into that word.

But why a study Bible when the NIV text itself is so clearly written? Surely there is no substitute for the reading of the text itself; nothing people write *about* God's word can be on a level with the word itself. Further, it is the Holy Spirit alone—not fallible human beings—who can open the human mind to the divine message.

However, the Spirit also uses people to explain God's word to others. It was the Spirit who led Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot, where he asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Ac 8:30). "How can I," the Ethiopian replied, "unless someone explains it to me?" Philip then showed him how an Old Testament passage in Isaiah related to the good news of Jesus.

This interrelationship of the Scriptures—so essential to understanding the complete Biblical message—is a major theme of the notes in the *NIV Study Bible*.

Doctrinally, the *NIV Study Bible* reflects traditional evangelical theology. Where editors were aware of significant differences of opinion on key passages or doctrines, they tried to follow an evenhanded approach by indicating those differences (e.g., see note on Rev 20:2). In finding solutions to problems mentioned in the book introductions, they went only as far as evidence (Biblical and non-Biblical) could carry them.

The result is a study Bible that can be used profitably by all Christians who want to be serious Bible students.

Features of the *NIV Study Bible*

The *NIV Study Bible* features the text of the New International Version, study notes keyed to and listed with Bible verses, introductions and outlines to books of the Bible, text notes, a cross-reference system (100,000 entries), parallel passages, a concordance (over 35,000 references), charts, maps, essays and comprehensive indexes.

The text of the NIV, which is divided into paragraphs as well as verses, is organized into sections with headings.

Study Notes

The outstanding feature of this study Bible is that it contains over 20,000 study notes located on the same pages as the verses and passages they explain.

The study notes provide new information to supplement that found in the NIV text notes. Among other things, they

1. explain important words and concepts (see note on Lev 11:44 about "holiness");
2. interpret "difficult verses" (see notes on Mal 1:3 and Luke 14:26 for the concept of "hating" your parents);
3. draw parallels between specific people and events (see note on Ex 32:30 for the parallels between Moses and Christ as mediators);

4. describe historical and textual contexts of passages (see note on 1Co 8:1 for the practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols); and
5. demonstrate how one passage sheds light on another (see note on Ps 26:8 for how the presence of God's glory marked his presence in the tabernacle, in the temple, and finally in Jesus Christ himself).

Some elements of style should be noted:

1. Study notes on a *passage* precede notes on individual verses within that passage.
2. When a book of the Bible is referred to within a note on that book, the book name is not repeated. For example, a reference to 2 Timothy 2:18 within the notes on 2 Timothy is written 2:18, not 2Ti 2:18.
3. In lists of references within a note, references from the book under discussion are placed first. The rest appear in Biblical order.
4. Certain kinds of material have been made more accessible through the use of the following symbols:



The seedling calls attention to Scripture references containing study notes that have practical principles for personal application.



The trowel points out references containing study notes that provide light from archaeology. Since there is more personal application material in the study notes than archaeological information, we have also indicated where archaeological data can be found in certain book introductions, maps and charts.



The character symbol occurs in front of Scripture references containing study notes that provide descriptions and/or characterizations of a person or a people. It also sometimes appears in book introductions and essays.

Introductions to Books of the Bible

Each introduction to each book of the Bible is different. Introductions vary in length and reflect both the nature of the material itself and the strengths and interests of contributing editors.

An introduction frequently reports on a book's title, author, and date of writing. It details the book's background and purpose, explores themes and theological significance, and points out special problems and distinctive literary features. Where appropriate, such as in Paul's letters to the churches, it describes the original recipients of a book and the city in which they lived.

A complete outline of the book's content is provided in each introduction (except for the introduction to Psalms). For Genesis, two outlines—a literary and a thematic—are given. Pairs of books that were originally one literary work, such as 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles, are outlined together.

Text Notes

NIV text notes are indicated by raised, bold-faced letters following the words or phrases they explain. They examine such things as alternative translations, meanings of Hebrew and Greek terms, Old Testament quotations and variant readings in ancient Biblical manuscripts. There are also some explanatory notes. Text notes appear at the bottom of the right-hand column, preceded by their bold letters and verse numbers.

Cross-Reference System

The cross-reference system can be used to explore concepts, as well as specific words. For example, one can either study "angels as protectors" (See Mt 18:10) or focus on the word "angel" (see Jn 20:12).

The NIV cross-reference system resembles a series of interlocking chains with many links. The head, or organizing, link in each concept chain is indicated by the letter "S" (short for "See"). The appearance of a head link in a list of references usually signals another list of references that will cover a slightly different aspect of the concept or word being studied. The various chains in the cross-reference system—which is virtually inexhaustible—continually intersect and diverge.

Cross references are indicated by raised light-italic letters. When a single word is addressed by both text notes and cross references, the bold NIV text-note letter comes first. The cross references normally appear in the center column and, when necessary, continue at the bottom of the right-hand column after the NIV text notes.

The four lists of references are in Biblical order with one exception: If reference is made to a verse within the same chapter, that verse (indicated by “ver”) is listed first. If an Old Testament verse is quoted in the New Testament, the New Testament reference is marked with an asterisk (*).

Genesis 1:1 provides a good example of the resources of the cross-reference system.

The four lists of references all relate to creation, but each takes a different perspective. Note *a* takes up the time of creation: “in the beginning.” Note *b* lists three other occurrences of the word “created” in Genesis 1–2. Note *c* focuses on “the heavens” as God’s creation. Because note *d* is attached to the end of the verse as well as to the word “earth,” it deals with the word “earth,” with the phrase “the heavens and the earth” and with creation itself (the whole verse).

The Beginning

1 In the beginning^a God created^b the heavens^c and the earth.^d ²Now the earth was^a formless^e and empty,^f darkness was over the surface of the deep,^g and the Spirit of God^h was hoveringⁱ over the waters.

³And God said,^j “Let there be light,” and there was light.^k ⁴God saw that the light was good,^l and he separated the light from the darkness.^m ⁵God calledⁿ the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.”^o And there was evening, and there was morning^p—the first day.

1:1 ^aPs 102:25; Pr 8:23; Isa 40:21; 41:4,26; Jn 1:1-2
^bver 21,27;
Ge 2:3 ^cver 6;
Ne 9:6; Job 9:8;
37:18; Ps 96:5;
104:2; 115:15;
121:2; 136:5;
Isa 40:22; 42:5;
51:13; Jer 10:12;
51:15 ^dGe 14:19;
2Ki 19:15; Ne 9:6;
Job 38:4; Ps 90:2;
136:6; 146:6;
Isa 37:16; 40:28;
42:5; 44:24;
45:12,18;
Jer 27:5; 32:17;
Ac 14:15; 17:24;
Eph 3:9; Col 1:16;
Heb 3:4; 11:3;

Parallel Passages

When two or more passages of Scripture are nearly identical or deal with the same event, this “parallel” is noted at the sectional headings for those passages. Such passages are especially common in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; and in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

Identical or nearly identical passages are noted with “*pp.*” Similar passages—those not dealing with the same event—are noted with “*Ref.*”

To conserve space and avoid repetition, when a parallel passage is noted at a sectional heading, no further parallels are listed in the cross-reference system.

Concordance

The concordance is the largest ever bound with an English Bible. It was compiled and edited by John R. Kohlenberger III and Edward W. Goodrick. By looking up key words, you can find verses for which you remember a word or two but not their location. For example, to find the verse that states that the word of God is “sharper than any double-edged sword,” you could look in the concordance under either “sharper,” “double-edged,” or “sword.”

Maps

The *NIV Study Bible* includes 61 maps: 14 full-color and 48 black-and-white. The 14 full-color maps at the end of this Bible cover c. 2000 years of history.

Strategically placed throughout the text are four dozen black-and-white maps. The Contents: Maps page contains a complete list of the topics covered.

The cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus and Philippi have been reconstructed as they might have been in ancient times. These recreations allow Bible students to visualize David’s city and, in the New Testament, the places through which Paul traveled on his missionary journeys.

Charts

Complementing the study notes are 40 charts, diagrams and drawings designed specifically for the *NIV Study Bible*. Two full-color time lines, located in the front of this Bible, pinpoint significant dates in the Old and New Testaments. Other charts, carefully placed within the text, give detailed information about ancient, non-Biblical texts; about Old Testament covenants, sacrifices, and feast days; about Jewish sects; and about major archaeological finds relating to the Old and New Testaments.

Essays

Five brief essays provide additional information on specific sections of the Bible: Wisdom Literature, the Minor Prophets, the Synoptic Gospels, the Pastoral Letters, and the General Letters.

A sixth essay confronts the ethical question of war, and a seventh details the history, literature and social developments of the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments.

Subject, Notes and Map Indexes

The subject index contains references to key Biblical information and important topics. The notes index pinpoints other references to persons, places, events and topics mentioned in the *NIV Study Bible* notes.

Two map indexes help in locating place-names on a map.

Harmony of the Gospels

As an additional study tool for the Gospels and the life of Christ, this Bible contains a portion of the *NIV Harmony of the Gospels* by Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry.

The Divine Name Yahweh

The editors have sometimes elected to use the divine name Yahweh (rendered “the LORD” in the NIV) in the book introductions, study notes and essays instead of “the Lord” (or even “the LORD”). For the significance of this name see notes on Ge 2:4; Ex 3:14–15; 6:6; Dt 28:58.