

Study Bible Review: Chronological Life Application Study Bible

Rev. Greg H. Parsons, PhD

Frontier Ventures

Curator for the Ralph D. Winter Research Center

Every Sunday, in every time zone of the world, pastors, Sunday school teachers and small group leaders encourage their congregation to read their Bible. Perhaps that is one of the few things most Protestant churches agree on which helps believers in their walk with God.

The challenge in reading the Bible, is *how* to understand it. I'm not talking about whether they can or want to, that is a crucial, but different issue. Many who know how to read well, read it cover to cover each year.

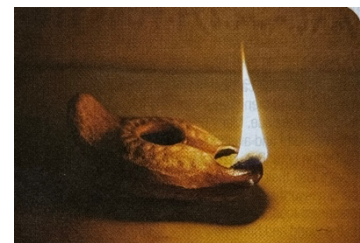
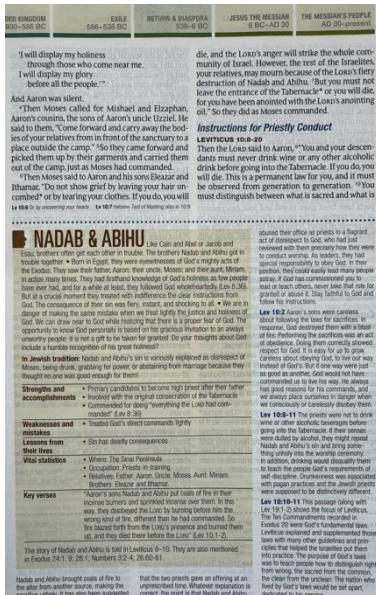
Yet, I would guess they may easily get bogged down plowing through Numbers or Leviticus or history or the Prophets. They can't wait to get to the New Testament – which is great, we should read through the gospels more than once each year!

Yet even with something as “readable” as the Gospels, includes several kinds of literature. While we all depend on the Holy Spirit for wisdom in life, some help from those who have studied the word deeply can help keep us from missing the core ideas, or worse, come up with interpretations or applications that are wrong or bad.

For this reason, and many others, I am thrilled with the release of the 2nd Edition of the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* (New Living Translation, Tyndale House

Publishers, 2023).¹ This is a rich resource for understanding the context and culture when the Bible was written. It is full of introductions, background, images, maps, tables, character profiles, and (of course) study notes. It has a running timeline across the top of every page, which helps you keep other history – both Bible history and general history – in context.

I first got excited about it when a long-term friend, who has worked in ministry to Jewish people for more than 45 years, shared with me that she was chosen to be the editor of the study notes. The notes are based on



Oil Lamp

Israelite lamps developed from those in general use among the Canaanites in the second millennium B.C. Their shape was similar to a shell or saucer with a lip. Lamps of stone, metal, and shells were used, although the majority were made of pottery. A multitude of clay lamps, fashioned in a variety of designs, have been excavated in Palestine. Most lamps were fueled by olive oil, and the average lamp could hold enough oil to burn through the night. Small, round, wheel-made lamps of simple design were prevalent in the time of Jesus. This would have been the type of lamp used by the woman searching the house for her gold coin (Luke 15:8). With wicks trimmed, the lamps of the foolish bridesmaids (Matt 25:1-13) would probably have lasted approximately five hours, from dark until about midnight.

¹ I received a review copy of this new edition in order to write this review. These images are only examples taken from my copy of this Bible.

the New Living Translation which I am not reviewing here. In general, it is both a very accurate and readable translation. I encourage the use of more than one translation to check how different approaches bring out the message.

Because of her and her team's extensive experience, as well as new discoveries since the 1st edition released in 2012, there are rich elements to reflect on as one seeks to understand background and settings. As I have thumbed through this Bible and begun to use it, I am finding wonderful helps, prods and encouragement in my reading and study. Our church is in a series on Acts. Just last Sunday, I was following the passages as various people in the story move from place to place. Almost each geographic move in the story has a map that shows where they are and where they go next. I quickly counted more than 12 small maps within the book itself, and I probably missed some.



The Appian Way

The Appian Way was a main highway from Rome southward to the heel of the Italian peninsula at Brundisium (a total of 350 miles). It received its name from Appius Claudius Caecus, the Roman censor who began its construction in 312 B.C. The Appian Way is referred to by ancient writers Livy, Strabo, Horace, and others in a variety of contexts. Portions of the road still exist today with the original Roman paving intact in many places. The apostle Paul traveled on the Appian Way on his journey to Rome after disembarking from a ship at Puteoli (Acts 28:13-15). This road, like many roads throughout the Roman Empire, paved the way for the spreading of the gospel. Today's ease and access of transportation should help us spread the Good News even further.

Since this is a chronological bible, the order of the text is done in the order it happened. This is one more way to help us understand what God is doing as the story unfolds. This study Bible puts Job after Genesis. Some other chronological Bibles put it after Abraham. You could put it before Genesis 12. When you understand that Job is one of the oldest parts of the Bible and that perhaps he lived about the same time as Abraham, it emphasizes the ancient nature of the struggles Job encounters.

Included are both:

- A 110+ page Master Index of virtually every study note, personality profile or map is listed. This helps you see the larger story by cross-referencing people, locations and events.

- A 120+ page Concordance.

Additional layout help includes a parallel passage indicator in the gospels, and various lists (such as 250 Events in the Life of the Messiah), profiles (who is Cornelius in Acts 10) and historic background (including 2 pages on The Jewish Synagogue).

As with any chronological Bible, you have to be prepared to shift gears from your “normal”



Bible reading. For example, when you get to the end of Acts 14, you next read James and Galatians, then back to Acts 15, etc. This can make it harder to use a Bible like this in church, but I have been doing so by book-marking the passage ahead of time — since it helps me to be reading the passage that we will study on Sunday. If our pastor refers to other texts I want to look up, I just use my Bible app.

If you haven't tried a chronological study Bible, I strongly recommend this one.

