

Refreshing Bible Review: Reveals a Refocus on Jesus

One of Jeanne's books jumped off a shelf earlier this year and I must share the story. I asked "What is this book about?" and it turned out to be a One Year reading of the Bible – for women. Upon inspection she had read it from January to December in 2005 leaving only a few marks mostly noting the birthdays of the kids. So I told myself I would look thru it and see what is different about the New Living Translation (NLT) and maybe decide to take a few minutes a day and read the whole thing.

I will tell you it has been rewarding. Every time through the Good Book will add something and this time through, it lived up to the promise both for what was read and then revealed what to read again – or what to refocus on. Course, I wasn't going to read it a day at a time (I know the ending and have been down this road in another version) so I set out to complete it in an honorable four-a-day or three months project.

Then it got interesting. Another book showed up (by design) and then it got serious - I doubled down on the readings – Then the finish. Then the refocus. Then back to looking at Jesus.

Therefore, this paper is my *Anschauung* (German for view, opinion, or attitude – A Wordsmith word pronounced *AHN-shou-uhng*).

May I share Jeanne's books with you - and my *Anschauung*?

Reading the One Year Bible for Women

The One Year Bible (OYB) is an easy read with the New Living Translation (NLT) making the modern words easy to comprehend and move along as in: rather than *shekels, cubits*, and Hebrew days; we read pounds, feet, and April 15th. Compared to reading the Bible in King James or even New English Version, it is refreshing (and sometimes surprising) to read it in New Living. This means some of the Holy Word we have been used to, comes out as an explanation rather than the honored poetry and it may help with understanding but it may be a loss of the good old familiar. For example in John 4:26 Jesus says:

"I, that speak unto thee, am He" in KJV¹.

"I am the Messiah" in NLT.

"I am, the one speaking to you" in Greek. [Note: Good footnotes in this book for Greek references.]

The OYB is divided into daily readings from the Old Testament, the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs (note the **boldface** passages are designed for memory and the thought for the day). The introduction to the New Living Translation is full of pertinent issues, philosophy and methodology, 'texts behind the NLT,' and further explains metaphoric language, male-orientated terms, lexical consistency, and ends with "we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitation and imperfections" (p. xvii).

So, touting how relaxing it was to read this New Living translation in the four part daily reading, I must quote their thought-for-thought translation as it: "seeks to be both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful" (p. xiii). (*Professorially, what are the two theories or methods they use in this Bible Translation? See the First page.*)

¹ My father wore out a King James Bible. His ole Book is in my library and will note I gave it to him in 1967. Jeanne gave me one just like it before I left for Korea in 1968 but it does not show the wear and tear of my Dad's. Some of us will always go back to what we grew up hearing and listening to and in most cases will hang on to the 'ring' of KJB. Jeanne had at least four different Bibles in her reading room and all of them well read, marked up, and with notes.

Reading the Bible, Sunday school, and Catechistic Learning

When I was in the sixth grade, having grown up in the First Methodist Church (not United yet) in Ardmore, the Sunday School for us boys was taught by Arthur Jones who used a large mobile scroll to show pictures, maps, text, and drawings of the Bible. As I remember the almost dozen boys, the third floor window (which was open most of the time), and Mr. Jones going through the stories of the Bible, this was really my first introduction to the Bible.

I do remember the stories. His scrolling down through the gardens, snakes, chariots, trumpets, walls falling, temples falling, sling shots, lion's den, bushes burning, rain, whales, arks, fire, doves, mangers, Jews, Jesus, crosses, and on it went. I'll bet that scroll is still somewhere in Carter County...I know most of my family attended his class – well, the boys.

If I were to be asked to teach my Bible 101 I promise you we would have in the syllabus the list of stories we would study. It would not be a survey of the Bible from Genesis to The Revelation (Bible 201) but would have as its task to show/learn/read/see the stories to hold the message. I would pick and choose the most formidable chapters and verses that tell the stories of the 'Books' of the history of God's chosen people, how God revealed Himself to the world, what the promise is through His Son, and spend the rest of the time looking at the geography. Just that simple...in the first course, that is.

Reading the One Year Bible (one a day, two, three? You set up your plan to suit your self) will cover all the stories, all the history, all the genealogy, all the tribes, all the wars, all the killing, and then in the New Testament cover the birth, life, and death of Jesus, his resurrection, life after death, Paul and his work, some church history, prophesy, and the end of times.

Reading the One Year Bible surprised me. I knew what was coming but what woke up in me was something I will have to call a 'wondering.' Until this reading I had not really wondered about some of the towns, people, kings, rivers, and mountains. I began to wonder and ask "where in the world is Mt. Sinai, what was the route of the Exodus, where is or who is Moab, how far is it from Judea to Sycar, and most importantly where did they film my most favorite movie "Jesus Christ Superstar" (JCS)?

This wondering caused my reading time to demonstratively increase in minutes and hours per day to read...this turned out to not be a bad thing and I will admit it is one reason for penning this paper. It started on the OYB (March 23rd or at Deuteronomy 1:44b) "They chased and battered you all the way from Seir to Hormah." So I asked where and what are Seir and Hormah? - It cost me two hours! Had to dig in my library books and scan for maps. I had to push my Methodist studied books and it was like being back in the library at Perkins/SMU again. Dang, there has to be a better way – at least a better way to look up geographical objects without spending two hours groping in the dark. Part of the answer was in the OYB: on the next page of March 24 as Moses and the Israelites "wandered around Mount Seir for a long time" (Deut 2:1b).

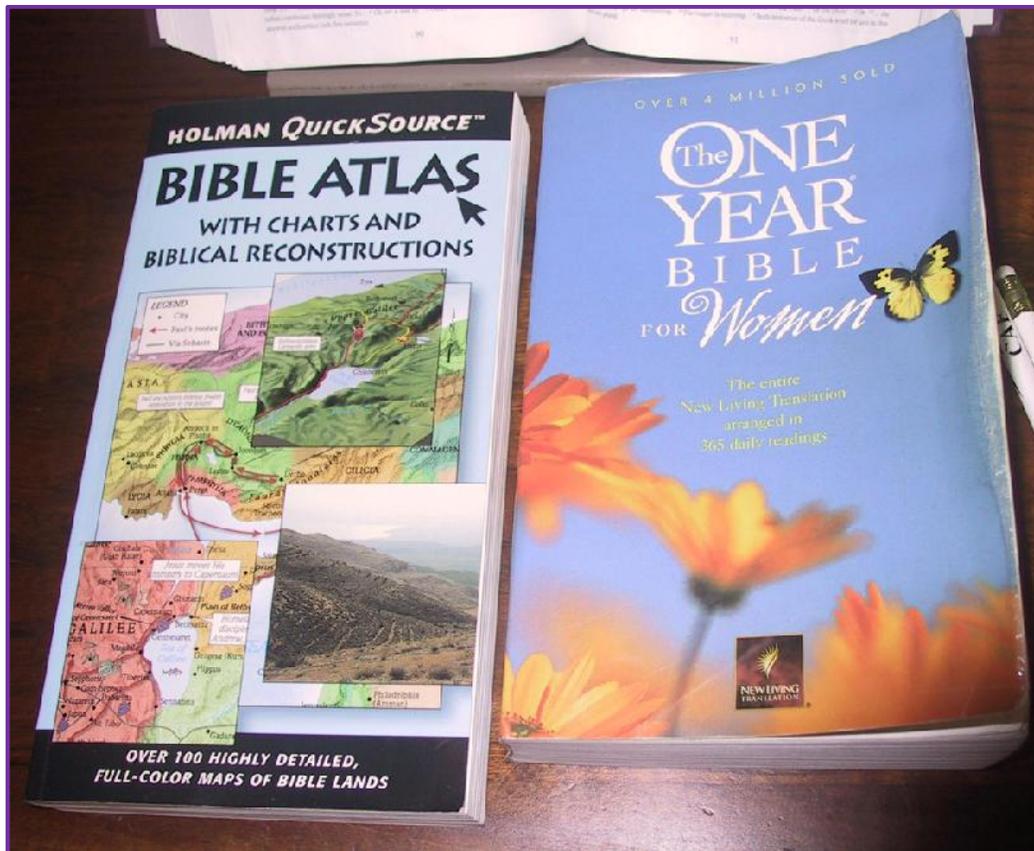
And then again the book trick. This one peaked out from behind Jeanne's reading lamp by her bedside night stand. It happened again (like manna from heaven – really). It said "Bible Atlas." I said, "Thank you Jesus."

Here it was: *Holman QuickSource: Bible Atlas* "with charts and biblical reconstructions." Can you believe it? Someone is smiling at this study...²

² Lisa Jean, as I told her yesterday, is in line to get this *One Year Bible* as Jeanne has read and noted the book as well as me. This means maybe she will do the same thing – at her pace. Then, just maybe also, Emily Jean will follow. They are now lucky to have the HQ to quickly find the maps, pictures, and geography.

Reading the One Year Bible with the Bible Atlas or Holman *Quick Source* (HQ)

Below is a picture of three of the books for this paper showing the *One Year Bible*, the Holman *QuickSource*, and the bottom part of my Monk desk Bible (NRSV).



My OYB readings were about half way complete and I was into May 9 looking at the last three verses of I Samuel 7 (or vs. 15-17) “Each year he traveled around, setting up his court first at Bethel, than at Gilgal, and then at Mizpah” (vs. 16). Hello HQ! Page 156 or Map #61. Now we can connect some dots!

[Before I forget let me show you where they filmed the JCS movie: page 334 or map #165. Where the rivers join at Scythopolls there is (Beth-shan) right below it. The name today on the maps is Beit She’an. This information and 50 cents will get you a cup of coffee (maybe) but the joy of reading the Bible and studying the Word can be rather gratifying especially if you are like me and they have made a movie out of it!]

This same map page will also show the “Samaritan village of Sychar” along the red lines tracking the travels of Jesus with a text box note where he “addresses a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s Well.”

Going back to a Bible 101 setting a quick review of the Bible Atlas is in order. The quickest way to get on top of the book is to scan the contents for an overall picture (to get a map) of what is in the book. For instance, in the **CONTENTS** the first three titles, and then the last three main sections, are

Forward, Geography of the Bible Lands: Introduction, Palestine

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The Life and Ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, Paul the Apostle, Revelation.

Second, turn to these sections and note the titles are upper case and highlighted in yellow. For instance look at **FOREWORD**. It is divided into Geography and Maps.

Maps of Bible Lands begins with The Days of Noah (in my version, 2005) on page 92. Then the sections are laid out accordingly to the major divisions of biblical history.

Each section includes maps, charts, and biblical reconstructions “that illuminate that epoch of history” (p. 19).

The bottom line is taking the Bible and reading it front to back (on your schedule) and having the Bible Atlas (HQ) right at your side to peek at the pages showing the charts, maps, geography, and textual history. This would be the time in Bible 101 to list perhaps some of the most important and significant stories from Genesis to The Revelation, but it is beyond the scope of this short paper.

The pedagogical points are (a) every time one reads through the Bible something else is learned, and (b) you could spend a life time studying any one part, Book, or figure in the Bible, and (c) the joy is picking out where one wants to go in the Bible (or is lead to go) and enjoy the trek, reading, and in some cases a ‘transformation.’

Reading the OYB and the HQ

Want to share an example of “peeking over into the Bible Atlas” (HQ). This combining the two study books came to me on the June 10th reading of the OT which was I Kings 7:1-51. I was trying to picture what the Temple looked like and how big it was. The OYB makes it easy using feet rather than cubits or meters.

Building the temple

Solomon asked Hiram to come to work for him on the temple. He built the two bronze pillars, named “Boaz” and “Jakin”; he cast the large round tank called “the Sea”; and the ten bronze water carts were placed five on the north and five on the south side of the temple. Course, all the numbers and the progress of the story is in Chapter 7 of I Kings.

The Bible Atlas shows four pages describing the building and has two ‘reconstructions’ of the temple – one being a cutaway view. Now we can see what Solomon built. Observe also the Timeline for Biblical History under UNITED KINGDOM about 1000 BC so now we can see the progression of Saul, David, and Solomon.

Of interest is reading the last paragraph. The temple had its ups and downs and lasted about 400 years before “the temple and the holy city were first plundered by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC” (p. 173).

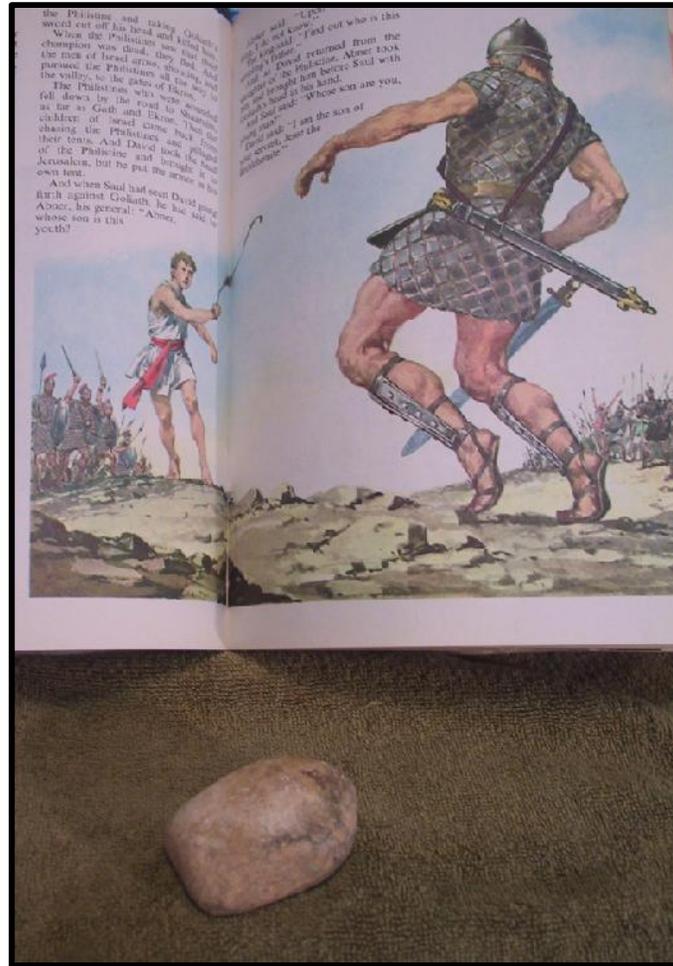
Valley of Elah

When Jeanne came back from her trip to Israel in the fall of 2007 she was just a bubble of smiles over having been to the Holy Land and walked where Jesus walked, prayed, and died. She saw the same towns, villages, and places of Scripture we are reading about today.

One place she saw, visited, and walked on was the Valley of Elah which is between or near Gath and Azekah. See page 160 or map #64 “David’s Rise to Power” as this spot is halfway between the Dead Sea on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

The previous page or map #63 shows a text box reflecting “Slaying of Goliath.” “He picked up five smooth stones from a stream and put them in his shepherd’s bag” (I Samuel 17:40a).

With tears in my eyes the dots are connected again - dots of indescribable tears and love...in a stone - from Elah.



AFTER Reading the OYB and the HQ - my *Anschauung*

So now we have read the Bible, the One Year Bible, and the Holman Bible Atlas. From here it depends on where you are – and I would emphatically point out it does not matter one whittle except, just be there! There are a lot of paths, directions, and adventures from here. We all must, what is best said, with the words “Press On!”

We can start over and keep reading the Bible (or different versions) from front to back.

We can go to the Holy Land and make our claims, prayers, or thanks at the Wailing Wall or the Garden of Gethsemane.

We can bring home a relic, pen, pin, book, hat, pictures, or a rock.

We can see one of the many movies about the Bible, God, and Jesus.

It all depends on where you are...

It is my opinion (and I am unanimous in this) the Word is just as important, as meaningful, and as applicable now, as it was then. This means when Jesus said something to someone then it could just as easily be said today and mean just as much. “...the learner (believer) will find the 1st century Words (ἐγώ εἶμι) leave us with no disadvantage in 20xx” (Jaime Clark-Soles). Yes, you know I will finish with/in the Fourth Gospel...

My *Anschauung* (view, opinion, or attitude) after just completing this reading of the Bible I have learned something different but meaningful: I don't have to completely go through the whole Bible again. In spite of having Ruth, Esther, and Ecclesiastes this time just jump out and surprise me with the story, truth, and lucidity, I can be a little picky about what to read in the OT. Do not want to spend all day on this but, for instance, the names of the descendants need to be recorded only once and in one place. My next time in the OT I will bypass the thousands and thousands of people the Lord had killed, caused to be killed, or were killed by his chosen kings. It would add to use Ockham's razor and parse some of the multiple renderings. One could then focus on more important issues for learning about the Word of God, His Promise, Jesus, and His Promise, and what to do with our lives. [No, I do not have the list of 'culled' books, chapters, or verses – yet.]

Even the short verses from Proverbs read on each day were memorable, for example: read December 22 for Proverbs 30:18-20. Let me remark first, as an aside, when you find a verse, page, story you like, make a note, say, on the inside cover (or back cover), of the page number, day, or verse so you can find it or go back to it quickly. I knew these verses were instructive and I had them highlighted. But go back and find it? Oh no, I had to turn one thousand, four hundred, and sixteen pages to find it again...These verses struck my fantasy as it reads a bit differently than previous versions (how does this read in your Bible?):

“There are three things that amaze me – no, four things I do not understand:
 how an eagle glides through the sky,
 how a snake slithers on a rock,
 how a ship navigates the ocean,
 how a man loves a woman.
 Equally amazing is how an adulterous woman can
 satisfy her sexual appetite, shrug her shoulders,
 and then say, “What's wrong with that?”

About half way through the readings this time it became clear to me while in the NT, I needed to look at the difference again between the four Gospels. Of course, for me and my *Anschauung*, the Fourth Gospel won out over the Synoptic Gospels – no contest.

After Jesus, of course, Paul is the most significant figure in the New Testament. Again, about half way through the readings it became clear to me Paul says things differently than what is in the Gospel of St. John (the Fourth Gospel or 4G). This paper is too short to defend this position but Paul's atonement theology, his sin, Satan, and death, go over and against John's love, light, life, and realized eschatology. Yes, I am fully aware of 96.5% of the church signing off on Paul's teachings but what I am saying is this time through the Bible put me back on course to keep waving the flag of St. John (and to stay on track studying the 'spiritual Gospel.')

The one point I will hold up, is the point that jumped out at me like reading Esther did, and it is Paul's treatment or attitude toward women. He puts woman in their place and the church has bought off on it. He puts women down. I have an issue with this (maybe you do too?) John (4G) has Jesus telling a woman that he is the Christ (Jn. 4) and makes Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20) the first Apostle...again, we could argue this till the second coming (this is what Paul says “on that day” and the John Jesus says “The hour has come” meaning now!)

“Paul's problem is he did not get the chance to read the Word in the Fourth Gospel” (guess who penned this...).

Time to say “Amen” – or “Thanks” to Jeanne

The message above suggests we press on. We will all be lead down a different path, verse, chapter, or Book in the Bible. We will read, hear, see, and wonder about what is being given to us and what we can take home. Personally it should be gratifying to have read the whole Bible. There is a real feeling of completion getting to December 31st. One may say “Yea!” or “Thank God!” or maybe “Thank goodness!”

Now, what are we going to do?

For me, I will say thanks to Jeanne for leaving these two books out for me to find, read, and study. This was really a good treat AND trek!

I will say thanks for the Holman Bible Atlas (HQ) where it says Jesus is supreme on pages 286 through about 347.

The section on *Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament* (chart #146) have peaked/tweaked my attention for more study.

The OYB readings for February 28 from Leviticus 23 peaked my interest knowing what the appointed festivals for the Jews are. This will be helpful understanding the readings in the NT and seeing how Jesus, as a Jew, worked with and professed these instructions.

Better, these festivals help us today to understand the history, the lessons, and the geography.

You may not have a third floor window to look out of while listening to a teacher discuss the paintings, charts, and pictures of the Bible but, perhaps, between the One Year Bible and the Bible Atlas (plus your own reading Bible) you may be able to agree with me: “It is never too late to study the Word.”