
Although *The IVP Atlas of Bible History* contains more than eighty colour maps, it is much more than a collection of maps. The book spans over two millennia of history from Abraham, placed at approximately 2000 B.C., through to the Revelation seen by the apostle John at the end of the first century A.D. The maps are generally accompanied by photos of important archaeological artefacts. Lawrence provides background information about a variety of topics, for instance concerning the archives and libraries of the Ancient Near East, the topography and climate of Canaan, the tabernacle, the ten plagues, the different types of literature, the Dan Stela, the prophetic literature, the temple and the Qumran scrolls. The book also contains a table of contents, a short glossary and an index.

It is Lawrence’s contention that history should primarily be based on written sources. He regards the Bible as his primary source. Information obtained from extra-biblical sources, nonetheless, occasionally influences his interpretation of the Biblical texts. Lawrence regards the campaigns by Joshua as disabling raids rather than territorial conquests followed by immediate occupation. He views Omri as an important king despite the fact that the Bible gives only six verses to his reign. His inclusion of photographs of important archaeological artefacts unintentionally draws attention to the importance of archaeological data for the study of the past.

Lawrence frankly maintains that he does not want to enter into academic controversies unless they affect the understanding of the flow of Bible history. His avoidance of theoretical constructions of the past based on minimal or no evidence can be accepted in terms of the scope of the book. The same can unfortunately not be said with regard to his suggestion that healthy respect should be shown to ancient writers, biblical and extra-biblical, simply because they lived much closer to the events they described than we do.
Lawrence wants to present the broad sweep of Bible history. Space is thus allotted to the creation accounts, the flood, the table of nations and the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 1-11 as well as the spread of Christianity in the first three centuries after the last book of the New Testament had been written. He also treats the inter-Testamental period.

Although all would not necessarily agree with Lawrence’s approach, The IVP Atlas of Bible History is a welcome addition to the Bible atlases currently available.

Marius D. Terblanche, Department of Old Testament, University of the Free State, P O Box 31142, Fichardt Park, Republic of South Africa. E-mail: mdterblanche@absamail.co.za