

***STARTING NEW TESTAMENT STUDY:  
LEARNING AND DOING***

Bruce Chilton and Deirdre Good, *Starting New Testament Study: Learning and Doing* (London: SPCK, 2009. £12.99. pp. 192. ISBN: 978-0-281-05354-4).

Chilton and Good's *Starting New Testament Study* is a well-designed and appropriately aimed introduction to NT studies. In a sense it functions as a crash course for those taking their first steps into the academic study of the NT, providing a sweeping

overview of the social world of first-century Palestine, the towns to which Jesus travelled, the relationship between Paul and his churches, and many other background issues which provide a solid foundation for further studies. Readers will be introduced not merely to the writings of the NT, but to the places in which it took place, the people with whom it is concerned, and the world from which it emerged.

This scope is reflected in the first chapter as Chilton and Good discuss the first-century social world of Jesus (e.g., the rule of Herod Antipas and rural Galilee). In chapter two Paul and his letters are covered. Here the authors focus on Paul's upbringing in Tarsus and its implications for his education, call to apostleship, and the letters he wrote to his fledgling churches (including those allegedly written by others in his name). The gospels are the subject of chapter three, which begins with a helpful introduction of the sources of the canonical gospels. Finally, in chapter four the catholic letters and apocalyptic writings of the NT are treated.

Overall this short book suits its purposes. Its chief strength is its aim to introduce undergraduate students to the field of NT studies generally rather than the individual NT writings. In terms of weaknesses, occasionally the authors' own views come through too strongly for a work of introductory nature. For instance, Ephesians and Colossians are uncritically introduced as letters written by Timothy in Paul's name. Such a view surely fails to acquaint readers with the ongoing and heated debate within the NT guild on Pauline authorship. That said, the book is well-tailored to introduce debutants to elementary matters in the study of the NT.

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