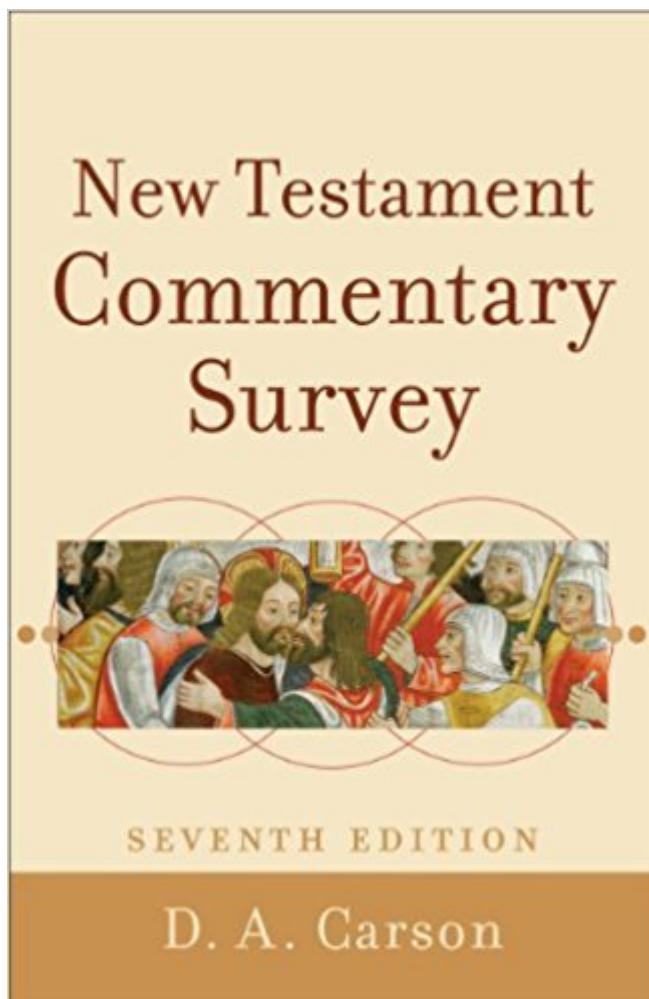


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# New Testament Commentary Survey



## **Synopsis**

Highly respected New Testament scholar D. A. Carson provides students and pastors with expert guidance on choosing a commentary for any book of the New Testament. The seventh edition has been updated to assess the most recently published commentaries. Carson examines sets, one-volume commentaries, and New Testament introductions and theologies, offering evaluative comments on the available offerings for each New Testament book. This is an essential guide to building a reference library.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I originally bought the 5th edition of this commentary survey (also written by Carson) for a class in my undergraduate days, and immediately found it to be a useful tool in my academic career. I felt it was necessary to update to the 7th edition this year in order to hear Carson's thoughts on some of the more recently published commentaries that I was considering using for my weekly

preaching. The purpose of this book is to help the reader sift through the enormous number of commentaries out there. Carson accomplishes this by introducing you to different commentary series quite exhaustively, ranging from more scholarly and academic works to more devotional works. Carson makes brief suggestions along the way as to the strengths and weaknesses of each series. Carson, as one might expect, definitely leans toward more scholarly commentaries as being helpful, and in several places implicitly criticizes the "poorly trained" pastor (his words). As a bonus, Carson also gives his thoughts on some other resources on the New Testament, including NT Theologies and Introductions. The section that I use most often makes up the bulk of Carson's material. I tend to preach through an entire book over the course of several months. Therefore, when I am preparing to begin a new book (most recently James), I consult Carson to see what different commentaries of James offer. I also frequently find Carson's recommendations to be helpful without feeling "judged" if I use a commentary he doesn't recommend. Further, although unabashedly evangelical, Carson still recommends many non-evangelical commentaries. He does frequently note and categorize individual commentaries as conservative, liberal and critical, which is helpful to a point. However, I do wish that Carson had either himself, or with help, better organized his thoughts on individual commentaries. For example, if you look at commentaries on Matthew, there is simply paragraph after paragraph of commentaries mentioned and briefly reviewed without much sense of why Carson is mentioning them in a particular order, or any idea of where to go to find Carson's highest recommendations. For this reason, it is not always a quick reference manual. On the other hand, Tremper Longman's 3rd edition of the corresponding Old Testament survey is neatly organized, but may fall into the trap of too neatly reviewing commentaries. Longman gives up to five stars to each commentary he reviews, and while quite readable and accessible, it becomes tempting to simply look for star ratings rather than evaluate how a commentary will fit your own needs. I greatly appreciate Carson's work in helping pastors weed through the many commentaries out there. My only complaint is that I wish his reviews were a bit better organized, and therefore more accessible.

Have you ever looked at the host of commentaries available on a particular book of the NT and wished you could ask a first-rate NT scholar what he thought about each of them? Most of us will never have that kind of direct access, but Carson's New Testament Commentary Survey comes pretty close. D. A. Carson is without question one of the most prolific and respected NT scholars of our day. His commentaries on Matthew and John are some of the best available and his forthcoming commentary on Revelation is highly anticipated. His work as the editor of the Pillar

New Testament Commentary series and the New Studies in Biblical Theology series have been of great service to the church. His books are too numerous to list and his influence tremendous (think Gospel Coalition). So if you could get his opinion on virtually any NT commentary in print (and many out of print), wouldn't that be worth your time? There are other commentary guides out there of course, but what makes this one unique among those I have seen is that it is written in a more narrative style. Rather than providing an annotated list, Carson writes in a more narrative style that makes it a pleasure to read (in fact, if you are a nerd like me you could read it more or less straight through). For each book (or group of books like 2 Peter and Jude) he usually mentions the top few commentaries in the first couple paragraphs, often noting how much Greek is necessary to use them, and then lists a plethora of other commentaries that are available. These are often evaluated based on whether they will be of any additional help to a pastor who already has one or two of the best commentaries on that book so that preachers don't waste money on commentaries that largely repeat the same points made by others. What makes Carson's Survey so valuable is his willingness to be direct about the relative worth of each commentary. Many are dismissed as "not worth the reader" as time goes on or as "too brief to be of any real help" while others are said to be "worth picking up second hand." If Carson thinks a commentary is "overrated" or "sadly overlooked," he says so. When a normally excellent commentator lays a bad egg Carson notes that too. Imagine standing in a book store with Carson and saying "what about that one?" and getting a pithy one or two sentence response about the book's merit or demerit. That is what this book is full of. And that is why this book deserves a place on every pastor's shelf. Are you really going to decide whether to spend \$40 on a commentary based on internet book reviews written by people you don't know (like me) without finding out what D. A. Carson thinks? I wouldn't.

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