

Kittel's Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament

Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: An Indispensable Resource for Biblical Scholarship

The study of the New Testament is a rich and complex undertaking, requiring deep engagement with the original Greek text and its historical context. For scholars and students alike, a crucial tool for navigating this landscape is *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), a monumental work that provides in-depth analysis of key words and their theological significance. This article explores the history, benefits, usage, and enduring legacy of this invaluable resource, addressing key aspects like its **lexicographical approach**, its contribution to **New Testament theology**, and its ongoing relevance in **biblical studies**.

Introduction: A Monumental Work of Biblical Scholarship

First published in German in 1933 as *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* is a multi-volume compendium of articles devoted to analyzing individual Greek words found in the New Testament. Edited initially by Gerhard Kittel and later by Gerhard Friedrich, and subsequently by a team of leading biblical scholars, the dictionary represents a landmark achievement in theological lexicography. Its impact on biblical studies is undeniable, shaping the way scholars approach and understand the nuances of the New Testament text.

Benefits and Value of the TDNT

The TDNT offers several key benefits that have cemented its place as a cornerstone of New Testament scholarship:

- **Comprehensive Coverage:** The dictionary tackles a vast number of Greek words, exploring their usage across the New Testament canon, along with relevant extra-biblical literature such as the Septuagint (the Greek translation

of the Hebrew Bible). This breadth of coverage provides a holistic view of word meaning and development.

- **In-Depth Theological Analysis:** Unlike simple lexicons, the TDNT delves into the theological implications of each word, examining its usage within specific contexts and tracing its evolution throughout history. This theological depth sets it apart from other lexical resources.
- **Historical Contextualization:** Each entry provides rich historical context, drawing upon relevant archaeological, linguistic, and literary sources to illuminate the word's meaning within its original setting. Understanding the historical context is vital for accurately interpreting the biblical text.
- **Expert Contributions:** The TDNT boasts contributions from a stellar cast of leading New Testament scholars, each bringing their expertise to bear on their assigned words. This collective wisdom ensures a high level of scholarship and rigorous analysis.
- **Enhanced Understanding of the New Testament:** By providing deep insight into the vocabulary of the New Testament, the TDNT enhances understanding of the theological message and overall literary artistry.

Using Kittel's Theological Dictionary Effectively: Practical Strategies

While a monumental work, the TDNT can be effectively used by both seasoned scholars and students. Here are some strategies for effective use:

- **Start with a specific word or concept:** Don't try to read the TDNT cover-to-cover. Begin with a particular word that sparks your interest or is central to your study.
- **Consider the historical context:** Pay close attention to the historical and linguistic context presented in each entry. This is crucial for a nuanced understanding.
- **Compare different entries:** The TDNT might address a single word across multiple entries; cross-referencing these allows for a more complete picture.
- **Utilize the indexes:** The extensive indexes provided in the TDNT are invaluable for finding specific words and topics of interest.
- **Integrate with other resources:** Use the TDNT in conjunction with other biblical commentaries, lexicons, and theological works to gain a broader perspective.

The TDNT's Enduring Legacy and Future Implications

Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament continues to be a vital resource for biblical scholarship, shaping current research and inspiring new avenues of inquiry. Its enduring relevance lies in its:

- **Rigorous scholarship:** The quality of its research and analysis remains unsurpassed, establishing a standard for theological lexicography.
- **Influence on subsequent scholarship:** It has profoundly influenced generations of biblical scholars, shaping methodologies and interpretations.
- **Ongoing relevance:** Despite being a work of mid-20th-century scholarship, the TDNT's insights remain remarkably relevant to contemporary issues in biblical interpretation.

Conclusion: A Timeless Resource for Biblical Scholars

Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament is far more than just a lexicon; it is a powerful tool that empowers scholars to engage deeply with the text and theology of the New Testament. Its meticulous scholarship, comprehensive coverage, and profound theological insights make it an indispensable resource for anyone seriously studying the Bible. While other dictionaries and commentaries exist, the TDNT remains a unique and highly valuable contribution to the field, offering a depth and breadth of analysis that few others can match. Its legacy extends far beyond the pages of its volumes, shaping how generations of scholars understand and interpret the New Testament.

FAQ: Addressing Common Questions about the TDNT

Q1: Is the TDNT only for advanced scholars?

A1: While the TDNT's depth requires some familiarity with biblical Greek and theological concepts, it's not exclusively for advanced scholars. Diligent students with a strong biblical foundation can effectively use it to enhance their understanding. Start with specific words relevant to your studies and utilize the provided context and explanations.

Q2: Are there online versions or digital access available for the TDNT?

A2: While a complete online version may not be freely available, some digital library subscriptions provide access to the TDNT's content. Additionally, some sections or articles might be accessible through online academic databases. Check with your local university library or other scholarly resources.

Q3: How does the TDNT compare to other New Testament lexicons?

A3: Unlike simpler lexicons that primarily define words, the TDNT emphasizes theological analysis and historical context. It provides a far richer and more detailed understanding of the word's meaning within its specific biblical context, making it more than just a vocabulary tool.

Q4: Are there any criticisms or limitations of the TDNT?

A4: Some scholars criticize its occasional theological biases, reflecting the historical context of its creation. Also, some entries might be outdated due to ongoing scholarly developments. However, its overall value and influence remain largely uncontested.

Q5: What are some alternative resources for studying New Testament vocabulary?

A5: Several excellent New Testament lexicons and dictionaries exist, including the *Bauer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* and the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. These provide different perspectives and approaches, and often work well in tandem with the TDNT.

Q6: How can I find specific entries within the TDNT?

A6: The TDNT includes detailed indexes, both in the printed versions and often in online databases. These indexes allow you to search for words or concepts directly. Understanding the Greek word you're seeking is essential for efficient searching.

Q7: What's the best way to integrate the TDNT into my biblical studies?

A7: Don't approach it as a cover-to-cover read! Instead, focus on specific words relevant to your studies. Use it to augment your understanding of other commentaries and biblical texts. Always consider the historical context provided.

Q8: Is the TDNT still relevant to contemporary biblical scholarship?

A8: Absolutely. Although published decades ago, the TDNT's rigorous scholarship and in-depth theological analysis remain incredibly relevant. While newer scholarship builds upon and sometimes refines its findings, the TDNT continues to

serve as a foundational resource for interpreting the New Testament.

Delving into the Depths: Exploring Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) stands as a monumental achievement in Biblical scholarship. This extensive work, initially conceived by Gerhard Kittel, continues to be an indispensable resource for anyone deeply engaged in exploring the New Testament. This article will delve into its significance, structure, and perpetual legacy within the realm of New Testament studies.

The TDNT's primary goal is to furnish a complete study of the vocabulary of the New Testament, contextualizing each word within its social and linguistic setting. It's not simply a dictionary in the traditional sense; it's a theological analysis of the import and progression of key notions within the New Testament. Each entry dives into the subtleties of a given word, following its employment across the various New Testament books and comparing it to its occurrence in ancient Greek literature.

The scope of the TDNT is impressive. The initial German edition, completed over decades, comprises several volumes, each packed with dense scholarship. The English version, undertaken by leading scholars, retains the precision and profoundness of the original. This availability in English has made the TDNT accessible to a larger readership.

One of the benefits of the TDNT is its multidisciplinary approach. Entries are not merely philological exercises; they engage historical data to illuminate the context of the text. For instance, an entry on a word relating to "temple" might reference upon epigraphic findings to describe the structural layout of the temple in Jerusalem, shedding illumination on its religious significance. This intertwining of various disciplines is what lifts the TDNT beyond a simple dictionary.

Furthermore, the TDNT's influence on biblical scholarship has been profound. It has molded the understanding of countless passages, offering scholars with a solid basis for their analyses. Its influence can be seen in countless papers and commentaries on the New Testament, illustrating its extensive impact on the field. Its comprehensive methodology has become a model for other analogous lexicographical projects.

The TDNT, however, isn't without its opponents. Some claim that its interpretive inclinations are too apparent, potentially shaping the analyses presented. Others note to the outmoded nature of some of the material, demanding reference of more contemporary scholarly work. Nevertheless, its significance as a cornerstone tool

remains undisputed.

In conclusion, Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament embodies a significant contribution in biblical scholarship. Its comprehensive scope, interdisciplinary method, and perpetual effect have secured its place as an indispensable tool for students and scholars alike. While critiques exist, its continuing significance remains unrivaled. Its use requires critical engagement, acknowledging its historical context, but its influence to New Testament studies remains priceless.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. Is the TDNT suitable for beginners? While the TDNT is a potent resource, its specialized nature makes it more suitable for intermediate or advanced students. Beginners may find it challenging to navigate.

2. What are the key differences between the German and English editions? The English edition is a rendering of the German original. While the matter is largely the same, there are unavoidable variations in interpretation and wording.

3. Are there online resources related to the TDNT? While a complete online version doesn't exist, some entries might be available online through research databases. Many libraries also provide access to the printed editions.

4. How can I effectively use the TDNT in my research? Begin with the index, and then thoroughly read the chosen entry. Pay attention to the historical background and cross-references to other sections. Contrast the information to other scholarly resources.

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