

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 religious scholarship. This enormous work, initially conceived by Gerhard Kittel, continues to be an indispensable reference for anyone seriously engaged in investigating the New Testament. This article will examine its significance, structure, and enduring legacy within the discipline of New Testament studies.

The TDNT's chief objective is to provide a thorough study of the lexicon of the New Testament, situating each word within its historical and rhetorical context. It's not simply a dictionary in the usual sense; it's an exegetical exploration of the meaning and progression of key notions within the New Testament. Each entry plunges into the complexities of a given word, tracking its employment across the various New Testament books and comparing it to its usage in historical Greek literature.

The scale of the TDNT is astonishing. The first German edition, completed over many years, comprises numerous volumes,

each brimming with thorough scholarship. The English translation, undertaken by renowned scholars, maintains the accuracy and insightfulness of the original. This accessibility in English has made the TDNT available to a wider readership.

One of the advantages of the TDNT is its holistic perspective. Entries are not simply philological exercises; they consider archaeological information to explain the setting of the writing. For instance, an entry on a word relating to "temple" might reference upon historical findings to explain the structural layout of the temple in Jerusalem, casting clarity on its social meaning. This interconnectedness of various disciplines is what raises the TDNT beyond a basic dictionary.

Furthermore, the TDNT's impact on biblical study has been significant. It has molded the understanding of countless passages, supplying scholars with a firm basis for their analyses. Its influence can be seen in countless books and interpretations on the New Testament, showing its widespread effect on the field. Its comprehensive methodology has become a model for other comparable reference undertakings.

The TDNT, however, isn't without its opponents. Some argue that its exegetical biases are too pronounced, potentially influencing the interpretations presented. Others note to the aging nature of some of the data, requiring consideration of more recent scholarly research. Nevertheless, its worth as a historical tool remains undisputed.

In conclusion, Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament embodies a significant feat in biblical scholarship. Its extensive breadth, multidisciplinary method, and perpetual influence have secured its place as an indispensable tool for students and scholars similarly. While critiques exist, its enduring importance remains undiminished. Its employment requires critical engagement, understanding its historical setting, but its impact to New Testament studies remains inestimable.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

- 1. Is the TDNT suitable for beginners?** While the TDNT is a powerful reference, 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 discrepancies in rendering and wording.
- 3. Are there online resources related to the TDNT?** While a complete online version doesn't exist, some sections might

be available online through research databases. Many libraries also provide availability to the printed sets.

4. How can I effectively use the TDNT in my research? Begin with the index, and then thoroughly read the chosen article. Pay attention to the linguistic setting and cross-references to other articles. Compare the information to other scholarly resources.

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