

Recommended resources on biblical history and culture

Can you recommend any books on biblical history? I would like to supplement my understanding of the of the courses "Life of Christ" and "Missionary Journeys of St. Paul" with more on the history and culture of Israel, the early Church, and surrounding peoples.

I'm not sure how in-depth of a treatment of the subject you're looking for. But one of the finest resources for the world of first-century Judaism and Christ's interaction within that setting is N.T. Wright's [*New Testament and the People of God*](#) (the second half, not the first).

Two additional considerations. First, the Church warmly recommends the type of study you're interested in pursuing. One caution, based on the experience of recent decades, is to be leery of texts that exaggerate what is generally known as "literal-historical criticism." Such criticism, when done with the mind of the Church, contributes greatly to our understanding. When exaggerated, it takes a more agnostic approach that sows seeds of doubt into the reliability of the Word of God--Scripture and sacred Tradition.

Second, many study Bibles or Bible commentaries provide a good deal of background information of the kind you're looking for. In that regard, we'd heartily recommend the [Ignatius Catholic Study Bibles](#), published by Ignatius Press, though there are others.