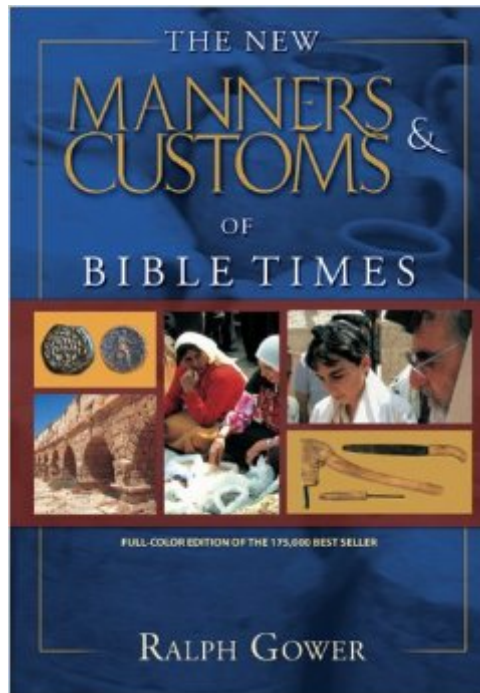


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# The New Manners & Customs Of Bible Times



## Synopsis

We know that John the Baptist ate locusts, but were they insects or sweet beans? Why did a fish swallow a coin that Jesus later used to pay the temple tax? How could walking beside a donkey have made Joseph a laughingstock? Good handling of biblical passages demands a working knowledge of the historical and cultural context in which they were written. This bestselling reference book contains colorful photography, artwork, maps, diagrams, and charts to lend knowledge of context. Additionally, there are Scripture and topical indexes for quick fact-checking. Students and teachers of the Bible will benefit from and be fascinated by the helpful features of *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Let me give my reservations first: 1. The book has no bibliography and no notes at all. This means that when the author says, for instance, that the "synagogue itself seems to have come into existence during the Exile", he gives you absolutely no way to evaluate what "seems to" means. Probably? Almost certainly? The preponderance of scholarly opinion? Does "seems to" mean that the institution might pre-date the Exile, or be more recent? No way to tell, and you're completely on your own for follow-up research. 2. The author often gives one explanation for a phenomenon without explaining that there are others. For example, the author states, without qualification, that "Maccabeus means 'the hammer'". He neglects to explain that "hammer" is only one explanation for Judah the Maccabee's famously cryptic epithet. It might mean the "commander", or be a family name, or a statement of the uniqueness of God, or (my favorite) maybe it's better translated as

"hammerhead" -- Israel describes most of its heroes as physically beautiful, but, strikingly, not Judah. Maybe he was an ugly cuss. Again, as there are no notes, you have no way to do further research on your own.<sup>3</sup> I don't know about the author's frequent use of the very broad term "Bible times." The impression the book gives is that most of the cultural institutions it describes were identical for thousands of years (and may still exist among, for instance, the Bedouin), with the exception of the rule of the Romans. Maybe this is true, but the phrase "Bible times" makes me a bit nervous. Nevertheless, I recommend this book. Its many wonderful advantages include the following:<sup>1</sup>. Profuse illustration.

I must rate this book 3 stars for two reasons.<sup>1</sup> As noted by another reviewer, the book has no bibliography and makes no references to any other text besides the Bible.<sup>2</sup> The author frequently slips in his own theology and views, often blatantly wrong. This book describes the "manners and customs" of the Bible times, and as such is a work of history and should include some references to sources. There are frequent references to Bible passages pertaining to the topic being discussed. However, more often than not, the book is offering no additional information or insights than could be obtained from reading that passage in the Bible. This indicates to me that there may have been limited use of archaeological data and non-Biblical texts. This lack of sources prevents the reader from verifying claims made by the author. In the words of Philip Schaff "Every historian rests on the shoulders of his predecessors." and "Only he should always carefully indicate his authorities and verify facts, dates, and quotations. A want of accuracy is fatal to the reputation of a historical work." Worse than a lack of sources for this work is the erroneous theology of the author that he inserts, often without even indicating when the "truth" he presents is controversial and other views exist. Even worse, is when he attempts explain away a miracle in ways that are ridiculous. For example, the author uses 2 Kings 2:19-22 to support his claim that salt was believed to have healing properties. Take a moment and read those verses and ask yourself; did they throw salt in the spring because they thought it would purify the water? No! A better explanation is that the use of salt, which would normally ruin the spring, was proof that God worked a miracle.

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