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Kaminsky, Lohr, and Reasoner's "The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible: Understanding Jewish and Christian Scriptures" (Book Review)

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Book Reviews



50 Things You Need to Know About Heaven,

by Dr. John Hart. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 137 pp.
\$9.99. ISBN 9780764211669

Reviewed by Amy Bessin, Instructional Services Librarian, Asbury University, Wilmore, KY

Dr. John Hart's *50 Things You Need to Know About Heaven* provides a broad overview of a topic that is often shrouded in mystery. The book is laid out in a user-friendly format with each chapter devoted to answering a single question about heaven. Because the table of contents lists each question, the reader can easily go to a specific topic of interest rather than having to read the book cover to cover to find information on a specific topic. The book is written in an approachable style, which makes it relatively easy to understand even for someone who might not be a theological scholar.

The extensive nature of the book (covering 50 unique questions) means that a wide variety of questions are covered, but also that each question has to be answered fairly simplistically. The answers presented in *50 Things You Need to Know about Heaven* are based on Scripture and each chapter provides the reader with additional Scriptures to read if further study on the topic is desired. This text would be a good addition to a library with readers who are personally searching biblical truths or readers who are relatively new to the study of theology.

The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible: Understanding Jewish and Christian Scriptures,

by J.S. Kaminsky, J. N. Lohr, and M. Reasoner. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014.
366 pp. \$39.99. ISBN 9781426751073

*Reviewed by Brian W. Holda, Web Development & Instructional Librarian,
Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, MI*

Although I am no Bible scholar, I am a researcher and Bible student, as well as one who loves God and His Word as best as I know how. As such, I assess that *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible* significantly fails to live up to its title, and should not be recommended.

Though this work has some praises, such as valuable biblical insights, conciseness, consistent organization, and readability, my primary objection is with its frustratingly low view of Scripture. For instance, the biblical text is variously described as “mythic” (p. 56), “legend” (p. 65, p. 94), “not strict fact” (p. 102), “a fictional story” (p. 155), “a fictional construct” (p. 194), “inaccurate” (p. 226), “false” (p. 228), “sometimes contradictory” (p. 233), “less interested in the hard facts” (p. 295), etc. In fact, in my analysis, 47 of the Bible’s 66 books (71%) have their historical and/or doctrinal claims questioned, or (many times) outright denounced. Genesis 1-11 is even compared to *Little Red Riding Hood*, because, the authors allege, it lacks historical and scientific trustworthiness (p. 56).

The authors’ conclusions are largely based on various scholarly trends and arguments. However, the astute reader should quickly realize that strong counter-arguments and reasonable biblical interpretations by other scholars were either overlooked or ignored by the authors. Further, as C. S. Lewis has argued, even if the authors’ viewpoints are shared by the majority of their colleagues, this does not ensure their correctness, for the vast majority of Lewis’ contemporary literary scholars wrongly identified the origins and intent behind his own writings, and that while living in the same culture and speaking the same language – two privileges that modern Bible scholars do not share with the authors they study.

For the Christian reader, however, a simple consideration of Jesus’ own beliefs should settle the matter. Consider that Jesus saw the Scriptures as God’s Word (Matt. 4:4; 19:4-5; Mark 12:35-37; John 10:34-35; etc.), and as “truth” (John 17:17) that “cannot be broken” (John 10:35). To Him, the Bible’s authority extended to the smallest written marks (Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 16:17), the Old Testament – including Genesis 1-11 – recorded straightforward history (Luke 11:51; 17:26-27; etc.), and the Scriptures were to be read and believed (Matt. 22:29-31), even when traditions and contemporary scholars said otherwise (Mark 7:1-13). Sadly, *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible* rejects such notions. Therefore, the Christian librarian should direct students to more faithful and humble appraisals of God’s Word than this work.

Acts: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible,

by Jaroslav Pelikan. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005. 320 pp. \$26.00.
ISBN 9781587433542

*Reviewed by Dennis Ingolfsland, Director of Library Services/Professor of Bible,
Crown College, St. Bonifacius, MN*

The introduction to *Brazos Theological Commentary* on Acts says that commentators were chosen not because they were biblical scholars with historical or philological