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Walton's "Old Testament theology for Christians: From ancient context to enduring belief"

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Book Reviews



Walton, J. H. (2017). *Old Testament theology for Christians: From ancient context to enduring belief*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. 320 pp. \$30.00. ISBN 9780830851928.

This book provides an overview of the theology of the Old Testament within the context of the ancient world. It is written from a confessional perspective and with a Christian audience in mind. Walton urges readers to study the Old Testament with an ancient Near Eastern audience in mind, rather than only reading it through the lens of the New Testament. He begins with the premise that while the Old Testament is still for us today, it was not written to us. Consequently, heavy emphasis is placed on understanding the ancient context, intention of the ancient writers, and the message to the original audience (which may differ from a contemporary understanding of the text). It is the responsibility of contemporary readers to do careful exegesis and research on the ancient context of the Old Testament.

A central theme of the Old Testament, as presented by Walton, is “God’s intention to dwell among his people and to be in relationship with them,” (p. 7). This foundational theme runs through the entire Old Testament and is addressed in Walton’s book through the eight chapters. These chapters include: introduction and foundations, Yahweh and the gods, cosmos and humanity, covenant and humanity, covenant and kingdom, temple and Torah, sin and evil, salvation and afterlife, and conclusions.

One strength of this book is Walton’s blending of cognate ancient Near Eastern literature and Scripture for a theological understanding of the Old Testament that is deeply rooted in original historical and cultural context. He is sensitive that we not simply impose a Western-Christian perspective only the Old Testament or the ancient world. One minor critique is the lack of bibliography and suggestions for further reading of secondary sources, although this seems to be an intentional decision of the author.

The book is highly recommended for theological libraries and will be a valuable tool for undergraduate and beginning graduate students seeking an accessible, yet substantial overview of the theological significance of the Old Testament. Likewise, professors of the Old Testament may find this book a useful resource in addition to textbooks to use in the classroom.

Reviewer

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