

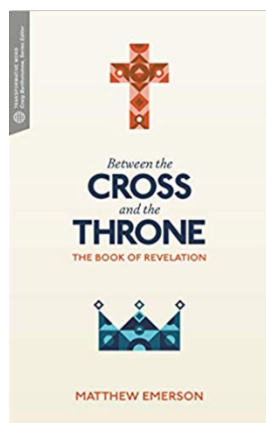
From Readers Like You

Book Reviews — 2019 Compilation

The following book reviews are provided by faithful brethren who enjoy studying God's Word and learning more of His will. Each brother was selected and asked to provide a brief review of one of their favorite reads from 2019. Each review highlights a positive aspect of a particular book, but is not a full endorsement of all material contained within the book. Since the Bible is the only book on earth that inspired and free of errors, one should always read cautiously all works of man – including the books set before you in this review.

Between the Cross and the Throne

By Matthew Emerson



Recently the congregation here in Grapevine, TX embarked upon a chapter study of the Book of Revelation. One book that prevented against running aground on the confusion and disinformation surrounding the Apocalypse written by John was *Between the Cross and the Throne* by Matthew Y. Emerson. Just under 80 pages, the book is at the exact of concise and insightful, an ideal introduction for Christians who are unfamiliar with the final book of the Bible (as I was). *Between the Cross and the Throne* leaves the reader thinking, “it’s possible for me to understand Revelation, after all!” The book’s title comes from the general view it takes on the thousand-year reign of Christ from Revelation chapter 20. Namely, the Amillennial view that Christ is reigning now as king at the right hand of God. This is in opposition to the popular view that Jesus will set up a kingdom on the earth to rule for 1,000 years upon His return. The author’s view of the millennium precludes most methods of interpreting the Book of Revelation, as well, but he does not spend precious pages on detailing all their differences or refuting them. Instead, he focuses on helping the reader understand the Book of Revelation, itself, by explaining how genre, apocalyptic imagery, the use of numbers, and recapitulation as a literary device all factor into interpreting Revelation correctly. Further, *Between the Cross and the Throne* uses connections between Revelation and the Old Testament prophets to resist the modern “prophecy watch” mentality that feels so much like reading tea leaves. Gain a big picture view of the Book of Revelation with this helpful introductory book.

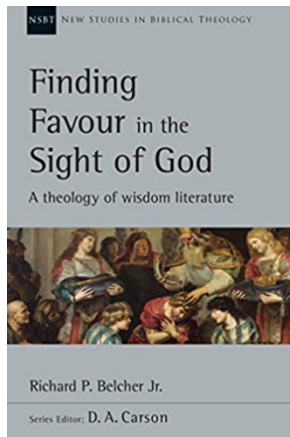
- Eric Reiser

Matthew Y. Emerson's *Between the Cross and the Throne* may have been the best book I read this year for one specific reason: it had more potency than all the others. Emerson's book is full of substantial content without being so dense or lengthy the reader can't sift through it all. It's been said that after reading Emerson's gives you have a real confidence that the Revelation can be understood, and I can't help but agree. What other books may struggle to portray in several chapters Emerson is able to plainly state in less than 100 pages. *Between the Cross and the Throne* is a succinct yet substantial work able to introduce anyone to this critical portion of God's sacred words.

-Cody Stone

Finding Favor in the Sight of God

By Richard P. Belcher Jr.



One of the best books that I read in 2019 was *Finding Favor in the Sight of God* by Richard P. Belcher Jr, which is a part of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. Its subtitle is “A theology of wisdom literature”, which means that it attempts to explain what the authors of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes intended to teach their readers and how that relates to the wider biblical narrative. As such it's written in a scholarly style. Belcher introduces the book by pointing out the difficulties of interpreting wisdom literature in light of the rest of the Old Testament since it doesn't deal much with covenants, salvation, or the activity of God in human history. Belcher continues by showing not just how to read each of the three wisdom books, but also how they fit into the biblical canon and add to our understanding of God and His plan for us.

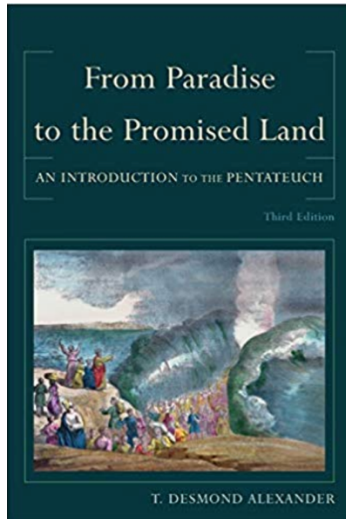
He then concludes with the best chapter in the book, “Jesus and Wisdom”, where he explores how wisdom literature points towards Jesus and His mission. The main downside to the book is that Belcher takes what, in my opinion, is the wrong view of Ecclesiastes. He believes that it is primarily an injunction by a later editor to not reason like the Preacher (traditionally Solomon), but rather to keep our perspective on God and His eternal plan. To my mind, these chapters have limited use and I would instead recommend Brother Ron Courter's booklet, *Unlocking Ecclesiastes* for study in that particular book. With that being said, I found the book very helpful in understanding God's purpose for writing wisdom literature in general and Proverbs and Job in particular.

Overall, I would rate the book a 8/10 with a reading difficulty of 7/10.

- Jamie Thomson

From Paradise to the Promised Land

By T. Desmond Alexander



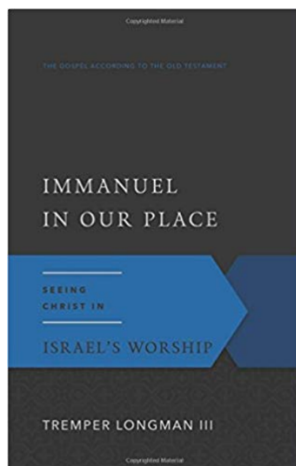
The book I enjoyed the most this year was *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* by T. Desmond Alexander. Before I read this book, I had not dedicated any time in truly studying the Pentateuch, so the author introduced many concepts I would have never thought of when casually reading these first five books of the Bible. Alexander takes a lot of time setting up the structural aspect of the Pentateuch and shows how they set the foundation not only for the Old Testament, but also the New Testament. For me, as a local teacher, he gives you a format that you could follow to teaching each book at a higher level without getting discouraged or bogged down into the weeds. He shows how each book weaves together, connecting the major story lines, showing the seriousness of sin, the love of God, and the hope of entering into

a covenant relationship with God. As you read the book, you need to keep in mind the author's Reformed background. If you have never studied the Pentateuch or the Old Testament, this book will motivate you to dig deeper into a deeper study.

— Derek Nichols

Immanuel In Our Place

By Tremper Longman III

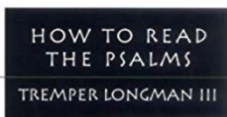


If forced to choose just one book as a favorite from 2019, I would say I really enjoyed reading *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ Through Israel's Worship* by Tremper Longman, III. It was a fun read for me. *Immanuel In Our Place* is a theology of how we should see Christ in Israel's worship and how He became its fulfillment. Because of this book, I have a much greater appreciation for Israel's worship, and I understand it much better than I did before. To me that is worth the price of the book. As a disclaimer, I disagree with Mr. Longman in many ways, but he also has some very excellent points.

– Jason Ellis

How to Read the Psalms

By Tremper Longman III



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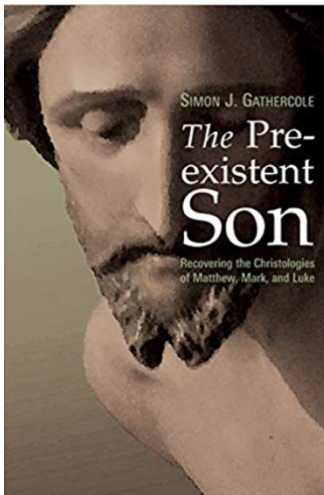
Tremper Longman III's How to Read the Psalms showed me that I was only reading and using the Psalter at a surface level. I've since used Longman's material several times to prepare expository sermons focused on the Psalms. It's a short read but packed full of insight that will bring one to a greater appreciation of this book that sits at the heart of the Old Testament. Longman delivers his content in three parts: *The Psalms Then and Now*, *The Art of the Psalms*, and *A Melody of Psalms*. The first part is a deep dive into this literature's Hebrew history, which introduces how we might use the psalms in modern times. In the second part, Longman breaks down some of the literary devices used within the psalms, explaining why this analysis should hold significance in our understanding of what we read. In the last part, three exegetical

sermons are presented from individual psalms to provide a practical example of how to synthesize all of this information. In conclusion to an empowering chapter on the Psalms as a mirror of the human soul, Tremper writes, "Our intellect is informed, our emotions are refined, and our wills are directed. What further motivation do we need to spend time reading and meditating on the Psalms?" (Longman 85). To that I say, amen!

- Noah Martin

The Pre-Existent Son

By Simon Gathercole



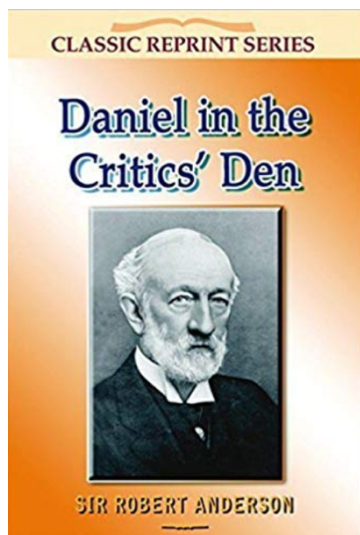
Although I don't know if it's the best book I read, when asked to write a review of my favorite book from 2019 I immediately thought of *The Preexistent Son* by Simon Gathercole. I first learned about this book from Smith Bibens last summer. The book deals with the widely held view among theologians that the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) do not teach the preexistence of Jesus. This means that, unlike John, the synoptic gospels do not teach that Jesus existed before He was born. The lack of teaching on this subject in these three gospels is considered proof that the gospel of John teaches a different kind of Jesus than the synoptic gospels do. Gathercole thoroughly refutes this view. He argues that the synoptic gospels teach the preexistence of Jesus implicitly where John teaches this doctrine explicitly. This is not light reading, but I found it beneficial. I find that

books like this can help us to more fully appreciate the beautiful harmony that exists among the four gospels.

- Matt Trent

Daniel in the Critics' Den

By Sir Robert Anderson



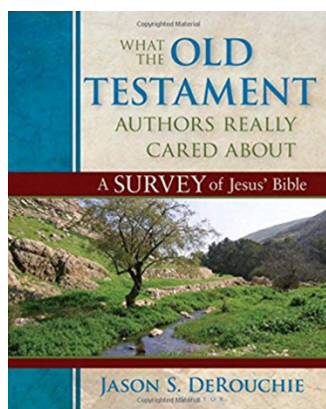
Daniel in the Critics' Den, by Sir Robert Anderson, 3rd edition published in 1909, is a well written early defense of the book of Daniel against the destructive criticism developed in the 19th century. Anderson, a criminal investigator, argues that the experts who question Daniel's authenticity belong in the witness chair, not as judge. He proceeds to examine their position, showing the flaws in their arguments and turning questions back on them, showing that if you accept critical assumptions you have even more difficult questions to answer than when accepting a traditional date. He also shows that biases in these experts often had more impact in their conclusions than did the evidence, stating, "It was the miraculous element in the book that set the whole pack of foreign skeptics in full cry."

Two caveats: First, Anderson's section on the seventy weeks is suspect. Second, being over 100 years since published and being a shorter work, not all arguments are fully developed. For a thorough examination, with extensive quotes on both sides, see Josh McDowell's more recent work with the same title.

— Ethan Wall

What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About

Edited By Jason DeRouchie



What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About is an invaluable and accessible resource for any serious student of the Bible. DeRouchie's book is well constructed with lots of helpful charts to supplement clear, yet concise overviews of each book of the Hebrew Old Testament in the arrangement that Jesus used. While some chapters are undoubtedly better than others, the book is full of strong material that enables the reader to obtain a better understanding of the big picture of the Bible and how each Old Testament book fits into that picture. This book has given me a much better grasp of the Bible that Jesus taught from, and of Jesus' teachings in turn.

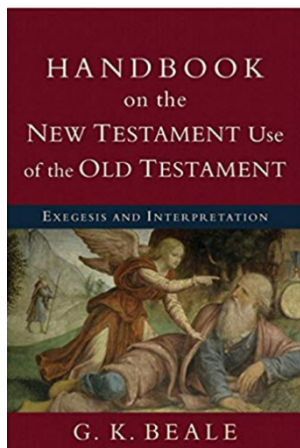
- Aubrey Smith

"What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About, provides its reader with a good summary of the books of the Old Testament, showing a unified message across all the books of the Old Law. The book focuses on key moments throughout each book which highlight God's rule and authority coupled with proclaiming the coming Messiah. DeRouchie writes a book that is well organized, easy to read, and does a good job showing how the New Testament unveils many things which were veiled under the Old Law. Unfortunately, within his writings DeRouchie has sprinkled in false doctrines such as "Original Sin" and "Imputed Righteousness" which the reader needs to be mindful of if he chooses to read this book."

- Aaron Boone

Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament

By G. K. Beale



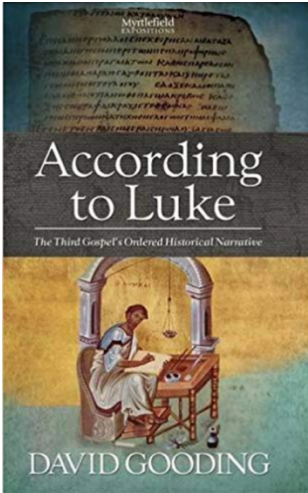
It is helpful to understand the perspective of the original recipients of the scriptures. One valuable perspective they had was their knowledge of the Old Testament. Most of them had a much better working knowledge of it than our generation. Jesus and the N.T. writers often communicated their messages with links and references to the O.T. through subtle and not so subtle connections that often need to be carefully considered before appreciated. This method of study is one of G.K. Beale's specialties. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson edited a "Commentary on the N.T. Use of the O.T.". The handbook serves as a primer for the commentary. In it, Beale describes an effective 9 step approach for interpreting the N.T. use of the O.T.

There are several things I appreciate about this Handbook. The first is the obvious high regard that Beale has for the scriptures. He answers objections from doubts in prophesy directly. His approach to interpretation is founded on his confidence in the bible's inspiration. Secondly, I was both comforted and impressed with his teaching on Typological Fulfillment. I believe it to be a valid option for some prophecies which, on the surface, seem to point to two different fulfillments. Thirdly, as silly as it sounds, this book gave me a needed reminder to both slow down and pay better attention to my bible margins. Often, it leads to a greater understanding of the overall meaning. Fourthly, I found his emphasis on the O.T. context (point 3 of 9) useful in gaining knowledge of the connection. Finally, this handbook wets the appetite for the application made in the "Commentary on the N.T. Use of the O.T.". With enough time and resources, you too can find these references. The commentary, however, does the legwork for you. Their citations provide an opportunity for further exploration and checking. You may not agree with every single allusion cited, but you can respect the approach taken. I would recommend reading this handbook, and then approaching the Commentary.

- Eric Cox

According to Luke

By David Gooding



Hands down the best book I read in 2019 was David Gooding's "According to Luke." I've never fully appreciated the book of Luke and its well-crafted narrative. It also gave me greater appreciation for Luke's work in recording historical moments in Christ's life — pre- and post-birth. The timelines Gooding provides helps the book explain to the reader why Christ did what He did at the precise moments He did them and why they had to occur. His writing style is easy to follow but provides sincere meat for one to consider. I've never read a narrative commentary prior to Gooding's, but I now feel it's required for me to do so before preparing expository studies of any book should a narrative commentary be available for it.

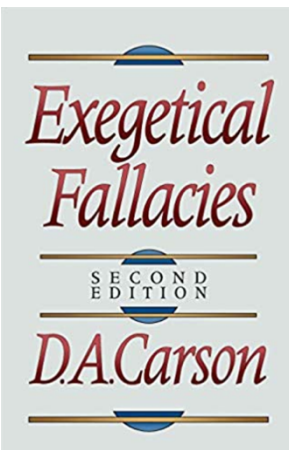
- **Drew Maudlin**

According to Luke is an enlightening read on many levels and serves as an ideal model for how narrative commentaries should be written. If you have never read a narrative commentary, the benefits of narrative analysis are tremendous and Gooding's exposition of Luke is an excellent place to experience those benefits for the first time. Gooding is a world-class story teller and his commentary flows beautifully while tackling large chunks of scripture at a time. The greatest strength of Gooding's work is the structural breakdown of Luke's gospel into two halves and nine stages in which each story plays an essential role to the overall message of the Gospel. The result is a unified view of Luke's purpose of writing and a greater appreciation of Gospel as a whole. Luke has given us an intentional portrait of Christ and Gooding helps equip the reader to better appreciate Luke's masterpiece. Of all the books I read in 2019, According to Luke excels them all.

- **Nathan Battey**

Exegetical Fallacies

By D. A. Carson

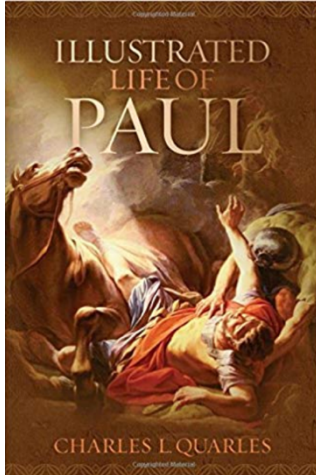


Out of the books I have read in 2019, Exegetical Fallacies, by D.A. Carson, is my recommendation. Bible readers can undoubtedly profit from Carson's presentation of typical and common errors in biblical interpretation. Among these are errors involved in word studies, grammar, logic, presupposition, and more. Diligent Bible students will find this a very useful aid in their studies.

- **A. K. Rickardson**

Illustrated Life of Paul

By Charles L. Quarles

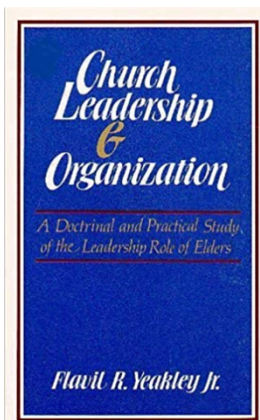


If I were forced to choose but one book this year that has lived with me long after I closed it, I'd be forced to say *The Illustrated Life of Paul* by Charles Quarles. Quarles' writing is easy to follow and he succeeds at making the world of Paul come alive. The account of Paul's travels in the book of Acts are familiar to me, but with Quarles as a guide, I was able to follow along on a familiar journey with fresh eyes. Quarles also touches on each epistle written by Paul at the appropriate place in his life. One could feasibly follow along in the book of Acts as they go through Quarles' book and then read the epistles as they were written in order to proceed chronologically through the life of Paul. For brevity's sake, the high points are the historical and cultural background of places such as Ephesus, Athens, and Corinth. Quarles' depictions of a Roman prison cell are also chilling. I haven't read 2 Timothy the same way since. As for the lows, Quarles does come from a Reformed background, so there is some Calvinism sprinkled in, though the occasions are rare enough and brief. Overall a great read and one I'll likely revisit.

- -Jeremy Hykel

Church Leadership and Organization

By Flavil R. Yeakley Jr.



Church Leadership & Organization is the best book I have read on the subject of church eldership. Many of the principles taught therein are general leadership principles, but in the process Yeakley weaves in teachings and texts about eldership that might leave the reader unaware when the subject changes from leadership in general to eldership specifically. This natural flow of writing is comfortable and provides for an easy reading most of the time. There are occasions where he gives heavy exposition of key verses when necessary, and the book at that moment becomes more of a textbook, but those sections are in the minority.

Yeakley has two strengths: The first is his insight of the elder's operation, and the second his accurate, though brief explanation of various scriptures pertaining to eldership. Yeakley effectively explains how "faithful children" qualified by Paul in the book of Titus necessarily includes a man with only one child. He specifically addresses other frequently asked questions surrounding the topic of qualifications and functions of the eldership.

My final assessment of the book is 9/10. Occasionally Yeakley's institutional roots will surface as he uses false inferences insinuating the permissive nature of institutions larger than the church such as missionary societies. However, these issues are not primary to any discussion, and many readers will probably read right over them without even noticing. There is perhaps no book that so comprehensively addresses the issue of biblical eldership from the position of sound, biblical interpretation as well as practical application.

-Aaron Battey

Two Final Notes to the Reader:

We have provided a hyperlink to each book that has been reviewed to help you locate a copy. A couple of the books – According to Luke and Church Leadership and Organization are available for free in digital format.

We are always interested in learning about great reads and resources. If you have read a book that you feel would be beneficial to our readers, send us a brief review at ChristianResearcher@gmail.com.

