

A Few Notes on my Genesis Commentaries

I have purchased a handful of commentaries to help in my studies of Genesis. If I had to start over, there are some commentaries I would buy again, and some I would not.

Commentaries I would buy again:

Mathews, Kenneth. *Genesis 11:27-50:26*. The New American Commentary. 2005.

This is actually a two-volume set (I have the first volume in Libronix), and it's the most detailed commentary I have. Mathews carefully explores just about everything, often going into great details as he explores various interpretive options. I love the detail!

Waltke, Bruce. *Genesis: A Commentary*. 2001.

Waltke brings a literary perspective to the text, reminding me that Genesis is also a superbly crafted literary work. His commentary is not as detailed as Mathews, but it is often very helpful and keeps me thinking about the context.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*. Preaching the Word. 2004.

Hughes' commentary is pastoral, not academic, but he does a great job helping me to understand the text and how I might communicate it.

Greidanus, Sydney. *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*. 2007.

I love this commentary. It's not a traditional commentary; Greidanus does not attempt to cover every chapter. His goal is to help the reader think through a chapter and prepare to preach an expository sermon on it. So he does a wonderful job helping me to consider the central truth of the text and the purpose of the text and thus the central truth of a sermon and the purpose of the sermon. And he is marvelous at finding Christ in the text, which is a requirement for correctly understanding every text in the Bible! I wish every commentator would think like this.

Sailhammer, John. *Genesis*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol 2. 1990.

Sailhammer's work is both helpful and frustrating. It's frustrating because it's concise; I'm certain Sailhammer knows far more about the text than he shares. I wish he had written for a different commentary set, one that would not have such space constraints. But the reason I would buy this commentary again is because Sailhammer is very good at keeping the meta-narrative, the big picture of the text, in mind. He constantly brings the reader back to the fall and to God's promises to Abram. He doesn't get into the weeds as much as I would like, but neither does he get lost in the weeds.

Commentaries I would not buy again:

Kidner, Derek. *Genesis: An Introduction & Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. 1967.

This commentary, like most in the Tyndale series, is too concise. Kidner's work is good, there's just not enough of it. Too many parts of the text are ignored.

Morris, Henry. *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings*. 1976.

Morris' commentary purports to be scientific, but for the parts I read it is more often speculative. I have never read a commentary that spends so much time guessing about the parts of the narrative that the writer did not tell us; and worse, his guesses are sometimes important to his interpretation of the text. Here's the right way to interpret the missing parts: If they're not in the story, they're not important to understand the story! The Bible doesn't tell us everything we *want* to know, but it does tell us everything we *need* to know. I find little value in this commentary.

Ross, Allen P. *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. 1998.

On the one hand, Ross does get me to begin thinking about how to transfer the truth of the text from the past to the present. This is good; every sermon and lesson must do this. On the other hand, Ross too often misses the point of the text. Unlike Sailhammer, he seems to forget the meta-narrative. Unlike Greidanus, he doesn't interpret the text Christologically. Thus this commentary doesn't help me as much as I would like.