

Holman Old Testament Commentary: Joshua. By Kenneth O. Gangel. Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003, xiii + 327 pp., \$19.99.

This commentary on Joshua is part of the Holman Commentary Series. The commentary series is designed to present “a detailed interpretation” and to deliver “an essential understanding of the Old Testament with unsurpassed clarity and convenience.” Gangel has written an excellent commentary addressing the second goal of the series. This is not a textbook; it is designed for pulpit and Sunday School ministry. A reader does not come away with a deeper or comprehensive understanding of the book of Joshua. The main emphasis of the book is to provide expository sermon and study outlines for each chapter. Gangel does an excellent job of staying true to the text and message of Joshua.

The commentary consists of eighteen chapters each focusing on one or two chapters of the book of Joshua in English. There is a brief four-page introduction to the book of Joshua, a one-page glossary, and a brief bibliography. The commentary is designed so that each chapter follows the same outline: Introduction, Commentary, Conclusion, Life Application, Prayer, Deeper Discoveries, Teaching Outline, and Issues for Discussion.

Although one of the main goals is to provide a straightforward outline and expository approach to the text, the commentary needs a thorough discussion providing the background of the book. This would have been accomplished by a more detailed introduction discussing major literary themes, and a brief summary of archaeological and historical data. A detailed summary of the geographical dynamics of the land besides the two illustrations found in the book would also be beneficial to the commentary. To the author’s credit, he does an excellent job of relating the book to the New Testament, particularly his discussion concerning Pauline theology in Ephesians. There is no vehicle to take the pastor to deeper levels within the text and the discussions found in the “Deeper Discoveries” sections are superficial.

This book is not recommended for use as a textbook, except perhaps as a supplemental text for preaching from the Old Testament. The text is too superficial for an Old Testament course. Gangel provides good examples of how to preach and teach the laity and he provides excellent sermon outlines based on each chapter of Joshua as it is divided in the Bible. For a deeper study of the biblical text, I would suggest the New American Commentary series.

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