

Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The Old Testament and Apocrypha

An interview with adopter Paul Kim, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Williams Chair of Biblical Studies, Methodist Theological School in Ohio



The Fortress Commentary on the Bible distills the current conversations in contemporary biblical studies, gathers scholarship from a cohort of diverse perspectives, and provides a unique view of biblical texts through the lens of contexts. This makes the commentary an excellent resource for instructors and students alike in upper-level biblical studies and seminary courses. Read an interview with Professor Paul Kim on why he uses the Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The Old Testament and Apocrypha in his Introduction to the Hebrew Bible course.

FP: Why did you select the *Fortress Commentary on the Bible* for use in your Introduction to the Hebrew Bible course?

PK: It is one of the latest commentaries out there, which also appears to read like a good “introduction” textbook for Hebrew Bible / Old Testament. It is also from a reputable publisher.

- FP: The *Fortress Commentary on the Bible* emphasizes interpreting biblical texts with three contexts: the text in its ancient context, the text in the interpretive tradition, and the text in contemporary discussion. Why do you find it important to include the discussion of contexts in your teaching?
- PK: I like all three contexts—in fact, this is ingenious. One reservation I had was whether covering *three* contexts would obstruct the overall quality. However, I am delightfully surprised that each context discussion is rich with solid scholarship and cutting-edge knowledge. I have read many portions thus far (e.g., Exodus – Chronicles, plus some prophetic books), and find each section immensely insightful. Especially, the “contemporary” context discussions are thought-provoking, powerful, yet balanced. One critique: the “interpretive tradition” context discussions tend to have more of Christian traditions than Jewish (and Quranic) traditions. I would note that (Christian) students/readers can benefit by learning more of Jewish interpretive traditions.

FP: Similarly, why should students care about studying in context?

PK: Students often are less than enthused about learning the Bible—an ancient text with ancient and often remote and unappealing stories, especially the Old Testament as opposed to the more popularized New Testament. Helping them learn the key ingredients of ancient contexts, long interpretive traditions, and contemporary connections can enrich their clearer understanding, and even appreciation, of this ancient text.

FP: How do you present contexts in class?

PK: I try to introduce the Ancient Near Eastern texts, culture, and archaeology (e.g., *Context of Scripture* texts [Hallo and Younger, Brill]) for ancient context. For interpretive traditions, I have students do their own group presentation by doing extensive research on a given topic. For contemporary discussions, I introduce a movie, current news issue, or pastoral care case studies so that students can find how characters, events, and issues of the Bible do matter for pertinent characters, events, and issues of today’s society.

Overall, I am pleasantly impressed with this book, and I hope to use it as one of my main textbooks for upcoming years.