

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

A SIMPLE MAN'S STUDY OF ESTHER

Chuck Robertson

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BOOK REVIEW

An accessible commentary and study guide for the book of Esther in the Old Testament.

Debut author Robertson provides an unusual work that offers a blend of academic rigor and homespun flavor. He manages to find a middle ground between the weightiness of a detailed academic commentary and the simplicity of a basic study manual. The result is a tool for individual or group study of Esther that delves into the historical setting, cultural nuances, and linguistic subtleties of the book while also delivering an evangelical interpretation of the text, marked by commonplace prose. Esther presents readers with very real challenges for full comprehension and meaningful interpretation, and Robertson uses the tools of modern exegesis to flesh out the text for the average reader. Moving passage by passage, he wisely begins with an exploration of the social setting as well as a close look at key Hebrew words; for instance, he notes the use of two words for “pleasure”—one that focuses on “evil” pleasure, another on “moral” pleasure. After each critical reading section, Robertson goes on to provide an entirely separate part related to interpretation, asking readers, in most cases, where God is found in each passage. The author also defies convention by interpreting the story of Esther in almost exclusively Christian terms: “In our story...Xerxes would be representative of God the Father; Mordecai, Jesus; and Esther, the new covenant church, us.” However, Robertson’s otherwise laudable text is marred by a colloquial style that goes beyond hominess and borders on unprofessional (“The Jews are big on these [genealogies]”; “How sweet it is!”). It also relies too heavily on the first-person narrative voice (“I figure that right about now you’re saying...”). Nevertheless, Robertson does succeed in creating an easy-to-read guide that never skimps on substance. His exegetical conclusions, however, are up for debate.

A literate study of Esther hampered by an overly casual style.