

Review: Listening to Scripture

September 14, 2023

Listening to Scripture: An Introduction to Interpreting the Bible

By Craig G. Bartholomew (Baker Academics)

Most hermeneutics textbooks could carry the same subtitle as this one. Few honestly could carry its main title, “*Listening to Scripture*,” but this book earns it.

Craig Bartholomew believes both the scholarly academic examination of Scripture and the devotional reading of the Bible are valuable, and he rejects any suggestion the two approaches are mutually exclusive. 

Bartholomew adopts an approach similar to N.T. Wright’s in terms of viewing the Bible as a grand narrative drama in multiple acts—and that’s a commendation, not a criticism. While he acknowledges the merits of various types of biblical criticism, Bartholomew essentially urges readers not to focus so singularly on the leaf of a single tree that they lose sight of the majestic forest. Any encounter with Scripture should lead the audience to hear what God is saying, he insists.

While all of *Listening to Scripture* offers rich insights, perhaps its most beneficial content appears at the end of each chapter. In addition to discussion questions and a suggested bibliography for further reading, the author concludes each chapter with an exercise in *lectio divina*—an ancient practice of reading the Bible meditatively, savoring each word and engaging the imagination.

Baker Academics undoubtedly envisioned this book as a textbook or supplementary reading for university or seminary classes. No doubt, it will serve well in that role. However, any serious lay student of Scripture who is willing to engage both head and heart in reading the Bible also would benefit from *Listening to Scripture*—and listening to God.

Ken Camp, managing editor

Baptist Standard