

The Living Pulpit
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The second series is *Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries*. The two volumes that I examined are *Matthew* by O. Wesley Allen, Jr., associate professor of homiletics and worship at Lexington Theological Seminary, and *Acts of the Apostles* by Ronald J. Allen, professor of Preaching, Gospels, and Letters at Christian Theological Seminary. This series seeks to cover both broad themes of a book or letter as well as individual pericopes in that book or letter. The editors say that *Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries* "provide the preacher with resources that draw together the strengths of these two approaches into a single text aid, useful for the moment of preparation halfway between full scale exegesis and a finished sermon." The authors of this series are biblical scholars who offer expositions of the text rooted in detailed study but communicated in straightforward, readable ways. The editor claims that these volumes seek to do two things. First, they aim to identify what the text invited the people in the ancient world to believe about God and the world. Second, they explore what the text encouraged the people to do in response. The series is also concerned with how the preacher moves from the ancient text to a contemporary context and offers hermeneutical help to build that bridge.

A helpful feature of these new commentaries is that they give special attention to both the liturgical year and lectionary readings. So, whether you are a lectionary preacher or not, these volumes can be useful in sermon preparation.

I would recommend both of the volumes that have been released. In each volume the authors carefully balance a treatment of the "big picture" of the text with analytical treatment of the "little pictures" of the text. This is exegesis that honors the traditional methods of interpretation while encouraging the question of how the gospel is performed and practiced. Allen's treatment of Matthew also provides a running comparison with other synoptic texts while examining both lectionary and non-lectionary texts. Allen does similarly in *Acts of the Apostles* so that Acts is set in the context of the larger Lukan narrative.

The Fortress series will be much more helpful to preachers than the *Opening the Scriptures* series. I would, however, invite you to examine both for your self.



About the author

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