

Book Review

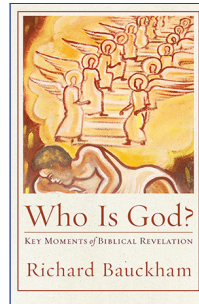
Richard Bauckham.

Who Is God?

Key Moments of Biblical Revelation

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2020.

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Richard Bauckham is a theologian, Bible scholar, and award-winning author. He holds several academic positions, including senior scholar at Ridley Hall, Cambridge University, visiting professor at St. Mellitus College, and New Testament professor emeritus at the University of St. Andrews. The author has an extensive academic history in New Testament literature studies, including teaching, reading, and lecturing on various New Testament topics. His current book, *Who Is God? Key Moments of Biblical Revelation* is comprised of the material from his 2015 Frumentius Lectures at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology and the 2018 Haywood Lectures at Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia except for Chapter One, which is new to the book (vii).

The book is a short, easy read with illuminating biblical truths that answer his thesis: Who is the God of the Christian Bible, and what does his self-revelation say to humanity? Bauckham has succinctly undertaken the exposition of God's self-revelatory identity in four profound chapters. Each chapter includes compelling elements that further his thesis and allows the reader to glean the material's expanse: footnotes with scriptural cross-referencing and explanatory notes (vii); well-placed images granting the reader a visual perspective; and a short bibliography. The moderate use of ancient biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek,

for keywords and ideas expounds the author's theological evidence that 'God is with us.'

Bauckham illuminates "key moments of divine disclosure" (2) by exegeting individual Bible stories. He begins his discourse in Chapter One by discussing "The Revelation of the Divine Presence" (pgs. 5-34). The author offers the story of Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:10:22) as a pivotal starting point for revealing the nuances of God's omnipresence in individuals' lives and upon the earth (e.g., Temple). He exquisitely covers these nuances through "sub-sections," which succinctly discusses the different motifs that coalesce his mega-theme of "God is with us." Bauckham writes, "Many of the varied forms of God's presence that we find in the Old Testament continue or have equivalents in the New Testament, but many of them also find their culmination in a new form of divine presence that surpasses them: incarnation, God's presence as the human Jesus Christ" (13). Chapter One is enlightening and thought-provoking, bringing together the Old and New Testaments, revealing the myriad of ways that God is with us.

Bauckham begins Chapter Two, "The Revelation of the Divine Name" (pgs. 35-60), with a short explanation of God's name in Hebrew and Greek. The author's brief overview of God's name in the ancient biblical languages shows his thoughtfulness for readers who may not have Biblical language experience. Following, he turns the reader's attention to Moses and the

Burning Bush in Exodus 3, revealing God's self-introduction. Bauckham takes meticulous care to demonstrate how the Divine Name reveals His character: holy, committed, "self-subsistent and self-determining" (42). Chapter Two shows the Divine Name's historical, cultural, and theological importance, demonstrating a loving, committed God.

Chapter Three, "The Revelation of the Divine Character" (pgs. 61-87), is closely related to the previous chapter, illuminating who God is through his name. At the same time, Chapter Three carries the discovery further in answering 'What is God like?' 'What sort of God is he?' (62). The parallel themes of God's self-revelatory name alongside the disclosure of His behavioral characteristics give the reader a comprehensive picture of the Who? How? and Why? of God's nature. Bauckham uses Moses at Mount Sinai in Exodus 34 to show God's qualifying behavioral characteristics such as mercy, grace, love, and faithfulness (68). The author expounds further on these qualities to reveal a relational and consistent God in dealing with humanity. Bauckham poignantly shares, "Only when we have focused as intently as the psalm does on the positive qualities of God's character and the universality of his desire for the good of all his creatures can we get into proper perspective the way God deals with evil" (79). Bauckham superbly deals with the ideology that the Old Testament's God is full of anger and wrath, while the God of the New Testament is merciful. Chapters Two and Three are deserving of special attention as they lead the reader on a more profound journey of discovering the God of the Bible.

The final chapter deals with "The Revelation of the Trinity" (89-113). The author contends with "three key moments of revelation in the Gospel of Mark": Jesus's baptism (1:9-11), the

transfiguration (9:2-8), and "tearing of the veil" and the centurion (15:37-39) (89). Bauckham theologially ties the three passages together, coalescing their similarities and pointing to the "spirit." Yet, Bauckham could more aptly explain the Trinity's mysteries by examining the personhood of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The book closes in the way it began: His divine presence "to us, with us, and in us in distinguishable ways" (110).

Who Is God? Key Moments of Biblical Revelation is an excellent book that is theologially and scripturally sound, thereby allowing for applicability in many ways. The book is an excellent resource for seasoned theologians and scholars as well as the everyday reader who seeks to understand the nuances of God's complex identity. Academically the book is well-suited for undergraduate level theology courses or higher. One unexpected approach to Bauckham's book is its usefulness for Bible studies and home groups. The author's inclusion of cross-scripture references and short chapter sections favor group discussions. The book has two significant problems: First, there are moments in the author's writing that his thesis can be hard to follow. Second, Chapter Four does not catch the theological essence of the Trinity. Despite these issues, the book warrants a spot on the bookshelf of all knowledge seekers. Bauckham answered his thesis succinctly but thoroughly.