

Book Recommendation

Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community, Second Edition, Craig R. Koester, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2003.

I am often “late to the party” when it comes to finding good and helpful books or authors. So, many of you might already be familiar with Koester’s work on the gospel of John and particularly this volume on the use of symbolism in John.

Like many books, not everything in this one is worth taking the time to read. The first two chapters on “Symbol, Meaning, and Mystery” and “Representative Figures” had **some** helpful material (the section on people who meet Jesus is worth a glance) but where I found the most value was in chapters 3-6, “Symbolic Actions”, “Light and Darkness”, “Water”, and “The Crucifixion.” Except for some pretty good thoughts on discipleship, the last two chapters (“Symbol and Community” and “Symbol and the Knowledge of God”) were not of much value to me. Others may differ from their own reading of them.

Part of my problem with reading Koester is he promotes the Johannine Community model espoused by Raymond Brown. And, though he is not unique in this regard, he is also a proponent of multiple writers of the gospel of John. Those things notwithstanding, I still found the book useful and helpful in forcing me to think more deeply about many passages in John and for helping me consider OT associations, connections and motifs with the miracles recorded and with many of Jesus’ public and private discourses.

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