

***The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus: A Clear and Simple Explanation of the World's Best Seller.*** By John R. Cross. Canada: GoodSeed International, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2003 (1997). 304 pp., Paper, \$15.00.

Author John Cross is lecturer, author, photographer and family man. Add to this list: Bible student. Cross has produced what may be the most clearly written and logically ordered beginner's summary of the Bible.

Cross appropriately begins the volume with a chapter that deals with the uniqueness of the Bible, as compared to all other books (pp. 5-13). He does a masterful job of describing God's character, the creation of the heavenly host, the creation of the universe and sin's consequences in this perfect creation. Chapter Five specifically deals with the origin of sin in the universe and the tragic results it has on us (pp. 70-99).

Chapters Six through Nine deal with such key concepts, personalities and events as atonement, Moses, Babel, Abraham, grace, Lot, Isaac, Israel and Judah (the divided kingdom), Moses, Pharaoh, the Passover, the Ten Commandments, the Tabernacle and the times of the Judges, Kings and Prophets. Most of the concepts, personalities and events are beautifully illustrated with pictures, charts and timelines, which are worth the price of the book. Especially helpful for most Bible students is the timeline entitled, "A Family Tree: From Adam to Jesus" (pp. 162-163).

Cross is not always clear on the nature of faith. In his section on Abraham, he writes, "*belief or faith* affects our actions. Abraham's belief went beyond agreement. He staked his life, his reputation, and his actions on it" (p. 105, author's emphasis). Later, he refers to "genuine faith" and writes, "True biblical belief does not stop with mental assent to the truth. It includes a *heart trust*, a confidence in the facts expressed by a voluntary act of the will" (p. 254, author's emphasis).

Although these statements may be of concern, it should be noted that Cross does acknowledge that salvation is a "gift." He writes, "Gifts are free. If you work for a gift, it is no longer free" (p. 271).

All readers will not agree with Cross on his understanding of repentance. He holds the "change of mind view" (pp. 180-181, 193). Some readers will also disagree with his use of Phil 1:6 as assurance of sanctification and perseverance (p.283).

However, overall, Cross demonstrates biblical precision in small and great details. His treatment of Jesus' "I am" statement (John 18:5) is thorough and insightful (p. 219-20). He also takes care to note that the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) is not a parable but a "true story" (p. 212). In his conclusion, he even differentiates between relationship and fellowship (1 John 1:9). Cross provides a helpful picture that explains: "Relationship: unbreakable: you have been born into God's family. You are eternally His child. Fellowship: breakable. Your sin breaks the pleasant harmony you have with your Heavenly Father" (p.281-82).

Cross is excellent at simplifying complex issues and making memorable points. For example, he makes an insightful observation in his discussion on the Law (pp. 124-141). He writes, "Most people will agree that they are *sinner*s. However, few will readily admit that they are *helpless sinner*s. There is a big difference" (p. 141, author's emphasis). Elsewhere, in distinguishing the Sadducees and Pharisees he explains that the Sadducees *took away* from God's Word and the Pharisees *added* to God's Word (p. 160, author's emphasis). He also does a good job tying the New Testament ideas together with the Old Testament symbolism without bogging down in the minutia of details.

A workbook is also available which will make this tool even user-friendlier for individual study, small groups and Sunday School classes. This book is an ideal tool to put into the hands of a new believer. While it may not be doctrinally "perfect," it is the best book of its kind that this reviewer has seen. Not only is it thoroughly biblical, it is also a very clear and interesting presentation of the key content of the Bible. For those looking for a simple and concise overview to present the Bible as one unfolding story, order a copy of *The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus*. The subtitle delivers what it says, "A Clear and Simple Explanation of the World's Best Seller."