Stories of the Covenant

Book Review by Bethany Te Slaa. Bethany is a teacher at Northwest Protestant Reformed School in Doon, IA. She and her husband attend Heritage Protestant Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, SD.

Jehovah’s Mighty Acts will serve well for parents who are looking for a brief overview of the Old Testament to share with their children. Thirty-one chapters make up this book, which is the first in a Bible storybook series by Rev. Nathan J. Langerak. The author tells events of biblical history in short accounts, each one summarizing several chapters of the Bible. This is not a comprehensive or detailed Bible storybook as such a brief number of short stories relate the life of God’s people from creation all the way to the time of Esther. Some familiar Old Testament stories are missing entirely such as the life of Job, the early life of Joseph, and stories of Ruth and Daniel.

The Bible stories that Rev. Langerak has chosen to include in Jehovah’s Mighty Acts remain true to his covenantal purpose in writing the book. In the preface Langerak states, “Each chapter will teach the truth of God’s eternal covenant of grace in Christ as that is revealed in the Bible stories and applies to the New Testament church.” Serving the interest of this covenantal purpose, the selected Old Testament stories of Jehovah’s Mighty Acts show God’s wonderful and powerful works in his destruction of the wicked, his choosing of a people to himself, and his faithfulness to his covenant despite the sins of his people.

The layout of the book is nicely done, with a clear table of contents to guide the reader. Each Bible story is paired with the appropriate Old Testament Bible passages and a few are also matched with relevant New Testament passages. In my opinion, this allows for the possibility of extending the use of the book beyond one or two devotional times per story. The stories are told in a simple, straightforward way, with paraphrased dialogue rather than direct quotation; although I was pleased to find that wording from scripture was not totally eliminated. In the first chapter’s account of the creation, the author writes, “How great a God is our God who made the heavens and the earth! He is the only true God. He only is our help and strength.” In the account of Moses’s birth and early life, the story says that “Moses’ parents obeyed God rather than men.” In my estimation these occasional spatterings of scriptural language enhance the book.

While I didn’t find many occasions to disagree with the author’s wording or communication of Old Testament events, I was at one point uncomfortable with his repeated references to Moses as the “savior of Israel.” Indeed, chapter 12 is entitled “Moses, Israel’s Savior.” While I understand that Moses served as a type and figure of Christ, I believe that calling him the savior will be confusing for young children. Although God certainly used Moses for the purpose of earthly deliverance, yet there is only one Savior for the church of all ages, and Moses showed that he was not that person when he failed as Israel’s mediator at Kadesh. To be fair, the author does clarify that Moses is merely a type of Christ at the end of chapter 12, but in my opinion this clarification came too late as Moses’ role as “Israel’s savior” had already been established. Another point of detail that led me to pause was the author’s reference to the rock of Rephidim following the children of Israel through the wilderness. In this instance, however, my confusion regarding this event in Israel’s history led me to study 1 Corinthians 10:4 more closely and to gain a new understanding of that wonder of grace.

The beautiful illustrations of Jehovah’s Mighty Acts serve as a final outstanding quality of the book. Children will be drawn to Michael Welply’s colorful images that are sprinkled generously throughout the pages. The pictures of Israel’s passage through the Red Sea and the burning of Jerusalem are especially striking. The book’s pictures will serve to pique the curiosity, engagement, and understanding of children as they listen to the beloved stories that teach us who we are as God’s children and his covenantal plan for our salvation.