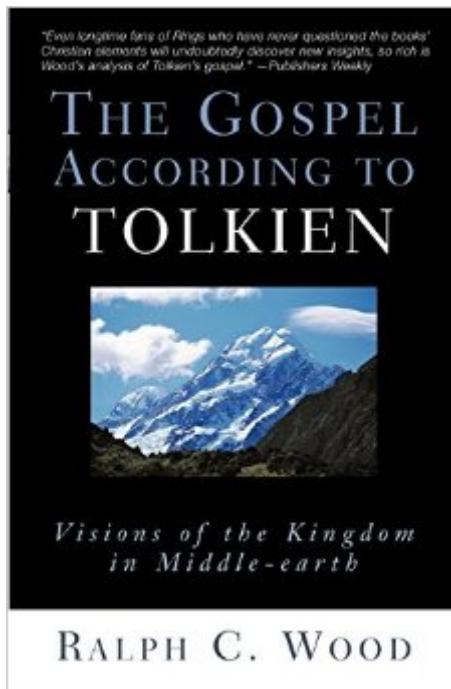


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The Gospel According To Tolkien: Visions Of The Kingdom In Middle-earth



Synopsis

Readers have repeatedly called The Lord of the Rings the most important book of our age--absorbing all 1,500 of its pages with an almost fanatical interest and seeing the Peter Jackson movies in unprecedented numbers. Readers from ages 8 to 80 keep turning to Tolkien because here, in this magical kingdom, they are immersed in depth after depth of significance and meaning--perceiving the Hope that can be found amidst despair, the Charity that overcomes vengeance, and the Faith that springs from the strange power of weakness. The Gospel According to Tolkien examines biblical and Christian themes that are found in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. Follow Ralph Wood as he takes us through the theological depths of Tolkien's literary legacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are many books out there that are trying to Christianize works of literature and popular media these days. I am sure you have seen them. Books that claim you can find Christ in Harry Potter, The Matrix, and Star Wars. I think we can agree that in most cases these books are really IMPOSING Christianity on these works. But J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" is different. In "Letters", page 243, Tolkien himself states that the "Lord of the Rings" is a "fundamentally religious and Catholic work." These are Tolkien's very own words. He confirms the Christianity of his epic yet again on page 172 of "Letters" when he states that "The religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism." So, right of the bat "The Gospel according to Tolkien" is set apart from other books of the genre. Ralph Wood is not imposing Christianity on "The Lord of the Rings", he is exploring the

Christianity that Tolkien himself integrated into his great work of literature. Ralph Wood's book is a very good introduction to the Christianity of the "Lord of the Rings." He makes it clear that reading the "Lord of the Rings" with the eyes of faith will greatly enhance ones understanding of what Tolkien was doing in writing his great epic. The only problem for me is that Ralph Wood decided to write his book from an ecumenical perspective. The themes he explores in his book are those that are shared by all Christians. Now I realize that one can view this as a very good thing. But Tolkien was a Catholic, and the "Lord of the Rings" was deeply affected by his Catholic faith. So if one explores the Christianity of the "Lord of the Rings" without exploring the Catholicism of it, I feel we are left with a somewhat incomplete study.

The plethora of books with a variant of the title "The Gospel According To ..." continues to fill bookshelves and entice the unwary buyer into reading some attempt to shoehorn popular culture into the biblical message. The earliest of this genre that I can recall was The Gospel According to Peanuts (still in print since 1965), after the popular cartoon strip by the late Charles Schultz. Being a confessing Christian, Mr. Schultz did on occasion openly present a Christian message through his syndicated strip-the most famous and endearing being the rendition by the blanket-hugging Linus of Luke's birth narrative in Schultz' animated Christmas television feature. Today we have our choice of The Gospel According to Dr. Seuz, The Gospel According to The Simpsons, The Gospel According to Harry Potter, The Gospel According to Disney, and The Gospel According to The Sopranos (I'm not making that last one up, really). Ralph C. Wood, professor of theology and literature at Baylor University, has now added to that collection The Gospel According to Tolkien. It is arguably the only volume that can legitimately make a claim to that title, for as Wood ably demonstrates, Tolkien's corpus is implicitly, but authentically, Christian. Tolkien's Middle Earth trilogy has experienced a rediscovery, if not a revival, among a wider audience due to Peter Jackson's brilliant movie interpretation of The Lord of the Rings, so the timing of this publication could not have been more strategic.

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