



Foretaste of the Future *Reading Revelation in Light of God's Mission*

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A Missional Reading of Revelation

What led to your interest in Revelation and now sharing about reading Revelation missionally?

Dean Flemming: I wrote this book in part because I believe that Revelation has much more to say to the church and its role in the world today than we normally expect. Too often, a deep disconnection operates in the minds of students, preachers, and church members between the book of Revelation and the everyday life and mission of the church. Because Revelation seems to be confusing, baffling, and even frightening, they often avoid it. What is more, many popular readings of Revelation focus almost entirely on how events will unfold in the *future*. When Revelation is read as a play-by-play script for the end times, it has little to say about what God is doing in the world *now*. Some of those popular readings envision the church *escaping* this world through a secret rapture, which amounts to an escape from the church's mission *in* the world.

In contrast to such approaches, I propose that a *missional* reading of Revelation will lead us to read this often-perplexing book in a more faithful and responsible way. When engaging local congregations, students, and pastors in a variety of settings and cultures, I sense a genuine hunger for materials that can help rehabilitate Revelation for the church and its mission in the world. Consequently, this book is intended for the church. It seeks to help God's people read Revelation in light of God's mission and the church's participation in that mission within their diverse contexts.

What is your main thesis in *Foretaste of the Future*?

Flemming: This book argues that "Revelation is not about scripting future events but revealing God's great purpose to redeem and restore the whole creation, including people, through the mission of the slain Lamb. At the same time, Revelation seeks to shape and equip Christian communities to participate in God's saving purpose by living as a foretaste of God's coming new creation now, through their lips and through their lives." What is more, since missional readings of Scripture are sensitive to specific contexts, the book asks how Revelation speaks into the church's diverse, global settings today. To that end, it includes the perspectives of readers from a variety of circumstances, particularly from the Majority World (many of these in sidebars). The book also offers a case study in reading the Bible missionally. Finally, because Revelation asks readers to use their imaginations, I include a variety of illustrations throughout the book, many of which are works of art that Revelation has inspired over the centuries.

What do you hope your book contributes to the study of Revelation?

Flemming:

- It offers the first missional reading of Revelation as a whole. In doing so, it models the practice of reading Scripture missionally.
- It provides a distinctive approach to reading Revelation, which integrates biblical and mission studies. This approach builds on previous work in missional and theological interpretation and in contextualization. It also takes seriously the interpretive perspectives of readers from a variety of backgrounds, particularly from the Majority World.
- It seeks to relate biblical scholarship to the missional identity and practice of the church. It shows how the book of Revelation shapes the church's engagement in the mission of God.



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