



Revelation Realist Eric V. Cline
Resource Publications 2023

Reading the Book of Revelation can be a puzzling challenge, to say the least. Written by John while he was imprisoned on, or banished to, the island of Patmos, it comprises different literary genres including letters to seven churches, visions and blessings. It includes bizarre images, esoteric symbols and mysterious numbers. Some people are fascinated and intrigued by Revelation but others are put off, perhaps by the sheer weirdness and terrifying violence of some of the imagery, or the apparent apocalyptic fervour of some of the text.

Key to getting to grips with Revelation is to consider firstly what framework, or hermeneutical approach, to adopt towards reading, thinking about and interpreting it. Conventional options include the *Futurist* approach (the events in Revelation have not yet happened), the *Historicist* (some of the events have happened, some are happening now and some will happen in the future; a continuous history), the *Preterist* (most of it happened in the first century) or the *Idealist* (a timeless application of symbology and imagery to demonstrate spiritual warfare recurring throughout history).

Cline criticises all these approaches, opining that they too readily invite false assumptions and certainties of prediction or chronology. Instead, he argues for what he describes as the Realist approach. Hence the title of his book. In this approach, events in Revelation are as real as the call for us to repent and follow Jesus, trusting God in all things, visible and invisible, and to life in the world to come; God wins always and in all ways. Cline shows how Revelation is not an end-times crisis story but is solely the Revelation about Jesus from Jesus, giving hope and encouragement to the faithful and warning to the rebellious and unfaithful. This applies today as much as it did to those of the first century audience, particularly those in the seven churches identified in John's letters.

Cline confirms how there is nothing in Revelation that is not already in scripture. No extra truths, no hidden secrets. The Realist perspective therefore requires humble and cautious exegesis. This is exemplified throughout, not least by frequently drawn parallels between Revelation's metaphorical imagery and symbology and Old and New Testament references, all of which would probably have been well understood by John's audience at the time. This includes imagery which to us today may seem extremely bizarre but which was, and is, not to be taken literally (any more than we would say "it's raining cats and dogs" and mean it literally!).

Cline insists that Revelation is not about predicting the future but about revealing Jesus, helping us to see Jesus as he is right now, the same yesterday, today and forever. Cline is a North American author, but there is no particular transatlantic flavour to this systematic, grounded, informative and well researched summary, succinctly packed into 122 pages. This would be a good introductory read, or perhaps a reintroduction for anyone who may have been deterred by their reading of Revelation in the past.