



History and Mystery: The Complete Eschatological Encyclopedia of Prophecy, Apocalypticism, Mythos, and Worldwide Dynamic Theology: Revised and Expanded 3rd. Edition (Vol. 1)

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History and Mystery is an encyclopedic introduction to Christian notions of the apocalypse.

Bernie L. Calaway's *History and Mystery* is a lengthy exploration of the history and theology of Christian apocalyptic literature.

The book begins by suggesting that there are several ways in which end times literature in the Bible can be explored, with this book giving a literal and conservative reading of the text. It includes useful data for “basic biblical learning,” including details about topics like what Babylon was and the definition of eschatology. The book then turns to more theological matters, considering prophecy and the theory of dispensationalism. It closes with a survey of essays related to end times studies that focus on specific passages from the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel.

The book's entries cover material as varied as Jewish holy days and cultural traditions. Such background information is often treated in the form of lists, though there are some longer essays included. This approach opts for breadth over depth; the work becomes akin to a loose survey of the entirety of the biblical prophetic tradition.

Still, the essays do an able job of highlighting complex issues, like the hermeneutical challenge of making sense of vast apocalyptic materials, and what biblical prophecy is and why it matters. And it encourages comprehensive study throughout: one entry argues that the depiction of Babylon in Revelation is complex, and that “a quick read-through of Babylonian history then is not only helpful but also nearly essential if we are to fully comprehend the literary image presented.” Likewise, in discussing the harvest pageants of Revelation 14, one entry admits from the outset that “Revelation can be a puzzle” and that comprehending it requires engaging with commentary and background information.

Trading between a scholarly tone and that of a preacher, the book suggests some hope that its audience will be changed by their time with it—maybe even finding salvation in its pages. It seeks to make biblical interpretation accessible, cheering prospective scholars on without proffering every solution itself. Still, though it is organized in an outwardly logical manner, the book often reads like a haphazard collection, as when it jumps from a thoughtful consideration of the imagery in Revelation into an essay about New Testament contributions to eschatology. It works to solve these rough transitions by ending each entry with suggestions for further or connected reading, but the method is ineffective in print format.

History and Mystery is an encyclopedic introduction to Christian notions of the apocalypse; it covers biblical prophecies from the book of Daniel to Revelation.

JEREMIAH ROOD (September 6, 2022)

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