

Leah D. Schade and Jerry. L. Sumney. *Apocalypse When? A Guide to Interpreting and Preaching Apocalyptic Texts*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020. 194 pages. \$25.

Given the tribulations of our twenty-first century context, it seems appropriate and helpful to think anew about preaching the apocalyptic texts of the Bible. This book, co-written by biblical scholar Jerry Sumney and homiletician Leah Schade, offers preachers and students of preaching a way to connect these seemingly radical texts with our contemporary situation. The purpose of the book, as stated in the preface, is to “help the church understand and proclaim the powerful messages that the Bible’s apocalyptic texts contain” (6). The book helps us understand how and why people in crisis still proclaim a message of hope and liberation.

The first chapter, written by Sumney, introduces the genre of apocalyptic texts, writings which come from groups of people experiencing a crisis. Sumney states, “These writings are all seeking ways to make sense of their belief in a good, powerful, and just God given their experience of the world as a place ruled by evil” (20). Sumney provides the preacher with an understanding of the original contexts of the biblical authors and what the writers might have thought regarding the nature of God, the nature of humanity, and the ethical considerations of the time. This provides a strong foundation for the more detailed exegesis found in chapters 4 through 12.

The second chapter, written by Schade, unpacks the challenges and opportunities of preaching apocalyptic texts. Schade wants to help preachers find hope in these sometimes troubling texts. She also notes that these texts have sometimes been used in harmful ways. The goal of the contemporary preacher can be to reverse that harm and redeem these texts in ethical and loving ways. A good apocalyptic sermon will 1.) honor the value of creation, 2.) prophetically call out and critique the dilemmas in which we find ourselves today, and 3.) look for the hope, restoration, and community found in Christ (34).

Each subsequent chapter covers sections of apocalyptic literature found in the Revised Common Lectionary. These chapters are divided into three sections. The first is an exegesis of a biblical passage. The second section provides suggestions for preaching. The third is an example of a sermon. One thing I think preachers and students will find appealing is having good examples of the way good exegesis can inform and be incorporated in the sermon. The connections between the three sections of the chapter (the exegesis, suggestions for preaching, and sermon) are clear without being heavy-handed. The sermons seem to accomplish what Schade sets before the preacher in chapter 2.

The book achieves its stated purpose, guiding pastors and students to preach the good news within the apocalyptic texts of the Bible. This book will appeal to preachers, though it provides helpful insights for seminary students as well. It is clear how the sermons and the homiletic suggestions connect to the exegetical work of Sumney. This book demonstrates well the way biblical exegesis can inform sermonic content and form as Schade’s commentary and sermons draw from the biblical expertise of Sumney. Preachers may find inspiration in the chapters of this book, and seminary students will benefit from seeing the connection between exegesis and the final sermonic product.

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