

"It's all coming to an end... will you repent?"

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- . Biblical text at the end of sermon.
- . Previous sermons in this series available on the website
- . See: www.jewsforjesus.org.au/sermons.html
- . Many other notes (not used in the sermon) are at the end of the text as well from literature and other religious observations.
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Introduction

This week 15 nations of the world spent a bit of its Thursday remembering the Holocaust. It was the 60th Anniversary of the release of prisoners from Auschwitz, liberated by the Soviet army in January 1945. Visual images of the famed death and torture camps showed on televisions. Smoke filled the sky above the gas chambers, evoking a cough and a bent neck, making even the most insensitive to think again.

When we read this chapter today, I want you to think of this imagery. I want you to see the countless numbers of armies attacking the religionists and feel sad. I want you to see the belching into the sky of smoke from a bottomless pit. And I want you to think...what would I do in light of that?

You would think that a preacher would preach all the time about sin and repentance or money and tithing or love and unity and such. Here we are in the 9th chapter of the last book of the Bible, and we have been studying this since last year. And we have been talking about the apocalyptic victory of Y'shua over sin and death. And today, so as not to disappoint you, we want to talk about sin and sinners and what a wise sinner should do in light of the information we will address today.

The imagery of the First and Second Woes which are the Fifth and Sixth angels in chapter nine is grand and takes a lot of description, more than the first four angels all together. I say that to say that John is digging deep into the scene being shown him in heaven into which he is peering. There is a lot of destruction, albeit limited, and sights and sounds that would make Spielberg long to cinematise them.

The point of today's lesson is as always to encourage the believers to hang in there and to teach the nations outside to turn and find eternal life in God's love. If you know your world is ending, what will you do?

The Fifth Angel (1-11)

The two main items we see in the first part of our chapter today are smoke and locusts. The main reaction of the people is hiding and wishing for death. Destruction is the motif; destroyer is the name of the agent.

You might know that on Wednesday morning, two young men in balaclavas and ski masks smashed the front of our new bookshop in Bondi Junction. They intended to damage; they didn't want to steal anything. The surveillance cameras show them running to the front of the shop, wielding a metal pipe and a cricket bat, smashing the glass, and then running away all within 6 seconds.

The police asked me; the media on channel 7 asked me; you might be thinking the same. What was their purpose? To go there I have to think like a derelict. To find 'reason' within something so irrational is inconsistent. It begs me to think in a way of the criminal. If I think like that, I become like that. Solomon said, 'as a man thinks within himself, so he is.' (Prov. 23.7)

So I cannot presume to know what these fellows were thinking. What I can understand is that their purpose was to destroy. And that is a purposeless purpose. What a waste! Maybe they want us to be discouraged. Maybe they want us to leave

town. Maybe they just were out for a good time and find ruin a good time-filler. Until we find them and ask them and hope for a right answer, we will never know. But what we do know is that God knows them, and longs for them to find eternal life in Him.

Channel 7 asked me what message I would want to give them if I could. My first thought was that they should find eternal life and the forgiveness that God extended to us, without merit. I want them to know the Lord and to extend that same forgiveness to others. What else do we have for these two?

So back to our chapter. The king in verse 11 is the angel who rules over the spiritual destruction that is occurring. Two languages testify of this character, whom we might simply call Satan. His name in Hebrew and Greek is 'destroyer.' Although the first four angels destroyed nature with natural disasters, angel five is a spiritual destroyer.

How fitting for us to ponder the words of Y'shua who said of Satan, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." (John 10.10) What a contrast! What a saviour we have!

The world will not turn to look for salvation because they are being abused. A sexually abused child or a verbally abused spouse only want it to end; they rarely have the strength to run. They seek no salvation in the sense of starting over. They think they deserve this punishment or abuse. Even the national sexual assault hotline website in the US recommends leaving as the first step in getting help. (<http://www.rainn.org/whatshould.html>)

[What should I do if I am sexually assaulted?

- * **Find a safe environment - anywhere away from the attacker. Ask a trusted friend stay with you for moral support.**
- **Preserve evidence of the attack - don't bathe or brush your teeth.]**

Every situation is different, but being alone is all they usually want. No wonder, rocks won't you hide me (Rev. 6.16) and here (9.6) men seeking death, makes sense. Trauma, terror, punishment... where is there hope?

This reminds me of the Gadarene demoniac of Mark chapter 5. He knew his own summary, spoke as Legion to Y'shua when the Master walked by, and cried for his own deliverance. He lived in tombs and scraped himself with rocks, all the while alone. Devastated by this allegiance he had to the enemy of God; delivered only when Messiah walked nearby. Hope comes to the lost when we move near them; until then they are lost and seeking only solace, not help.

Remember that the legion asked Y'shua to let them stay or if they should have to leave the demoniac, where did they NOT want to go? Into the abyss.

So here in our chapter today, a star, probably an angel, not Satan, (Satan is the Destroyer of verse 11), who has the key of the abyss. Cosmologically it is a black hole. And from it belches horror in smoke and devastation. And this horror is human and the devastation is on people.

The locusts of verses 3-10 are not real locusts. They have hair 'like' women (which may represent their antennae) and their teeth 'like' lions and their appearance is 'like' horses. Crowns 'like' gold sounds like a colour of the invading marauding band. But tails like scorpions, which can hurt men for 5 months, helps us understand (verse 10) that this is symbolic and not genuine prophecy. And the five months is symbolic of a long season of pain and suffering, but still only one season. It's not eternal. It's temporal.

Back to the smoke image. Biblically smoke is a picture of devastation and darkness, meaning judgment. Remember the darkness of Egypt in the 8th plague? Remember the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah with smoke rising because of the perversion of the sin of homosexuality? PE Hughes says, "the darkness caused by the

smoke from the abyss, permeating the air and obscuring the sun typifies the darkness which he who is the Light of the world came to conquer and dispel. Exclusion in 'outer darkness' is the destiny of those who persist in unbelief for them 'the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved forever'. The world darkened by this smoke from the abyss symbolizes the pervasive influence of Satan in human society." (Book of Revelation, page 109) [cf Mk 13.24, Mt. 24.29, Jn 1.5, 3.19, 8.12, 12.46, 1 Jn. 1.5, 2.8, 9, 11; Mt 4.16, Lk. 1.79, Mt. 8.12, 22.13, 25.30, Jude 13, 2 Pet 2.17)

No wonder the image of Auschwitz with smoke billowing is so powerful. And so descriptive of the evil of Hitler and the Nazis. No wonder God uses this symbol to describe humanity's quest for dominance and exclusion from the Almighty.

It won't harm us

This judgment on the earth, specifically on the people of the earth will not harm the believers. This is radical. Even to think in these terms is mind-boggling. After all, who didn't suffer in World War II? Gypsies, Poles, Russians, 6 million Jews... all were forced to endure harsh treatment. Yet verse four says this pain and suffering will only affect the ones who "do not have the seal of God on their foreheads."

This is clear evidence of the apocalyptic and not the prophetic nature of the book. This is not a prophecy of what will happen one day, when locust-like creatures from satanic realms come out to damage the earth and somehow believers will be gone or pain-free. We have already shown in earlier lessons that John is living in exile, many believers have been killed and are ill-treated. We will all suffer persecution if we want to live a godly life, Paul said. (2 Tim. 3.12) So what can this mean, exactly? What it means, as I've tried to show again and again, is that John is painting the overarching picture. He is telling us we WILL conquer. We will walk with Y'shua and that day is coming soon. Apocalyptic literature calls for people to hold fast, saying that there would be a restoration of the nation and that God would eventually punish the enemies. That's our hope. The evil ones will not flourish forever; God will eventually judge them. The word *eventually* comes to the front, and even drops out of view. It is replaced by 'surely' and 'absolutely'.

So although we are well aware of the pain and suffering that believers are facing there in John's day in 90 CE and although we know of believers suffering today, the final story is not yet told. Yes Richard Wurmbrand was tortured for his faith in a Romanian prison; yes, Brother Yun in China, the self-named "Heavenly Man" experienced great pain and terror, and as a result launched him into new understandings of God's love and purpose.

We will conquer, yes, we will suffer, yes, but it will be limited and in the end, we will NOT suffer for rejecting the Almighty. We will find eternal life because we have repented and found forgiveness for all our sins.

The sixth angel: The second woe (12-21)

Now appearing at an altar was another angel who had another trumpet. And a release happens of formerly restrained angels who are bringing judgment on the heathen. (Mt. 13.41). These angels have been on the Euphrates, which originally flowed out of the Garden of Eden, is the eastern border of the originally designed Land of Israel, and as you would expect, fulfils an end-times location. It separates the kings of the East from Israel. Even today Baghdad and Mosul are on the Tigris, just east of the Euphrates, Turkey and Syria officially across the river. Lebanon and Jordan on the west side of it.

As with the other trumpet blasts, this judgment here is partial and preliminary, affecting only a third of humanity. (.15)

The great host numbered 200,000,000. Even we think this is a very large number. Imagine what the ancients would have thought about it! Compare Ps. 68.17 "twice 10,000, thousands upon thousands." And Rev 5.11. And we will see a reflection of the

psalms and John is saying the number is like we would say gazillions! (Compare 2 King 6.15-17: those who are with us are more than those who are with them.)

For whom is this judgment?

We must ponder at the last this question. With one third of mankind killed in the First Woe, what will the other 2/3rds do? It appears that they will similarly not repent but will continue in their idolatry (verse 20), their (verse 21) murders, sorceries (drugs), immorality and stealing. What a waste! Why would we not learn from the mistakes of others? Why would we not change our ways when we see the others living near us who are unharmed, that is, unaffected by the pains, as if above it all?

The apostle cannot imagine worse punishment. But one thing is clear. Worse punishment is coming. The impenitent will regret their failure to repent.

A final comment on the idolatry of verse 20. In our age, we may be free from graven images, but we are certainly not free from idolatry. Virtually anything can be an idol: money, power, fame, pleasure, sex, and in short humanistic self-centeredness in all its forms. As always "ungodliness breeds inhumanity." And what typifies that better than glass smashing at our office or the smoke billowing out of Auschwitz. We must all learn and repent. We must all turn to the God who wants to forgive and walk with Him.

Summary

So: What should you learn/hear today as a result of reading this text? Or what lessons do we learn from today's teaching?

- 1) Be blessed by reading this book regularly
- 2) Repentance is still available for all people until they die
- 3) God really does restrain evil and brings it to bear in his time
- 4) God's love is reaching out to all people, even now

Invitation

We want to give a choice to you. Maybe you have been an opponent of the Messiah. Maybe you have worshipped wrong. Maybe you have rejected what God said, but today you want to turn and agree with God about Y'shua knowing that judgment is surely coming. If you would like to be delivered from your sin by the blood of Y'shua, then pray this prayer and receive His love and grace. Father, forgive me in the name of Y'shua for all my sins. He was the Saviour and the fulfilment of all prophecies about Messiah. He is the one and the only one who can save me from my selfishness, from my sin. I acknowledge Y'shua as that one who wants to free me, and who alone can free me. I repent of my sin and accept Y'shua as my deliverer. By faith I am now born again by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, please talk to me after the service is over, [\[or email me if you are reading this online\]](#) so we can talk about growing in this knowledge and this relationship with God.

Actual text

Rev. 9.1 ¶ And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

Rev. 9.2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

Rev. 9.3 And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Rev. 9.4 And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Rev. 9.5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.

Rev. 9.6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die and death flees from them.

Rev. 9.7 And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

Rev. 9.8 And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.

Rev. 9.9 And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.

Rev. 9.10 And they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.

Rev. 9.11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Rev. 9.12 ¶ The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

Rev. 9.13 ¶ And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

Rev. 9.14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

Rev. 9.15 And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind.

Rev. 9.16 And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

Rev. 9.17 And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.

Rev. 9.18 A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths.

Rev. 9.19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads; and with them they do harm.

Rev. 9.20 And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

Rev. 9.21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

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Other Notes:

PRIMARY SOURCES

Apocalyptic Literature in Judaism and Early Christianity

By Professor L Michael White

The Genre of Apocalypse in early Jewish and Christian Tradition

White is Professor of Classics and Christian Origins at the University of Texas at Austin, and acted as historical consultant for "Apocalypse!" The Greek word apokalypsis (from which we get the English word "apocalypse") literally means "something uncovered" or "revealed." It emerged as a new genre of literature in early Jewish tradition commencing sometime in the third century BCE. Apocalyptic thinking has been called "the child of prophecy in a new idiom." This idea aptly reflects both its origins out of the older prophetic tradition and its new elements. For prophecy in ancient Israel, even down to the period of the Babylonian exile, had little to do with predicting the future or forecasting historical events. The great prophets of Israel, such as Isaiah or Jeremiah, were primarily concerned with delivering the "word of the Lord," meaning oracles calling on the people to respond to divine direction. But after the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple by the **Babylonians** in 586 BCE, things began to change. Now there began to be oracles calling for people to hold fast, saying that there would be a restoration of the nation and that the enemies would eventually be punished by God. A future-looking sense of history was born, and we see these ideas especially in some of the proto-apocalyptic writers from the end of the prophetic tradition, such as the "Third Isaiah" writer and the compilers of Ezekiel.

The full flowering of apocalyptic, however, required other elements, and chief among these were influences from first the Persian culture and then the Greek, in the period from the fifth to the third centuries BCE. In this vein, apocalyptic has also been called "a product of hope and despair; hope in the eternal power of God and despair over the present evil conditions of the world." This sense of dualism, drawn chiefly from Persian **Zoroastrianism**, is characteristic of the genre, but specifically looks at time and history in dualistic categories: the present evil age will give way to a glorious new age. The break between these two was usually termed the "end" or "last things" (Greek: eschaton or eschata), meaning the "end" of the present evil age. The outlook of apocalypse literature thus recounts how the world will work itself out in this manner,

usually with some account of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan and their respective forces. Notions of deliverer figures, such as the messiah (an old kingship title from the Davidic period) were commonplace in this scenario; however, not all apocalypses envision a concrete character as such, while others, notably the **Essenes** of the Dead Sea Scrolls, expected more than one messiah.

Apocalyptic thinking was extremely influential in Jewish tradition between the second century BCE and third century CE; however, the disastrous failure of the two **revolts against Rome** (in 70 and 135 CE, respectively) caused the radical political dimension of apocalyptic tradition to undergo some key changes.

The following are some of the key examples of Apocalypse literature during this period, showing where the Apocalypse of John (Revelation) fits into this history.

Proto-Apocalyptic literature (5th-4th centuries BCE)

· "Third Isaiah" (= Isaiah, chapters 56-66)

· Ezekiel (esp. chapters 37-48)

Early Jewish Apocalyptic (late 3rd century BCE to 70 CE)

· **I ENOCH** ca. 225 BCE (and forward; 5 sections of compositions, some of which show Christian reworking) **DANIEL** ca. 165 BCE (included in

· **DEAD SEA SCROLLS** ca. 2nd century BCE to 69 CE

(selections, e.g., "The War Scroll") LIFE OF ADAM AND EVE or

APOCALYPSE OF MOSES ca. 70 CE TESTAMENT OF ABRAHAM ca. 1st century CE

· II ENOCH (*Book of Secrets of Enoch') ca. 1st century CE

Later Jewish and Christian Apocalypses (Hebrew Bible) **BOOK OF JUBILEES** ca. 150-100

BCE **SIBYLLINE ORACLES** Book III ca. 150 BCE (and forward) **TESTAMENT OF XII**

PATRIARCHS ca. late 2nd century BCE (+) **PSALMS OF SOLOM.** ca. 48 BCE **TESTAMENT OF MOSES** (*Assumption of) ca. 6-36 CE (but based on earlier 2nd cent. BCE text)

· **MARTYRDOM OF ISAIAH** 1st century CE

· **SIBYLLINE ORACLES (Jewish)** Book IV ca. 80 CE

· **II EDRAZ (IV EZRA)** ca. 80-90 CE (chs. 3-14) later + (chs. 1-2, 15) **II BARUCH** after ca. 90

· **APOCALYPSE OF ABRAHAM** ca. 70-100 CE

· **APOCALYPSE OF JOHN** **CA. 90-95 CE** This is the book we are studying now

III BARUCH ca. 2nd century CE **SIBYLLINE ORACLES (Jewish & Christian)** Book V ca. 2nd

century CE **APOCALYPSE OF PETER (Christian)** early 2nd CE **THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS** early 2nd CE (Christian)

From the NIV commentary on chapter 9:

9:1-11 *The fifth trumpet: The first woe.* John now focuses attention on the fifth and sixth trumpets (first and second woes) by giving more than twice the space to their description than he does to the previous four trumpets together. The fifth trumpet releases locusts from the Abyss. For five months these locusts torment the inhabitants of the earth who do not have the seal of God. John sees a "star" that has fallen to the earth. Since this star is given a key to open the Abyss, it is reasonable to understand it as being a symbolic reference to an angel. This is supported by v. 11, where "the angel of the

Abyss” is mentioned and named “Abaddon,” as well as 20:1, where reference is also made to “an angel coming down” who has the key to the Abyss, where Satan is thrown.

The “Abyss” (GK G12) is also referred to in 11:7 and 17:8 as the place from which the beast arises. This word refers to the underworld as (1) a prison for certain demons (Lk 8:31; cf. 2Pe 2:4; Jude 6) and (2) the realm of the dead (Ro 10:7). When the Abyss is opened, huge billows of smoke pour out, darken the sky, and release horselike locusts on the earth.

Locust plagues are one of the severest plagues of humankind. The imagery of locusts, appearing like armies, advancing like a cloud, darkening the heavens, and sounding like the rattle of chariots, goes back to Joel’s vision of the locust army that came on Israel as a judgment from God (Joel 1:6; 2:4-10). But the locusts of the Apocalypse inflict agony like scorpion stings (vv. 3, 5, 10). This, together with the fact that they do not eat grass (v. 4), shows that these locusts are something other than ordinary earthly insects. Indeed, they have the special task of inflicting a nonfatal injury only on the beast worshipers, who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (v. 4; cf. comment on 7:3). This may imply that these locust-like creatures are not simply instruments of a physical plague (as in Moses’ or Joel’s day or under the first four trumpets) but are demonic forces out of the Abyss from whom the true people of God are protected (cf. John’s use of frogs to represent demonic powers in 16:13). The five months of agony (vv. 5, 10) may refer to the life span of the locust (i.e., spring and summer). So severe is the torment they inflict that their victims will seek death (cf. Job 3:21; Jer 8:3; Hos 10:8).

John describes the locusts as an army of mounted troops ready for the attack (v. 7). The heads of the locusts resemble horses’ heads. John does not say that the locusts had crowns of gold on their heads but that they wore “something like crowns of gold” on their heads. This may refer to the yellow green of their breasts. This, combined with their resemblance to human faces, suggests something unnatural, hence demonic. The comparison of their “hair” with that of women may refer to the locusts’ long antennae, while their lionlike teeth suggest the terrible devastation they can bring (cf. Joel 1:6-7). The “breastplates of iron” refers to their scales, which appeared as a cuirass of metal plates across the chest and long flexible bonds of steel over the shoulders. Their sound was like the rushing of war chariots into battle (v. 9; cf. Joel 2:5).

This description creates an image of the fearful onslaught of demonic powers in the last days. Therefore, their leader is called “Abaddon” (GK H11 & H13) in Hebrew and “**Apollyon**” (GK G661) in Greek. The Hebrew term means “destruction” or “ruin” (cf. Job 26:6; Pr 27:20) and more often “the place of ruin” in Sheol (cf. Job 26:6; Pr 15:11; 27:20), “death” (cf. Job 28:22), or “the grave” (cf. Ps 88:11). The Greek term means “exterminator” or “destroyer” and does not occur elsewhere in the Bible. Some understand **Apollyon** as a separate angel entrusted with authority over the Abyss. Why John names the king of the Abyss in both Hebrew and Greek is open to question. Perhaps his readers’ background in Hebrew, on which John’s names and thoughts seem to turn (cf. 16:16), was so slender that an additional help here and there was necessary. This stylistic trait of giving information in

bilingual terms is peculiar to Revelation and John's Gospel (see Jn 6:1; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16).

The Apocalypse in Victorian Literature

(<http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/apocalypse/3.html>)

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The following discussion was adapted from an essay by the authors; see bibliography below. GPL wrote this section and adapted it for the Victorian Web, placing the endnotes in the main text and bibliography.

Victorian literature presents an interesting case to those concerned with the influence of the Bible and biblical tradition upon secular culture. M. H. Abrams and other critics have clearly demonstrated the major extent to which Wordsworth, Blake, and the other Romantics employed secularized extensions of Christian thought, of which the apocalyptic themes of the marriage of heaven and earth and the end of the world figured importantly. Nonetheless, critics of the Romantics have so accustomed us to thinking of nineteenth-century British culture as essentially humanistic, rather than Christian, that students of the later nineteenth century too easily assume that any reference to Apocalypse after 1800 can only take the form of loose analogy. Of course, British art and literature, like that throughout the West since the 1790s, displays many more situations, metaphors, and images of crisis analogous to the Apocalypse than detailed allusions to it (see Images of Crisis). One unfortunate corollary of the false assumption that English Romanticism and Post-Romanticism relate only distantly to contemporary religion is that their students do not have to acquaint themselves with either the Bible or the interpretive traditions according to which it was commonly understood.

Even were such an interpretation of Romanticism correct, Victorian studies would have to follow a different path. The situation in Victorian literature differs profoundly from that created by the first Romantic generation because of a dramatic -- and until recently, almost completely unnoticed -- revival of biblical prophecy, typology, and apocalypics. This return to prominence of older exegetic practice, which often took on specifically Victorian intonations, means that the student of the age must know well both the Bible and contemporary attitudes towards its interpretation. Victorian uses of the Apocalypse in secular literature, for example, take far more elaborate forms than mere distant echoes of archetypal structures drawn from it.

The great Evangelical revival of the early nineteenth century produced a religious situation at mid-century which differed radically from what had obtained at 1800, for by the third decade at least two thirds of British Protestants within and without the established church practised some form of Evangelical religion. Evangelicalism, which thus shaped most people's attitudes towards reading and interpretation, taught countless nineteenth-century readers sophisticated approaches to typology and biblical prophecy, both of which they often found in rather surprising portions of Holy Scripture. Therefore, a precise knowledge of the Bible and its associated interpretive traditions formed a crucial element in the intellectual heritage (or intellectual baggage) of nineteenth-century readers, who possessed a rich repertoire of forms, codes, and symbols derived from the Book of Revelation and other books of the Bible.

The cultural accessibility of complex allusions to the Apocalypse in the Victorian age perhaps best appears in the fact that so many popular works made use of them. One finds little surprising in the fact that Edward Bickersteth, an Evangelical clergyman, wrote a popular visionary epic, *Yesterday, Today, and For-Ever* (1866), which tries to outdo Milton both by

casting away all allusions to pagan literature and by furnishing a poetic redaction of the Apocalypse. Similarly, William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* (1853), which was probably the most popular British religious painting of the nineteenth century, illustrates a verse from the Book of Revelation, and the artist's very popular *Triumph of the Innocents* (versions 1884, 1887), which he painted many years later, parallels -- and possibly derives from -- John Keble's "The Holy Innocents," which takes as its text Revelation 14.4. Keble's extraordinarily popular *The Christian Year* also makes half a dozen other references to the Apocalypse.

Given a large contemporary audience capable of responding to the kind of allusions made by these religious works, Victorian authors like Carlyle and Ruskin frequently salt their prose with heavy allusion to the Apocalypse. Tennyson's "The Holy Grail," which makes several crucial allusions to Revelation, employs them differently than did either of these two previous groups of literary and pictorial artists. Whereas Bickersteth, Hunt, and Keble represent those who convey essentially religious themes by means of orthodox allusions, Carlyle and Ruskin, both of whom at one time or another abandoned orthodox Christianity, represent those many authors who employ specific allusions to the Apocalypse in extended and usually secularized forms. In contrast, Tennyson, who writes as a Christian, employs his allusions to the Book of Revelation to call into question the entire notion of revelation itself. Tennyson, we recall, began *The Idylls of the King* with "The Coming of Arthur," in which he dramatizes the essentially subjective means by which men and women attain to belief. After questioning others about their reasons for accepting Arthur's authenticity, King Leodogrand, Guinevere's father, falls asleep and has an ambiguous dream which presents Arthur's kingship in apocalyptic terms, for it includes both a joining of heaven and earth and the end of a world. He awakens and decides to give his daughter, his faith, and his allegiance to the young, untested monarch. Later in *The Idylls*, Tennyson presents such essentially subjective decisions far more darkly, since in "The Holy Grail" the grail vision comes to almost every knight as a disruptive force which leads him to break faith with his king and seek salvation for himself. At the close of the idyll, Tennyson has Arthur, who had been away from Camelot on a mission of justice and mercy when the vision appeared, tell how he, like the ploughman, must first do his task and not chase after ambiguous revelations. Using allusions from the Gospels and contemporary prophetic readings of the Psalms, Tennyson thus strongly suggests that one should avoid immersing oneself in apocalypics and instead confine oneself to the clearer portions of scripture as guides for living on this earth. The poet's closing allusions, like those to the Book of Revelation in the visions of Percival, Bors, and Lancelot, display a detailed knowledge of apocalypics being used, at least in part, to attack what he believes to be an excessive concentration upon them.

From Worldwide Church of God website:

Although Daniel and Revelation are sometimes designated simply as "prophecy," the two books are more accurately labelled apocalyptic literature, a specific type of prophetic writing.

However, neither book is entirely apocalyptic. The early chapters of Daniel are historical, and Revelation includes letters to seven churches in Asia Minor.

One distinction between apocalyptic and prophetic literature lies in the history of their development. Prophetic literature dates from the eighth century B.C. to the fifth century B.C. Apocalyptic literature, on the other hand, was popular among Jews living from the second century B.C. until the second century A.D. (This is not to say that apocalyptic was unknown before the second century B.C. Conservative scholars date the book of Daniel much earlier.)

The historical distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic is important. Most of the Old Testament prophetic messages went to Israel or Judah while the nations still retained some sovereignty.

Apocalyptic writings, however, flourished when Israel was no longer a sovereign nation. The Jews had spread throughout the known world, and those among them who produced apocalyptic writings were struggling to maintain their relationship with God while living under Greco-Roman rule.

A second distinction lies in the types of revelation on which the two different genres of prophecy and apocalyptic draw. Apocalyptic is a revelation, usually experienced through dream and vision. The book of Revelation reflects this facet of apocalyptic literature.

God inspired John to show that an angel revealed visions to him: "The revelation of Jesus Christ" who "make it known by sending his angel to his servant John" (Revelation 1:1). This supernatural revelation given to John is filled with symbols and imagery.

Although prophecy comes from God and is a type of revelation, it is most frequently expressed as the word of God rather than as a vision. That is why the phrase "Thus says the Lord" appears in prophecy so often.

Another difference between apocalyptic and prophecy is the type of imagery used. Prophetic imagery most often includes easily recognized symbols, like plants, animals and farm tools. Apocalyptic imagery is often strange and unknown.

In *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, Grant R. Osborne comments that "the purpose of esoteric symbols in apocalyptic is to turn readers from the actual event to its theological meaning. In other words, readers are expected to see the hand of God in the future but are not supposed to know the exact sequence of events."

Prophecy and apocalyptic both stir hearers to repentance and both encourage believers. Even so, the primary purpose of prophecy is to bring people to repentance, while the principal aim of apocalyptic literature is to encourage.

With these distinctions in mind, it is clear that prophecy and apocalyptic share a common goal -- to point people to God. By condemning the nation's sins and seeking Israel's repentance, prophecy pointed the Israelites to their God, just as it continues to point us to God. Likewise, apocalyptic books pointed persecuted believers to God through an encouraging symbolic description of the triumphant, end-time return of Christ. Those same visions point us to God today.

For Christians, the most important message of Revelation and Daniel is not precise symbolic meaning and definitions of dragons and horns. The urgent message is that Jesus has not forgotten his elect and will, in due time, intervene in world history.

Bill Palmer

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