**Apocalypse**

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*This article is about the general concept of Apocalypse. For specific Apocalypses, see* [*Apocalypse (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse_%28disambiguation%29)*.*

Apocalypse depicted in [Christian Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) traditional [fresco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fresco) scenes in [Osogovo Monastery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osogovo_Monastery), [Republic of Macedonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Macedonia)

St. John at Patmos: the receiving of an apocalyptic vision

An **apocalypse** ([Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): ἀποκάλυψις *apokálypsis*; "lifting of the veil" or "revelation") is a disclosure of something hidden from the majority of mankind in an era dominated by falsehood and misconception, i.e. [the veil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calypsis) to be lifted. *The Apocalypse of John* (Greek *Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου*) is the [Book of Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation), the last book of the [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament). By extension, *apocalypse* can refer to any [End Time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End_Time) scenario, or to the [end of the world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Risks_to_civilization%2C_humans_and_planet_Earth) in general.

**Characteristic features**

**Dreams or visions**

The disclosure of future events is made through a dream, as was the experience for the prophet [Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel), which is recorded in the book with his name, or a [vision](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vision_%28religion%29) as was recorded by [John of Patmos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_Patmos) in the [Book of Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation). Moreover, the manner of the revelation and the experience of the one who received it are generally prominent.

The primary example of apocalyptic literature in the Bible is the [Book of Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel). After a long period of [fasting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasting), Daniel is standing by a river when a heavenly being appears to him, and the revelation follows ([Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel) 10:2ff). John, in the [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) [Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation) (1:9ff), has a similar experience, told in very similar words. Compare also the first chapter of the [*Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Apocalypse_of_Baruch); and the [*Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syriac_Apocalypse_of_Baruch), vi.1ff, xiii.1ff, lv.1-3. Or, as the prophet lies upon his bed, distressed for the future of his people, he falls into a sort of trance, and in "the visions of his head" is shown the future. This is the case in Daniel 7:1ff; [2 Esdras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2_Esdras) 3:1-3; and in the Book of Enoch, i.2 and following. As to the description of the effect of the vision upon the seer, see Daniel 8:27; Enoch, lx.3; 2 Esdras 5:14.

**Angels**

The introduction of [angels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angels) as messengers of the apocalypse is a standing feature. At least four types or ranks of angels are mentioned in biblical scripture: the [Archangels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archangels), [Angels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angels), [Cherubim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherubim) and the [Seraphim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seraph). God may give instructions through the medium of these heavenly messengers; they act as the seer's guide. God may also personally give a revelation, as is shown in the Book of Revelation through the person of [Jesus Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ). The [Book of Genesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Genesis) speaks of the "Angel" bringing forth the apocalypse.

**Future**

Apocalyptic visions through the writing of these scriptures is how the prophets revealed God's justice as taking place in the future. This genre has a distinctly religious aim, intended to show God's way of dealing with humankind, and God's ultimate purposes. The writers present, sometimes very vividly, a picture of coming events, especially those connected with the end of the present age. In certain of these writings the subject matter is vaguely described as "that which shall come to pass in the later days" (Daniel 2:28; compare verse 29); similarly Daniel 10:14, "to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the later days"; compare [Enoch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Enoch), i.1, 2; x.2ff. So, too, in Revelation 1:1 (compare the [Septuagint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint) translation of Daniel 2:28ff), "Revelation ... that which must shortly come to pass."

[Viktor Vasnetsov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Vasnetsov), the four riders of the Apocalypse

Future history is not included in the vision, traditionally said to give the proper historical setting to the prediction, as the panorama of successive events passes over imperceptibly from the known to the unknown. Thus, in the eleventh chapter of Daniel, the detailed history of the Greek empire in the East, from the conquest of [Alexander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) down to the latter part of the reign of [Antiochus Epiphanes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_Epiphanes) (verses 3-39, all presented in the form of a prediction), is continued, without any break, in a scarcely less vivid description (verses 40-45) of events which had not yet taken place, but were expected by the writer: the wars which should result in the death of Antiochus and the fall of his kingdom. Modern scholars therefore date the composition of the book to about 167 BCE, when Antiochus Epiphanes sacked [Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem) and desecrated the [Holy Places](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Places). This serves as the introduction to the [eschatological](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eschatology) predictions in the twelfth chapter.

Similarly, in the dream recounted in 2 [Esdras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esdras) 11 and 12, the eagle, representing the [Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire), is followed by the lion, which is the promised [Messiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah), who is to deliver the chosen people and establish an everlasting kingdom. The transition from history to prediction is seen in xii.28, where the expected end of [Domitian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domitian)'s reign – and with it the end of the world – is foretold. Still another example of the same kind is Sibyllines verses, iii.608-623. Compare also *Assumptio Mosis*, vii-ix. In nearly all the writings which are properly classed as apocalyptic the eschatological element is prominent. The growth of speculation regarding the [age to come](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_to_Come) and the hope for the chosen people more than anything else occasioned the rise and influenced the development of [apocalyptic literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalyptic_literature).

**Mystical symbolism**

[Mystical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism) [symbolism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolism) is a frequent characteristic of apocalyptic writing. This feature is illustrated in the instances where [gematria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gematria) is employed either for the sake of obscuring the writer's meaning, or enhancing its meaning further as a number of ancient cultures used letters also as numbers (*i.e.*, the Romans with their use of "[Roman numerals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_numerals)"). Thus, the mysterious name "*Taxo*," "*Assumptio Mosis*", ix. 1; the [*"Number of the Beast*" (616 / 666)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Number_of_the_Beast), of Revelation 13:18; the number 888 ('Iησōῦς), *Sibyllines*, i.326-330.

Similar to this discussion is the frequent prophecy of the length of time through which the events predicted must be fulfilled. Thus, the "time, times, and a half," Daniel 12:7 which has generally been agreed to be 3½ years in length by dispensationalists; the "*fifty-eight times*" of Enoch, xc.5, "*Assumptio Mosis*", x.11; the announcement of a certain number of "weeks" or days, which starting point in Daniel 9:24, 25 is "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build [Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem) unto the [Messiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah) the Prince shall be seven weeks", a mention of 1290 days after the covenant/sacrifice is broken (Daniel 12:11), 12; Enoch xciii.3-10; 2 Esdras 14:11, 12; *Apocalypse of Baruch* xxvi-xxviii; Revelation 11:3, which mentions "two witnesses" with supernatural power, 12:6; compare *Assumptio Mosis*, vii.1. Symbolic language is also used to describe persons, things, or events; thus, the "horns" of Daniel 7 and 8; Revelation 17 and following; the "heads" and "wings" of 2 [Esdras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esdras) xi and following; the seven seals of Revelation 6; trumpets, Revelation 8; "vials of the wrath of God" or "bowl..." judgments, Revelation 16; the dragon, Revelation 12:3-17, Revelation 20:1-3; the eagle, *Assumptio Mosis*, x.8; and so on.

As examples of more elaborate prophecies and allegories, aside from those in Daniel Chapters 7 and 8; and 2 Esdras Chapters 11 and 12, already referred to, may be mentioned: the vision of the bulls and the sheep, [Enoch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Enoch) lxxxv and following; the forest, the vine, the fountain, and the cedar, *Apocalypse of Baruch* xxxvi and following; the bright and the black waters, ibid. liii and following; the willow and its branches, [Hermas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermas), "Similitudines," viii.

**End of the age**

[Russian Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church) [icon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon) *Apocalypse*

In John's apocalypse, the [Book of Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation), he refers to the "unveiling" or "revelation" of [Jesus Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ) as [Messiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah). This term has come to mean, in common usage, the [end of the world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eschatology).

The simple pictures of the end of the age in the books of the [Old Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament) were images of the judgment of the wicked, as well as the resurrection and glorification of those who were given [righteousness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imputed_righteousness) before God. The dead are seen in the [Book of Job](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Job) and in some of the [Psalms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms) as being in [Sheol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheol), awaiting the final judgment. The wicked will then be consigned to eternal torment in the fires of [Gehinnom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gehinnom), or the Lake of Fire mentioned in Revelation.

The [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) letters written by the [Apostle Paul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostle_Paul) expand on this theme of the judgment of the wicked, and the glorification of those who belong to Christ or Messiah. In his letters to the [Corinthians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistles_to_the_Corinthians_%28disambiguation%29) and the [Thessalonians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistles_to_the_Thessalonians_%28disambiguation%29) Paul expounds further on the destiny of the righteous. He speaks of the simultaneous [resurrection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection) and [rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture) of those who are in Christ (or Messiah).

[Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) had a [Millennial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennialism) expectation for glorification of the righteous from the time it emerged from [Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) and spread out into the world in the first century. The poetic and prophetic literature of the [Hebrew Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible), particularly in [Isaiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bookgay_of_Isaiah&action=edit&redlink=1), were rich in Millennial imagery. The [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) Congregation after [Pentecost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecost) carried on with this theme. During his imprisonment by the Romans on the Island of [Patmos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patmos), [John](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_Patmos) described the visions he experienced, writing the Book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 20 contains several references to a thousand-year reign of Christ/Messiah upon the earth.

Modern Christian movements in the 18th and 19th centuries were characterized by a rise of [Millennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennialism). Christian Apocalyptic eschatology was a continuation of the same two themes referred to throughout all of scripture as "this age" and "the age to come". [Evangelicals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical) have been in the forefront popularizing the biblical prophecy of a major confrontation between good and evil at the end of this age, a coming Millennium to follow, and a final confrontation whereby the wicked are judged, the righteous are rewarded and the beginning of Eternity is viewed.

Most evangelicals have been taught a form of Millennialism known as [Dispensationalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism), which arose in the 19th century. Dispensationalism sees separate destinies for the [Christian Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church) and [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel). Its concept of a special Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church has become extremely popular, thanks in part to the [*Left Behind*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Behind) series of books and films. Dispensationalist interpretations find in biblical prophecy predictions of future events: the various periods of the church, for example, shown through the letters to the seven churches; the throne of God in Heaven and his Glory; specific judgments that will occur on the earth; the final form of [Gentile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gentile) power; God' re-dealing with the nation Israel based upon [covenants](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covenant_%28biblical%29) mentioned in the [Old Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament); the [second coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_coming) proper; a one-thousand year reign of Messiah; a last test of Mankind's sinful nature under ideal conditions by the loosing of [Satan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan), with a judgment of fire coming down from Heaven that follows; the [Great White Throne Judgment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_White_Throne), and the destruction of the current heavens and the earth, to be recreated as a "New Heaven and New Earth" ushering in the beginning of Eternity. A differing interpretation is found in the [Post Tribulation Rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Tribulation_Rapture).

One of the most complete exegetical works on the meaning of the Book of Revelation was written by [Emanuel Swedenborg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emanuel_Swedenborg) called the Apocalypse Revealed, first published in two volumes in [Amsterdam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amsterdam) in 1766. A more current book, utilizing the literal method of interpretation, is *The Revelation Record* by [Henry M. Morris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_M._Morris).

This page was last modified on 23 March 2012 at 18:02.