# The Apocalyspe: Crash Course World Mythology #23

Crash Course: World Mythology
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Hey there, I'm Mike Rugnetta, this is Crash Course Mythology, and today we'll be talking about the moment that you've all been waiting for, or perhaps dreading. That's right Thoth, it's the end of the world.

These days books and movies and video games are big on post-apocalypse stories: nuclear fallout, zombies, robot uprisings, nuclear-powered robot zombie uprisings. But before there were post apocalypse stories, there were plain old apocalypse stories.

What's an apocalypse? Well, it's a fancy way of saying "The End of the World," but often with a religious connotation. So yes, fair warning: the apocalyptic visions we're discussing come from living religious texts and as usual, we're not going to touch on their religious significance, but these stories do fit our definition of myth: significant stories that have been important to many people for a very long time.

So, let's get started with all of these endings!

[Opening music]

We can find stories of the end of the world in cultures around the globe and perhaps that's because they reflect the uncomfortable fact that for individual people, the world does come to an end, in a sense, when when we, you know, die. But apocalypses are about more than any individual death. They're about imagining how a supernatural power will eventually end all human life in its entirety.

According to our old pal, David Leeming, "Through their myths of the apocalypse, human societies express a sense that higher powers of the universe must intervene definitively to put an end to the failure of humanity."

This theme of divine punishment is similar to what we saw in all those flood stories: China, Mesopotamia, the Inca Empire. But there's one significant difference: flood stories are about the past but apocalypse stories - apocalypse comes from a Greek word for uncovering by the w - always reveal something yet to come. This makes talking about them a little strange because they're old stories rooted in the past which discuss a distant glob-only-knows-when future.

What we'll see today is the flood story theme of judgment combined with focus on torment for those harshly judged. And in many cases, just like the flood stories, these end of everything tales actually promise a new beginning. There's more than one tale of apocalypse in the Hebrew Bible foretold by a number of prophets. In some of these prophecies, the end of the world is marked by two events: first, general destruction, usually of the natural world, followed by a judgment punishing the enemies of God. We're going to see these themes repeated again and again.

The Book of Isaiah describes the promised destruction: "Behold, the Lord will strip the Earth bare and lay it waste, and twist its surface, and scatter its inhabitants."

The Book of Zechariah has little more detail about how the judgment will work itself out. Amid the destruction of the world, the people of Jerusalem will be embroiled in a great battle, but the Lord Himself will go forth to sway the battle and save his righteous followers.

And those on th other side of the battle, the not-righteous, you might be wondering? Well: "Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouth." Anyone who manages to survive the literal face-melting, the Lord will put a "great tumult" among them, leaving all of the non-believers to fight each other as the world burns down around them.

For the true believers in Yahweh, the prophecy promises safety and survival in the Kingdom of God. This is an apocalyptic attribute that we're going to see more than once today: "If you got faith, you safe!"

For the ancient Persian Zoroastrians, the ultimate deity, Ahura Mazda, has a destructive counterpart in Angra Mainyu or Ahriman. In their apocalypse prophecy, your faith is tied to which one you follow. The many followers of Ahriman will be punished, while the few faithful to Ahura Mazda will be rewarded.

According to David Leeming, "Fire, the son of Ahura Mazda, will flow like a river over the universe, as an ultimate sacrifice, destroying all before it-including even hell- and separating the good from the evil as a 'Last Judgment'. Then, through ceremonies presided over by the savior, Saoshyant, the resurrection of the bodies of the good will take place and a new golden age will follow."

Saoshyant, who is referred to as a single figure, sometimes,and other times is a group of figures, is a kind of messiah who will help remake the world and redeem worthy human kind. In some traditions, the Saoshyant is also a product of a virgin birth, but this story involves bathing in a lake filled with sperm.

Lake of sperm aside, maybe you are picking on some similarities. There was a great deal of synergism among the religions of the eastern Mediterranean, which brings us to the Christian apocalypse. The end of the world is described in the Book of Revelation. It portrays the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth, the raising of the dead and the last judgment. We got angels and Antichrist, plagues, this end of days has it all.

Come on down to the Thought Bubble!

Amid all the chaos at the end of days, St. John the Divine describes, in particular detail, the alchemical plagues of seven angels. He writes, "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God."

The seven angels appear, each holding their own vial of plague liquid. One by one, they pour them out across the land, the first angel pours their vial and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped His image.

The second angel pours their vial into the sea which turns into blood. The third angel pours a vial on the rivers and the fountains, which also turn into blood. The fourth angel pours their vial into the Sun, which flares up and scorches those on the face of the Earth. Angel five pours on the seat of the beast. This fills their kingdom with darkness and causes their followers to gnaw their own tongues in pain.

The sixth angel pours their vial on the great river Euphrates, and in kind of a twist, the river doesn't turn into blood but it does dry up entirely. The final angel pours their liquid into the air which causes a great booming voice to come from the Temple of Heaven saying, "It is done."

There's thunder and lightning and a terrible earthquake, and all the remaining cities of all the nations of Earth crumble and fall.

Thank you, Thought Bubble?

The apocalypse story in Revelation has a lot in common with the older prophecy told by Zachariah: plagues, war, the dissolving of terrestrial nations. But there's one very significant difference which is that Revelation makes frequent reference to "The Beast." Saint

John has added a villain, similar to what we saw in Zoroastrinism. Of course, the villain stuff gets complicated because there are actually two beasts and a dragon - yes, there is also a dragon. So I guess that means that there are then three beasts? Also, the dragon is the devil.

The last story of apocalypse that we're going to talk about comes from Islam, and since Islam is also an Abrahamic tradition, it's unsurprising that there are similarities between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim accounts of the end of the world. There's a long description of the final judgment in Sura 56 of the Quran. But there's also interesting additional information recorded in a collection of "hadith", which are sayings and stories of the life of Muhammad.

It's worth nothing that while this is a religious text in Islam, it's considered a secondary text to Quran and not all collections of hadith are equally esteemed. Muslims have a variety of relationships with the hadith, often depending upon their denomination and how well sourced a given hadith is. Here at Crash Course Mythology, we're interested in stories which is why we're drawing on this particular hadith, but if you wanna know more, you can check out the two episodes of Crash Course World History about Islam that cover this very topic.

When asked about the judgment that's mentioned in the Quran, Mohammed offers further explanation. He says that at this terrible time people will forsake studying the Quran and indulge in earthly pleasures. There will be famine and plague in Medina and Mecca, earthquakes throughout North Africa, thunderstorms in Iran and Turkey, banditry in Iraq, and floods in the Far East. As morality decays among all the people, the Dajjal, or Antichrist, will appear riding on a donkey and subjecting all the people to his rule. Dajjal's rule, not the donkey's rule.

The Dajjal will only rule for forty days, though, before God sends Jesus and an army of the faithful from Heaven. Jesus will defeat and kill the Dajjal and then reign for forty years, but each of the these years will have twenty-six months so it'll be more like eighty-seven years. At that point, Jesus will travel to Jerusalem, pray at the Dome of the rock and be taken up to Heaven. And this is where things get intense.

Seven days after Jesus ascends, the monsters Ya'juj and Ma'juj, referred to in the Old and New Testament as Gog and Magog, will escape from their bondage and destroy civilization. Then the angel Israphel will blow the horn of judgment. Mountains will crumble, there will be forty more years of earthquakes and terrible storms. Then Israphel will sound the horn again - the souls and bodies of the faithful will be reunited, resurrected, and spent the next forty years praising Allah.

After this final forty year period, the trumpet will sound again and Mohammad will return to earth for the day of judgment. Everyone will have their secret sins measured against their good deeds on the scales of judgment. The Allah will tip the scales if one of the damned sincerely calls for mercy. And finally, all will walk to cross the bridge into Paradise - easy and wide for the righteous, while the damned can't help but slip off and fall below into hell. But even if they do fall into hell, if they really have a change of heart along the way they'll be able to scramble out in time. There's always hope for things to turn around.

So these apocalypse stories feature plagues and natural disasters, things far beyond mortal control. And let's not forget the unnatural disasters like rivers of molten metal or the dragons - not nice ones interested in responding or helping with floods either. And yet, these apocalypse stories mix terror with hope. As in flood myths, apocalypse stories from the religious of the traditions of the Eastern Mediterranean, all offer some sense of everlasting life beyond this world-at least for believers.

If they speak to the end of the world, they also speak to the faithful in the present moment, promising great rewards or amnesty from everlasting torment if that faith continues. But let's hope the world doesn't end too soon, at least not before we get to talk about Ragnarok.

Thanks for watching, we'll see you next time!

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Thanks for watching, and the beware! The end of this video is nigh!