

What's going on?

September 13, 2020

The fire has eerie sky colors and the smoke is hazardous to your health and the updates are ever changing. But, is it apocalyptic? What does that even mean?

A dictionary definition is "Describing or prophesying the complete destruction of the world." www.lexico.com

The biblical meaning of the word "apocalypse" is to uncover or reveal something that was previously hidden. Central to this is the opening of eyes to see things you missed and opening of ears to hear things you never understood before. Basically, you see God by looking at Jesus and you hear God by listening to Jesus.

Sight and sound must be accompanied by understanding with the heart, resulting in repentance and belief. So in Matthew 13:16 Jesus tells His disciples "blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."

There are some lessons for us when we consider the biblical uses of the word "apocalypse." That word can be a noun (revelation) or a verb (to reveal).

1. Jesus reveals God to simple, trusting hearts in childlike faith

In Matthew 11:25-27, Jesus praises God because He has hidden things from the wise and learned and revealed (*apocalypse*) them to little children. He goes on to say that "no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal (*apocalyse*) him."

That doesn't sound like the end of the world, or does it? The end of pride, definitely. The end of self-importance, absolutely. The end of pretending, know-it-all attitudes, and self-sufficiency, you betcha.

In some strange way, things that we cannot control (viruses, wildfires, politicians) may actually be apocalyptic in revealing to us what we've been trusting all along. Manmade solutions give short-term comfort. God offers eternal good news, not temporary fixes.

2. Jesus reveals the gospel, the good news of God's righteousness accessed by faith alone.

Romans 1:17, says "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed (*apocalypse*), a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.' "

There is nothing that you can do to earn your salvation. You cannot justify your actions, your thoughts, your words to make them sound right before God. Your excuses sound lame when you try to justify yourself before your family and friends!

Coming to the end of yourself is another kind of apocalypse, a revelation that you are not enough in and of yourself. God's way is to justify sinners by faith, not works.

Romans 3:21-22 says, "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

3. Jesus reveals the relative insignificance of present trials in the light of future glory

Romans 8:17-18 says, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed (*apocalypse*) in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed (*apocalypse*).”

Not worth comparing? How can he say that? The present trials, as bad as they are, will not even register against the glory God holds in store for His children.

1 Peter 1:5 tells us that “through faith [we] are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed (*apocalypse*) in the last time.” Peter focuses his readers beyond their present trials by referring to future revelation of the glory of God in 1:7, 13; 4:13; 5:1.

Paul calls his many troubles “light and momentary” saying “[they] are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

4. Jesus will reveal His glory when he returns in full power at the end of all things

This is probably the closest to what people mean when they say it looks “apocalyptic” outside. They mean it looks like the end of the world.

For believers, this is about as far from a catastrophic cataclysm as you can get. This is finally seeing Jesus, the object of our faith. For those who are in Christ, we are not dreading this day. We actually are looking forward to it.

1 Corinthians 1:7 says, “We eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed (*apocalypse*).” No one eagerly waits for a disaster! This will be our deliverance.

2 Thessalonians 1:7 teaches that it will be a “relief to you who are troubled” when “the Lord Jesus is revealed (*apocalypse*) from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.” For believers, the apocalypse is as good as it gets. For unbelievers it is terrible and final judgment. “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

The last book in the Bible begins, “The revelation (*apocalypse*) of Jesus Christ” and the book ends with a hopeful expectation “Come, Lord Jesus!”

So, the next time you say or you hear someone say, “It is apocalyptic out there!” know that is an exaggeration, just a figure of speech.

Is this the apocalypse? No, but it is bad and I pray the fires and virus and violence stop so people have a chance to repent and believe before Jesus returns “on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed” (2 Thessalonians 1:10).