

The term 'apocrypha' derives from the Greek 'apocryphos' which means 'hidden'. It is equivalent to a Hebrew term 'ganaz' which means 'to store up'. Referred to books, it meant 'to withdraw from use'. Originally, it must have designated those sacred books withheld from the public due to their 'exalted' content, i.e., some special teachings of certain religious or philosophical sects. The members of the concerned sect alone had access to them.<sup>1</sup> In Dan 12:9-10 we are told that some words are shut up till the end of time - words that the wise shall understand and the wicked shall not. 4 Ezra mentions 94 books of which 24 (the OT) were to be published and 70 were to be handed over to only the wise among the people for 'in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge' (14:44-47). Gradually, the term, 'apocrypha' took on a pejorative meaning as it was found that the orthodoxy of these books was often questionable. It referred to books forbidden to be read during public worship. By Jerome's time (c 400) the term came to be used for noncanonical books. It is used in this sense here. According to the Protestants, the term applies to the books of Tobit, Judith, 1-2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch plus parts of the books of Esther and Daniel (known as deuterocanonical in Catholic parlance) with the addition of 1-2 Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh and, sometimes, 3-4 Maccabees. In the Catholic usage, 'apocrypha' designates ancient Jewish or Christian books of, or pretending to be of, the Biblical period but not a part of the canon (list of accepted scriptures). It covers books of both Jewish (commonly called pseudepigrapha by Protestants) and Christian origin.

The apocalyptic genre flourished c 200 BC-100 AD and there were many well known Jewish apocalyptic writings when John composed his Apocalypse, the most important among them being 1 Enoch (2<sup>nd</sup> cent BC-1<sup>st</sup> cent AD), 2 Enoch (late 1<sup>st</sup> cent AD), Sibylline Oracles (2<sup>nd</sup> cent BC-7<sup>th</sup> cent AD), Treatise of Shem (1<sup>st</sup> cent BC), Apocryphon of Ezekiel (1<sup>st</sup> cent BC-1<sup>st</sup> cent AD), Apocalypse of Zephaniah (1<sup>st</sup>

cent BC-1<sup>st</sup> cent AD), Fourth Book of Ezra (late 1<sup>st</sup> cent AD), Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent AD), Apocalypse of Adam (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> cent AD); Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (2<sup>nd</sup> cent BC), Testament of Job (1<sup>st</sup> cent BC-1<sup>st</sup> cent AD), Testament of Moses (1<sup>st</sup> cent AD). John could not have been unaware of them. It is, therefore, really surprising that he is not referring to any non-Biblical apocalyptic literature while making copious use of the Biblical. However, we can find many similarities between the book of the Apocalypse and the Apocryphal writings of the Jewish origin.

### **The Apocalypse and 1 Enoch**

The Apocalypse mentions 'seven spirits who are before his throne' (1:4). These are seven angels of high rank. Enoch, in a vision, sees the Lord summoning the 'seven first snow-white ones' and sending them on particular missions (1 Enoch 90:21). In the epiphany, John describes Christ's head and hair as 'white as white wool, white as snow' (1:13). In 1 Enoch the description fits God.

With them is the Antecedent of Time: His head is white and pure like wool and his garment is indescribable. (1 Enoch 71:11)

The message to Smyrna refers to the 'second death' (2:11) which alludes to 1 Enoch 108:3

... for their names shall be blotted out from the Book of Life and the books of the Holy One; their seeds shall be destroyed forever and their spirits shall perish and die; they shall cry and lament in a place that is a chaotic wilderness, and burn in fire...

The vision of God enthroned, surrounded by different attendants (ch 4), is analogous with 1 Enoch ch 14 and 71. Enoch enters the house which was 'hot like fire and cold like ice.' He sees the 'Great Glory' sitting on a 'lofty throne' and 'no one could come near unto him from among those that surrounded the tens of millions before him...' (1 Enoch ch 14). He also sees 'countless angels - encircling that house. Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Phanuel and numerous holy angels that are in heaven above, go in and out of that

house... With them is the Antecedent of Time: His head is white and pure like wool and his garment is indescribable...' (1 Enoch ch 71). The command 'come up hither,' (4:1) suggests a heavenly journey which is a very common means of 'seeing' the inscrutable ways of the Providence in apocalyptic literature. Enoch learns about the heavenly secrets during his tour of heaven (1 Enoch ch 1-36; 37-71). But, unlike other texts, the Apocalypse does not describe John's ascent, or tour of various locations in heaven, or his descent back to earth. John has a glimpse of 'a sea of glass, like crystal' in front of the throne (4:6); Enoch, during his tour of heaven, enters a house that was built of white marble and had the 'floor of crystal' (1 Enoch 14:10-13), and sees a lofty throne which had 'the appearance like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun' (1 Enoch 14:18).

The vision of the sealed scrolls (5:1-14) is analogous to the heavenly book in Enoch. In the latter case the angel Uriel tells Enoch to read the book.

Then he said to me, "Enoch, look at the tablet of heaven; read what is written upon them and understand one by one." So I looked at the tablet of heaven, read all the writing, and came to understand everything. I read that book of all the deeds of humanity and all the children of the flesh upon the earth for all the generations of the world. (1 Enoch 81:1-3)

The depiction of the Lamb as horned (5:6) is definitely influenced by the imagery of the ram in Enoch:

Now the dogs, foxes, and the wild boars began to devour those sheep till the Lord of the sheep raised up another sheep, one from among them - a ram which would lead them. (1 Enoch 89:42)

The other reference to the ram is in ch 90, which seems to fit in better in the context of the Apocalypse text.

Then I saw in a vision ravens flying above those lambs, and they seized one of those lambs, and then smashing the sheep, they ate them. I kept seeing till those lambs grew horns; but the ravens crushed their horns. Then I kept seeing till one great horn sprouted on one of those sheep, and he opened their eyes... He cried aloud to the sheep, and all the rams saw him and ran unto him.

In spite of this, all those eagles, vultures, ravens, and kites until now continue to rip the sheep... Those ravens gather and battle with him (the horned ram) and seek to remove his horn, but without any success. (1 Enoch 90:8-12)

John sees the four living creatures and the twenty four elders holding 'golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints' (5:8). In Enoch, it is the angels who have the task of interceding for men before the throne of God (1 Enoch 9:3; 15:2; 39:5; 104:1).

So there my eyes saw their dwelling places with the holy angels, and their resting places with the holy ones, and they interceded and petitioned and prayed on behalf of the children of the people (1 Enoch 39:5).

The opening of the sixth seal is followed by cataclysmic events (6:12-14). Enoch speaks of a strict regularity in the working of the universe which is the sign of God's fidelity but man will incur punishment because of his infidelity (1 Enoch chs 2-5; 41).

John has a vision of four angels 'holding back four winds of the earth' and another 'ascend from the rising sun' (7:1-2). In the post-exilic Judaism God was thought to be regulating the natural elements through his angels. Enoch is shown by an angel the mysteries of the winds, moon, stars, thunders and lightnings, frost, hail, and rain (1 Enoch 60:11-22) and 'the angels of punishment who are prepared to come and release all the powers of the waters which are underground to become judgment and destruction unto all who live and dwell upon the earth,' but 'the Lord of the Spirits gave an order to the angels' to hold on (1 Enoch 66:1-2). Then he sees 'a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb' rendering worship (7:9). The imagery comes again in 14:1 and 19:1. Enoch sees 'a hundred thousand times a hundred thousand, ten million times ten million, an innumerable and uncountable multitude who stand before the Lord of the Spirits' (1 Enoch 40:1).

John's vision of a star falling down from heaven (9:1) is an allusion to the myth of the rebellion of Satan

and of the fallen angels. The falling of a star symbolising the punishment of the angels is a very common imagery in Enoch (1 Enoch 18:13; 19:1; 21:3; 86:1; 88:1). Their crime, according to 1 Enoch is choosing wives from among the daughters of men and begetting children (1 Enoch chs 6-8; 15:1-9).

In those days, when the children of man had multiplied, it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them; and they said to one another, "Come, let us choose wives to ourselves from among the daughters of man and beget us children." (1 Enoch 6:1-2)

We find various reasons for their punishment: it was 'because they did not arrive punctually' (1 Enoch 18:15); or they 'transgressed the commandments' (1 Enoch 21:6); or 'united themselves with women,' and 'have defiled the people,' and 'will lead them into error so that they will offer sacrifices to the demons as unto gods' (1 Enoch 19:1). The description of the 'bottomless pit' here and as 'the lake of fire that burns with sulphur' (19:20; 20:14) is analogous to the one in Enoch (1 Enoch 18:9-14; 21:1-10).

The 144,000 who follow the Lamb wherever he goes are those who 'have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste' (14:4). This imagery by contrast alludes to the fallen angels who are deprived of their privileges in heaven. John's vision of 'the angel who has power over fire' (14:18) reminds us of Enoch learning the mysteries of nature (1 Enoch 60:11-23). The worshipper of the beast will drink 'the wine of God's wrath... and he shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb...' (14:10-11). Enoch also speaks of the wicked being judged in the presence of the righteous or sinners being delivered into the hands of the righteous (27:2-3; 48:9; 91:12; 96:1; 98:12). John describes the last judgement with the allegory of the wine press (14:18-20). According to him 'blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14:20). Enoch, describing the great bloodshed which would precede the final judgement, says:

From dawn until sun sets, they shall slay each other. The horse shall walk through the blood of sinners up to his chest; and the chariot shall sink down up to its top. (1 Enoch 100:2-3)

The angel pouring his bowl into the air (16:8) as in 14:8 is inspired by the description of angels in charge of natural elements in 1 Enoch ch 20:

The judgement against the merchants (18:11-13) is analogous to the woes unto sinners in 1 Enoch 94:7-9

Woe unto those who build their houses with sin!

For they shall all be demolished from their foundations;

and they shall fall by the sword.

Those who amass gold and silver;

they shall quickly be destroyed.

Woe unto you, O rich people!

For you have put your trust in your wealth.

You shall ooze out of your riches,

for you do not remember the Most High.

In the days of your affluence, you committed oppression,

you have become ready for death, and for the day of darkness and the day of great judgment.

The beast and the false prophet were thrown into 'the lake of fire that burns with sulphur' (19:20). In 1 Enoch, this place of punishment is 'a deep pit with heavenly fire on its pillars' (1 Enoch 18:11) where the 'spirits of sinners, blasphemers, those who do evil, and those who alter the things which the Lord has done through the mouth of the prophets' are taken (1 Enoch 108:6).

An angel coming down from heaven 'seized the dragon...and bound him for a thousand years' (20:2). Enoch hears the Lord commanding Raphael to 'bind Azaz'el hand and foot and throw him into the Darkness' (1 Enoch 10:4), and Michael to 'bind them for seventy generations underneath the rocks of the ground until the day of their judgment and of their consummation (1 Enoch 10:12). The Apocalypse speaks of 'a thousand years reign' of Christ with his faithful at the end of which Satan will be loosed from

his prison. The Satan will deceive the nations (20:4-7). Enoch, reviewing history in terms of weeks, describes the increase of unrighteousness on this earth until the final judgment comes (1 Enoch 93:3-10). After the final battle 'the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (20:10). Enoch hears God declare to Michael regarding Semyaza and his followers: In those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire - and in torment - in the prison (where) they will be locked up forever. And at the time when they will burn and die, those who collaborated with them will be bound together with them from henceforth unto the end of (all) generations' (1 Enoch 10:13-14). He also sees 'seven stars of heaven bound together... burning with fire' (1 Enoch 21:3). John then sees 'the dead, great and small, standing before the throne ... And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them' for the Last Judgment (20:12-13). The general resurrection, when all the dead will be judged, is also mentioned in 1 Enoch: In those days, Sheol will return all the deposits which she had received and hell will give back all that which it owes (1 Enoch 51:1); they 'were judged by what was written in the books' (20:12). In Jewish apocalyptic writings angels are depicted as recording the deeds of other angels as well as human beings as evidence for the final judgment. Enoch describes the 'shepherds' being commanded by the Lord to 'write down every excess and destruction that will be wrought through the shepherds' and read aloud before him 'each particular case - how many they destroy and how many they give over to destruction - so that this may become a testimony... against them' so that he may 'know all the deeds of the shepherds' in order to evaluate them (1 Enoch 89:61:63). He also sees the Lord sitting on the throne and the books being opened in his presence (1 Enoch 90:20).

John is given the vision of 'a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (21:1). In Enoch God promises that on that day He would transform heaven and earth and make them a blessing forever for His elect ones to dwell in (1 Enoch 45:4); Enoch tells his children that

after the eternal judgment 'the first heaven shall depart and pass away; a new heaven shall appear; and all the powers of heaven shall shine for ever sevenfold' (1 Enoch 91:16). John tells us that the holy city of Jerusalem had a great high wall with twelve gates, three in each direction (21:12-13). Enoch has a similar description of the gates of heaven (1 Enoch 33:1- 36:1). In this city all the nations of the earth will gather to worship God and give him the glory, and that nothing unclean shall enter there (Ap 21:24-27). Such a theme is found in Enoch as well. In the age to come, 'all those who dwell upon the earth shall fall and worship before him; they shall glorify, bless, and sing the name of the Lord of the Spirits' (1 Enoch 48:5). The same theme is found in chapter 10 also but here another element is added, 'the earth shall be cleansed from all pollution, and from all sin, and from all plagues, and from all suffering...' (1 Enoch 10:21-22).

In the vision of the new heaven, John is shown the river of the water of life (22:1). Enoch also sees streams of water flowing from the mountains in Jerusalem (1 Enoch 26:2; 28:2-3; 30:1) In 1 Enoch there is a curse pronounced on those who have 'forsaken the fountain of life' (1 Enoch 96:6). John's vision of the 'tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations' (22:2) has a counter part in Enoch (1 Enoch chs 26; 30-32). There will nothing accursed in the holy city (22:3). Enoch had seen an accursed valley in the middle of the beautiful trees, and also the rubbish-smelling tree of judgment (1 Enoch 27:1- 2; 29:2). John thinks that the wicked will not repent, in spite of the warnings and punishment they will continue in their evil ways while the holy would persevere in their good ways (22:11), a theme echoed by 1 Enoch as well:

... For the upright shall announce righteousness to the upright; and the righteous ones shall rejoice with the righteous ones and congratulate each other. But the sinners shall die together with the sinners; and the apostate shall sink together with the apostate (1 Enoch 81:7-8).

John's warning against either adding to or taking away from the words of his prophecy also finds a counterpart in 1 Enoch:

Do not become wicked in your hearts, or lie, or alter the words of a just verdict, or utter falsehood against the words of the Great, the Holy One,... For they (the sinners) shall alter the just verdict and many sinners will take it to heart; they will speak evil words and lie, and they will invent fictitious stories and write out my Scriptures on the basis of their own words... Again know another mystery!: that the righteous and the wise shall be given the Scriptures of joy, for truth and great wisdom.

(1 Enoch 104:9-12)

## **The Apocalypse and 2 Enoch**

John is granted a vision of the heavenly court (4:1-11). Such a vision is also found in 2 Enoch ch 20.

And those men lifted me up from there, and they carried me up to the 7<sup>th</sup> heaven. And I saw there an exceptionally great light, and all the fiery armies of the great archangels, and the incorporeal forces and the dominions and the origins and the authorities, the cherubim and the seraphim and the many-eyed thrones... And they showed me the Lord, from a distance, sitting on his exceedingly high throne.

The vision of the 'star fallen from heaven to earth' (9:1) recalls the myth of the fallen angels and the rebellion of Satan. 2 Enoch describes it thus:

"These are the Grigori, who turned aside from the Lord, 200 myriads, together with their prince Satanail... And they broke the promise on the shoulder of Mount Ermon. And they saw the daughters of men, how beautiful they were; and they took wives for themselves, and the earth was defiled by their deeds." (2 Enoch 18:3-4)

John speaks of the vision of the great dragon being thrown down from heaven to the earth along with his angels (12:9). In 2 Enoch 29:2-5 we find a similar description

But one from the order of the archangels deviated, together with the division that was under his

authority. He thought up the impossible idea that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to my power. And I hurled him out from the height, together with his angels. And he was flying around in the air, ceaselessly, above the Bottomless.

John sees 'the river of the water of life... flowing from the throne of God' in the new Jerusalem 22:1). In 2 Enoch there is the picture of a river in Paradise, issuing in the third heaven and flowing from beneath the tree of life and dividing itself into four streams of honey, milk, wine and oil (2 Enoch 8:5).

### **The Apocalypse and the 3 Enoch**

John presents the twenty four elders as seated on their thrones (4:4). The apocalyptic literature generally depicts all heavenly being standing around the seated deity.

...The princes of kingdoms stood beside me, to my right and to my left, by authority of the Holy One...

(3 Enoch 16:1)

### **The Apocalypse and the Sibylline Oracles**

In the inaugural vision, John describes the eyes of the 'one like a son of man' as 'like a flame of fire' (1:14). The same expression is used in 19:12 to describe the eyes of the 'Faithful and True'. The Sibylline Oracles also describes the 'fiery eye' of Christ which 'flashes like lightning' (Sib Or 6:28).

In the message to the church of Smyrna John refers to 'the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but a synagogue of Satan' (2:9). A similar polemic is also used in the message to the church of Philadelphia in 3:9. The Sibylline Oracles also refers to those who falsely claim to be Hebrews.

But they will endure extreme toil who, for gain, will prophesy base things, augmenting an evil time; who putting on the shaggy hides of sheep will falsely claim to be Hebrews, which is not their race.

As soon as the Lamb opened the fifth seal John saw `under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" (6:10) The blood crying out to heaven for revenge is a motif found in Sibylline Oracles, too.

Then you will be filled with blood, as you yourself formerly  
poured out the blood of good men and righteous men,  
whose blood even now cries out to high heaven. (Sib Or 3:312-314)

With the opening of the sixth seal `there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell on the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place' (6:12-14). The Sibylline Oracles draw a similar picture of the cosmic destruction in terms of the sky being rolled up.

... then all the elements of the universe  
will be bereft, when God who dwells in the sky  
rolls up the heaven as a scroll is rolled,  
and the whole variegated vault of heaven falls  
on the wondrous earth and ocean. An undying cataract  
of raging fire will flow, and burn earth, burn sea,  
and melt the heavenly vault and days and creation itself  
into one and separate them into clear air.  
There will no longer be twinkling spheres of luminaries,  
no night, no dawn, no numerous days of care,  
no spring, no summer, no winter, no autumn. (Sib Or 3:80-90)

The light of the sun will be eclipsed and the troupes of stars.

He will roll up heaven. The light of moon will perish. (Sib Or 8:232-233)

For I will melt all things and separate them into clear air.

I will roll up heaven, open the recesses of the earth. (Sib Or 8:412-413)

When the third trumpet was blown `a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the water became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter (8:10-11). When the fifth trumpet was blown another star fell on earth and caused terrible destruction on earth (9:1). A parallel can be found in the Sibylline Oracles, too.

But when after the fourth year a great star shines  
which alone will destroy the whole earth, because of  
the honour which they first gave to Poseidon of the sea  
a great star will come from heaven to the wondrous sea  
and will burn the deep sea and Babylon... (Sib Or 5:155-159)

The vision of the bottomless pit unfolds before John the torture of the adversaries of God. So great would be their agony `in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them' (9:6). The Sibylline Oracles depict the fate of the wicked in similar words.

They will not have their fill of tears, nor will their voice  
be heard as they lament piteously here and there,  
but in distress they will shout at length ...  
burning in much fire. They will gnash their teeth,  
wasting away with thirst and raging violence.  
They will call death fair, and it will evade them.

No longer will death or night give them rest. (Sib Or 2:300-328)

All the souls of men will gnash their teeth

with the wailings and panic of the lawless souls,

dissolving with thirst and famine and pestilence and murders,

and they will call death fair and it will evade them.

For no longer death will give rest to those, or night. (Sib Or 8:350-354)

In the trumpet series of visions the four angels bound at the Euphrates were released by the sixth angel 'to kill a third of mankind' and by the 'three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur' issuing from the mouth of the horses and their riders (9:15,18). A prophecy of various disasters in the Sibylline Oracles pronounces that only a third of mankind will survive the catastrophe.

... and cause drought over the whole earth, and make the earth iron.

But then all mortals will weep terribly

for the lack of sowing and ploughing, and the one who created heaven and earth

will set down much lamented fire on the earth.

One third of all mankind will survive. (Sib Or 3:540-544)

John sees two portents in heaven, one of a pregnant woman and the other of 'a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns' (12:3). He also sees 'a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads' in 13:1. The Sibylline Oracles mentions that 'when the purple dragon comes on the waves... then the end of the world and the last day is near' (8:88-91). The dragon's 'tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth' (12:4). The Sibylline Oracles describes the Titans (seventh generation) waging war against the 'starry heavens'.

But they also will have a proud heart

and finally rushing towards destruction will plot

to fight in opposition against the starry heaven. (Sib Or 1:312-314)

The child whom the woman brought forth, and the dragon wanted to devour 'is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron (12:5). The rule with a rod of iron is also referred to elsewhere in the Apocalypse (2:27; 19:15).

The Sibylline Oracles mentions that 'a holy prince will gain control of the scepters of the whole world for all ages' (Sib Or 8:169-170); he is also referred to as the 'heavenly grace' and the 'sacred child' (Sib Or 8:195-196); further, we read that 'An iron shepherd's rod will prevail' (Sib Or 8:248).

John employs gematria in referring to the beast by a number. He writes: This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six (13:8). The author of the Sibylline Oracles refers to God with such a riddle:

I am the one who is ...

I have nine letters, I am of four syllables. Consider me.

The first three have two letters each.

The last has the rest, and five are consonants.

The entire number is: twice eight

plus three hundred, three tens and seven. If you know who I am

you will not be uninitiated in my wisdom. (Sib Or 1:137-146).

The Apocalypse uses the imagery of the harvest to describe the death and destruction on earth. The one who sat upon the cloud 'swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped' (14:16). The prophecy referring to the dispersion of the Jews in the Sibylline Oracles uses a similar imagery.

Then when the Hebrews reap the bad harvest,

a Roman king will ravage much gold and silver.

Thereafter there will be other kingdoms

continuously as kingdoms perish,

and they will afflict mortals. (Sib Or 1:317-391)

John's vision of the judgement and the destruction of the harlot, Babylon (Rome) in chapters 17-18 echoes in the prophecy of disasters in the tenth generation portrayed in the second book of Sibylline Oracles.

But when on earth there are raging earthquakes  
and thunderbolts, thunders, and lightnings ...

Then indeed the tenth generation of men will also appear  
after these things, when the earth-shaking lightening-giver  
will break the glory of idols and shake the people of  
seven-hilled Rome. Great wealth will perish,

burned in a great fire by the flame of Hephaestus. (Sib Or 2:6-19)

The vision of the 'judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk' (17:1-2) has a reference in the Sibylline Oracles where it is written

May I not be alive when the abominable woman reigns (Sib Or 8:194).

The angel tells John, 'The beast that you saw was, and is not, and to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition... As for the beast that was, and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition' (17:8ff). This description alludes to the legend, Nero redivivus, and is mentioned in Sibylline Oracles, too.

Then the strife of war being aroused will come to the west,  
and the fugitive from Rome will also come, brandishing a great spear,  
having crossed the Euphrates with many myriads. (Sib Or 4:137-139)

But the one who obtained the land of the Persians will fight,  
and killing every man he will destroy all life  
so that a one-third portion will remain for wretched mortals.

He himself will rush in with a light bound from the West,  
besieging the entire land, laying it all waste... (Sib Or 5:101-109)

The 'ten horns ... and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked...' (17:16).

The Sibylline Oracles also uses such imagery of nakedness in pronouncing judgement on Rome.

Woe to you, Italian land, great savage nation.  
You did not perceive whence you came, naked and unworthy  
to the light of the sun, so that you might go again naked  
to the same place and later come to judgement...  
and you will disappear and will be blazing dust... (Sib Or 8:95- 103)

The doom of Babylon is depicted in graphic imagery by John in chapter 18 of the Apocalypse. We find a brief oracle which pronounces the doom on Babylon in the Sibylline Oracles. The reason for the judgement here is specific: destruction of the Temple.

God prompted me to say this first,  
how many grievous woes the Immortal devised  
for Babylon, because it destroyed his great Temple.  
Woe to you, Babylon, and race of Assyrian men. (Sib Or 3:300-303)

John hears a voice which spelling the doom of Babylon (Rome) says,

"...As she glorified herself and played the wanton,  
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.  
Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit,  
I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,'  
so shall her plagues come in a single day,  
pestilence and mourning and famine,  
and she shall be burned with fire..." (18:7-8)

A similar imagery is used in the Sibylline Oracles to depict the destruction of Rome.

Effeminate and unjust, evil city, ill-fated above all.

Alas, city of the Latin land, unclean in all things,

maenad, rejoicing in vipers, as a widow you will sit

by the banks, and the river Tiber will weep for you, its consort.

You have a murderous heart and impious spirit.

Did you not know what God can do, what he devises?

But you said, "I alone am, and no one will ravage me."

But now God, who is forever, will destroy you and all your people,

and there will no longer be any sign of you in the land. (Sib Or 5:167-175)

The same voice presents merchants of the earth weeping and mourning for her, standing far off for fear of her torment. So also the 'shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea' (18:11-19). We find a parallel in Sibylline Oracles.

For the Persian will come onto your soil like hail,

and he will destroy your land and evil-devising men

with blood and corpses, by terrible altars,

a savage-minded mighty man, much-bloodied, raving nonsense,

with a full host numerous as sand, bringing destruction on you.

And then, most prosperous of cities, you will be in great distress.

All Asia, falling to the ground, will lament for the gifts she enjoyed from you. (Sib Or 5:93-99)

John hears the angel saying,

and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters

shall be heard in thee no more (18:22)

The Sibylline Oracles envisages an eschatological time wherein there is

No drum sounds, no cymbal

no flute of many holes, which has a sound that damages the heart.

no pipe, which bears an imitation of the crooked serpent,  
no savage-sounding trumpet, herald of wars,  
none who are drunk in lawless revels or dances,  
no sound of the lyre... (Sib Or 8:114-119)

The beast and the false prophet were captured and 'thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur' (19:20). The Sibylline Oracles describing the woes that were to come upon Rome says  
you will come from a height and dwell under the earth  
in naphtha and asphalt and brimstone and much fire,  
and you will disappear and will be blazing dust forever. (Sib Or 8:101-104)

John beholds 'an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain' (20:1). The Sibylline Oracles describe the 'sacred child, the destroyer of all' as destroying 'the malignant abyss with bonds, opening it up' (Sib Or 8:195-198). After that he sees the thousand year reign of Christ with his followers, after which Satan 'deceives the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle... And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them...' (20:7-10). Sibylline Oracles predicts a great attack on Jerusalem by Gog and Magog which would prove disastrous for them resulting in great slaughter and bloodshed.

But again the kings of the peoples will launch an attack  
together against this land, bringing doom upon themselves,  
for they will want to destroy the Temple of the great God  
and most excellent men when they enter the land (Sib Or 3:663-666);  
Woe to you, land of Gog and Magog, situated in the midst  
of Ethiopian rivers. How great an effusion of blood you will receive

and you will be called a habitation of judgment among men

and your dewy earth will drink black blood. (Sib Or 3:319-322)

John is given a vision of the new heaven and a new earth. The new city was 'coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (21:2). The Sibylline Oracles describes the city thus,

And the city which God desired, this he made

more brilliant than stars and sun and moon,

and he provided ornament and made a holy temple,

exceedingly beautiful in its fair shrine, and he fashioned

a great and immense tower over many stadia

touching even the clouds and visible to all... (Sib Or 5:420-425).

He hears the one who sat upon the throne saying, '... To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death' (21:6-8). The fate of the righteous and the wicked finds a similar description in the Sibylline Oracles.

And then will all pass through the blazing river

and the unquenchable flame. All the righteous

will be saved, but the impious will then be destroyed

for all ages, as many as formerly did evil

or committed murders, and as many as are accomplices,

liars, and crafty thieves, and dread destroyers of houses,

parasites, and adulterers, who pour out slander,

terrible violent men, and lawless ones, and idol worshippers;  
as many as abandoned the great immortal God  
and became blasphemers and ravagers of the pious  
breakers of faith and murderers of the righteous men... (Sib Or 2:252ff)

John's vision of all nations flocking to the new Jerusalem and worshipping God and the Lamb (21:24-26) is analogous to the description of the gathering of all islands and cities to worship God in His Temple in Sibylline Oracles (Sib Or 3710-726).

### **The Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Zephaniah**

The description of the 'one like a son of man' in the Apocalypse, 'clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace... and his face was like the sun shining in full strength' (1:13-16) resembles that of the great angel in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah.

Then I arose and stood, and I saw a great angel standing before me with his face shining like the rays of the sun in its glory since his face is like that which is perfected in its glory. And he was girded as if a golden girdle were upon his breast. His feet were like bronze which is melted in a fire. (Ap Zeph 6:11-13)

The imagery of the conquest (2:7) is of those who battle against Satan. The Apocalypse of Zephaniah records the reward for the victorious thus,

... I saw a great angel before me saying to me, "Triumph, prevail because you have prevailed and Have triumphed over the accuser, and you have come up from Hades and the abyss. You will now cross over the crossing place." (Ap Zeph 7:9)

The 'son of man' of 1:13-15 is referred to as 'Son of God' in 2:18. Zephaniah, too, thinks that the 'great angel' is the 'Lord Almighty' (Ap Zeph 6:14).

In the vision of the heavenly worship John hears 'around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands...' (5:11). The Apocalypse of Zephaniah also mentions a great number of angels.

Then I walked with the angel of the Lord. I looked before me and saw a place there. Thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads of angels entered through it. (Ap Zeph 4:1-2)

The opening of the sixth seal heralds universal catastrophic events during which men are said to be hiding in caves to escape 'the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?' (6:17) Describing the trumpet blast accompanying the wrath of God, Zephaniah says,

He said to me, "I do not have authority to show them to you until the Lord Almighty rises up in his wrath to destroy the earth and the heavens. They will see and be disturbed and they will all cry out, saying, 'All flesh which is ascribed to you we will give to you on the day of the Lord. Who will stand in his presence when he rises in his wrath to destroy the earth and the heaven?' (Ap Zeph 12:5-7)

Referring to the angel who mediated the vision to him, John tells us that he 'fell down at his feet to worship him'. But the angel prevented him from worshipping him saying, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God' (19:10).

A similar incident is also narrated in 22:8. Such an account is also found in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah.

I fell upon my feet and worshipped him. He said to me, "Take heed. Don't worship me. I am not the Lord Almighty, but I am the great angel, Eremiel ..." (Ap Zeph 6:15)

John has a vision of the beast and the false prophet being captured and 'thrown alive into the lake of fire

that burns with sulphur' (19:20). The Apocalypse of Zephaniah also records a vision of a similar place.

Again I turned back and walked, and I saw a great sea... I discovered that it was entirely a sea of flame like a slime which casts forth much flame and whose waves burn sulphur and bitumen. (Ap Zeph 6:1-2)

### **The Apocalypse and the Fourth Book of Ezra**

The vision of the 'son of man' frightens the seer, John. He describes his experience thus: When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one..." (1:17). Ezra was also afraid when he saw the angel. He, too, was comforted by the angel.

... the angel who had come to me at first came to me, and looked upon me; and behold, I lay there like a corpse and I was deprived of my understanding. Then he grasped my right hand and strengthened me and set me on my feet, and said to me, "What is the matter with you? And why are you troubled? And why are your understanding and the thoughts of your mind troubled? (IV Ezra 10:29-31)

The message to the church in Ephesus ends with Jesus' promise, 'To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (2:7). The reference to the 'tree of life' is also found in 22:2 and 22:14. The Lord asks Ezra to tell the people of Israel, 'The tree of life shall give them fragrant perfume, and they shall neither toil nor become weary' (IV Ezra 2:12). The tree of life is again mentioned in 8:52.

John is commanded to write to the angel of the church in Sardis, '... Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy' (3:4). The mention of white garments is also found in 6:11 and 7:1, symbolising the victorious and glorified faithful. Such an imagery is also found in IV Ezra. Ezra tells the people of God

Rise and stand, and see at the feast of the Lord the number of those who have been sealed. Those who have departed from the shadow of this age have received glorious garments from the Lord. take again your full number, O Zion, and conclude the list of your people who are clothed in white, who have fulfilled the law of the Lord. (IV Ezra 2:38-40).

John's vision of heavenly worship by 'a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb' (7:9) is akin to the one in IV Ezra.

I, Ezra, saw on mount Zion a great multitude, which I could not number, and they all were praising the Lord with songs. (IV Ezra 2:42)

John has a vision of the 'shaft of the bottomless pit' being opened and a 'smoke like the smoke of a great furnace' rising from it (9:2). In his third vision Ezra also sees a similar pit.

Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of Hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the Paradise of delight. (IV Ezra 7:36)

John sees 'a beast rising out of the sea' to which 'the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority' (13:1-2). Ezra had a dream. In his dream

there came up from the sea an eagle that had twelve feathered wings and three heads... the eagle flew with his wings, to reign over the earth and over those who dwell in it... all things under heaven were subjected to him, and no one spoke against him, not even one creature that was on the earth' (IV Ezra 11:1-7)

John hears an angel announcing the destruction of Babylon: Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion (14:8). In 17:4 her sin is elaborated: The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a

golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication. The description continues in 18:7

As she glorified herself and played the wanton,  
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.

Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit,  
I am no widow, mourning I shall never see...'

Ezra's description of Babylon is similar. He curses Asia for having gone the Babylon's way.

And you, O Asia, who share in the glamour of Babylon and the glory of her person - woe to you, miserable wretch! For you have made yourself like her; you have decked out your daughters in harlotry to please and glory in your lovers, who have always lusted after you. You have imitated that hateful harlot in all her deeds and devices; therefore God says, 'I will send evil upon you, widowhood, poverty, famine, sword and pestilence, to lay waste your houses and bring you to destruction and death. And the glory of your power shall wither like a flower, when the heat rises that is sent upon you. You shall be weakened like a wretched woman who is beaten and wounded, so that you cannot receive your mighty lovers...' (IV Ezra 15:46-51)

In the vision of the harvest of the world he sees the angel who threw the vintage of the earth into the great wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and the blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14:19-20). Ezra has a vision of the horrifying warfare followed by ominous clouds which shall dash against one another and shall pour out a heavy tempest upon the earth, and their own tempest: and there shall be blood from the sword as high as a horse's belly and a man's thigh and a camel's hock. (IV Ezra 15:34-36)

The Apocalypse depicts the beast and the kings of the earth gathered with their armies at Armageddon on the great day of God the Almighty to wage war against the heavenly forces (16:16 read with 19:19). The sixth vision of Ezra, of the man from the sea, gives a detailed account of 'an innumerable multitude of men gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came from the

sea' and being destroyed completely. (IV Ezra ch 13).

In the vision of the last judgement, John sees 'the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done' (20:12). The reference to the books during the end of the age is found in IV Ezra, too: The books shall be opened before the firmament, and all shall see it together (IV Ezra 6:21). The general resurrection and the final judgement portrayed by the Apocalypse (20:12-13) is analogous to that found in IV Ezra.

And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment... (IV Ezra 7:32-33).

John sees the new city of Jerusalem, adorned like a bride, 'coming down out of heaven from God...' (21:2). Ezra also sees a woman who, suddenly, is transformed into a city.

And I looked, and behold, the woman was no longer visible to me, but there was an established city, and a place of huge foundations showed itself (IV Ezra 10:27).

The angel, interpreting this vision, informs Ezra that the woman is the city of Jerusalem (IV Ezra 10:44-59). He is told that the city 'which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed (IV Ezra 7:26).

The new city of Jerusalem, according to the Apocalypse, 'has no need for sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the lamb' (21:23). He has a similar vision in 22:5 also.

These visions have affinity to the promise of God to his people in IV Ezra.

Be ready for the rewards of the kingdom, because the eternal light will shine upon you for evermore. (IV Ezra 2:36)

John is granted a vision of the river of the water of life and on either side of which 'the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations' (22:2). In IV Ezra, too, there is a similar reference. But here twelve trees are mentioned, and the promise is more elaborate.

... I have consecrated and prepared for you twelve trees loaded with various fruits, and the same number of springs flowing with milk and honey, and seven mighty mountains on which roses and lilies grow; by these I will fill your children with joy. (IV Ezra 2:19)

John is shown the new Jerusalem where all those who had been faithful to Christ 'shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads' (22:4). Ezra is told how the righteous shall 'hasten to behold the face of him whom they served in life and from whom they are to receive their rewards when glorified (IV Ezra 7:99). John also is told that 'night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light' (22:5). Ezra is told 'how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on' (IV Ezra 7:97).

### **The Apocalypse and the 2 Baruch**

According to the Apocalypse, on the last day when the son of man comes on the clouds, 'all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him' (1:7). With reference to the end of the world Baruch is told

This then will be the sign: When horror seizes the inhabitants of the earth, and they fall into many tribulations and further, they fall into great torments. (2 Bar 25:2-3)

The Apocalypse refers to God as 'the Alpha and the Omega' and 'who was and who is to come, the Almighty' (1:8). Baruch addresses God as 'the only Living One, the Immortal One and the Inscrutable One' (2 Bar 21:10).

The message to the church of Smyrna reads, 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer... Be faithful unto

death, and I will give you the crown of life' (2:10). The Lord answering Baruch's query on the profit of being righteous says,

For them this world is a struggle and an effort with much trouble. And that accordingly which will come, a crown with great glory. (2 Bar 15:8)

The one who perseveres till the end is promised 'some of the hidden manna' (Ap 2:17). God had fed the Israelites with manna during their sojourn in the desert before reaching Canaan, the Promised Land (Num 11:7-9). The Jewish apocalyptic tradition held that manna will descend on earth in the Messianic age. 2 Baruch reflects this belief:

And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time (2 Bar 29:8).

John beholds 'in heaven an open door' and hears 'the first voice' which he had heard commanding him, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this" (4:1). Baruch also narrates such an experience:

And afterward it happened that, behold, the heaven was opened, and I saw, and strength was given to me, and a voice was heard from on high which said to me: Baruch, Baruch, why are you disturbed? (2 Bar 22:1-2)

And further, it is given to you to hear that which will come after these times. For truly, my salvation which comes has drawn near and is not as far away as before. (2 Bar 23:6-7)

The plagues of fire, war, pestilence and famine are described in vivid imagery in chapter 6 of the Apocalypse. 2 Baruch also describes the terrible events of the end-time:

The Most High then will give a sign to those nations which he has prepared before, and they will come and wage war with the rulers who will then remain. And it will happen that every one who

saves himself from the war will die in an earthquake, and he who saves himself from the earthquake will be burned by fire, and he who saves himself from the fire will perish by famine...

(2 Bar 70:7-9)

John sees 'under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne' being 'given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been' (6:9-11). The reference to the number to be completed is found in 2 Baruch, too. The voice from high tells Baruch, 'No creature will live again unless the number that has been appointed is completed'

(2 Bar 23:5).

John sees 'four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth...' and hears another angel telling them not to harm the earth or the sea or the trees (7:1-3). Baruch sees four angels standing at the four corners of the city of Jerusalem each holding a burning torch and hears another angel telling them to hold their torches and not to light them (2 Bar 6:4-5).

John hears an eagle flying in midheaven pronouncing woes to the inhabitants of the earth (8:13). Baruch sends his letter to the people of Israel with an eagle (2 Bar 77:19-21).

John sees an angel announcing the fall of 'Babylon, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion' (14:8). Baruch tells the nations

You who have drunk the clarified wine,

you now drink its dregs,

for the judgment of the Most High is impartial.

Therefore, he did not spare his own sons first,

but he afflicted them as his enemies because they sinned.

Therefore, they were once punished,

that they might be forgiven.

But now, you nations and tribes, you are guilty,

because you have trodden the earth all this time,

and because you have used creation unrighteously. (2 Bar 13:8-11)

John reports seeing 'seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended' (15:1). In answer to his question whether tribulations will last a long time, Baruch is told

That time will be divided into twelve parts, and each part has been preserved for that for which it was appointed. In the first part: the beginning of commotions. In the second part: the slaughtering of the great. In the third part: the fall of many into death. In the fourth part: the drawing of the sword. In the fifth part: famine and the withholding of rain. In the sixth part: earthquakes and terrors. In the eighth part: a multitude of ghosts and the appearances of demons. In the ninth part: the fall of fire. In the tenth part: rape and much violence. In the eleventh part: injustice and unchastity. In the twelfth part: disorder and a mixture of all that has been before. (2 Bar 27:1-13)

John has a vision of Satan being thrown into the bottomless pit and shutting it and sealing it (20:1-3; 14). Baruch is told by God that

The last ruler who is left alive at that time will be bound, whereas the entire host will be destroyed. And they will carry him on Mount Zion, and my Anointed One will convict him of all his wicked deeds and will assemble and set before him all the works of his hosts. And after these things he will kill him and protect the rest of my people... (2 Bar 40:1-2).

John has a vision of 'the dead, great and small, standing before the throne' for the Last Judgement; they are the ones whom the sea, Death and Hades have given up from their store (Ap 20:12-13). 2 Baruch also refers to this general resurrection (30:2; 42:8; chs 49-52).

And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the Anointed One has been fulfilled and he returns with glory, that then all who sleep in hope of him will rise. And it will happen at that time that those treasures will be opened in which the number of the souls of the righteous were kept, and they will go out and the multitudes of the souls will appear together, in one assemblage, of one mind... For they know that the time has come of which it is said that it is the end of times.

(2 Bar ch 30)

And dust will be called, and told, "Give back that which does not belong to you and raise up all that you have kept until its own time" (2 Bar 42:8).

The same idea is continued in chs 49-52 of 2 Baruch.. The judgement is based on 'what was written in the books, by what they had done' (Ap 20:12). 2 Baruch, too, refers to the books:

For behold, the days are coming, and the books will be opened in which are written the sins of all those who have sinned, and moreover, also the treasures in which are brought together the righteousness of all those who have proven themselves to be righteous. (2 Bar 24:1)

As in the Apocalypse, the resurrection and the judgement are explicitly linked in 2 Baruch.

For the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form. But as it has received them so it will give them back. And as I have delivered them to it so it will raise them. For then it will be necessary to show those who live that the dead are living again, and that those who went away have come back. And it will be that when they have recognized each other, those who know each other at this moment, then my judgment will be strong, and those things which have been spoken of before will come (2 Bar 50:2-4).

John describes the vision of the new heaven and new earth in Chapter 21. He sees the holy city of Jerusalem descending from heaven in all splendour (21:2). Baruch is told by God about the new Jerusalem,

Or do you think that this is the city of which I said: On the palms of my hands I have carved you? It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already

prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. (2 Bar 4:2-3)

John hears the voice from the throne saying that God 'will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying for pain any more, for the former things have passed away' (21:4). In 7:16-17, too, there is such a promise:

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;  
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of living water;  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (7:16-17)

We find a more elaborate description in 2 Baruch:

And it will happen that after he has brought down everything which is in the world, and has sat down in eternal peace on the throne of the kingdom, then joy will be revealed and rest will appear. And then wealth will descend in dew, and illness will vanish, and fear and tribulation and lamentation will pass away from among men, and joy will encompass the earth. And nobody will again die untimely, nor will any adversity take place suddenly. Judgement, condemnations, contentions, revenges, blood, passions, zeal, hate, and all such things will go into condemnation since they will be uprooted. (2 Bar 73:1-4)

### **The Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Elijah**

The message to the church in Philadelphia in the Apocalypse includes a promise to the conquerors that the names of God, Christ, and the new city of Jerusalem will be inscribed on them (3:12). It also refers to the 'servants of God' being sealed (7:3). Those who persevered in their faith would be clothed in white garments and would 'hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat' (7:16). The 144,000 who stood on Mount Zion with the Lamb 'had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads' (14:1). At the judgement, John sees 'the souls of those who

had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands' coming to life and reigning with Christ for a thousand years. But 'the rest of the dead did not come to life... (20:5). The Apocalypse of Elijah also has a reference to this 'name on the forehead' and 'sealing' of the faithful while the sinners being condemned to death:

"Everyone who will obey me will receive thrones and crowns among those who are mine." The Lord said, "I will write my name upon their forehead and I will seal their right hand, and they will not hunger or thirst. Neither will the son of lawlessness prevail over them, nor will the thrones hinder them, but they will walk with the angels up to my city." Now, as for the sinners, they will be ashamed and they will not pass by the thrones, but the thrones of death will seize them and rule over them because the angels will not agree with them. They have alienated themselves from his dwellings.

(Ap Elijah 1:8-12).

Now those upon whose forehead the name of Christ is written and upon whose hand is the seal, both the small and the great, will be taken up upon their wings and lifted up before his wrath. (Ap Elijah 5:4)

In the open heaven John beholds a throne on which one covered with dazzling light was seated. 'Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads' (4:4). According to the Apocalypse of Elijah, Elijah and Enoch will come down and fight with 'the shameless one who has revealed himself in the holy place' saying, '... You have been hostile to the thrones...' (Ap Elijah 4:10). The four living creatures surrounding the throne sang day and night,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,

who was and is and is to come !" (4:8)

The Apocalypse of Elijah speaks of Christ sending from heaven six-winged sixty four thousand angels to take the righteous to heaven, whose 'sound will move heaven and earth when they give praise and

glorify' (Ap Elijah 5:2-3).

The opening of the sixth seal heralds cosmic upheavals and John hears people from different strata of society calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb..." (6:16). Such an imagery is also found in the Apocalypse of Elijah

In those days they will run up to the rocks and leap off, saying, "Fall upon us." And still they will not die (Ap Elijah 2:33).

Those 'who have come out of the great tribulation' without succumbing to the temptations and crumbling before the persecutions, according to the Apocalypse, will be clothed in white garments and serve God continually and 'shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more' (7:16). They will 'eat of the tree of life' (2:7). We are also told in 21:23-24 that in the new city of Jerusalem there will be 'no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk...' The Apocalypse of Elijah has a condensed description of the bliss of the righteous.

Then Gabriel and Uriel will become a pillar of light leading them into the holy land. It will be granted to them to eat from the tree of life. They will wear white garments... and angels will watch over them.

They will not thirst, nor will the son of lawlessness be able to prevail over them (Ap Elijah 5:5-6).

According to the Apocalypse, the blowing of the third trumpet (8:10) and the fifth trumpet (9:1) makes the stars to fall from heaven and cause havoc on earth. Elijah and Enoch refer to the 'shameless one' as having 'fallen from heaven like the morning stars' (Ap Elijah 4:11).

The opening of the 'shaft of the bottomless pit' will unleash so much suffering and pain that 'in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them' (9:6).

The Apocalypse of Elijah uses very similar vocabulary in describing the reaction of people under great tribulation

Many will desire death in those days, but death will flee from them (Ap Elijah 2:4, 32).

The Apocalypse describes the beast making war against the two witnesses and killing them, 'and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. For three days and a half men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb...' (11:8-9). We have a parallel in the Apocalypse of Elijah. Hearing Elijah and Enoch accusing him, 'the shameless one' will be angry, and he will fight with them in the market place of the great city. And he will spend seven days fighting with them. And they will spend three and one half days in the market place dead, while all the people see them (Ap Elijah 4:13-14).

Seeing the doomed city of Babylon (Rome), as John sees it in his vision, 'the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more (18:11). In his apocalypse Elijah hears:

In those days the cities of Egypt will groan for the voice of the one who sells and the one who buys will not be heard. The markets of the cities of Egypt will become dusty (Ap Elijah 2:31).

John has a vision of those 'who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God' coming to life and reigning 'with Christ a thousand years' (20:4). In the final vision he sees 'a new heaven and a new earth' (21:1). The Apocalypse of Elijah also speaks of the new heaven and new earth and the millennial age.

On that day, the Christ, the king, and all his saints will come forth from heaven. He will burn the earth. He will spend a thousand years upon it. Because the sinners prevailed over it, he will create a new heaven and a new earth. No deadly devil will exist in them. He will rule with his saints, ascending

and descending, while they are always with the angels and they are with the Christ for a thousand years (Ap Elijah 5:36-39).

### **The Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Daniel**

The cataclysmic events associated with the sixth seal make people of every walk of life, 'the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free', leave the city and hide 'in the caves among the rocks of the mountains' (6:15). The Apocalypse of Daniel also speaks of fleeing to the mountains:

But the rulers of the Romans and the magnates of the Seven-hilled city will flee to the glens of the mountains. And there will be fear and affliction (Ap Dan 2:15).

So great will be the affliction caused by the plagues following the blowing of the trumpets that 'men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them' (9:6). The Apocalypse of Daniel, too, presents such a scenario:

And then the people will be calling upon death and digging up the tombs and saying, "Blessed and thrice blessed are you who have already died, because you did not reach these days. And those who go down to the sea also will be saying, "May the fury of your waves swallow us also, O holy sea" (Ap Dan 12:4-6).

Describing the end of the world in terms of great bloodshed in the imagery borrowed from harvest operations, the Apocalypse says that the angel 'gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, so high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14:19-20). The Apocalypse of Daniel draws an equally, if not more, terrifying picture of bloodshed in the slaughter by a Roman king.

And he will massacre them like the grass of a reed being burnt by fire. And from their blood a three-

year-old bull will drown. And the king alone will pursue a thousand and the two small boys myriads. And Ishmael and the sons of Hagar will be butchered to the end. And there will be war and great Bloodshed such as has not been since the foundation of the world. The blood will be mixed in the sea one and a half miles. And in the street of the Seven-hilled city horses will be submerged drowning in the blood (Ap Dan 4:2-8).

In the last vision of the bowl series, 'the seventh angel poured his bowl into the air and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne... And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peels of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake...' (16:17-21). The Apocalypse of Daniel also refers to 'a great sound from heaven and a fearful earthquake and a voice from the angel from heaven' preceding the great bloodshed (Ap Dan 3:7).

John hears a heavenly voice announcing the doom of Babylon (Rome) saying,

"... As she glorified herself and played the wanton,  
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.

Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit,  
I am no widow, mourning I shall never see.'  
so shall her plagues come in a single day,  
pestilence and mourning and famine,  
and she shall be burned with fire..." (18:7-8)

and reproducing the merchants' words of mourning,

"Alas, alas, for the great city  
that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet,  
bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!  
In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste." (18:17-18)

We find a striking parallel to this description in the Apocalypse of Daniel:

"And therefore woe to you, Seven-hilled Babylon, because your wealth and your glory will be proclaimed. For, boasting, you said, 'I am clothed in gold and in hyacinth and pearl and in scarlet raiment and in purple and in silver and amber and there is nothing inferior in me because kings will reign in me and potentates will come in and go out and great rulers will reside in me.'" (Ap Dan 7:1-10)

### **The Apocalypse and The Testaments of The Twelve Patriarchs**

In the vision of the heavenly court, John sees God seated on a throne in dazzling light, surrounded by twenty four thrones, seven spirits of God, and four living creatures, singing and worshipping God day and night (4:1-11). The Testament of Levi records the heavenly scene thus:

In the uppermost heaven of all dwells the Great Glory in the Holy of Holies, superior to all holiness. There with him are the archangels, who serve and offer propitiatory sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of all the sins of ignorance of the righteous ones. They present to the Lord a pleasing odour, a rational and bloodless oblation. In the heaven below them are the messengers who carry the responses to the angels of the Lord's presence. There with him are thrones and authorities; there praises to God are offered eternally. So when the Lord looks upon us we all tremble. Even the heavens and earth and the abysses tremble before the presence of his majesty. (T Levi 3:4-9)

Of the four six-winged living creatures, one was 'like an ox' (4:7). The Testament of Naphtali also mentions such a creature:

And behold there was a bull on the earth with two great horns and an eagle's wings on its back.  
(T Naph 5:6)

John sees a great portent in heaven, 'a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (12:1).

Naphtali, in his fortieth year, had a vision. Describing this vision, he says:

I saw on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem that the sun and moon stood still. And behold Isaac, my father's father, was saying to us, 'Run forth, seize them, each according to his capacity; to the one who grasps them will the sun and moon belong.' All of them ran, but Levi seized the sun and Judah, outstripping the others, grasped the moon. Thus they were exalted above the others. (T Naph 5:1-3)

In the vision of the war in heaven in which the dragon and his angels were defeated, John hears a voice referring to those who have conquered the devil 'by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony' (12:11). In the vision of the last judgement, John has a vision of the 'souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God... These came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years' (20:4). In the Testament of Judah we read:

And those who died in sorrow shall be raised in joy;  
and those who died in poverty for the Lord's sake shall be made rich;  
those who died on account of the Lord shall be wakened to life. (T Judah 25:4)

The Devil and Satan is seized, bound and sealed in the bottomless pit (20:2) and Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire (20:14). The Testament of Judah declares, 'There shall no more be Beliar's spirit of error, because he will be thrown into eternal fire' (T Judah 5:3). We have a similar reference in the Testament of Levi, too:

And Beliar will be bound by him  
And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits. (T Levi 18:12)

In the vision of the new heaven and new earth John hears a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them...' (21:3-4). God tells Levi, 'Levi, to you I have given the blessing of the priesthood until I shall come and dwell in the midst of Israel' (T Levi 5:2). John says that all nations will flock to the

heavenly Jerusalem (21:24-27). We find such expectations in the Testaments of Levi (T Levi 18:9), Naphtali (T Naph 8:3-4), and Asher (T Ash 7:3).

The Spirit has promised the conquerors the right 'to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God' (2:7). This promise is fulfilled in the new Jerusalem where 'on either side of the river the tree of life' (22:2) flourished. Those who have the right to this tree are blessed (22:4, 19). In the new Jerusalem there will be unmitigated eternal joy (21:4; 22:2, 4-5). The Testament of Levi also speaks of the saints as having access to the tree of life and the bliss in heaven:

And he shall open the gates of paradise;

he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam,

and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life.

The spirit of holiness shall be upon them. (T Levi 18:10-11)

## REFERENCE

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1949, vol 2, p 105