

approach one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever."

The book of Daniel contains some of the Bible's most descriptive apocalyptic passages. When many of us hear the word apocalypse, we might think of the Book of Revelation, or a movie about Vietnam (Apocalypse Now), or the Zombie apocalypse. These are all resonant with one dictionary's definition:

1. The complete final destruction of the world, as described in the biblical book of Revelation.
 2. An event involving destruction or damage on a catastrophic scale.”
- (Oxford Dictionaries Online)

The word's origin might give us some clues for interpreting such passages: “Old English, via Old French and ecclesiastical Latin from Greek apokalupsis, apokaluptein uncover, reveal, from apo- un- + kaluptein to cover.” (Oxford Dictionaries Online)

An apocalypse is an uncovering, a revealing, a revelation. Perhaps it is more than destruction and havoc, it is also an illumination of sorts. When we read the passage above, our immediate reaction is likely one of dread, fear, or puzzlement. This portion of scripture is confounding. It helps to remember that The Book of Daniel is filled with stories of God's miraculous saving power [the lion's den (Daniel 6:1-28), the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:1-30)], and can be read, among other ways, as a testament to God's faithfulness in a time of great struggle, an allegory of comfort and challenge to the people of Israel, who find themselves in exile and captivity in foreign lands. In that reading, this text is both apocalyptic and deeply hopeful. God

God's justice and truth? Who in the wider world?

What are your thoughts on the coming of God's great justice and revelation? Does that thought frighten or delight you? A bit of both? Neither?

In Christian tradition the apocalypse is the revelation of the truth of God's sovereignty, and the realization of the fullness of God's vision for the world in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Different streams of Christianity have interpreted that revelation in a variety of ways. Some have seen the second coming as a mystical reality, a coming of Christ into the world in a way we cannot yet foresee or understand. Others have understood it as the literal unfolding of the events prophesied in the New Testament (especially The Book of Revelation and the First Letter to the Thessalonians). Still others see the apocalyptic texts as solely illustrative, not prophetic, a product of the Roman persecution of Christian, through which we learn about early Christians. And there are many viewpoints in-between and besides.

Our Eucharistic Prayer reflects the importance of this theme. The prayer speaks of "the last day", and in its course, the congregation and clergy affirm, "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." These are both ways of talking about the Second Coming.

Do you believe Christ's coming again will be an historical event? A mystical reality? Both? Something we cannot understand, though real? Something else?

Is the idea of Christ coming again important to your faith? Why or why