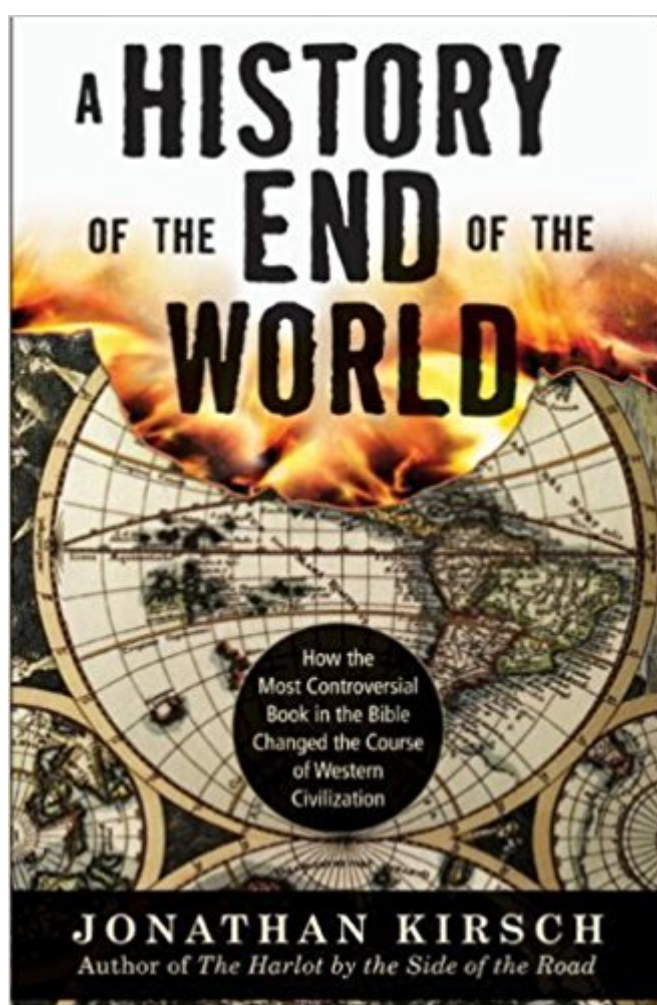


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A History Of The End Of The World: How The Most Controversial Book In The Bible Changed The Course Of Western Civilization



Synopsis

"[The Book of] Revelation has served as a "language arsenal" in a great many of the social, cultural, and political conflicts in Western history. Again and again, Revelation has stirred some dangerous men and women to act out their own private apocalypses. Above all, the moral calculus of Revelation—the demonization of one's enemies, the sanctification of revenge taking, and the notion that history must end in catastrophe—can be detected in some of the worst atrocities and excesses of every age, including our own. For all of these reasons, the rest of us ignore the book of Revelation only at our impoverishment and, more to the point, at our own peril." The mysterious author of the Book of Revelation (or the Apocalypse, as the last book of the New Testament is also known) never considered that his sermon on the impending end times would last beyond his own life. In fact, he predicted that the destruction of the earth would be witnessed by his contemporaries. Yet Revelation not only outlived its creator; this vivid and violent revenge fantasy has played a significant role in the march of Western civilization. Ever since Revelation was first preached as the revealed word of Jesus Christ, it has haunted and inspired hearers and readers alike. The mark of the beast, the Antichrist, 666, the Whore of Babylon, Armageddon, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are just a few of the images, phrases, and codes that have burned their way into the fabric of our culture. The questions raised go straight to the heart of the human fear of death and obsession with the afterlife. Will we, individually or collectively, ride off to glory, or will we drown in hellfire for all eternity? As those who best manipulate this dark vision learned, which side we fall on is often a matter of life or death. Honed into a weapon in the ongoing culture wars between states, religions, and citizenry, Revelation has significantly altered the course of history. Kirsch, whom the Washington Post calls "a fine storyteller with a flair for rendering ancient tales relevant and appealing to modern audiences," delivers a far-ranging, entertaining, and shocking history of this scandalous book, which was nearly cut from the New Testament. From the fall of the Roman Empire to the Black Death, the Inquisition to the Protestant Reformation, the New World to the rise of the Religious Right, this chronicle of the use and abuse of the Book of Revelation tells the tale of the unfolding of history and the hopes, fears, dreams, and nightmares of all humanity.

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Customer Reviews

Considering the nearness of the last failed attempt to set the date of the "last days" this is a great account of how pervasive and this idea has become. Very amusing. I will more of this author's work.

I have no doubt that this book will upset certain people of faith but this is well researched and written treatise that seems to have been written without preconception or prejudice by a aknowledged Biblical scholar.

Well written, keep your interest level high . A history of how the book of Revelation has impacted life through the ages to the present. Great food for thought.

Jonathan Kirsch offers interesting insights which allow the reader to navigate through the most mis-quoted and potentially dangerous book in the Bible. Aficianados of the "Left Behind" series beware: "A History of the End Of the World" might just change your mind about how to interpret the "Book of Revelations". Since Mr. Kirsch is a journalist by profession, the ideas expressed are in a clear and most readable manner.

Jonathan Kirsch has written numerous books (including his famous "The Harlot by the Side of the

Road") about the Old Testament, pulling the curtain away from years of misinterpretation that cloud the true meaning of the stories. Here he tackles the New Testament book of Revelations by peeling away the Christian layers to reveal the Jewish apocalyptic history and vision behind it. Written in Kirsch's trademark entertaining style, the book keeps stopping you in your tracks so you can go, "Wow." As a personal aside unrelated to Kirsch's narrative, I got a kick out of the description of the whore of Babylon (Revelations 17:4) as wearing purple and scarlet -- she's a red hat lady -- who knew?

An excellent treatment of the Book of Revelation that debunks and exposes the many myths that have been built up around this controversial NT book and provides the reader with an entertaining and informative understanding of what Revelation is really about, and, more importantly, what it is clearly NOT about. If you want to be able to respond intelligently to religious crackpots who are out to convince you that the world will end on any given date, this book will provide you with plenty of good information. Don't sell all you have and go out into the desert to wait for the "rapture", instead, read this book and enjoy life!

I have enjoyed the informative content of this book, although there are a couple of minor errors, and share the enthusiasm of other reviewers. Apocalyptic religious literature plays no part in my own spiritual life, but I believe as a teacher that it is an aspect of religious writing about which I ought to know. What bothers me is the author's apparent underlying disrespect for his subject. Perhaps "creepy" and "spooky" give the book a pop appeal, but, as an example, why does he say that Moses "rants"? That isn't objective. If one can discount the tone, this is a worthwhile read.

The author does an excellent job showing the world John, the author of Revelations, inhabited. The author brings to the table the works of various scholars, ancient and new, from various points of view and weaves all the information into an interesting and intriguing book that has changed my views on Revelation.

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