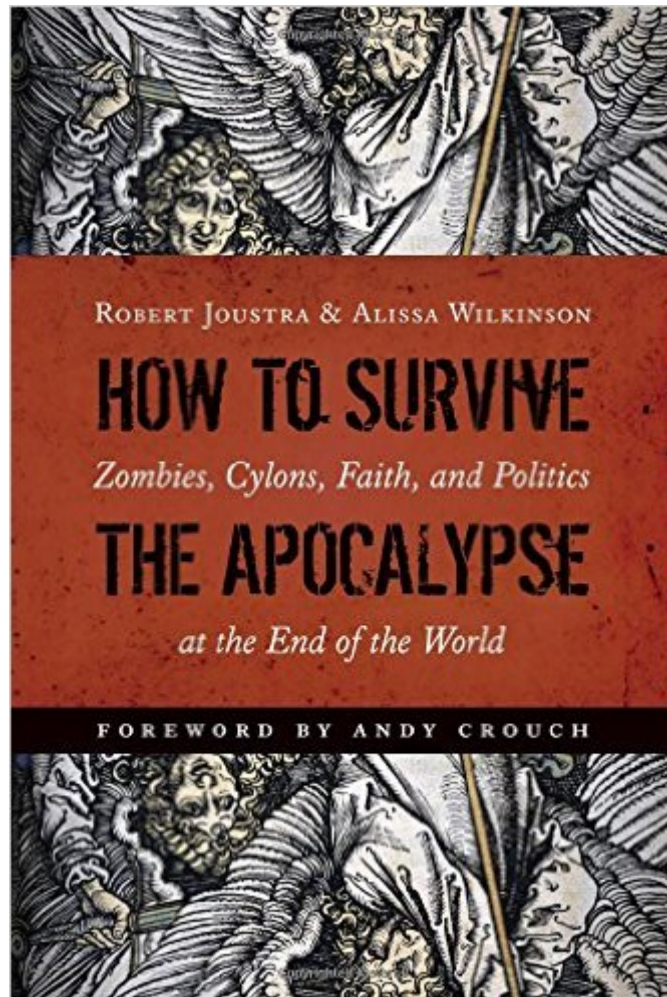


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How To Survive The Apocalypse: Zombies, Cylons, Faith, And Politics At The End Of The World



Synopsis

Incisive insights into contemporary pop culture and its apocalyptic bent. The world is going to hell. So begins this book, pointing to the prevalence of apocalypse — cataclysmic destruction and nightmarish end-of-the-world scenarios — in contemporary entertainment. In *How to Survive the Apocalypse* Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson examine a number of popular stories — from the Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* to the purging of innocence in *Game of Thrones* to the hordes of zombies in *The Walking Dead* — and argue that such apocalyptic stories reveal a lot about us here and now, about how we conceive of our life together, including some of our deepest tensions and anxieties. Besides analyzing the dystopian shift in popular culture, Joustra and Wilkinson also suggest how Christians can live faithfully and with integrity in such a cultural context.

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Customer Reviews

Alissa Wilkinson and Robert Joustra take us on a tour through contemporary apocalyptic TV and movies. They also discuss why apocalyptic themes have become ubiquitous in modern media. The sensibility is not limited to material apocalypses but also what they refer to as moral ones - the complete destruction of moral mooring points. They begin the book with a brief introduction to Charles Taylor's framework and his idea of the social imaginary, the series of pre-theoretical understandings and practices we acquire from the families, communities, and countries into which we were born. And his idea of "The Secular age" where human flourishing is the only conceivable goal of life. In this age meaning must be created, it is not out there. Another key concept Alissa and Robert do an excellent job explaining is the buffered

self in contrast to the pre-modern porous self. A porous self is an identity that is not fully distinct from the environment. Hierarchy, place, family, spirits, and institutions play a defining role in creating identity. The buffered self places a layer between the environment and the self and inserts the idea of choice of identity. They then proceed with a summary of apocalyptic stories as stories that "expose hidden truths, wipe away the veneer, push past the superficial ... and get to the reality of things." Apocalyptic stories blow up contemporary conventions and recreate a world without institutional restraints. These settings allow the raw human condition to be explored. The heart of the book is a discussion of different contemporary media that fits these descriptions. We visit *Battlestar Galactica*, *House of Cards*, *Game of Thrones*, *Hunger Games*, *Scandal*, *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *Her*, *World War Z* and other Zombie films. Along the way we see how identity is formed in relationship with others. The drive to recognition is pulled out as a key motivator. We see the all too tragically, not just in fictional media, but when crazed gunmen initiate their own apocalypse for the sake of recognition. These apocalyptic films explore moral territory. What is right when all restraint is removed? Is raw self interest? Are others nothing more than tools for my own survival? Apocalyptic stories are inevitably political. How should society re-form itself?

Abstract solidarity of humankind is a tough sell in the zombie apocalypse. The last chapter explores how Christians can faithfully engage with the Secular Age. The Age of Anxiety has migrated from ivory towers into the suburbs. The question of "Who am I?" is on everyone's mind. But identities are not created from scratch. A better question Alissa and Robert propose is "What story or stories do I find myself a part of?" We can choose the story, we can choose to eliminate some stories we don't want to be a part of, but we are forced to choose from an existing set of stories. In faithful witness, we must first look at what stories we have chosen to be a part of, which ones have we rejected. What repeated gestures have become our postures (Andy Crouch). What cultural liturgies are we participating in that are shaping our desires (James K. A. Smith)? Where is our love disordered? We need to examine ourselves and our institutions first. Using Daniel as a model, Alissa and Robert propose "faithful comprise" as the best option to engage culture. This oxymoron simply means supporting society, supporting the exploration of questions of meaning in a pluralistic environment while remaining a faithful disciple. In summary, this book is a valuable tool to decrypt modern media. It provides a guide to the multitude of questions raised by the Apocalypse, Zombies, Cylons, Faith, and Politics. To top it off, the book is transparently written. Most books at the intersection of faith, politics, art, and culture are cryptic, confusing, and halting. With this book, you get more meaning with less effort, because of the smooth writing.

This is a weighty book, but it doesn't feel that way while you're reading it, thanks to the authors' easy style, gentle humor and pacing. Though we get a brief tour of pop culture, this book doesn't feel lightweight because it offers individuals a way forward through a culture unaware of what its popular images seem to be saying. At first, I was skeptical of why shows such as "Breaking Bad" or "Mad Men" should be included, until it realized the apocalypse can be an individual moment. Everyone experiences "the end of the world" in their own way. The world they build in its place may feel like their own creation, but it is still dependent on the "world" around.

Look around the pop culture landscape and it doesn't take long to see we're obsessed with the end of the world. It both terrifies and fascinates us. WHY do we tell these apocalyptic stories again and again? And what meaning can these apocalyptic tales have in our Secular culture? The authors unpack a dense philosophical framework that allows us to journey with them from Westeros to the Blue Sky of New Mexico to Zombie-infested Georgia and all the way through deep space to Caprica. Again and again, the authors demonstrate that these secular apocalypses crave religion. If you wonder why Christians should be concerned with popular culture, and what answers a faithful life can give to the questions our culture is asking, Joustra and Wilkinson offer you a can't-miss guide to engaging pop culture.

Thoughtful interplay of the current cultural narratives of the apocalypse as expressed in movies and television icons and a Christian worldview.

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