

Prophetic Literature and Apocalyptic Literature

The Bible contains both prophetic literature and apocalyptic literature. This chart shows some of the key differences between those two genres.

	Prophetic Literature	Apocalyptic Literature
examples in the Bible	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos	Daniel 7–12, Revelation
period of biblical history when most prominent	monarchy, exile, return	intertestamental period, Christian era
situation addressed	God's people are coming under judgment for failure to keep the covenant	God's people are being persecuted for faithfulness, but some are turning apostate
basic message	Repent! Obey God! Keep the covenant!	Keep the faith! Persevere until the end comes!
audience addressed	Israel	the elect
mode of communication	oracles that reveal the will of God in clear, deliberate terms	visions that convey God's plan with symbolic imagery
view of history	reformable	irredeemable
the "day of the Lord"	propitious moment in history; coming soon	cataclysmic end of history; coming soon
understanding of the world	basically positive; just needs to be reformed	completely negative; needs to be destroyed or replaced
cause of suffering	unfaithfulness	faithfulness
cure for suffering	human repentance; seek what is good; shun what is evil	divine resolution; ultimate victory of good over evil
the plan of God	to establish God's reign within history	to establish God's reign beyond history
content of "hope"	restoration of God's people, to continue living in God's world in the way that God desires	removal of God's people to a new sphere of existence, in which God's will is done
process of salvation	deliverance wrought by God acting within history, through historical persons	deliverance wrought by God acting at end of time, through spiritual intermediaries
ethics	fundamentally communal; nation is to enact justice, live as God's covenant people	basically individualistic; the one who endures to the end will be saved