

# Elements Of Zoroastrian Millennial Tradition

## Underlying Judeo-Christian Apocalyptic Traditions

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### Basic worldview

The “*asha*” is the all-embracing order of creation; it expresses the “normal and right way for things to happen in the world,” including nature, human life, and ritual and moral order.

The operation of *asha* was overseen by Ahura Mazda, “Lord Wisdom,” who is the uncreated first-cause of all that is good, and worthy of worship.

Asha is negated by “*druj*,” “falseness,” which is controlled by Angra Mainyu, the spirit of destruction. Both gods made primal choices between *asha* and *druj*, and thus became opponents.

For other cultures, the world of the world was essentially static; for Zoroaster, the world was a battlefield, the battle was still in progress, but it would have an end.

### Underlying social reality in early Persian experience (circa 1400 BCE)

Persian antiquity involved a relatively peaceful social order threatened by external aggression from other tribal cultures. The external threat was seen as a challenge to the entire way of life of the Persians; thus, it became millenarian in that it was accompanied by a mythos of end-time transformation and resolution (see below).

### Conception of time

“*limited time*” = the period in which the cosmic battle between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu took place; its conclusion would initiate an eternal period of bliss and harmony.

At the end of the battle, there would be bodily resurrection of all, a “re-creation” by Ahura Mazda.

The resurrection would be followed by a great assembly, in which the good and evil would be separated, and the wicked destroyed. The righteous would become eternally young. The earth would be flattened by a fiery flood into a single, level plain. All humans would become devout Zoroastrians.

The coming state of bliss was anticipated during the spring equinox “new year’s” festival, and referred to as the “making wonderful.”

### Savior figure

The Saoshyant, literally, “future benefactor,” would appear to complete Ahura Mazda’s work.

The prophet’s (i.e., Zoroaster’s) seed is preserved in a lake and watched over by 99,999 souls of the righteous dead. A virgin will bathe in the lake, become pregnant, and bear the Saoshyant. He will wield a “victorious weapon” and gather the mighty chieftains from Persian past to share in the victory with him that leads to the “making wonderful.”

### Transformation of early Zoroastrian vision within Imperial Persia

With Darius (522-486 BCE; see flip side of this outline), Persian monarchs saw themselves as the representative on earth of Zoroaster, which became the imperial religion. The “making wonderful” was altered from an imminent expectation to a distant one. It resulted in the following schema:

1. “limited time” consisted of equal periods, either 3-3 thousand year periods or 4-3 thousand year periods. Original vision probably was a 6 thousand year total time.
2. Zoroaster’s revelation came at the beginning of the final 3 thousand year period, which itself would be divided into 3-1 thousand year periods (i.e., millennia).
3. Each 1 thousand year period would culminate with the appearance of a Saoshyant, who would restore fallen Zoroastrian practice.