

## = A Vision of the Last Judgment =

A Vision of the Last Judgment is a painting by William Blake that was designed in 1808 before becoming a lost artwork . The painting was to be shown in an 1810 exhibition with a detailed analysis added to a second edition of his Descriptive Catalogue . This plan was dropped after the exhibition was cancelled , and the painting disappeared . Blake 's notes for the Descriptive Catalogue describe various aspects of the work in a detailed manner , which allow the aspects of the painting to be known . Additionally , earlier designs that reveal similar Blake depiction of the Last Judgment have survived , and these date back to an 1805 precursor design created for Robert Blair 's The Grave . In addition to Blake 's notes on the painting , a letter written to Ozias Humphrey provides a description of the various images within an earlier design of the Last Judgment .

## = = Origins = =

Blake claimed to have seen visions throughout his life , and he claimed that they were a common aspect of life . His understanding of these events was , as he explained , similar to the experiences of biblical prophets . In the commentary to A Vision of the Last Judgment , Blake claimed that the image originated in a particular vision he experienced that allowed him to see the host of Heaven praising God . The actual design of A Vision of the Last Judgment was created in 1808 as an expansion of his 1805 work The Day of Judgment . Blake created this work to be used in Blair 's The Grave , which was published 1808 .

The seven foot by five foot painting was to be shown in an 1810 exhibit of Blake 's work , but the exhibit was cancelled after problems resulting from an 1809 exhibit of his works . The actual painting was lost , but earlier versions of the work survived . These include an 1808 watercolour version made for Elizabeth Ilive , wife of George Wyndham , 3rd Earl of Egremont , that was displayed at their Petworth House . A similar illustration in pencil and ink became part of the Rosenwald Collection . Other editions included watercolours made for Thomas Butts in 1806 , 1807 , and 1809 , one for John Flaxman in 1806 ( lost ) , and an 1809 unsold version in tempera . These are in addition to The Day of Judgment made for Blair 's The Grave .

The painting was to be discussed in Blake 's Descriptive Catalogue , a work that , in 1809 , described Blake 's feelings about various painters and poets in addition to descriptions of his own works and their various meanings . Blake planned to create another edition for the 1810 collection but the plan was stopped after the exhibition was cancelled . Notes for what Blake planned to write for the works A Vision of the Last Judgment and Public Address survived . The notes were discovered by William Michael Rossetti and first mentioned in a letter to Horace Scudder on 27 November 1864 . Rossetti transcribed the notes for Alexander Gilchrist 's The Life of William Blake , an early biography on Blake . One piece of the work was missing : part of page 71 was sent by Rossetti to Scudder . Blake discussed the 1808 watercolour sold to Ilives in two works , a poem , " The Caverns of the Grave Ive Seen " , written for Ilives provided by Blake with her design. and a description of Ilives 's design for Humphry in January 1808 .

## = = Painting = =

The description provided by Blake to Humphrey explains that the work depicts the resurrection . The top of the work depicts Christ on the Throne of Judgment with Heaven opened up across the painting . Behind Christ are the heads of infants which represent creation coming from Jesus . Christ is surrounded by the four Zoas and seven angels that have vials filled with God 's wrath . An image of a tabernacle with a cross inside is depicted above Christ . An image of baptism is to Christ 's right and the Last Supper is to Christ 's left with both representing eternal life . Further to Christ 's right is the resurrection of the just and to the left is the resurrection and subsequent fall of the wicked . Adam and Eve are below Christ , and Abraham and Moses are nearby . Below Moses is Satan wrapped by the Serpent and in the centre is the book of death . At the top is the book of life , and the Christian Church is the figure of a woman on top of the moon .

Blake , in his notes to A Vision of the Last Judgment , describes how his design is to work : " If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought [ ... ] then would he arise from his Grave " . He relies on the word representation frequently in the work , and he tries to represent action in a visible manner that distances his depiction of the apocalypse from a traditional version that disguises the various components of an apocalyptic vision . To Blake , he must create an image of the Last Judgment , then represent the image , and then describe with a written gloss of the work . This creates a layer of representation that separates the audience from the apocalyptic experience , which undermines the concept of apocalypse as both mysterious and directly experienced .

In discussing the nature of time , Blake wrote in his notes : " The Greeks represented Chronos or Time as a very Aged Man ; this is Fable , but the Real Vision of Time is in Eternal Youth . I have , however , somewhat accommodated my Figure of Time to the common opinion , as I myself am also infected with it & my Visions also infected , as I see Time Aged , alas , too much so . "

= = Themes = =

Blake based his portrayal of the apocalypse on his belief that God 's love allowed for a personal apocalypse as part of the human experience . In the notes to the work , he claimed that " whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual " . This idea is connected to views of David Hartley of the " pure disinterested love of God " , and appears in other works by Blake , including his Jerusalem . Also , Blake 's Milton describes the process that an individual goes through during an apocalypse , which includes having to confront their errors and their flaws . There is no peace during the struggle , as it involves a direct interaction between contrary views that would eventually establish the new state .

On the details in the painting , Blake claimed that each component had a specific meaning that provides an allegory @-@ like dimension to the work . Blake dismissed the idea of using allegory within his works except , as he wrote in a letter to Butts , 6 July 1803 , " Allegory Address 'd to the intellectual powers , while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding , is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry " .

Blake 's philosophical interpretation of time is similar to Samuel Taylor Coleridge 's depiction of the relationship between time and the state of limbo within his poem " Limbo " . Both claim that their understanding of time is connected to the common , contemporary view , but they alter their perspective of time within their works to that of an older person . The figure of time appears in other works by Blake , including as the figure Los and in the illustration Blake made for Edward Young 's Night Thoughts .