



Apocalyptic Imagery in Robert Frost's "Fire & Ice" and "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ."

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Abstract

Human beings are considered as a dangerous species in the whole world because they are the only species that destroys their own kind. They have become the end of the world through ecological degradation, nuclear weapons and unchecked advancements in technologies creating great concern for global catastrophe and a possibility for great delusion of an apocalypse. The very idea evokes a sense of fear and guilt in each and every one of us. In short, the current scenario is seen as a man-made tragedy. In Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice", destruction of the world is portrayed as consequences of human emotions, especially desire and hatred. The destruction caused by war and violence created by human desire and hatred. Frost uses elements like fire and ice to describe the destruction of the world. Frost uses fire as a symbol of human desire and ice as a symbol of coldness of hatred. It also implies that destruction is not only caused by external forces but rather by man's internal flaws. The poem's detached tone indicates that the end of the world is not just possible but an inevitable event due to human nature. "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ" described in biblical context, portrays the destruction of the world to divinely judge the righteousness from unrighteousness. It is not just destruction, whereas it's a cleansing ritual of the pure to separate the evil and good to purify the world. The second coming offers hope and redemption. The evil are judged and the good are promised eternal life and to create a new world and new heaven. In this perspective, the destruction is both an end and a new beginning. This paper explores comparative study of the poem "Fire and Ice" and "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ" using elemental symbols.

Keywords: apocalypse, destruction, Human desire, hatred, indifferences, fire and ice and divine judgement

Introduction

Robert Frost was born in 1874 in San Francisco, California. He is widely regarded as one of the most prominent poets among American poets in twentieth century. Robert Frost is known for his traditional verses and his realistic imagery of rural life in New England. Frost received four Pulitzer Prizes for his works. His most accomplished works include *Mountain Interval* (1916), *North of Boston* (1914), *New Hampshire* (1923), and *West-Running Brook*

(1928). And his splendid collection of poems include "The Road Not Taken", "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", "Mending Wall" and "Fire and Ice."

Frost's poetry explores the theme of Moral and Ethical complexities of human choices, Nature, Isolation, Boundaries and Destruction. Though his settings and tone seem to be rural with simple language, many of his poems have dark philosophical tone. The theme of Destruction is a



prominent theme in “Fire and Ice.” He explores the destructive nature of human beings. The poem offers a prediction of the end of the world through elemental Imagery. Similarly, the second coming of Jesus Christ also depicts apocalyptic vision with divine judgement. The second coming of the Jesus Christ in biblical context describes profound portrayal of Divine Judgement. It is not just about the destruction of the world, it is a moment for redemption for all the faithful. So, this paper in particular suggests that both the poem “Fire and Ice” and the second coming addresses the destruction of the world as a consequence of moral and ethical failure of human beings.

A Comparative study of Apocalyptic Imagery in Robert Frost’s “Fire and Ice” and “The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.”

Robert Frost’s “Fire and Ice” is a nine lined compact poem that explores the possibilities of the destruction of the world. He wrote the poem in a conversational undertone and it’s in simple style. The poem uses two well-known destructive forces like ‘Fire’ which represents desire and passion and ‘Ice’ symbolizes coldness, hatred and indifference. In the first half of the poem, the poet contemplates that the world will end in fire, determining it as a personal struggle with human desire. ‘Fire’ in the poem can be understood in literal or in metaphorical manner. Fire can be interpreted as intense human emotions like greed and ambition. Those emotions have the power to consume and destroy. The second half of the poem focuses on ‘ice’, ‘Ice’ is also equally destructive because of its cold indifference and hatred which shows absence of mercy and compassion in human beings. By comparing the elemental forces Frost offers a realistic and collective responsibility that the end of the world is not from any external catastrophe created by universe rather an emotional and ethical decay of human beings. There is no plea for vindication for hope and change when it all comes to an end. So, the poem is a reflection of self-inflicted destructive tendencies of mankind.

“The Second Coming of Jesus Christ” is a Christian belief that refers to the return of Jesus

Christ to redeem the faithful and righteous people and to punish the wicked and unrighteous people. In “The Second Coming of Jesus Christ”, he will never be a servant nor a lamb who will be put to death but he will be righteous king and a judge. In his first coming, he was marked by humility and sacrifice and promised salvation. But his second coming focuses on final judgement of all humanity and to establish new eternal life on earth. There will be no warning signs, of Jesus Christ’s return and he will judge all of mankind, dividing them from good and evil. This event may be preceded by moral and spiritual decay, war and violence and false prophets. The divine Judgement will divide people into two categories the righteous and the wicked. It’s not just about hope but rather to orchestrate God’s divine plan to redeem mankind. Though second coming of Christ is unknown, believers are asked to live with unwavering faith and readiness for the return of Jesus Christ.

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in Ice. (Frost)*

Robert Frost’s *Fire and Ice* (1920) explores two destructive forces like ‘Fire’ and ‘Ice’. Fire is often interpreted as desire and passion while Ice as hate and indifference. The poem interprets how the human desire and hatred is the main focal point in destroying the world.

“The Second Coming of Jesus Christ” refers to the return of Jesus Christ. It also explores the destruction of world through judgement days. It involves global catastrophe and Judgement of the living and dead by dividing the righteous from unrighteousness.

*But the day of the Lord will come
like a thief. The heavens will
disappear with a roar, the
elements will be destroyed by
fire...(2 Peter 3:10)*

The fire in the biblical text not only symbolizes destruction but also purification. Purification of the world from all the evil malicious acts that has been engraved in the depth of the world. The second coming of Jesus Christ is to redeem people who are righteous.



In “Fire and Ice”, fire represents war and violence caused by human being’s desire and passion, a self -inflicted wound and in scripture, fire represents divine judgement and purification. Frost refers to fire as a man-made self-inflicted destruction where as in biblical context it is referred as divinely appointed. Ice represents hatred, and cold indifference which also imitate the loss of love at the end of times. In the perspective of Frost, there is no salvation for the people in their end times. On the other hand, the biblical context promises salvation and redemption.

“Fire and Ice” depicts the human moral failures that led humans to destroy their own habitat and themselves. But the vision of the poem and the biblical context ends in completely different outcomes because Frost’s depiction of the world simply ends where as in the biblical context it is a new beginning.

Conclusion

The paper explored the apocalyptic event depicted in Robert Frost’s “Fire and Ice” in comparison to “The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.” The paper examined the destruction of the world by fire or ice, comparing the poem “Fire and Ice” and “The Second Coming of Jesus Christ” in the biblical context. The paper has explored the themes of human desire, greed and cold indifference using ‘fire’ and ‘ice’ as symbols in Robert Frost’s poem “Fire and Ice” and

compared with the biblical context, “The Second Coming of Jesus Christ”, in which fire and ice depicts the wrath of the God and the divine judgement for all the living and dead to separate the righteous and unrighteous in the world. Both the scripture and the poem talks about the destruction of the world. The poem “Fire and Ice” and “The Second Coming of the Jesus Christ” in the biblical context both envision the destruction of the world. Frost apprehends there is no saviour, just the end times where as in biblical context, there is a saviour and divine judgement which leads to redemption. Together this text provides solid understanding of the end times.

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