

# **The Understanding of the Church Fathers Regarding the Olivet Discourse and the Fall of Jerusalem**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Last year I presented a paper to this body regarding the Jewish historian Josephus’ understanding of the Olivet Discourse and the Fall of Jerusalem and particularly how Preterists had written about Josephus’ recording of the event. Preterists have sought to demonstrate that the words of Jesus about His Second Coming in judgment is the destruction that He speaks of in the Olivet Discourse, that the Antichrist is the Roman government’s assault on Jerusalem mentioned in Daniel 9, and that the abomination of desolation refers to Titus’ sacrilege in his destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. They are divided as to whether there are still some aspects of Christ’s prophecy about His coming in the clouds yet to be fulfilled. In seeking the support of Josephus, in his account of the destruction of Jerusalem, the attempt to assign a A.D. 70 date to the fulfillment of most or all of the Olivet Discourse, with its vivid description of divine judgment, falls greatly short. As I demonstrated last year, little if any of Josephus’ description satisfies the words of our Lord in His discourse.

As a futurist, and a dispensationalist, I find the exegetical arguments for Preterism to be woefully lacking and the historical arguments from Josephus to bolster their arguments disingenuous, but is there support for this type of understanding of the Fall of Jerusalem and the predictions of Christ within the writings of the Church that follows A.D. 70? Did the Church Fathers of the ensuing centuries look back on A.D. 70 as the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse in part, or whole? When reading the works of the theologians of the first several centuries—the patristic period ranging from the first through the eighth centuries—orthodox and heterodox,<sup>1</sup> none of them seemed to refer to the fall of Jerusalem as a comprehensive fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse nor did they

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<sup>1</sup> Largely I will address the recognized orthodox apologists and fathers, but I will also consider some who failed in one or more areas of orthodoxy and yet held correct interpretation of this portion of Scripture and the ensuing fall of Jerusalem.

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believe that most or all of the second coming was past. Rather, they believed that the statements of Jesus in the “little apocalypse” (Matt 24; Mark 13) were future from their day. An examination of the writings of the ante-Nicene, Nicene, and post-Nicene Fathers of the Church reveals clearly that they looked for a future coming of Christ, cancelling out any sense a hard Preterism. If any expressed a Preterist perspective regarding the particulars of the Olivet Discourse (namely, the coming of Christ, the Antichrist and destruction of Jerusalem), it would surely only be a soft Preterism. In spite of this caveat, however, I could only find one father who might qualify (Clement of Alexandria).

In considering this topic, I briefly also desire to mention an important factor about the church fathers, and others, of the first few centuries of the Church that I hope to speak on in some depth at a later time. One observes that the teachers of the orthodox and heterodox communities of Christians tended to agree on certain matters of eschatology, though greatly differing in other doctrines such as Jesus and the Trinity. The unity of belief among the orthodox regarding eschatology is due to at least three reasons.<sup>2</sup> First, the apostle John or his disciples had trained these early orthodox teachers, and the apostolic tradition in this matter was mainly accepted and passed down to successive generations. Consequently, they passed on the Johannine tradition of pre-millennialism advocated by the Apostle in the book of Revelation that he understood from the Old Testament, the earthy teachings of Jesus, and the revelation he received from the glorified Lord on Patmos. Second, the strong Jewish perspective that John shared, mainly because of the adherence to the Old Testament promises of Israel’s future glory and the reign of David’s Son, Jesus, permeated their view of last things. Last of all, the teachers of Asia Minor, unlike those in Alexandria (where a neo-Platonic renaissance had arisen) tended to understand the Scripture in less literal fashion, embracing allegorical interpretation.

In setting forth the evidence the various statements of the Fathers in the patristic period have been studied references to the Olivet Discourse, their view of Daniel’s prophecy in Daniel 9, their understanding of the Antichrist and the abomination of desolation (mentioned by Daniel, Jesus and the Apostle Paul), and the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem to their eschatology. Rather than presenting this information topically, since often the same quotations contain these elements together, I will present the results by various Fathers of the Church who serve as representative of the thesis I seek to demonstrate, by providing their words with comments by me.

## CHURCH FATHERS

The writings that set forth the thinking of the patristic period of early Christian leaders and theologians come to us from the end of the first century and through the eighth century, ending with John of Damascus. In these works we may discern the unity and diversity among the various Church centers of the Roman Empire (and later Byzantium) as well as the major thinkers of the Church. We will examine but a few, though they are representative, to get an idea of how the Church viewed the matter of the Olivet Discourse and the significance of the Fall of Jerusalem.

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<sup>2</sup> The reason for heterodox agreement will be addressed later in the paper briefly but reserved for the study of the difference between Asia Minor and Israel from Alexandria.

### **Epistle of Barnabas (ca. A.D. 80-120)**

The author of the Epistle of Barnabas betrays a decidedly supersessionist perspective<sup>3</sup> and a penchant for allegory. He gives texts that would normally be interpreted literally, and he seems to at times, but draws conclusions that have little to do with the texts themselves.<sup>4</sup> He desires to apply the texts to the current ethical life of the Christian rather than the predictive elements that are found in the biblical passages. Moreover, he sees the Church as having taken over the promises to Israel<sup>5</sup> and chides those who believe that Israel and Christians have a common covenant. It is somewhat confusing at this point since he does not develop the idea of the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31, but rather speaks of the Mosaic covenant that Israel disobeyed and the covenant of Jesus that Christians embrace.

The author mentions that the Lord “has cut short the times and the days, that His Beloved may hasten,” an possible allusion to words of [the book of] Enoch but also in line with the words of Christ in Mark 13:20, referring to the time of great tribulation on the earth (13:19), “Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.” (Mark 13:20 NAS95). He says this in the middle of discussion on doing what is able to save us, but instead of relating this to the tribulation spoken of by Jesus in Mark 13, or Enoch, he applies it to contemporary difficulties that Christians were having. His further discussion of Enoch (and Daniel’s comments about the future time of prophetic fulfillment again turns to contemporary personal application rather to the prophetic events themselves.

One observes, as stated previously, that the author of the Epistle of Barnabas is inclined toward allegorical interpretation. In dealing with the temple of God, he accepts a literal temple but unlike Irenaeus who makes much of the fact that God instructed the building of the temple, this author views the Jews building and worship to be outside God’s intent, and with its destruction the true temple of God becomes the people of God. He continues with the theme of the Jews’ rejection of God and the nullifying the legitimacy of the building of the temple, and of temple worship itself, and is indicative of illegitimate worship. The rebuilding of the temple of which he speaks appears to be that of the first temple’s destruction with the rising of the second Jewish.

“Moreover, I will also tell you concerning the temple, how the wretched [Jews], wandering in error, trusted not in God Himself, but in the temple, as being the house of God. For almost after the manner of the Gentiles they worshipped Him in the temple. . . . Ye perceive that their hope is vain. Moreover, He again says, “Behold, they who have cast down this temple, even they shall build it up again.” It has so happened. For through their going to war, it was destroyed by their enemies; and now: they, as the servants of their enemies, shall rebuild it. Again, it was revealed that the city and the temple and the people of Israel were to be given up. For the Scripture saith, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the Lord will deliver up the sheep of His pasture, and their sheep-fold and tower, to destruction.” And it so happened as the Lord had spoken.”<sup>6</sup>

The author continues with his discussion of a temple, but then allegorizes this temple to

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<sup>3</sup> See my chapter on supercessionism in H. Wayne House, “The Church’s Appropriation of Israel’s Blessings,” *Israel: the Land and the People*, H. Wayne House, ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 77-

<sup>4</sup> *Epistle of Barnabas*, 4. ANF 1:138.

<sup>5</sup>  
<sup>6</sup> *Epistle of Barnabas*, 16. ANF 1:147.

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be a spiritual temple, that is, the habitation of the Spirit in each believer in Jesus.

Let us inquire, then, if there still is a temple of God. There is—where He himself declared He would make and finish it. For it is written, “And it shall come to pass, when the week is completed, the temple of God shall be built in glory in the name of the Lord.” I find, therefore, that a temple does exist. Learn, then, how it shall be built in the name of the Lord. Before we believed in God, the habitation of our heart was corrupt and weak, as being indeed like a temple made with hands. For it was full of idolatry, and was a habitation of demons, through our doing such things as were opposed to [the will of] God. But it shall be built, observe ye, in the name of the Lord, in order that the temple of the Lord may be built in glory. How? Learn [as follows]. Having received the forgiveness of sins, and placed our trust in the name of the Lord, we have become new creatures, formed again from the beginning. Wherefore in our habitation God truly dwells in us. How? His word of faith; His calling of promise; the wisdom of the statutes; the commands of the doctrine; He himself prophesying in us; He himself dwelling in us; opening to us who were enslaved by death the doors of the temple, that is, the mouth; and by giving us repentance introduced us into the incorruptible temple. He then, who wishes to be saved, looks not to man, but to Him who dwelleth in him, and speaketh in him, amazed at never having either heard him utter such words with his mouth, nor himself having ever desired to hear them. This is the spiritual temple built for the Lord.<sup>7</sup>

### Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 150-ca. 215)

Apparently this second century father believed that Daniel’s prophecies were fulfilled by Nero and Vespasian, an exception to the rest of the fathers of the Church that we have investigated. In reference to the Fall of Jerusalem, Clement of Alexandria believed that the Danielic prophecy was fulfilled in the time of Nero and Vespasian, making him unique among the fathers that I could examine. He calculates the time period spoken by Daniel relating to the seventy weeks of Daniel (Dan 9: ), concluding that the temple destroyed by the Babylonians in the 6<sup>th</sup> century was rebuilt by the Jews with the subsequent coming and reign of Messiah completing the sixty-nine weeks. Afterwards the last week was completed with the Roman emperors. Note his words that sound very much like Preterism:

That the temple accordingly was built in seven weeks, is evident; for it is written in Esdras. And thus Christ became King of the Jews, reigning in Jerusalem in the fulfilment of the seven weeks. And in the sixty and two weeks the whole of Judaea was quiet, and without wars. And Christ our Lord, “the Holy of Holies,” having come and fulfilled the vision and the prophecy, was anointed in His flesh by the Holy Spirit of His Father. In those “sixty and two weeks,” as the prophet said, and “in the one week,” was He Lord. The half of the week Nero held sway, and in the holy city Jerusalem placed the abomination; and in the half of the week he was taken away, and Otho, and Galba, and Vitellius. And Vespasian rose to the supreme power, and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place. And that such are the facts of the case, is clear to him that is able to understand, as the prophet said.”<sup>8</sup>

Clement of Alexandria’s belief that Daniel’s prophecy was fulfilled in the time of Nero and Vespasian<sup>9</sup> is a small minority position among the major fathers that I could

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<sup>7</sup>*Epistle of Barnabas*, 16. ANF 1.147.

<sup>8</sup>Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, 1.21. Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. II : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Fathers of the second century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire); Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 329. [ANF 2:329]

<sup>9</sup>Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, 1.21. Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. II : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Fathers of the second century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire); Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 333. [ANF 2:333.]

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examine.<sup>10</sup>

Though he does seem to adopt a Preterist perspective regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, Clement, in *Stromata*, 3.6. does indicate that he believes in a future second coming of Christ when he is arguing against those who spoke against marriage. In an untranslated Latin portion of Clement in Donaldson’s *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Book 3), Clement says that the coming of the Lord will be a time both of humans going about daily business and a time of great distress, quoting from the Olivet Discourse:<sup>11</sup>

Hic ipse autem Dominus dicit: . . . “Et rursus: “Sicut autem erat in diebus Noe, erant nubentes, et nuptui dantes, aedificantes, et plantantes; et sicut erat in diebus Lot, ita erit adventus Filii hominis.” [Matt 24:37-39 (v 37) and Luke 17:26-30 (v 28): conditions in days of Noah] Et quod hoc non dicit ad genies, ostendit, cum subjungit: “Num cum venerit Filius hominis, inveniet fidem in terra?” [Luke 18:8: question of faith when the Son of man comes] Et rursus: “Vae praegnantibus et lactantibus in illis diebus.” [Matt 24:19; Mark 13:17; Luke 21:23: bad news for pregnant and nursing mothers]<sup>12</sup>

[Personal Translation: However, the Lord Himself says, and again, “as it was in the days of Noah, when they were marrying and giving in marriage, building and planting; and as it was in the days of Lot, so it will be with the coming of the Son of Man,” and since this is not being said regarding the Gentiles [genies], it shows that he [says, cum subiungit] that “when the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth?” And again, “woe to the pregnant, and those who give milk in those days.”]

### Tertullian (ca A.D. 160-ca 220)

Tertullian, in the late second century, indicates that he is a futurist but sees the “falling away”<sup>13</sup> of 2 Thessalonians 2 as referring to events in his day in the Roman Empire after which the Antichrist would be revealed. This important father of the western church argues from Second Thessalonians 2 that Christ’s coming occurs only after the demise of ten kingdoms—the falling away in Tertullian’s view—to be replaced by the

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<sup>10</sup> In his only surviving book, Victorinus of Poetovio (d. ca. A.D. 303) *Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John*, Vicorinus, writes in chapter 17 that the Apocalypse was written in the time of Domitian, but identifies the kings of the Revelation with Roman emperors in the first century, ending in Nerva (ca. 96-98). He may represent a historicist perspective:

9. “The seven heads are the seven hills, on which the woman sitteth.”] That is, the city of Rome.

10. “And there are seven kings: five have fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he is come, he will be for a short time.”] The time must be understood in which the written Apocalypse was published, since then reigned Caesar Domitian; but before him had been Titus his brother, and Vespasian, Otho, Vitellius, and Galba. These are the five who have fallen. One remains, under whom the Apocalypse was written—Domitian, to wit. “The other has not yet come,” speaks of Nerva; “and when he is come, he will be for a short time,” for he did not complete the period of two years. Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. VII : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily and Liturgies.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 357.

<sup>11</sup> Matt 24: 37-39 and Luke 17:26-30; Luke 18:8 ; and Matt 24:19; Mark 13:17, Luke 21:23.

<sup>12</sup> Book 3 of Clement of Alexandria is only in the Latin. I have provided my translation in the text and an alternate in this footnote at the end, located on an internet site. Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. II : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Fathers of the second century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire); Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 390. [ANF 2:390] Translated in xkxk, “And again, “The Son of Man’s coming shall be as in the days of Noah, when they were marrying, giving in marriage, building, planting, and as in the days of Lot.” (5) Since he is not speaking in relation to the gentiles, he adds, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (6) Again, “It will be bad for women pregnant or with child at the breast in those days.”

<sup>13</sup> See my chapter on an alternate perspective on the meaning of ἀποστασία in 2 Thessalonians 2 in *When the Trumpet Sounds*.

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rise of the Antichrist.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hinders must hinder, until he be taken out of the way.” [2 Thess 2:1-7] What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist upon (its own ruins)? “And then shall be revealed the wicked one, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” [2 Thess 2:8-10]<sup>14</sup>

The father of Latin Christianity, Tertullian, in his *Answer to the Jews*, does an intricate analysis of Daniel 9 to demonstrate to the Jews that Jesus was indeed the Messiah prophesied and the one mentioned in Daniel 9 as the prince who would be “cut off” as a sacrifice. Tertullian finds a completion of the 70th week of Daniel within the earthly life and death of Jesus,<sup>15</sup> but he does not connect the future Antichrist or second coming of Jesus to the fall of Jerusalem.

Tertullian, in his well-known work *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, writes about the resurrection, referencing the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. Tertullian tells his opponent that the resurrection of which he speaks is a Christian hope that may not be attained until the coming of Christ, the judgment of God and the final disposition of the world:

“Now, forasmuch as the seasons of our entire hope have been fixed in the Holy Scripture, and since we are not permitted to place the accomplishment thereof, as I apprehend, previous to Christ’s coming, our prayers are directed towards the end of this world, to the passing away thereof at the great day of the Lord—of His wrath and vengeance—the last day, which is hidden (from all), and known to none but the Father, although announced beforehand by signs and wonders, and the dissolution of the elements, and the conflicts of nations.”<sup>16</sup>

Note that Tertullian spells out the order of the events that lead to the end of the world relating to the questions of the disciples regarding the destruction of the temple. Tertullian says of Jesus’ response to His disciples that He was referring to the order of Jewish events that would occur until the destruction of Jerusalem, but then the Gentiles would tread down Jerusalem until the Gentile period should end. He interpreted this to mean that God would gather both Gentiles and the Jewish remnant.<sup>17</sup> At this time Jesus will come to bring an end to the world system and punish the enemies of God. Tertullian then continues his discussion by emphasizing that this event has not occurred yet since Christians were still suffering under the Romans. He says that Christians need to pray to be redeemed by the Lord from the trials coming on them:

“Who is it then, that has aroused the Lord, now at God’s right hand so unseasonably and with such severity “shake terribly” (as Isaiah expresses it (“that earth,” which, I suppose, is as yet unshattered? Who has thus early put “Christ’s enemies beneath His feet” (to use the language of David ), making Him more hurried than the Father, whilst every crowd in our popular assemblies is

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<sup>14</sup>Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. III : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 563. [On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Chap xxiv]

<sup>15</sup>For a look at his detailed calculation of Daniel’s 70 weeks, see Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, 8. Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. III : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 158. [ANF 3:158]

<sup>16</sup>Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 22 [ANF 3:560].

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still with shouts consigning “the Christians to the lions?” Who has yet beheld Jesus descending from heaven in like manner as the apostles saw Him ascend, according to the appointment of the two angels? Up to the present moment they have not, tribe by tribe, smitten their breasts, looking on Him whom they pierced. No one has as yet fallen in with Elias; no one has as yet escaped from Antichrist; no one has as yet had to bewail the downfall of Babylon. And is there now anybody who has risen again, except the heretic? *He*, of course, has already quitted the grave of his own corpse—although he is even now liable to fevers and ulcers; he, too, has already trodden down his enemies—although he has even now to struggle with the powers of the world. And as a matter of course, he is already a king—although he even now owes to Caesar the things which are Caesar’s.”<sup>18</sup>

In his work *Against Marcion*, Tertullian seems to set forth A.D. 70 as the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy of destruction, but not the inauguration of the millennium, since he seems to speak of the millennium as a coming event, not one having already become. Tertullian employs both a figurative and literal hermeneutic in dealing with future of the Jewish people and the church, the judgment of God on the world, and the reign of Christ on the earth from Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> He says to Marcion that the Messiah must have come because Israel’s punishment for their rejection of Messiah had already ensued. Tertullian here speaks of terms like “temple” and “city of God” in reference to the church, but in a figurative sense, as we shall observe later in his treatise. He apparently viewed the punishment as conditional on their rejection and remarks that they did not yet repent from their sin during the time of Tiberius through Vespasian.

“Consider whether what follows in the prophet has not received its fulfilment: “The Lord of hosts hath taken away from Judah and from Jerusalem, amongst other things, both the prophet and the wise artificer;” that is, His Holy Spirit, who builds the church, which is indeed the temple, and household and city of God. For thenceforth God’s grace failed amongst them; and “the clouds were commanded to rain no rain upon the vineyard” of Sorech; to withhold, that is, the graces of heaven, that they shed no blessing upon “the house of Israel,” which had but produced “the thorns” wherewith it had crowned the Lord, and “instead of righteousness, the cry” wherewith it had hurried Him away to the cross. And so in this manner the law and the prophets were until John, but the clews [clues] of divine grace were withdrawn from the nation. After his time their madness still continued, and the name of the Lord was blasphemed by them, as saith the Scripture: “Because of you my name is continually blasphemed amongst the nations” (for from them did the blasphemy originate); neither in the interval from Tiberius to Vespasian did they learn repentance. Therefore “has their land become desolate, their cities are burnt with fire, their country strangers are devouring before their own eyes. . . . At all events, if the Creator’s Christ has not come yet, on whose account the prophecy dooms them to such sufferings, they will have to endure the sufferings when He shall have come. Then where will there be a daughter of Sion to be reduced to desolation, for there is none now to be found? Where will there be cities to be burnt with fire, for they are now in heaps? Where a nation to be dispersed, which is already in banishment? Restore to Judaea its former state, that the Creator’s Christ may find it, and then you may contend that another Christ has come.”<sup>20</sup>

Tertullian then turns in his next chapter an argument about the earthly nature of the reign of Christ in contrast to the spiritual situation at the present time of his writing. He describes the promises of God to the Jewish people an earthly country, in contrast to the heavenly expression of God’s kingdom. Here he mocks Marcion for his view that God will merely return back an earthly kingdom, and that it is obvious that the actual restoration of Judea is spiritually applicable to the church. Note his words,

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<sup>18</sup>Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 22 [ANF 3:560]

<sup>19</sup>Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 3.23-24 [ANF 3: 341-343].

<sup>20</sup>ANF 3: 341-343.

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Yes, certainly, you say, I do hope from Him that which amounts in itself to a proof of the diversity (of Christs), God’s kingdom in an everlasting and heavenly possession. Besides, your Christ promises to the Jews their primitive condition, with the recovery of their country; and after this life’s course is over, repose in Hades in Abraham’s bosom. Oh, most excellent God, when He restores in amnesty what He took away in wrath! Oh, what a God is yours, who both wounds and heals, creates evil and makes peace! Oh, what a God, that is merciful even down to Hades! I shall have something to say about Abraham’s bosom in the proper place. As for the restoration of Judea, however, which even the Jews themselves, induced by the names of places and countries, hope for just as it is described, it would be tedious to state at length how the figurative interpretation is spiritually applicable to Christ and His church, and to the character and fruits thereof; besides, the subject has been regularly treated in another work, which we entitle *De Spe Fidelium*. At present, too, it would be superfluous for this reason, that our inquiry relates to what is promised in heaven, not on earth.<sup>21</sup>

What Tertullian takes away with one hand, he returns with the other, for he goes on to admit that his emphasis is the spiritual dimension in his debate with Marcion. He then admits that there is in fact an earthly kingdom, believing that both heavenly and earthly promises of God are true:

But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, “let down from heaven,” which the apostle also calls “our mother from above; ” and, while declaring that our πολίτευμα, or citizenship, is in heaven, he predicates of it that it is really a city in heaven. This both Ezekiel had knowledge of and the Apostle John beheld. And the word of the new prophecy which is a part of our belief, attests how it foretold that there would be for a sign a picture of this very city exhibited. to view previous to its manifestation. This prophecy, indeed, has been very lately fulfilled in an expedition to the East. For it is evident from the testimony of even heathen witnesses, that in Judea there was suspended in the sky a city early every morning for forty days. As the day advanced, the entire figure of its walls would wane gradually, and sometimes it would vanish instantly. We say that this city has been provided by God for receiving the saints on their resurrection, and refreshing them with the abundance of all really spiritual blessings, as a recompense for those which in the world we have either despised or lost; since it is both just and God-worthy that His servants should have their joy in the place where they have also suffered affliction for His name’s sake. Of the heavenly kingdom this is the process. After its thousand years are over, within which period is completed the resurrection of the saints, who rise sooner or later according to their deserts there will ensue the destruction of the world and the conflagration of all things at the judgment: we shall then be changed in a moment into the substance of angels, even by the investiture of an incorruptible nature, and so be removed to that kingdom in heaven of which we have now been treating. . . .

At this point in his argument Tertullian wants to demonstrate that the same God makes provision of heavenly and earthly blessings, and that in which ever state he should find himself he would be with Christ who made both:

For we shall, according to the apostle, be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord (even the Son of man, who shall come in the clouds, according to Daniel ) and so shall we ever be with the Lord, so long as He remains both on the earth and in heaven, who, against such as are thankful for both one promise and the other, calls the elements themselves to witness: “Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth.” Now, for my own part indeed, even though Scripture held out no hand of heavenly hope to me (as, in fact, it so often does), I should still possess a sufficient presumption of even this promise, in my present enjoyment of the earthly gift; and I should look out for something also of the heavenly, from Him who is the God of heaven as well as of earth. I should thus believe that the

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<sup>21</sup>ANF 3: 341-343.



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Christ who promises the higher blessings is (the Son) of Him who had also promised the lower ones; who had, moreover, afforded proofs of greater gifts by smaller ones; who had reserved for His Christ alone this revelation of a (perhaps) unheard of kingdom, so that, while the earthly glory was announced by His servants, the heavenly might have God Himself for its messenger.<sup>22</sup>

### Irenaeus (2<sup>nd</sup> Cent A.D.—ca. 202)

Few would question that Irenaeus was the premier premillennialist of the second century, to the consternation of Eusebius of Caesarea Maritima. I would not want to argue beyond the evidence, since Irenaeus primary interest in his discussion is to demonstrate that the Gnostic dualistic view of the OT and NT is false, but it appears that this second century father [Irenaeus], who accepts the future millennial reign of Jesus, also envisions a time in which the temple will be rebuilt, though he does not explicitly say this, since he views the future Antichrist sitting in the Jewish temple. In view of Irenaeus’ importance, and his being in the theological succession from John the writer of Revelation, I will quote him in greater amount than other authors.

Irenaeus uses Daniel’s prophecy, and Jesus’ reiteration of it, to show that the Gnostic dualistic view of the Old Testament and New Testament is false. While he does mention the prophecy of the weeks of Daniel, he does not mention anything about the destruction of Jerusalem in connection with it:

“2. Moreover, he (the apostle) has also pointed out this which I have shown in many ways, that the temple in Jerusalem was made by the direction of the true God. For the apostle himself, speaking in his own person, distinctly called it the temple of God. Now I have shown in the third book, that no one is termed God by the apostles when speaking for themselves, except Him who truly is God, the Father of our Lord, by whose directions the temple which is at Jerusalem was constructed for those purposes which I have already mentioned; in which [temple] the enemy shall sit, endeavouring to show himself as Christ, as the Lord also declares: “But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which has been spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains; and he who is upon the house-top, let him not come down to take anything out of his house: for there shall then be great hardship, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be.” [Matt 24:15, 21]”<sup>23</sup>

In his characteristic futurist perspective Irenaeus attempts to place the Antichrist within the context of the ten kings of the Revelation, and as a future imposter for the Messiah, who is finally defeat to him, then giving the kingdom to the saints:

“3. Daniel too, looking forward to the end of the last kingdom, i.e., the ten last kings, amongst whom the kingdom of those men shall be partitioned, and upon whom the son of perdition shall come, declares that ten horns shall spring from the beast, and that another little horn shall arise in the midst of them, and that three of the former shall be rooted up before his face. He says: “And, behold, eyes were in this horn as the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, and his look was more stout than his fellows. I was looking, and this horn made war against the saints, and prevailed against them, until the Ancient of days came and gave judgment to the saints of the most high God, and the time came, and the saints obtained the kingdom.” [Dan 7:8, etc]

Irenaeus understands the three and one-half weeks as a reference to three and one-half years in which the Antichrist reigns over the defeated kingdoms and the whole earth. He

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<sup>22</sup>ANF 3: 341-343.

<sup>23</sup>Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.25.1-5 Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.1 : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.,Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 553.

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connects this with Paul’s teaching in second Thessalonians concerning the revelation of the Antichrist and his subsequent destruction by the coming Messiah:

. . . and he [[the Antichrist]] shall speak words against the most high God, and wear out the saints of the most high God, and shall purpose to change times and laws; and [everything] shall be given into his hand until a time of times and a half time,” [Dan 7:23, etc] that is, for three years and six months, during which time, when he comes, he shall reign over the earth. Of whom [[that is, the Antichrist]] also the Apostle Paul again, speaking in the second [Epistle] to the Thessalonians, and at the same time proclaiming the cause of his advent, thus says: “And then shall the wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy by the presence of His coming; whose coming [i.e., the wicked one’s,] is after the working of Satan, in all power, and signs, and portents of lies, and with all deceivableness of wickedness for those who perish; because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And therefore God will send them the working of error, that they may believe a lie; that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but gave consent to iniquity,” [2 Thess 2:8]<sup>24</sup>

The Antichrist is viewed as setting up his kingdom in Jerusalem and sitting in the temple of God there at the end of a three and one-half year period, half of a prophetic week:

“4. The Lord also spoke as follows to those who did not believe in Him: “I have come in my Father’s name, and ye have not received Me: when another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive,” [John 5:43] calling Antichrist “the other,” because he is alienated from the Lord. This is also the unjust judge, whom the Lord mentioned as one “who feared not God, neither regarded man,” [Luke 18:2, etc] to whom the widow fled in her forgetfulness of God,—that is, the earthly Jerusalem,—to be avenged of her adversary. Which also he shall do in the time of his kingdom: he shall remove his kingdom into that [city], and shall sit in the temple of God, leading astray those who worship him, as if he were Christ. . . .

. . . . “And in the midst of the week,” he says, “the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and the abomination of desolation [shall be brought] into the temple: even unto the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete.” [Dan 9:27] Now three years and six months constitute the half-week.”<sup>25</sup>

Irenaeus identifies the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament as the same God, contrary to Gnostic thought:

5. From all these passages are revealed to us, not merely the particulars of the apostasy, and [the doings] of him who concentrates in himself every satanic error, but also, that there is one and the same God the Father, who was declared by the prophets, but made manifest by Christ. For if what Daniel prophesied concerning the end has been confirmed by the Lord, when He said, “When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which has been spoken of by Daniel the prophet” [Matt 24:15] (and the angel Gabriel gave the interpretation of the visions to Daniel, and he is the archangel of the Creator (Demiurgi), who also proclaimed to Mary the visible coining and the incarnation of Christ), then one and the same God is most manifestly pointed out, who sent the prophets, and made promise of the Son, and called us into His knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

What is fascinating about the following quote from Irenaeus is that he puts the rapture chronologically before the tribulation, albeit, one could argue that it is possibly mid-trib,

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<sup>24</sup>Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.;Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 553.

<sup>25</sup>Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.;Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 554.

<sup>26</sup>Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.;Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 554. [ANF 1:553-554]

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but neither pre-wrath nor post-trib seems to be in view:

1. In the previous books I have set forth the causes for which God permitted these things to be made [[the creation]], and have pointed out that all such have been created for the benefit of that human nature which is saved, ripening for immortality that which is [possessed] of its own free will and its own power, and preparing and rendering it more adapted for eternal subjection to God. And therefore the creation is suited to [the wants of] man; for man was not made for its sake, but creation for the sake of man. . . . And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up [[cf. 1 Thess 4:17]] from this [[the judgment of the ungodly]], it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.” For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.<sup>27</sup>

In speaking of the difficulty of knowing the name of the beast (antichrist) by the number 666, he cautions rash decisions by interpreters. He speaks in the late second century of the future Antichrist, “Moreover, another danger, by no means trifling, shall overtake those who falsely presume that they know the name of Antichrist. For if these men assume one [number], when this [Antichrist] shall come having another, they will be easily led away by him, as supposing him not to be the expected one, who must be guarded against.”<sup>28</sup> He believed that one should wait to observe the prophetic fulfillment before making some final determination.<sup>29</sup>

The greatness of the coming of the Lord—that we know as the second coming—is spoken of by Irenaeus in these words:

And those who said, “The Lord hath reigned; let the people be enraged: [even] He who sitteth upon the cherubim; let the earth be moved,” [[referring to Ps 99:1]] were thus predicting partly that wrath from all nations which after His ascension came upon those who believed in Him, with the movement of the whole earth against the Church; and partly the fact that, when He comes from heaven with His mighty angels, the whole earth shall be shaken, as He Himself declares, “There shall be a great earthquake, such as has not been from the beginning.”<sup>30</sup>

From this Psalm Irenaeus understood that the wrath of the whole earth would come against the Church because of belief in Jesus, but he also taught that the literal shaking of the earth would occur at the coming of the Lord with his mighty angels. None of this seems to have any reference to the fall of Jerusalem, but rather to a future coming. The future coming of Christ, according to him, would be judged by the Lord for their failure to acknowledge and glorify him. Consequently, he will bring tribulation upon the earth. What is interesting, though, is that Irenaeus places this coming of Christ for the Church before a period of tribulation, though admittedly, it may be a mid-tribulation perspective since the righteous are said to face a final challenge in this period. Listen to the words, “And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall

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<sup>27</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.28. [ANF 1:558.]

<sup>28</sup>Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 559. [ANE 4.30]

<sup>29</sup>Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 559. [ANE 4.30]

<sup>30</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.33.13 [ANF 1:510]; his reference to the earthquake is from Mark 13:19 and Matt 24:21.

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be.” For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.<sup>31</sup>

The Bishop of Lyons has much to say in his writing about the Antichrist. This is to be expected since he was embroiled in considerable struggle with various heretics that fought against the orthodox faith, certainly the antichrists of which John mentioned (1 John 2:18). He views the rise of the Antichrist to be at a future date, in a predetermined time. Writing in the last portion of the second century A.D. rules out any connection of this prophetic figure with what occurred at the fall of Jerusalem. Irenaeus describes the coming king as one who is vainglorious, desiring worship as if he were God. He says,

1. “And not only by the particulars already mentioned, but also by means of the events which shall occur in the time of Antichrist is it shown that he, being an apostate and a robber, is anxious to be adored as God; and that, although a mere slave, he wishes himself to be proclaimed as a king. For he (Antichrist) being endued with all the power of the devil, shall come, not as a righteous king, nor as a legitimate king, [i.e., one] in subjection to God, but an impious, unjust, and lawless one; as an apostate, iniquitous and murderous; as a robber, concentrating in himself [all] satanic apostasy, and setting aside idols to persuade [men] that he himself is God, raising up himself as the only idol, having in himself the multifarious errors of the other idols.<sup>32</sup>

Irenaeus relates this action to what was prophesied by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians

“This he does, in order that they who do [now] worship the devil by means of many abominations, may serve himself by this one idol, of whom the apostle thus speaks in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians: “Unless there shall come a failing away first, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God.” The apostle therefore clearly points out his apostasy, and that he is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped—that is, above every idol—for these are indeed so called by men, but are not [really] gods; and that he will endeavour in a tyrannical manner to set himself forth as God.”<sup>33</sup>

In a wonderful passage from his *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus criticizes allegorization of the prophecies about a future coming of Christ, the resurrection of the just, and a millennial reign on the earth. He shines in this area as someone who embraces the teachings of the Apostle John and those who knew him:

1. If, however, any shall endeavour to allegorize [prophecies] of this kind, they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all points, and shall be confuted by the teaching of the very expressions [in question]. For example: “When the cities” of the Gentiles “shall be desolate, so that they be not inhabited, and the houses so that there shall be no men in them and the land shall be left desolate.” [Isa 6:11] “For, behold,” says Isaiah, “the day of the Lord cometh past remedy, full of fury and wrath, to lay waste the city of the earth, and to root sinners out of it.” [Isa 13:9] And again he says, “Let him be taken away, that he behold not the glory of God.” [Isa 26:10] And when these things are done, he says, “God will remove men far away, and those that are left shall multiply in the earth.” [Isa 6:12] “And they shall build houses, and shall inhabit them themselves: and plant vineyards, and eat of them themselves.” [Isa 65:1] For all these and other words were

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<sup>31</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.28 [ANF 1:558].

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 553. [ANF 1:553-554.]

<sup>33</sup> Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 553.

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unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in [the times of] which [resurrection] the righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord: and through Him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father, and shall enjoy in the kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels, and union with spiritual beings; and [with respect to] those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting Him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the Wicked one. For it is in reference to them that the prophet says: “And those that are left shall multiply upon the earth,” And Jeremiah the prophet has pointed out, that as many believers as God has prepared for this purpose, to multiply those left upon earth, should both be under the rule of the saints to minister to this Jerusalem, and that [His] kingdom shall be in it, saying, “Look around Jerusalem towards the east, and behold the joy which comes to thee from God Himself. Behold, thy sons shall come whom thou hast sent forth: they shall come in a band from the east even unto the west, by the word of that Holy One, rejoicing in that splendour which is from thy God. O Jerusalem, put off thy robe of mourning and of affliction, and put on that beauty of eternal splendour from thy God. Gird thyself with the double garment of that righteousness proceeding from thy God; place the mitre of eternal glory upon thine head. For God will show thy glory to the whole earth under heaven. For thy name shall for ever be called by God Himself, the peace of righteousness and glory to him that worships God. Arise, Jerusalem, stand on high, and look towards the east, and behold thy sons from the rising of the sun, even to the west, by the Word of that Holy One, rejoicing in the very remembrance of God. For the footmen have gone forth from thee, while they were drawn away by the enemy. God shall bring them in to thee, being borne with glory as the throne of a kingdom. For God has decreed that every high mountain shall be brought low, and the eternal hills, and that the valleys be filled, so that the surface of the earth be rendered smooth, that Israel, the glory of God, may walk in safety. The woods, too, shall make shady places, and every sweet-smelling tree shall be for Israel itself by the command of God. For God shall go before with joy in the light of His splendour, with the pity and righteousness which proceeds from Him.”

Having set forth his understanding of the glorious reign of God in the earth during the millennium and the participation of believers in that time, he explains why this should refer to the actual earth and not some ethereal sense.

2. Now all these things being such as they are, cannot be understood in reference to super-celestial matters; “for God,” it is said, “will show to the whole earth that is under heaven thy glory.” But in the times of the kingdom, the earth has been called again by Christ [to its pristine condition], and Jerusalem rebuilt after the pattern of the Jerusalem above, of which the prophet Isaiah says, “Behold, I have depicted thy walls upon my hands, and thou art always in my sight,” [Isa 49:16] And the apostle, too, writing to the Galatians, says in like manner, “But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” [Gal 4:26] He does not say this with any thought of an erratic Aeon, or of any other power which departed from the Pleroma, or of Prunicus, but of the Jerusalem which has been delineated on [God’s] hands. And in the Apocalypse John saw this new [Jerusalem] descending upon the new earth. [Rev 21:2] . . . . And after this, he says, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth have passed away; also there was no more sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband.” “And I heard,” it is said, “a great voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them; and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them as their God. And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, because the former things have passed away.” [Rev. 21:1–4] Isaiah also declares the very same: “For there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and there shall be no remembrance of the former, neither shall the heart think about them, but they shall find in it joy and exultation.” [Isa. 65:17, 18] Now this is what has been said by the apostle: “For the fashion of this world passeth away.” [1 Cor. 7:31] To the same purpose did the Lord also declare, “Heaven and earth shall pass away.” [Matt. 26:35] When these things, therefore, pass away above the earth, John, the Lord’s disciple, says that the new Jerusalem above shall [then] descend, as a bride adorned for her husband; and that this is the tabernacle of God,

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in which God will dwell with men. Of this Jerusalem the former one is an image—that Jerusalem of the former earth in which the righteous are disciplined beforehand for incorruption and prepared for salvation. And of this tabernacle Moses received the pattern in the mount; [Ex. 25: 40] and nothing is capable of being allegorized, but all things are steadfast, and true, and substantial, having been made by God for righteous men’s enjoyment. For as it is God truly who raises up man, so also does man truly rise from the dead, and not allegorically, as I have shown repeatedly. And as he rises actually, so also shall he be actually disciplined beforehand for incorruption, and shall go forwards and flourish in the times of the kingdom, in order that he may be capable of receiving the glory of the Father. Then, when all things are made new, he shall truly dwell in the city of God. For it is said, “He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And the Lord says, Write all this; for these words are faithful and true. And He said to me, They are done.” [Rev 21:5, 6] And this is the truth of the matter.<sup>34</sup>

### Hippolytus (ca A.D. 170-ca 236)

Hippolytus, likely a disciple of Irenaeus—who himself was in succession from Tatian and Justin, was a disciple of Polycarp, a direct disciple of the Apostle John—in a treatise on Christ and the antichrist said,

63. “And the blessed Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says: “Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together at it, [Hippolytus reads here *ἐπ’ αὐτῆς* instead of *ἐπ’ αὐτόν*, and makes the pronoun therefore refer to the coming] that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letters as from us, as that the day of the Lord is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for (that day shall not come) except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth (will let), until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: (even him) whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”[2 Thess 2:1-11] And Esaias says, “Let the wicked be cut off, that he behold not the glory of the Lord.” [Isa 26:10]

64. “These things, then, being to come to pass, beloved, and the one week being divided into two parts, and the abomination of desolation being manifested then, and the two prophets and forerunners of the Lord having finished their course, and the whole world finally approaching the consummation, what remains but the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope? who shall bring the conflagration and just judgment upon all who have refused to believe on Him. For the Lord says, “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” [Luke 21:28] “And there shall not a hair of your head perish.” [Luke 21:18] “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” [Matt 24:27, 28]<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 565.

<sup>35</sup>Hippolytus, *The Extant Works and Fragments, Part II, Dogmatical and Historical, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. V: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novatian, Appendix.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 218.

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### Origen (ca. A.D. 185-254)

Origen was the most prodigious theologian in early Christian history, producing scores of masterful and lengthy books on a variety of topics. He is noted for certain heretical teachings concerning the ontological inferiority of the Son to the Father, the preexistence of souls, as well as a form of reincarnation, among other lesser matters, and also for his allegorical hermeneutics, even though in his exegetical work he also gave masterful literal insight. At times Origen was a brilliant exegete and at other times he found multiple layers of meaning within the biblical text. In the following passage in his famous treatise *Against Celsus*, he gives clear evidence that he views the words in a literal sense, but he decides not to exposit them for his purpose:

“It is thus that the apostle expresses himself: “We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by word, nor by spirit, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” [2 Thess 2:1-12] To explain each particular here referred to does not belong to our present purpose. The prophecy also regarding Antichrist is stated in the book of Daniel, and is fitted to make an intelligent and candid reader admire the words as truly divine and prophetic; for in them are mentioned the things relating to the coming kingdom, beginning with the times of Daniel, and continuing to the destruction of the world. And any one who chooses may read it. Observe, however, whether the prophecy regarding Antichrist be not as follows: “And at the latter time of their kingdom, when their sins are coming to the full, there shall arise a king, bold in countenance, and understanding riddles. And his power shall be great, and he shall destroy wonderfully, and prosper, and practise; and shall destroy mighty men, and the holy people. And the yoke of his chain shall prosper: there is craft in his hand, and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by craft shall destroy many; and he shall stand up for the destruction of many, and shall crush them as eggs in his hand.” What is stated by Paul in the words quoted from him, where he says, “so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God,” is in Daniel referred to in the following fashion: “And on the temple shall be the abomination of desolations, and at the end of the time an end shall be put to the desolation.” So many, out of a greater number of passages, have I thought it right to adduce, that the hearer may understand in some slight degree the meaning of holy Scripture, when it gives us information concerning the devil and Antichrist; and being satisfied with what we have quoted for this purpose, let us look at another of the charges of Celsus, and reply to it as we best may.”<sup>36</sup>

It is clear that Origen in this passage does not clearly present his eschatological views but this much can be discerned. He held to a futurist perspective in that the kingdom was in the future, the rise of the Antichrist and the abomination of desolation was yet to come, as

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<sup>36</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book vi, chap xlvi; Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. IV: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 594.

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was the coming of Jesus in judgment against the ungodly. We can only surmise some aspects of Origen’s ideas regarding last things, particularly chiliasm and Jewish restorationism, which were non-issues, but he does not express a Preterist view.

### **Athanasius (ca. A.D. 293-373)**

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, saw Constantius as the Precursor to coming Antichrist,

“Terrible indeed, and worse than terrible are such proceedings; yet conduct suitable to him who assumes the character of Antichrist Who that beheld him taking the lead of his pretended Bishops, and presiding in Ecclesiastical causes, would not justly exclaim that this was ‘the abomination of desolation [Dan 9:27]’ spoken of by Daniel? For having put on the profession of Christianity, and entering into the holy places, and standing therein, he lays waste the Churches, transgressing their Canons, and enforcing the observance of his own decrees. Will any one now venture to say that this is a peaceful time with Christians, and not a time of persecution? A persecution indeed, such as never arose before, and such as no one perhaps will again stir up, except ‘the son of lawlessness [2 Thess 2:8],’ do these enemies of Christ exhibit, who already present a picture of him in their own persons. Wherefore it especially behoves us to be sober, lest this heresy which has reached such a height of impudence, and has diffused itself abroad like the ‘poison of an adder [Prov 23:32],’ as it is written in the Proverbs, and which teaches doctrines contrary to the Saviour; lest, I say, this be that ‘falling away [2 Thess 2:3],’ after which He shall be revealed, of whom Constantius is surely the forerunner. Else wherefore is he so mad against the godly? wherefore does he contend for it as his own heresy, and call every one his enemy who will not comply with the madness of Arius, and admit gladly the allegations of the enemies of Christ, and dishonour so many venerable Councils? why did he command that the Churches should be given up to the Arians? was it not that, when that other comes, he may thus find a way to enter into them, and may take to himself him who has prepared those places for him? For the ancient Bishops who were ordained by Alexander, and by his predecessor Achillas, and by Peter before him, have been cast out; and those introduced whom the companions of soldiers nominated; and they nominated only such as promised to adopt their doctrines.”<sup>37</sup>

Athanasius appears to use the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 against the compromise with Arianism by Constantius (not Constantine), viewing that this departure from the faith and the judgment of God was in his day. Constantius was the forerunner of the Antichrist, giving room for a future Antichrist. As with many others for whom we have little sampling of eschatology, nonetheless, their teaching indicates a futurist view of the Antichrist, tribulation, and coming of Christ, all disqualifying them as candidates for Preterism.

### **Cyril of Jerusalem (ca A.D. 313-386)**

Cyril of Jerusalem considers the “falling away” spoken of Paul in 2 Thessalonians as occurring in his day, and soon expects the Antichrist (who is calls “the enemy”) to come next on the scene, thus revealing his futurist inclination:

“Such is Paul’s account [Cyril has just cited 2 Thessalonians 2:3–10.]. And we have reached the “falling away.” Men, that is, have fallen away from the true faith. Some proclaim the identity of Father and Son. Others dare to assert that one should believe Christ has come into existence out of nonexistence. Formerly heretics were quite evident, but now the church is full of masked heretics. For men have deserted the truth and want to have their ears tickled [Cf. 2 Tim 4:3.]. Make a

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<sup>37</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series Vol. IV* (Athanasius: Select Works and Letters.;Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 299.



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plausible case, and everyone is ready to listen to you. Talk of changing one’s life, and everyone deserts you. The majority have fallen away from the sound doctrines and are readier to choose what is bad than to prefer what is good. So there you have the “falling away,” and the coming of the enemy is to be expected next. Meanwhile, he has begun to send out his forerunners here and there, so that the spoil may be prepared for him when he comes. Therefore, brothers, look to yourselves. Watch over your souls carefully.”<sup>38</sup>

Again, Cyril of Jerusalem says concerning the judgment against the Roman Empire, which for him was the final kingdom before the end of the world,

“The Antichrist just mentioned by Paul will come when the destined period of the Roman Empire has run its course and the subsequent end of the world is drawing near. Ten claimants to the empire will arise simultaneously, I suppose in different parts, but all wearing the purple at the same time. Antichrist will form an eleventh after them, having seized the imperial power by the use of magic arts. He will humble three of those who came to power before him and cause the remaining seven to be Caesars under him [Cf. Dan 7:24]. At first he will feign mildness and will appear to be a learned and understanding man, with pretended prudence and kindness. Then he will take in the Jews, by making them suppose him to be their expected Messiah, by false signs and wonders produced by magical trickery. And afterwards his character will be written large in evil deeds of inhumanity and lawlessness of every kind, so as to outdo all wicked and godless men that were before him. He will display a murderous, most absolute, pitiless and unstable temper toward all people, but especially toward us Christians. He will act insolently for only three and a half years. Then he will be defeated by the second glorious coming from heaven of the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus, the true Christ. He will destroy Antichrist “with the spirit of his mouth” and commit him to the flames of hell.”<sup>39</sup>

Cyril, in his Catechetical Lectures, sees the Antichrist as future and the anticipated coming end of the world, though he uses this for spiritual preparation rather than detailed contemporary prophetic fulfillment,

8. “Thou hast this sign also: And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come [Matt 24:14]. And as we see, nearly the whole world is now filled with the doctrine of Christ.

9. And what comes to pass after this? He says next, When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, standing in the Holy Place, let him that readeth understand [Matt 24:15]. And again, Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or, Lo, there; believe it not [Matt 24:23]. Hatred of the brethren makes room next for Antichrist; for the devil prepares beforehand the divisions among the people, that he who is to come may be acceptable to them. But God forbid that any of Christ’s servants here, or elsewhere, should run over to the enemy! Writing concerning this matter, the Apostle Paul gave a manifest sign, saying, For that day shall not come, except there came first the falling away, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of iniquity cloth already work, only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall the lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of

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<sup>38</sup>Peter Gorday, *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 9. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 109. Cyril of Jerusalem, “Masked Heretics,” Catechetical Lectures 15.9 [LCC 4:154-55]

<sup>39</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem, “The Nature of Antichrist,” Catechetical Lectures 15.12, in Peter Gorday, *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 9. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 111. [[LCC 4:156-57\*]

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Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing [2 Thess 2:3-10]. Thus wrote Paul, and now is the falling away. For men have fallen away from the right faith; and some preach the identity of the Son with the Father, and others dare to say that Christ was brought into being out of nothing. And formerly the heretics were manifest; but now the Church is filled with heretics in disguise. For men have fallen away from the truth, and have itching ears [2 Tim 4:3]. Is it a plausible discourse? all listen to it gladly. Is it a word of correction? all turn away from it. Most have departed from right words, and rather choose the evil, than desire the good. This therefore is the falling away, and the enemy is soon to be looked for: and meanwhile he has in part begun to send forth his own forerunners, that he may then come prepared upon the prey. Look therefore to thyself, O man, and make safe thy soul. The Church now charges thee before the Living God; she declares to thee the things concerning Antichrist before they arrive. Whether they will happen in thy time we know not, or whether they will happen after thee we know not; but it is well that, knowing these things, thou shouldest make thyself secure beforehand.”<sup>40</sup>

In his *Catechetical Lectures*, 15.3-22, Cyril relates the various statements used by Preterists to the Fall of Jerusalem to a future time from his own day but also anticipates a renewed heavens and earth that have been judged:

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, comes from heaven; and He comes with glory at the end of this world, in the last day. For of this world there is to be an end, and this created world is to be re-made anew. For since corruption, and theft, and adultery, and every sort of sins have been poured forth over the earth, and blood has been mingled with blood in the world, therefore, that this wondrous dwelling-place may not remain filled with iniquity, this world passeth away, that the fairer world may be made manifest. And wouldest thou receive the proof of this out of the words of Scripture? Listen to Esaias, saying, And the heaven shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all the stars shall fall, as leaves from a vine, and as haves fall from a big-tree. The Gospel also says, The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. Let us not sorrow, as if we alone died; the stars also shall die; but perhaps rise again. And the Lord rolleth up the heavens, not that He may destroy them, but that He may raise them up again more beautiful.

Cyril continues that Christians should not attempt to declare when the things prophesied by Christ will occur, but nonetheless Christians, as make clear by the apostles’ questions being answered by Christ, may know of certain signs of the end so that they may not be deceived by the Antichrist that might come.<sup>41</sup>

### **Basil [the Great] (330-379)**

St. Basil, is clearly is not pre-tribulationist, but is a futurist. Speaking of the persecution of orthodox Christians in Egypt, specifically Alexandria, by heretical Christians, Basil comments,

1. I Have already heard of the persecution in Alexandria and the rest of Egypt, To my reflections has been added this thought too; can the Lord have wholly abandoned His Churches? Has the last hour come, and is “the falling away” thus coming upon us, that now the lawless one “may be revealed the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God and is worshipped”? [2 Cor 2:4] But if the temptation is for a season, bear it, ye noble athletes of Christ. If the world is being delivered to complete, and final destruction, let us not lose heart for the present, but let us await the revelation from heaven, and the manifestation of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. If all creation is to be dissolved, and the fashion of this world transformed, why should we be surprised that we, who are apart of creation, should feel the general woe, and be delivered to afflictions which our just God inflicts on us according to the measure of our strength, not letting us

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<sup>40</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, Lec xv, Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series Vol. VII* (Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen.;Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 106.

<sup>41</sup>*NPNF* 2.7: 105-111.

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“be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation giving us a way to escape that we may be able to bear it”? [1 Cor 10:13] Brothers, martyrs’ crowns await you. The companies of the confessors are ready to reach out their hands to you and to welcome you into their own ranks. Remember how none of the saints of old won their crowns of patient endurance by living luxuriously and being courted; but all were tested by being put through the fire of great afflictions. “For some had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and others were sawn asunder and were slain with the sword.” [Cf Heb 11:36, 37] These are the glories of saints. Blessed is he who is deemed worthy to suffer for Christ; more blessed is he whose sufferings are greater, since “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” [Rom 8:18]”<sup>42</sup>

### Jerome (ca 347-420)

Jerome speaks of the statue of Hadrian still standing in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem in his day [apparently at the site but not in a actual Jewish temple], viewing it to be a reference to the abomination of desolation, and also post-1st century:

“Whenever we are urged to use our understanding, the meaning is shown to be mystical. But we read in Daniel this only: “And for half a week my sacrifice and offering will be removed, and the abomination of desolation shall be in the temple until the end of time, and the end will be given in abandonment.” [Super solitudinem; see Dan 9:27] The apostle also said in this regard that the man of iniquity, the enemy, would rise up against everything uttered by God and would dare to stand in the temple and be worshiped as though he were God. After Satan’s work is finished, however, Christ’s coming will destroy all who raised themselves against him and will return them to the state of divine abandonment. This man of iniquity can be interpreted either simply as the antichrist, or as the image of Caesar which Pilate put in the temple, or as the statue of Hadrian the equestrian which still today stands in the Holy of Holies. Because the Old Testament normally calls the abomination an idol, the word desolation is added here to indicate that the idol shall be placed there resulting in the temple’s abandonment and destruction.”<sup>43</sup>

In concert with nearly all Fathers and teachers of the Patristic period, Jerome saw a future Antichrist, abomination of desolation, and the coming of Christ.

### John Chrysostom [Χρυσόστομος, Golden-mouthed] (ca A.D. 347-407)

Chrysostom sees the coming of the Christ as a future event:

“To the one a savor from death to death, to the other a savor from life to life.” [2 Cor 2:16.] For this sweet savor some so receive that they are saved, others so that they perish. If any one is lost, it is his own fault.... Light (as I have already observed) blinds the weak. Such is the nature of good things. They not only correct things similar to them but also destroy their opposite. In this way their power is most clearly displayed. Fire displays its unique power when it gives light and when it purifies gold. The same is true when it consumes thorns. In all these cases it demonstrates itself to be fire. Christ, too, in the same way will display his own majesty when he “shall consume” Antichrist “with the breath of his mouth and overcome him with the manifestation of his coming.”<sup>44</sup>

Chrysostom, as well, views the man of sin, the Antichrist, as a future reality:

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<sup>42</sup>Basil, *Letter 139*. Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series Vol. VIII* (Basil: Letters and Select Works.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 203.

<sup>43</sup>Jerome, “The Abomination of Desolation,” *Commentary on Matthew 4.24.15*, in Manlio Simonetti, *Matthew 14-28 (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 1b)*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 193. [CCL 77:225–26]

<sup>44</sup>Chrysostom, “The Proper Power of Goodness,” *Homilies on Second Corinthians 5.2*, in Peter Gorday, *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 9)*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 112. [NPNF 1 12:302\*]

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“Here he discourses concerning the Antichrist, and reveals great mysteries. What is “the falling away?” He calls him Apostasy, as being about to destroy many, and make them fall away. So that if it were possible, He says, the very Elect should be offended. [From Matt. 24:24] And he calls him “the man of sin.” For he shall do numberless mischiefs, and shall cause others to do them. But he calls him “the son of perdition,” because he is also to be destroyed. But who is he? Is it then Satan? By no means; but some man, that admits his fully working in him. For he is a man. “And exalteth himself against all that is called God or is worshiped.” For he will not introduce idolatry, but will be a kind of opponent to God; he will abolish all the gods, and will order men to worship him instead of God, and he will be seated in the temple of God, not that in Jerusalem only, but also in every Church. “Setting himself forth,” he says; he does not say, saying it, but endeavoring to show it. For he will perform great works, and will show wonderful signs.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis (Augustine of Hippo) (A.D. 354-430)**

Augustine, who is certainly not seen as an advocate of pre-millennialism or futurism, does not seem to rule out a future temple in Jerusalem, but finally settles for noncommittal perspective. Clearly, though, he sees the Antichrist as future, when he says,

“No one can doubt that Paul is here [Augustine has just cited 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12] speaking of Antichrist, telling us that the day of judgment (which he calls the day of the Lord) will not come without the prior coming of a figure whom he calls the Apostate, meaning, of course, an apostate from the Lord God. And if this appellation can rightly be attached to all the ungodly, how much more to him! There is, however, some uncertainty about the “temple” in which he is to take his seat. Is it the ruins of the temple built by King Solomon, or actually in a church? For the apostle would not say “the temple of God” if he meant the temple of some idol or demon. For that reason some people would have it that Antichrist means here not the leader himself but what we may call his whole body, the multitude, that is, of those who belong to him, together with himself, their leader.... For myself I am much astonished at the great presumption of those who venture such guesses.”<sup>46</sup>

Augustine apparently believed that the coming of Christ was soon since the Olivet Discourse connected the end of the world to the universal proclamation of the Gospel.

22. You, however, through your profound erudition, have discovered something which you think worthy to be alleged as a great objection against the Divine testimonies. For you say, “If we consider the parts comprehended in the whole world, it is a comparatively small portion in which the Christian faith is known:” either refusing to see, or pretending not to know, to how many barbarous nations the gospel has already penetrated, within a space of time so short, that not even Christ’s enemies can doubt that in a little while that shall be accomplished which our Lord foretold, when, answering the question of His disciples concerning the end of the world, He said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.”<sup>47</sup>

In the *City of God*, he views there to be yet a great tribulation of Christians, like unseen before as mentioned by Christ in the Olivet Discourse:

But that Abraham sat down with them, signifies that even amid these divisions of the carnal,

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<sup>45</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. XIII* (Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 386.

<sup>46</sup>Augustine, “A Wise Caution,” *The City of God* 20.19.2, in Peter Gorday, *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 9. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 109. [CG 932–33\*]

<sup>47</sup>Augustine, *Letter To Vincentius*, 43.7.22. [NPNF 1.1.390]

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true believers shall persevere to the end. And that about the going down of the sun great fear fell upon Abraham and a horror of great darkness, signifies that about the end of this world believers shall be in great perturbation and tribulation, of which the Lord said in the gospel, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning.”<sup>48</sup>

### John of Damascus (ca A.D. 676-749)

John of Damascus saw the Antichrist and coming of Christ as future from the middle of the eighth century A.D. in *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book 4, chap 26,

Concerning the Antichrist, Augustine says,

It should be known that the Antichrist is bound to come. Every one, therefore, who confesses not that the Son of God came in the flesh and is perfect God and became perfect man, after being God, is Antichrist [1 John 2:22]. But in a peculiar and special sense he who comes at the consummation of the age is called Antichrist. First, then, it is requisite that the Gospel should be preached among all nations, as the Lord said [Matt 24:14], and then he will come to refute the impious Jews. For the Lord said to them: I am come in My Father’s name and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive [John 5:43]. And the apostle says, Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause Gad shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness [2 Thess 2:10-12]. The Jews accordingly did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ who was the Son of God and God, but receive the impostor who calls himself God. For that he will assume the name of God, the angel teaches Daniel, saying these words, Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers [Dan 11:37]. And the apostle says: Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son, of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called Gad or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God [2 Thess 2:3, 4], shewing himself that he is God; in the temple of God he said; not our temple, but the old Jewish temple [Cyril of Jerusalem, Cat. 15]. For he will come not to us but to the Jews: not for Christ or the things of Christ: wherefore he is called Antichrist.

First, therefore, it is necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations [Matt 25:14]: And then shall that wicked one be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, whom the Lord shall consume with the word of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming [2 Thess 2:8-10]. The devil himself, therefore does not become man in the way that the Lord was made man. God forbid! but he becomes man as the offspring of fornication and receiveth all the energy of Satan. For God, foreknowing the strangeness of the choice that he would make, allows the devil to take up his abode in him.

He is, therefore, as we said, the offspring of fornication and is nurtured in secret, and on a sudden he rises up and rebels and assumes rule. And in the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity. But when he becomes master he persecutes the Church of God and displays all his wickedness. But he will come with signs and lying wonders [2 Thess 2:9], fictitious and not real, and he will deceive and lead away from the living God those whose mind rests on an unsound and unstable foundation, so that even the elect shall, if it be possible, be made to stumble [Matt 24:24].

But Enoch and Elias the Thesbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children [Mal 4:6; Rev 11:3], that is, the synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the apostles: and they will be destroyed by him. And the Lord shall come out of heaven, just as the holy apostles beheld Him going into heaven perfect God and perfect man, with glory and power, and will

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<sup>48</sup>Augustine, *City of God*, 16.24, Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. II* (St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine.:Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 324.

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destroy the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, with the breath of His mouth [Acts 1:11]. Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven, as He himself has made sure [2 Thess 2:8].<sup>49</sup>

## CONCLUSION

An examination of the patristic literature from the late first century of the Christian era through the eighth century reveals that this sampling of the words of the Fathers demonstrates that what is known as Preterism held virtually no sway in the eschatological perspectives taught by the Church Fathers. Though not all were pre-millennialists, nor futurists in the contemporary sense, nonetheless the overwhelming consensus was that the Second Coming of Christ was future from each of the writers' time frame and that it included the revelation of the Antichrist before the coming of Christ, an apostasy, a tribulation of the saints, and for some a millennial kingdom following the coming. Though the perspectives on the place of the Jews in the future kingdom of God, the millennial reign of David's Son, and other important doctrines were not consistent among the Fathers, largely I believe dependent on the influence of the apostles in Asia and neo-Platonic thought in Egypt, nevertheless the Church looked for a future coming of Christ in judgment on a rejecting sinful world but a Blessed Hope of the coming of Christ for His Church.

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<sup>49</sup>John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book iv, chap xxvi, Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series Vol. IX* (Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 98.