



Early Church Fathers

&

ESCHATOLOGY

70AD-250AD

2 TIMOTHY 2:2 — PASSING ON GOD’S WORD

“And the things that you
have heard from me
among many witnesses...”

“...commit these to
faithful men...”

“...who will be able to
teach others also”

FIRST GENERATION

SECOND GENERATION

THIRD GENERATION

Peter

Clement

Justin

John

Ignatius

Melito

Luke

Aristides

Athenagoras

Paul

Polycarp

Theophilus

Timothy

Papias

Irenaeus



EARLY CHURCH FATHERS INTRODUCTION

 Just because an early church father believed something does not make it true.

 The terms they used were sometimes different than the common terms we may use today.

 These writings were written when persecution was already taking place.

- They wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD.
- They refer to events still in the future.



WHY STUDY EARLY CHURCH VIEWS

- 1** It is important for us to know where various views came from.
- 2** Some Prophecy teachers quote them out of context (selective quotes) to justify their position.
- 3** It helps us know how to suffer and deal with martyrdom. They talked about suffering a lot. And they anticipated it to become even worse.





THE ANTICHRIST

1 of 4

**Little children, it is the last hour;
and as you have heard that the
Antichrist is coming, even now
many antichrists have come, by
which we know that it is the last
hour.**



1 JOHN 2:18



DIDACHE



The word comes from the Greek term for 'teaching.'



It is sometimes called, "The Teaching of the Twelve."



It is not Scripture, but teaching concerning Scripture.



It is considered to have been written between 70AD and 130AD.



¹Watch over your life. Do not let your lamps burn out, nor your waist be ungirded, but be ready, for you do not know when our Lord is coming. ²And gather together frequently, seeking what is necessary for your souls, for all your years of faith will count for nothing unless you are perfected in the last days. ³In the last days, false prophets and corrupters will multiply, ⁴and the sheep will turn into wolves, and love 

<https://legacyicons.com/content/didache.pdf>

will be turned into hate. As lawlessness increases, men will hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the Deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God, and will do signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands. He will commit abominations which have never been seen since the world began. (Didache 16:1-4)

EPISTLE OF BARNABAS — 70-132AD



Not to be confused with the Gospel of Barnabas.



It is named for Barnabas the companion of Paul, though the letter does not mention the author.



The text gives insight into Old Testament Jewish laws and traditions, comparing and contrasting them with Christian practice under the New Covenant.



⁹I was anxious to write to you, being your devoted slave. Wherefore let us take heed in these last days. For the whole time of our faith shall profit us nothing, unless we now, in the season of lawlessness and in the offenses that shall be, as becometh sons of God, offer resistance, that the Black One [Antichrist] may not effect an entrance.

¹⁰Let us flee from all vanity, let us entirely hate the works of the evil way.

(Epistle of Barnabas 4:9-10)

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-lightfoot.html>

JUSTIN MARTYR — 100-165AD



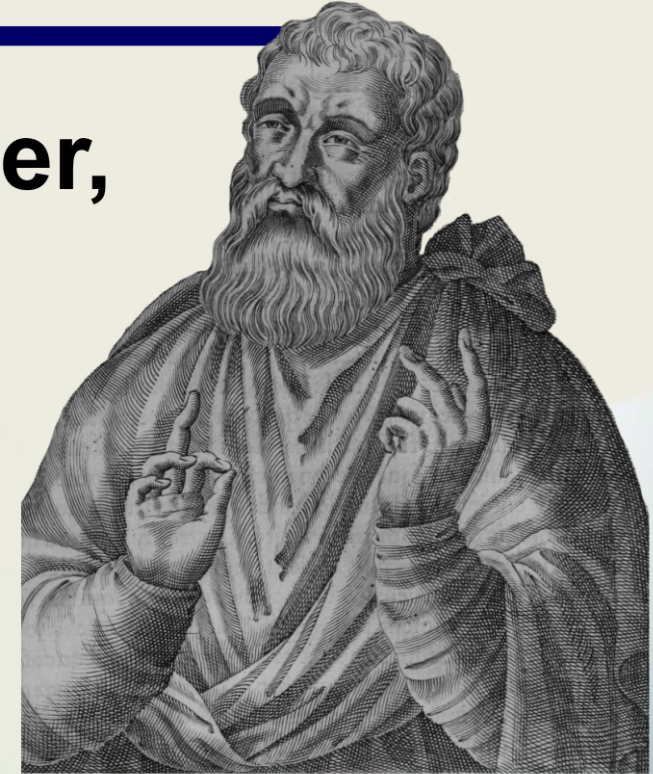
Justin was a Christian teacher, writer, and ultimately a martyr.



Justin was impressed with the character of Christians who were martyred for their faith.



Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho is a discussion with a Jew regarding the superiority of Christ and Christianity.



¹He will come with glory from the heavens, when also the Man of the apostasy, ²who also speaketh strange things against the Most High, will dare to do lawless deeds on earth against us Christians.

(Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, CX)

https://earlychurch.org.uk/pdf/e-books/williams_a-lukyn/dialogue-with-trypho_williams.pdf

IRENÆUS OF LYONS — 120-202AD



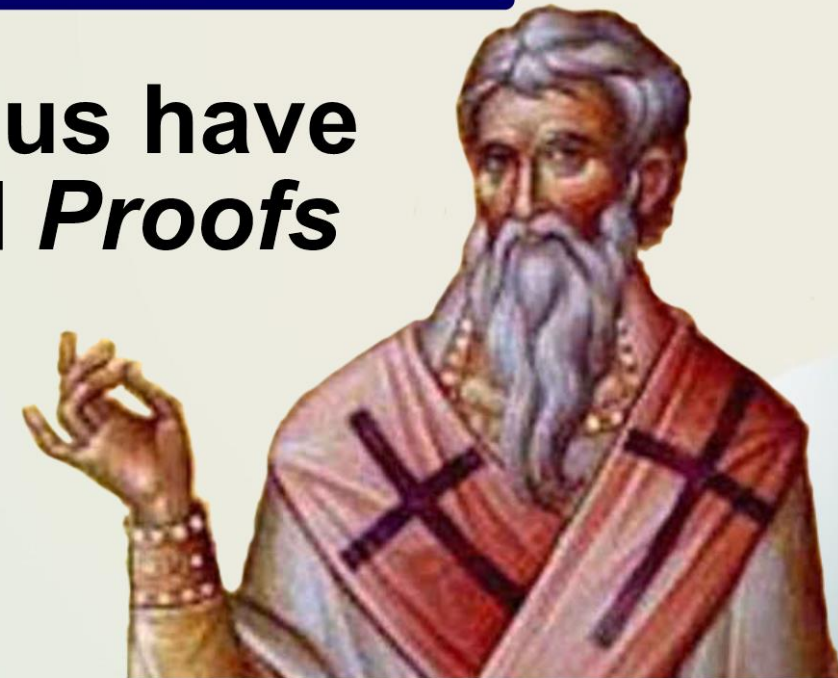
Two significant works of Irenaeus have survived: *Against Heresies* and *Proofs of Apostolic Preaching*.



He was a student of Polycarp who was a student of the apostle John.



Irenaeus moved to Rome and studied under Justin Martyr.



Apostle John

Polycarp

Irenaeus

Hippolytus



**And they shall lay Babylon waste,
and burn her with fire, and shall give
their kingdom to the beast, and put
the Church to flight.**

(Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 26, Paragraph 1)

<https://fourcornerministries.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Saint-Irenaeus-Against-Heresies-Complete.pdf>

TERTULLIAN — 145-220AD



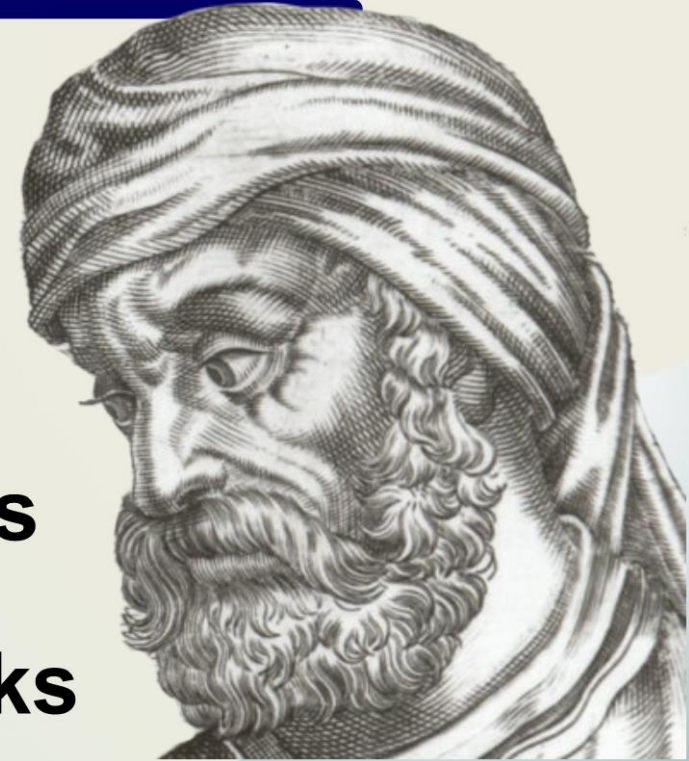
He was profoundly affected by the testimonies of Christians who were martyred in the arena, and it is likely that his conversion was a result.



Tertullian is known in church history as the father of Latin theology, as he was the first church leader to write his works in Latin.



Most of his writing was in defense of Christianity against persecution from without or heresy from within.



**Heresies, at the present time, will
no less rend the church by their
perversion of doctrine, than will
Antichrist persecute her at that
day by the cruelty of his attacks...**

(Tertullian, Prescription Against Heretics, IV)

<http://www.public-library.uk/ebooks/77/62.pdf>

**And "the beast," which is
antichrist, with "its false
prophet" may bring a conflict
upon the Church...**

(Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 25)

https://earlychurch.org.uk/pdf/e-books/souter_a/tertullian-concerning-the-resurrection_souter.pdf

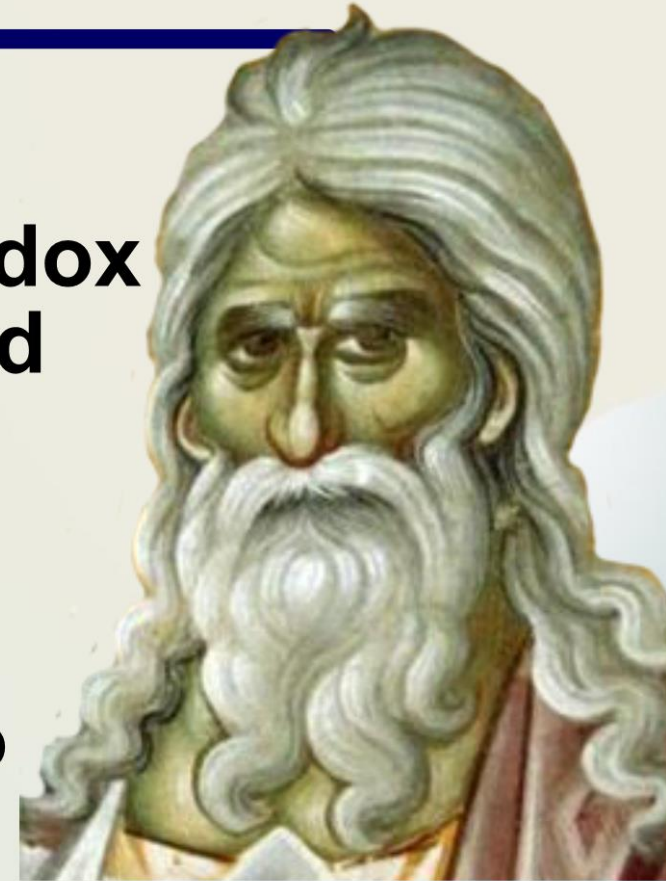
HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME — 160-235AD



He is known today for promoting orthodox Christology amid the confusion and bad doctrine in the church at Rome.



Hippolytus' most important work, *Refutation of All Heresies*, attempted to demonstrate that all Christian heresies spring from reliance upon pagan philosophy.



When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them. When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.

(Hippolytus, On Daniel II, 7)

<https://ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/anf05.xml>

CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE — 200-258AD



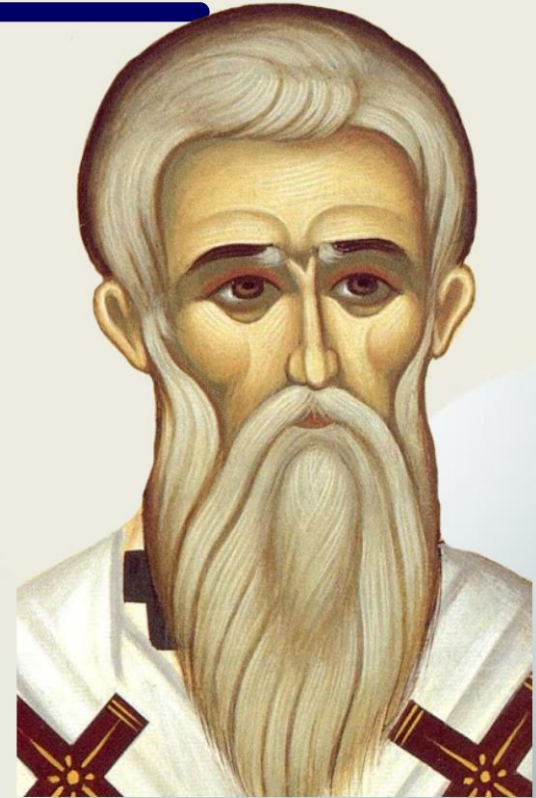
Cyprian was a bishop of Carthage and an early Christian writer.



His written works were always related to his pastoral ministry.



Cyprian rejected the idea of any one Christian bishop having special authority over the others such as a Pope.



Nor let any one of you, beloved brethren, be so terrified by the fear of future persecution, or the coming of the threatening Antichrist, as not to be found armed for all things by the evangelical exhortations and precepts, and by the heavenly warnings. Antichrist is coming, but above him comes Christ also. The enemy goeth about and rageth, but immediately the Lord follows to avenge our sufferings and our wounds. The adversary is enraged and threatens, but there is One who can deliver us from his hands.

(Cyprian, Epistle, Part 55, Section 7)

<https://ccel.org/ccel/cyprian/epistles/anf05.iv.iv.lv.html>

He [Jesus Christ] will come with glory from the heavens, when also the Man of the apostasy, who also speaketh strange things against the Most High, will dare to do lawless deeds on earth against us Christians.

Justin Martyr dialogue with Trypho, CX

It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfilment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved ... But he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is...

Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 30, Par. 3,4

<https://fourcornerministries.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Saint-Irenaeus-Against-Heresies-Complete.pdf>

ANTICHRIST SUMMARY

1

The early church father in the first few hundred years **ALL AGREED** the church would encounter the Antichrist.



2

There is **NO HINT** of the church escaping his persecution.

3

The early church understood the persecution of the Antichrist will begin in the middle of Daniel's 70th Week. This shows that the “Tribulation” is **NOT** the Day of the Lord’s wrath.



DANIEL'S 70th WEEK

3 ½ Years

**“Beginning
of Sorrows”**

3 ½ Years

**“Great
Tribulation”**

**“Day of
the Lord”**

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

2 of 4

**¹⁵Therefore when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),
¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.**

MATTHEW 24:15-16, 24

⁷Then all created men shall come into the fire of trial, and many shall be offended and shall perish.

⁸But they who have endured in their faith shall be saved under the very curse. And ⁹then shall appear the signs of the truth; ¹⁰first the sign of a soaring forth in heaven, then the sign of the voice of the trumpet, and the third, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but, as it hath been said, The Lord will come and all the saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven. (Didache 16:7-10)

SHEPHERD OF HERMAS — 95-150AD



The author of “The Shepherd of Hermas” is not known.



“The Shepherd of Hermas” was even considered canonical Scripture by some of the early church fathers as the NT was being canonized.



It was written as a call to repentance and adherence to a strict moralistic life.



Happy ye who endure the great tribulation that is coming on, and happy they who shall not deny their own life.

(Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 2, 2)

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Shepherd_of_Hermas:_Book_of_Visions_\(Lightfoot_translation\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Shepherd_of_Hermas:_Book_of_Visions_(Lightfoot_translation))

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 be. [Matthew 24:21] For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.

(Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 29, Paragraph 1)

⁶⁰Now, concerning the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall upon the Church from the adversary [Antichrist] ...

⁶¹That refers to the one thousand two hundred and threescore days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church.

(Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 60, 61)

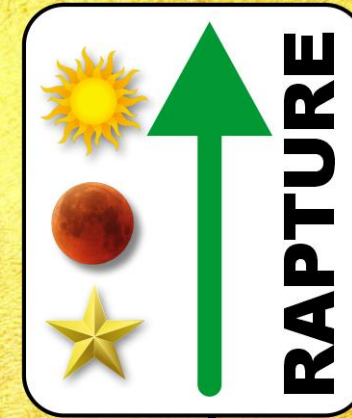
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus-christ.html>

For all these and other words were 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

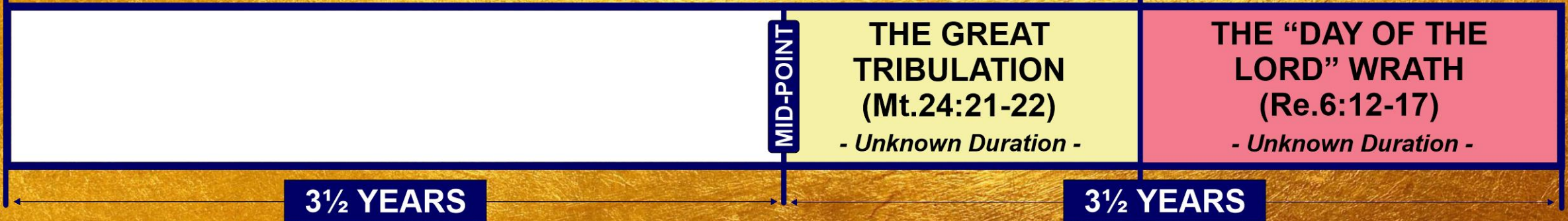
Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 30, Par. 1

<https://fourcornerministries.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Saint-Irenaeus-Against-Heresies-Complete.pdf>

1



→ There is a Future 7-Year Period (Da.9:24-27) — Daniel's 70th Week



THE RAPTURE

3 of 4

¹³But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-17



¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-17

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 be. [Matthew 24:21] For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.

(Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 29, Paragraph 1)

Now the privilege of this favor awaits those who shall at the coming of the Lord be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints; as he writes to the Thessalonians [1Th.4:15-17]

(Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 41)

In the crisis of the last moment, and from their instantaneous death while encountering the oppression of the Antichrist, these persons will also undergo a change. They obtain thereby, not so much a divestiture of the body, as a clothing superimposed upon it with the garment that is from heaven. These persons will put on this heavenly garment over their bodies. Meanwhile, the dead, for their part, will also recover their bodies. Over their bodies, they too have a garment to put on—the incorruption of heaven. . . . The one group puts on this apparel when they recover their bodies. The others put it on as overcoats, for indeed they hardly lose their bodies.

Tertullian (c. 207, W), 3.455 Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.551

And this, as it ought always to be done by God's servants, much more ought to be done now — now that the world is collapsing and is oppressed with the tempests of mischievous ills; in order that we who see that terrible things have begun, and know that still more terrible things are imminent, may regard it as the greatest advantage to depart from it as quickly as possible. If in your dwelling the walls were shaking with age, the roofs above you were trembling, and the house, now worn out and wearied, were threatening an immediate destruction to its structure crumbling with age, would you not with all speed depart?

(Cyprian, Treatise 7:25)



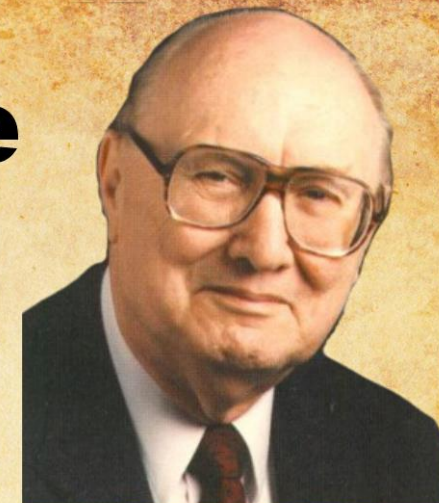
<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050707.htm>

If, when you were on a voyage, an angry and raging tempest, by the waves violently aroused, foretold the coming shipwreck, would you not quickly seek the harbour? Lo, the world is changing and passing away, and witnesses to its ruin not now by its age, but by the end of things. And do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, that by an earlier departure you are taken away, and delivered from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent?

(Cyprian, Treatise 7:25)

<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050707.htm>

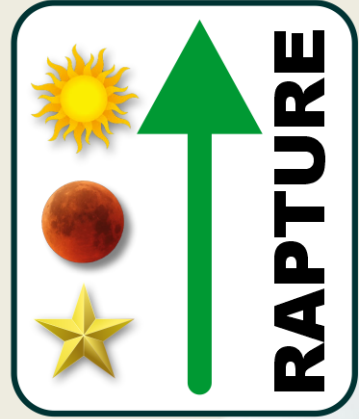
“The preponderance of evidence seems to support the concept that the early church did not clearly hold to a rapture as preceding the endtime tribulation period.... the early church fathers ... should be classified as posttribulational.”



John F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and The Tribulation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976)

RAPTURE SUMMARY

- 1** The rapture or being caught up was taught in the early church
- 2** They used different terminology and thought of it as a change, resurrection, or death.
- 3** The preponderance of evidence is that the church will see the Antichrist **BEFORE** the rapture.



New Jerusalem



MILLENNIAL KINGDOM



THE MILLENNIUM

4 of 4

EARLY CHURCH FATHERS: MILLENNIUM

-  The early church called the physical or literal 1000-year reign of Christ from Jerusalem 'Millennium,' 'Chiliasm,' (Greek for 1,000) or 'Chiliast view'.
-  That there will be a kingdom is certainly taught in the Old and New Testaments.
-  To some the idea of a kingdom is seen as spiritual in the hearts of the believer.
-  The duration of a physical kingdom is primarily based on Revelation 20 which describes it six times as lasting "a thousand years."



EARLY CHURCH FATHERS: SUPSESSIONISTIC



Many of the early church writers were supsessionistic. That is, they believed in replacement theology.



Many interpreted Daniel's references to "the holy people" (Da.8:24; 12:7) not as national Israel but as the church (or a mixture of the two).



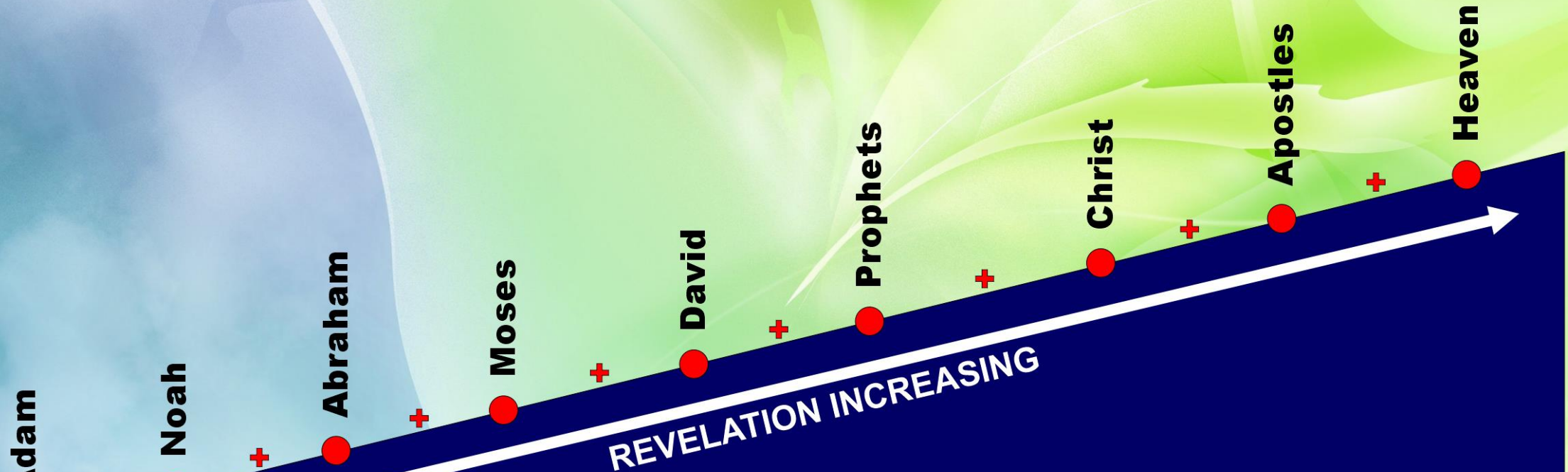
The progressive revelation shows that another entity, the church, will participate alongside national Israel, who will also experience persecution, albeit their persecution as Jesus teaches will be cut short before the day of the Lord's wrath begins (Mt.24:22).



PROGRESSIVE REVELATION: GENERAL

OLD TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT



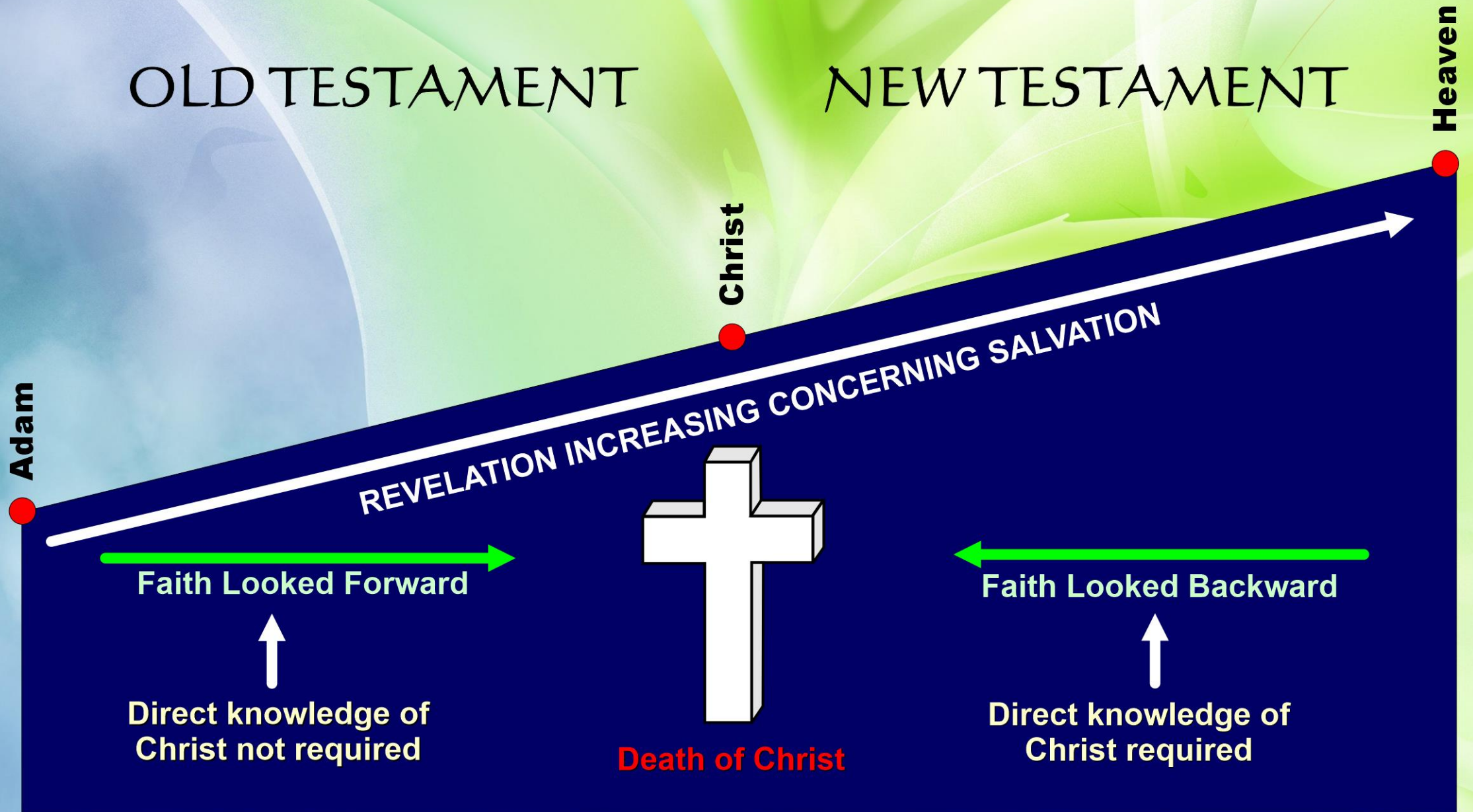
The Bible did not fall out of Heaven complete.

It was written over time and this new information is in addition to what was written prior.
Knowledge is added to over time.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION: SALVATION

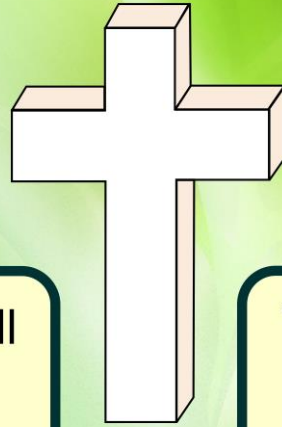
OLD TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT



PROGRESSIVE REVELATION: UNITY

OLD TESTAMENT



NEW TESTAMENT

- If you skip the first half of any good book, it will be hard to understand the characters, plot, and ending.
- A proper grasp of the OT is important in understanding the overall theme of the Bible.
- All OT history is a teaching or training period to prepare for Jesus Christ.

- The NT is only completely understood when it is seen as being built upon the foundation of the events, characters, laws, prophecies, covenants and promises of the OT.
- New Testament writers view of the Old Testament:
 - “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Ga.3:24)
 - “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Ro.15:4)
 - “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1Co.10:11)

EARLY CHURCH FATHERS: MILLENNIUM

-  **Between 66-135AD were the Jewish-Roman Wars.**
-  **In 70AD Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.**
-  **After 135AD Jews were forbidden from coming into Israel.**
-  **Some early church fathers believed in a future physical kingdom into the third century (AD200's).**



¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

REVELATION 20:1-6

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

REVELATION 20:1-6



PAPAIAS OF HIERAPOLIS — 60-130AD



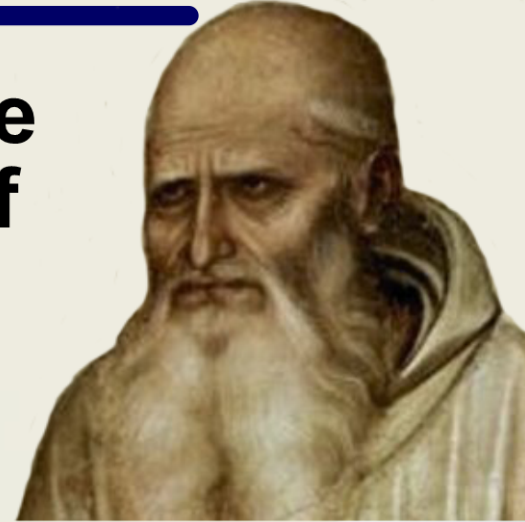
He recorded details regarding Jesus and the apostles in five books entitled Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord.



Papias's books are now lost except for some excerpts found in the second and third-century writings of Eusebius of Caesarea and Irenaeus of Lyons.



Papias was a chiliast, which in today's theological terminology might most closely resemble a premillennialist.



Among these things, Papias says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth.

**(Eusebius, citing Papias, c.120, E, 1.154.
Eusebius citing Papaia, 120AD, E.)**

I and others who are right-minded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built. ... For Isaiah spoke in that manner concerning this period of a thousand years.

Justin Martyr (c. 160, E), 1.239.

A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.450

In the times of the kingdom, the earth will be called again by Christ. And Jerusalem will be rebuilt after the pattern of the Jerusalem above.

Irenaeus (c. 180, E/W), 1.565

VICTORINUS OF PETTAU — ?-304AD



He was an early Christian ecclesiastical writer who flourished about 270AD.



He was martyred during the persecutions of Emperor Diocletian.



Victorinus was much influenced by Origen.



Victorinus wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation but was primarily allegorical.



They are not to be heard who assure themselves that there is to be an earthly reign of a thousand years. They think like the heretic Cerinthus. For the kingdom of Christ is already eternal in the saints — even though the glory of the saints will be manifested after the resurrection.

Victorinus (c. 280, W), 7.360

A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.452

ANTICHRIST

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https://earlychurch.org.uk/pdf/e-books/williams_a-lukyn/dialogue-with-trypho_williams.pdf - Justin Martyr

<http://www.public-library.uk/ebooks/77/62.pdf> - Tertullian - Prescription Against Heretics

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GREAT TRIBULATION

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<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus-christ.html>

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RAPTURE

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<https://www.bibleblender.com/2017/biblical-lessons/biblical-history/ancient-texts/tertullian-on-the-resurrection-of-the-flesh>

Tertullian (c. 207, W), 3.455 Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.551

<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050707.htm> - Cyprian

John F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and The Tribulation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976)

MILLENNIUM

A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.450 - Eusebius citing Papias

A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.450 - Justin Martyr

A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.451 - Irenaeus

A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David Bercot, Ed, p.452 - Victorinus

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Epistles_of_Cyprian/Part_55



SUPPLEMENTAL

PSEUDO EPHRAEM



The prefix "pseudo—" means "false" or "falsely ascribed to".



Scholars doubt this document is genuinely from the hand of Ephraem of Syria or that it was written in the fourth century.



The Greek prefix, "pseudo" is used by modern scholars to differentiate between a true author and someone writing in a famous person's name.



PSEUDO EPHRAEM



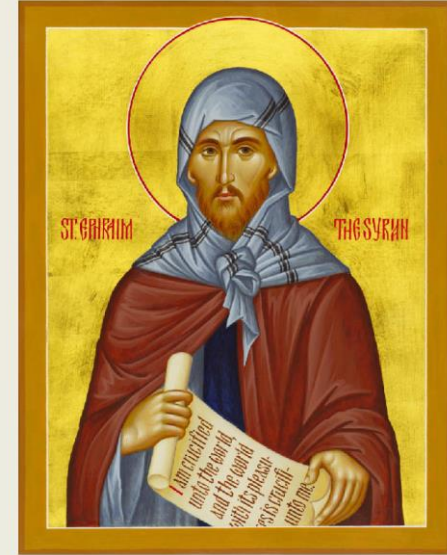
This is a sermon separated into ten paragraphs.



Some use selective portions of this sermon to support a pre-tribulational rapture.



If one simply considered the rest of the document they would get a different understanding.



All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins

Pseudo-Ephraem, Section II

We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging. Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom.

Pseudo-Ephraem, Section II

<https://www.bible.ca/rapture-pseudo-ephraem-latin-syriac-texts.htm>

And when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world ... will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty,... and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth.

Pseudo-Ephraem, Section X

<https://www.bible.ca/rapture-pseudo-ephraem-latin-syriac-texts.htm>

PSEUDO EPHRAEM



The term 'tribulation' has only recently been used to refer to the entire 7-year period.



The “thrown into confusion” is what happens after the rapture (i.e., The Day of the Lord).



When he says the church will escape the tribulation, he was using the word ‘tribulation’ to describe the wrath or judgment of God upon those left behind.



The writer did not mean the church would escape the presence of the Antichrist, because he says they will see him.





Early Church Fathers

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ESCHATOLOGY

70AD-250AD