

# THE ANTICHRIST: AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE FROM THE CHURCH FATHERS

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Today's sermon is about the [Antichrist](#), as I continue my sermon series on the Orthodox Christian perspective on the awaited Second

*The antichrist. Miniature from the cover of the Apocalypse.*

Coming of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. The purpose of this sermon is to provide a Patristic understanding of the Scriptures on this timely and important topic. Today one can find on the Internet many voices from various Bible preachers—Protestants, Roman Catholics, and even Orthodox—who all claim to have specific knowledge of End-Time events. There are similarities, but also much confusion, and where there are contradictions, one is left wondering which voice is correct. To solve this dilemma, we will take a look to see how the early Church viewed this matter. If a person wants to gather opinions about the correct interpretation of End-Time Scriptural passages, one would be better off going back deep into early Church history and listening to the opinions of the Apostles and early Church Fathers.

In another sermon we reviewed the sequence of “[End-Time](#)” events, according to the Orthodox Church's understanding. We heard of how the first events will be the “beginning of sorrow: wars, great earthquakes, famines, plagues, “fearful sights and great signs from heaven” (Matt. 24:7-8; Luke 21:11). We read the words of Christ, St. Paul, and the teaching of the Holy Apostles, as recorded in the book, “The Didache” (cir. first/second century). We saw clearly that a man is coming in the future who will be the opposite of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be the “instead-of-Christ”, the “Antichrist.” With the help of his false prophet, his false teaching, his false miracles and displays of power, this evil man will offer to the world, (especially to the Jews), a kind of earthly kingdom that is in everything the opposite of Jesus Christ's Heavenly Kingdom.

At first making a gentle, seductive appearance, this man will later reveal his true evil character. St. Paul warned of this evil man when he said, in 2 Thess. 2: 3,4,9,10:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [*i.e. the Day of the Last Judgment*] will not come **unless the falling away comes first**, and **the man of sin is revealed**, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God... The coming of **the lawless one** is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

This “man of sin,” the “lawless one,” the Lord Jesus will “consume with the breath of His mouth

and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8).

Our Lord Jesus Christ referred to this future false “christ” when He warned in Matthew 24:23, “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do **not** believe it.”

The teaching of the Holy Apostles, as recorded in the book known as “The Didache” (cir.first/second Century), is summarized similarly:

For in the last days false prophets and seducers will increase...and then the *deceiver* of the world will appear as though he were the Son of God, and he shall do signs and wonders and the earth shall be delivered into his hands; and he will do immoralities which have never been done since the age began. Then shall the race of men will come into the fire of proving trial... (Didache 16:3,4,5)

In today’s sermon I hope to answer the following questions: **Did the Father’s of our Holy Church support and continue to hold these Apostolic views about the Antichrist?** Do they see him as a future global leader—politically and spiritually? How do they think the Antichrist will come into world popularity? How will he reveal his true evil identity?

For answers to these questions, let us examine quotes from some of the greatest and most famous Fathers of the Church: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (second century), St. Ephraim the Syrian (fourth century), St. John Chrysostom (fourth century), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (fourth century), St. John of Damascus (eighth century), together with St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (nineteenth century Russian Bishop) and the recently canonized wonderworking St. Paisios of Mount Athos (†1994).

### [St. John of Damascus on the Antichrist](#)

We start with a long quote from St. John of Damascus, the great eighth century Church Father

*St. John of Damascus*

whose writings summarized the apostolic teachings of all the early Church Fathers who had preceded him. St. John is one of the most trusted Orthodox theologians whose inspired hand penned hymns for our Orthodox Pascha Matins service, the Orthodox Funeral Service, and the entire Book of the Eight Tones (the “Octoechos”). He also wrote the classic Orthodox catechism, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, which has been the main catechism of the Church for centuries. In Chapter 26 of Book 4 of this *Exposition* St. John summarizes the early Church’s teaching on the Antichrist:

It should be known that the Antichrist is bound to come. First, therefore, it is necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations (1): 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 (2), 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 (3). The devil himself (4), therefore does not become man in the way that the Lord was made man. God forbid! but he [*the Antichrist*] 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 (5)

He [*the Antichrist*] 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 (6). 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 (7), 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 (8).

But Enoch and Elijah the Thesbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children (9), 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 destroy the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, with the breath of His mouth (1). Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven, as He himself has made sure (2).

### **Antichrist will be a mockery and parody of the true Christ**

The Antichrist will be a mockery and parody of the true Christ, the Lord Jesus. Early Church saints such as [St. Irenaeus](#), [St. Jerome](#), and St. Ambrose and others hold that the Antichrist will be a Jew, as Jesus was, but will be born from the wrong tribe, not from the Tribe of Judah, but from the Tribe of Dan.<sup>1</sup> Both St. John of Damascus and [St. Ephraim the Syrian](#) believe that the Antichrist—“the offspring of fornication”— will be born, not of a holy virgin, but “of prostitution” from an immoral, sinful, “defiled maiden”.<sup>2</sup>

Just as Jesus Christ was raised quietly, before making His public appearance to begin His ministry at the age of 30, so too the Antichrist will be raised in obscurity, until the day of his public appearance (as St. John of Damascus said—quoted above—that the Antichrist will be “nurtured in secret”.)

Unlike the Lord Jesus Who had the Holy Spirit descend upon Him to work with Him in His earthly ministry, the Antichrist will be possessed by the Devil himself, and will operate using the Devil’s own power (see 2 Thess. 2:9 and Rev. 13:2). St. John of Damascus points out in his quote (in his *Exact Exposition*) that the Devil will NOT incarnate as a human. Only the Son of God became incarnate. Instead, the Devil will “take up his abode in him [*the Antichrist*].” In

other words, the Devil will possess a man through the “strangeness of the choice that he would make” and will live in him, thereby making him to be the Antichrist.

St. Paul made it clear to the Thessalonians that before the Antichrist can make his public appearance, there first must be a **massive apostasy**, or falling away, from the Christian Faith. “The falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.” (2 Thess. 2:3) St. Paisios of Mount Athos (d. 1994), a modern day saint who lived through most of the twentieth Century was of the opinion that this requirement has been fulfilled. Commenting upon our times, he said that “The situation is horrible. Madness has gone beyond all bounds. **Apostasy** is upon us, and now the only thing left is for the ‘son of perdition’ (2 Thess. 2:3) to come. The world has turned into a madhouse.”<sup>3</sup>

Global war as the catalyst for desire for a global “savior”—the Antichrist

But what would be the catalyst that would draw the world and the Antichrist together?

Several twentieth Century Russian Orthodox staretzii (Holy Spirit-filled elders)—such as [St. Lavrenty \(Laurence\) of Chernigov](#) (†1950), [St. Seraphim of Vyritsa](#) (†1949), and St. Paisios of Mt. Athos (†1994)—believe that the world will yet again be embroiled in another huge global war, which will remove peace from the earth. They suggest that such international turmoil will be the motivation for the citizens of the world to seek an ultimate political peace-maker who will unify them in an effort to bring peace back again into the world. As Jesus stated, when describing the world situation just prior to the End, that first there will be “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). The Book of Revelation opens with a colossal war (chapters 6-9). The Antichrist will make his appearance on this troubled world scene and offer peace on earth. He will entice and seduce the world with the help of demons. “He will offer a plan for the successful resolution of the world crisis, based on social and political wisdom—the establishing of a uniform political and social structure over the whole world”—in other words, a single government for the whole world with himself as the king.<sup>4</sup>

Once the Antichrist makes his first public appearance, evil spirits will generate a global excitement over him. Says St. Ephraim the Syrian (fourth century): “Evil spirits dispersed over the universe will excite in men a universal, most exalted opinion of Antichrist; a general... and irresistible attraction to him.”<sup>5</sup> (Thus, some Orthodox elders have strongly advised against even looking at the face of the Antichrist, lest you get seduced by his charm.) As a result of this demonic stirring up of excitement over the Antichrist, according to [St. Ignatius Brianchaninov](#) (nineteenth century), there “will arise a demand for an invitation to Antichrist. A voice of appeal will issue forth in human society, expressing the urgent need for a ‘genius of geniuses,’ who would elevate material development and progress to a higher plane and bring about prosperity on earth.”<sup>6</sup> He will be hailed as the ultimate political savior. Most everyone will be placing all

their hopes on him, looking to him to solve the world's political and financial turmoil. People will be supremely impressed with him and will think that he is the best leader ever, the ultimate man. They will say, "Who is like unto the beast [the Antichrist]? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev.13:4).

### **The Great Pretender who deceives the world**

At first, while he goes about increasing his popularity, the Antichrist will feign (fake) the attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ—love, compassion, meekness; he will NOT show to anyone that he has the Devil living inside of him. St. John of Damascus says that the Antichrist, "in the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity."<sup>7</sup> St. Ephraim (fourth century) states that the Antichrist will come

in such a manner as to deceive all. He will appear humble, meek, a hater (as he will say himself) of unrighteousness, shunning idols, showing a preference to piety, good, a lover of the poor, beautiful to the extreme, steadfast, affable to all and especially esteeming the Jewish people because the Jews will await his coming. He will take cunning measures to please everyone in order that the people will quickly come to love him; he will not accept gifts nor speak in anger nor show a gloomy appearance, but with a decent exterior he will set about deceiving the world, until he is enthroned.<sup>8</sup>

[St. Cyril of Jerusalem](#) (in about 350 A.D.) comments that "at first he [*the Antichrist*] shall feign mildness,—as if he were a learned and discreet person,—and sobriety and loving-kindness."<sup>9</sup>

This fake, pretend sanctity will deceive many. Says St. Ephraim, "When the nations and peoples see such virtues and powers (in the Antichrist), all will have one thought—to pronounce him ruler, saying to each other; 'Will another man so good and so truthful be found?'"<sup>10</sup> As prophesied in Rev. 13:4—People will cry out in amazement and awe: "Who is like unto the beast?"

At this point, Christians much watch out! "Take heed that no man deceive you," said Jesus. "For many shall come in My name, saying, 'I am Christ' and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4-5). St. John Chrysostom (fourth century) taught that the Antichrist will deceive people and "will violently usurp everything that does not belong to him and call himself 'God'. This is what Christ meant when He said that Antichrist 'will come in My name'."<sup>11</sup>

Tragically, many Christians who are not watchful, and many Jews too, will be deceived. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (fourth century) states that "since the true Christ is to come a second time, the adversary [*the devil*] makes use of the expectations of the simple, and especially of those of the circumcision [*i.e. the Jews*]... By this name 'Christ' he shall deceive the Jews, who are

expecting the Anointed [*i.e. the Messiah (in Hebrew), the Christ (in Greek)*]; and he shall seduce the Gentiles...”<sup>12</sup>

St. Paisios of Mount Athos taught that the Antichrist will present himself as the “savior” whom all the religions of the world are waiting for—all rolled into one man. He will say:

“I’m the Imam, I’m the fifth Buddha, I’m the Christ whom Christians are awaiting. I’m the one whom the Jehovah’s Witnesses have been waiting for. I’m the Jewish messiah.”<sup>13</sup>

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov clearly states, “The world of man will **not recognize Antichrist**; it will **acknowledge him to be Christ**, it will **proclaim him as Christ**.”<sup>14</sup>

This will be **the great deception**, that people, even many unwatchful Christians, may **mistake the false christ**—the Antichrist—for the *true* Christ, the Lord Jesus. People will flock to see the “Christ”, telling their friends, as Jesus warned: “Look, here is the Christ!” or, “Look, He is in the desert!” or, “Look, He is in the inner rooms!” Jesus warns us, when that happens: “**Do not believe it.**” (Matthew 24:23, 26).

### **The true Christ will come from heaven, not on earth**

*The Dread Judgment. Fresco from Visoki Dečani Monastery.*

The Lord Jesus at His Second Coming will appear to all **IN THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY, not on earth**. But the *false* “Christ” (Antichrist) will appear **on earth**. “The monks of Solovki Monastery have handed down an answer which St. Zosima gave to his spiritual children who asked him how to recognize Antichrist when he comes. The holy monk gave this precise reply, ‘When you hear that the Christ has come to the earth or has appeared on earth, then know that it is Antichrist’.”<sup>15</sup> Jesus told the Jews that He would be seen coming on the clouds of heaven: “You shall see the Son on man sitting on the right hand of power, and *coming in the clouds of heaven*.” (Mark 14:62)

St. John the Evangelist said the same about Jesus in Revelation 1:7: “Behold, He *cometh with clouds*; and **every eye shall see Him**, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.” The angels who appeared to the Apostles when they stood gazing into heaven at the Lord’s Ascension said the same thing: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner* as ye have seen Him go into heaven”(Acts 1:11). And, Jesus Himself clearly taught that His Return would be like lightning from out of heaven, a dramatic wonder for all to behold *instantly* around the world—“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” (Matt.24:27). St. Ignatius Brianchaninov explained: “It will be neither necessary

nor even possible for men to give report to each other of the coming of the Son of God. He will appear suddenly; He will appear in His omnipotence to all men and the whole world at one time.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, St. John of Damascus summarized correctly: “Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven, as He Himself has made sure.”<sup>17</sup>

The two witnesses—[Enoch](#) and [Elias](#)—will oppose the Antichrist

While the Antichrist, with the help of the demons, is stirring up global lust for him to be their savior and ruler, God in His mercy will send two mighty prophets to warn everyone that this man is not the real Christ, but is the Antichrist. St. John of Damascus (in his *Exposition*) states the literal opinion of the Church Fathers that St. Elijah will return to earth with holy Enoch before Judgment Day. This will fulfill the ancient prophecy of the Prophet Malachi (4:5-6), which states:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children...” (Malachi 4:5-6).

The coming of Elijah and Enoch will also fulfill the prophecy of St. John in the Book of Revelation (11:3-12), which speaks of the “two witnesses” (also known as the “two olive trees” and the “two candlesticks”—see verse 4) who will tell the truth about the Antichrist and will warn the world about him, exposing his fake sanctity. This will continue for three and a half years (or, 1260 days), while the Antichrist’s political machine is ramping up and gaining power, during which time the Antichrist is pretending to be the nice guy (Rev. 11:3). St. John of Damascus states that in fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy, “Elijah the Thesbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, that is, the synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the Apostles”<sup>18</sup> St. John of Damascus believes that some Jews will be saved from following the Antichrist, and with the help of Elijah and Enoch they shall repent and turn to Jesus, the true Christ, and become Christians. The Jews who repent are the “fathers” (the Old Testament synagogue) who turn their hearts to accept and love their “children” (the New Testament Church).

The Antichrist will be annoyed with what these two great prophets are saying and doing, but at first will do nothing against them because he is trying to look so nice. But finally, in rage, when he begins his egotistical tyranny as world king, the Antichrist will show his true inner evil self and will kill these two prophets and launch a fierce persecution against all who oppose him, particularly Christians (Rev. 11:7, and 13:7).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem on the Antichrist’s quest to be the global king

Even though God will send Enoch and Elijah to warn humanity (which convinces some people

and some devout Jews), most men and most Jews will be deceived by the false “Christ”—the Antichrist—and will run after him. The nations will desire that this “wonderful” man rule them all, and he will therefore easily grab the power of global rule. St. Cyril of Jerusalem taught that the “Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled and the end of the world is drawing near.” He “shall seize for himself the power of the Roman Empire, and he shall falsely style himself ‘Christ’.”<sup>19</sup> The Roman Empire will have ended (“shall have been fulfilled”). At the time when the end of the world “is drawing near”, the Antichrist shall grab—“shall seize for himself”—the “power” of the old Roman Empire, which was a huge, powerful political machine that united nations under the one throne of one emperor, whose worship as a god was a required part of politics (and this was also the reason why so many Christians became martyrs, refusing to worship the emperor or his image). The Antichrist will have global power because “authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Rev.13:7).

St. Cyril’s *Catechetical Lectures* (written in mid-300s AD) state:

And now, in this same way, since the true Christ is to come a second time, the adversary [the devil] makes use of the expectations of the simple, and especially of those of the circumcision [i.e., the Jews]; and he brings in a certain man who is a magician, and who is quite expert in sorceries and enchantments of beguiling craftiness. This one shall seize for himself the power of the Roman Empire, and he shall falsely style himself Christ. By this name Christ he shall deceive the Jews, who are expecting the Anointed [i.e. the Messiah]; and he shall seduce the Gentiles by his magical illusions.

This aforementioned Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled and the end of the world is drawing near. There shall rise up together ten kings of the Romans, reigning in different parts, perhaps, but all reigning at the same time. After these there shall be an eleventh, the Antichrist, who by the evil craft of his magic shall seize upon the Roman power. Of the kings who reigned before him, three shall he humble, and the remaining seven he shall have as subjects under him. At first he shall feign mildness,—as if he were a learned and discreet person,—and sobriety and loving-kindness.

Having beguiled the Jews by lying signs and wonders of his magical deceit, until they believe he is the expected Christ, he shall afterwards be characterized by all manner of wicked deeds of inhumanity and lawlessness, as if to outdo all the unjust and impious men who have gone before him...[quote is continued below]<sup>20</sup>

Most people of the world will love this Antichrist and will want him to rule them. From our own Church hymnbook, the Lenten Triodion—we hear in the Synaxarion reading for Meat-Fare Sunday that the Antichrist “will be **constrained by men and will be proclaimed king** and the



multitudes of the **Jewish** people will **love him**; he will restore Jerusalem and will erect the **temple** for them” (*Apostasy and Antichrist*, p.30).

### **Solomon’s Temple will be rebuilt**

*Artist’s interpretation of the First Temple in Jerusalem. Photo: Wikipedia*

St. Ephraim (d. 373AD) in his sermon, “On the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the coming of the Antichrist,” says the Jews will accept the false “messiah”—the Antichrist—and he will rebuild for them their Temple in Jerusalem.

“The Jews will rejoice and give honor to the reign of the antichrist more than anyone else. And he, under pretense of preference, and being industrious with them, will designate for them all a place and the **temple**.”

After the Temple of Solomon is rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Antichrist will sit in the Temple to be crowned “king”.<sup>21</sup>

St. Paisios said that a sign that this prophecy is about to be fulfilled is when we see the Mosque in Jerusalem being taken down in order to make way for the re-construction of the Jewish Temple of Solomon on the ancient Temple Mount.<sup>22</sup> This will be the time for the Christians to “flee to the hills” and mountains that the Lord Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:15-22, because terrible things will start to happen once the evil king is crowned in Jerusalem. The final persecution of Christians will begin: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).

### **The Dragon inside the Antichrist reveals himself and desires worship**

Having rebuilt the temple of the Jews in Jerusalem, and having been crowned king of the world, **a great change in the countenance and actions** of this global leader will be seen. The Antichrist will now openly display his real, evil, inner character, which he had been concealing. And, he will reveal his true desire. Like the pagan Roman emperors of old, the **Antichrist (and the Devil living inside of him) wants worship**, not merely political leadership. The famous kings in history who also sought worship from their subjects—such as Nero and Nebuchadnezzar—are just historical prototypes of the Antichrist.

Then will be the time when St. Paul’s words will be fulfilled: “The man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4). This will be the “abomination of desolation” in the Temple of which the Lord Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:15.<sup>23</sup>

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386AD) in his *Catechetical Lectures* describes the Antichrist's sudden “change” of character, once he has been enthroned as a global king, sitting and demanding worship:

Having beguiled the Jews by lying signs and wonders of his magical deceit, until they believe he is the expected Christ, *he shall afterwards be characterized* by all manner of wicked deeds of inhumanity and lawlessness, as if to outdo all the unjust and impious men who have gone before him. He shall display against all men, and especially against us Christians, a spirit that is **murderous** and most cruel, merciless and wily. For three years and six months only shall he be the perpetrator of such things; and then he shall be destroyed by the glorious Second Coming from heaven of the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus, the true Christ, who shall destroy him with the breath of His mouth, and shall deliver him over to the fire of Gehenna.<sup>24</sup>

St. Ephraim (fourth century) writes of the Antichrist's desire to be worshipped:

He will herald himself as the precursors heralded him; he will call himself the preacher and re-establisher of true knowledge of God. Those not comprehending Christianity will see in him a representative and champion of the true religion and will join with him. He will herald himself, calling himself the promised messiah and the children of worldly wisdom will hail his presentation. Because of his renown, might, genial capabilities and his widest development of the elements of the world, they will proclaim him a god and will make themselves his accomplices.<sup>25</sup>

The Antichrist will want the whole world to worship him because the Devil living inside him wants the worship that belongs to God. **Like** the ancient emperors Nero and Nebuchadnezzar, **he will demand—and try to force—people to worship him.** According to Revelation chapter 13, an assistant to the Antichrist known as the “False Prophet” will set up a talking image (*in Greek, “icon”*) of the Antichrist (“the Beast”). Anyone who refuses to worship this image/icon will be killed (Rev. 13:15).

### **St. Irenaeus on Nebuchadnezzar as a prototype of the future Antichrist**

St. Irenaeus, in the second century, perceived in the story of the ancient King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Book of Daniel, Chp.3) a prefigurement of the coming future ultimate wicked king, the Antichrist. King Nebuchadnezzar himself was a tyrant ruling an empire. He sought all peoples, nations, and tongues to worship his golden image of himself that he had set up. If they refused to worship the image, they would die by being thrown into the fiery furnace. St. Irenaeus foresaw that similarly the Antichrist “beast” in the book of Revelation would also use the threat of death to force the nations into worshipping his image. He wrote:

And there is therefore in this beast [*i.e. the Antichrist*], when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every deceit... For that image which was set up by Nebuchadnezzar had indeed a height of sixty cubits, while the breadth was six cubits; on account of which Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, when they did not worship it, were cast into a furnace of fire, pointing out prophetically, by what happened to them, the wrath against the righteous which shall arise towards the [time of the] end. For that image, taken as a whole, was a prefiguring of this man's coming, decreeing that he should undoubtedly himself alone be worshipped by all men.”<sup>26</sup>

## No “pre-Tribulation” rapture into Heaven for End-Time Christians

The Three Holy Youths are seen by St. Irenaeus as a prefigurement of the Church in the End-Times that shall be persecuted severely by the Antichrist for its refusal to worship him or his image. Believers must remain strong at that time. Endurance is needed. Patience is needed (Rev. 13:10). There will be **no “pre-tribulation” rapture** (*rapture* means: “caught up”) as a miraculous escape route into Heaven to avoid End-Times persecution. This concept of escaping the Antichrist’s final persecution by a divine rapture up into Heaven is a modern-day false teaching that only a certain percentage of Protestants believe. It was invented in Scotland in 1830 by Margaret Macdonald and promoted widely by Englishman John Nelson Darby (whom some credit as its originator.)<sup>27</sup> Before these two people lived, no Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox Christian ever heard of or believed such an idea. Rather, the historic Christian view has always been to follow the Lord Jesus’ exhortation of believers to endurance, saying: “He who endures **to the end** shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

Orthodoxy rejects and has never taught the innovative and recently developed modern-day theory of an escape “rapture” that will gather Christians into heaven ahead of time so that they will not have to see the Antichrist nor be persecuted by him nor undergo a period of persecution, trial, and tribulation. If there was such a rapture into Heaven ahead of the Antichrist’s persecution, then all of Jesus’ warnings to believers to watch out and not be deceived by the false christ would be useless warnings (see Matthew 24:23-27). Rather, Scripture teaches that “it was given unto him [*to Antichrist—the Beast*] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Rev.13:7). Obviously, the Christians will be still on the planet if the Antichrist is going to be fighting and persecuting them. If the “saints”—the believers—had been previously raptured (caught up) into heaven prior to the Antichrist’s persecution of them, then this Scripture (Rev. 13:7) would mean nothing. Rather, St. Paul explains that the real “rapture” of believers being “caught up” into the sky is simply the gathering of the believers who are still alive on the earth (and enduring to the End) to meet the Lord Jesus in the air when He finally returns on the clouds of glory at His Second Coming—which takes place **after** the Antichrist’s persecution.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the

archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then **we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:** and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

This gathering of the remaining faithful Christians (the “elect”) to Christ at His Second Coming will **follow** the period of great End-Time Tribulation that Jesus Himself described:

Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days...they shall see the Son of man **coming in the clouds** of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall **gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:29,30,31)

### **The Antichrist’s short three and a half year violent reign**

“Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days...” Holy Scripture is very clear that **before** Christ’s Glorious Return in the sky, there will be a terrible time of persecution for believers, with no pre-tribulation escape rapture. True believers must be strong, patient, and trusting in Jesus (Rev. 13:10). Many will be witnesses for the true Christ, and will be beheaded, becoming martyrs (Rev. 20:4). For a short period of three and a half years (“1260 days”—Rev. 11:3) the Antichrist will have deceived the world, pretending to be nice, so that he could take over political control. But then, after becoming global monarch, for **second short period of another three and a half years** (“42 months”—Rev. 13:5) he will try to force humanity to worship him. Like ancient King Nebuchadrezzar, the Antichrist will use devious and evil means to do so. He will use coercion to force all people into his spiritual and political camp by controlling the buying and selling of all goods and services. Thus, after a pre-reign period of a first three and a half years of campaigning during which time he fakes kindness in order to gather global political support, then following his coronation as global king in Jerusalem, the Antichrist will have a short, yet violent reign of another three and a half years. St. Paisios of Mt. Athos took this time frame to be literal.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the total is **seven years** allotted to the Antichrist—from his first appearance on the world scene until his overthrow at Christ Jesus’ Second Coming, as described in 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

### **The False Prophet and the Mark of the Beast (666)**

In seeking all of humanity to worship him, the Antichrist will have the aid of an assistant —the False Prophet, a second beast, a sort of global religious leader (Rev. 13:11-18 and Rev. 19:19-20). Just as the Forerunner (St. John the Baptist) gathered followers for the true Christ (Jesus), this False Prophet in the time of the Apocalypse will gather followers for the Antichrist. And just as the Apostles sealed the new Christians with the seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27), marking them for God, so too the False Prophet will seek to formally mark all of humanity with the Antichrist’s name or number—the mysterious “666”—either on the hand or

on the forehead (Rev. 13:16-18). *This mark—whatever it proves to be—we Orthodox Christians view as a serious denial of Christ. We must not accept it.* Accepting it will be a **rejection** of one's Holy Chrismation and a rejection of God.

Modern-day saint and wonder-worker Paisios of Mt. Athos, in speaking of the coming “666” mark, said that if a Christian accepts the Mark of the Beast, he or she will have denied Christ. He believed it to be some form of computerized personal ID number.<sup>29</sup> He noted that in the Old Testament the Jews required a yearly tax of 666 gold talents from conquered nations. Thus, St. Paisios said that “today, in order to subjugate the whole world, they’ll once again introduce the old tax number linked to their glorious past. That is, ‘666’ is the number of mammon. Everything is going as planned. They put the number a long time ago on credit cards. As a result, he who is not marked with the number ‘666’ will be unable to buy, sell, get a loan, or find work.”<sup>30</sup>

Accepting the devil’s ID mark (“666”) on hand or forehead will be a rejection of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, which was received at Holy Baptism in the Anointing of Holy Chrism (the sealing of one’s hands and forehead by the priest)—the true mark of the true Christ. St. Paul wrote: “When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13). This holy seal of God is mentioned again in Rev. 7:3 as the “seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” It is literally placed on the hands and forehead of each newly Baptized Orthodox Christian to give to them the Holy Spirit through the Holy Chrism (the sacred anointing oil) following their Holy Baptism. With that holy Baptismal seal we “denied the devil and sided with Christ,” as St. Paisios stated it.<sup>31</sup>

The Baptismal Seal of the Holy Spirit is the opposite of the Devil’s seal (the “666”), which also will be marked on right-hands and foreheads (Rev. 13:16). This fake “chrismation” of the devil removes the Holy Spirit and brings a person into the devil’s kingdom of darkness. It will be used to control them through fear, because without it they *cannot* buy any food.

And he [*the False Prophet*] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name...and his number is 666. (Revelation 13:16-18)

### **Warning from Holy Scripture: Do not take the 666 Mark—the Devil’s “chrismation”**

Receiving this “666” mark of the Antichrist will **send** a person to eternal **hellfire**. For any Christian who accepts it, it is a denial of Christ—a betrayal—which cancels out their previous holy Chrismation seal/mark of the Holy Spirit and sends them to hellfire, since they put their trust in the Antichrist (and his system) instead of keeping their trust in the true Christ Jesus.

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his *forehead*, or in his *hand*, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God...and he shall be *tormented with fire and brimstone* in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name. (Rev.14:9-11)

The False Prophet will try to coerce all humanity to accept the Antichrist's "chrismation"—the mark of the Beast—by arranging life so that in the new global government's one-world economy, no one will be able to buy or sell without that mark. Those who do not take the mark face economic disaster, famine and starvation.

### **Saint Andrew of Caesarea on the Mark of the Beast**

Saint Andrew of Caesarea (d. 637AD), who for centuries has been an Orthodox authority on the interpretation of the Book of Revelation, spoke of this in his famous *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. He wrote of this mark of the Beast/Antichrist:

He...will strive to place upon all the outline of the ruinous name of the apostate and deceiver, "in their right hands," in order to cut off the doing of right and good deeds, and likewise "in their foreheads," in order to instruct the deceived to be bold in deception and darkness. But it will not be received by those sealed in their faces with the Divine Light (cf. Rev 7:3,4). And the seal of the beast will be spread everywhere, in buying and selling, so that those who do not receive it will suffer a violent death from want of necessities. <sup>32</sup>

### **St. Ephraim the Syrian on the Mark of the Beast**

St. Ephraim the Syrian (fourth century) in his sermon, "On the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the coming of the Antichrist", wrote this about the mark of the beast:

Beloved, we need a lot of prayer and tears in order that some of us prove strong through the trials; because the beast will work many illusions. He himself is an enemy of God and wants to destroy everyone. The torturer will use such means so that *all will have to have the mark of the beast on themselves*, in due time, that is at the fulfillment of time, when the Antichrist comes and deceives all with signs. And only in the case [that they have the mark] will they be able to purchase food and other necessities; and he will set up supervisors to enforce his orders. My brethren, notice the wiliness of the beast which is above all measure, and the contriving of his wickedness—how he will start with the stomach, so that man, when brought to an extreme of food deprivation, will be compelled to accept the mark, or rather the wickedly profane symbol, not just on any part of the body but on the right hand and also on the forehead, so that he will be unable afterwards to make the sign of the cross with the right hand or to sign the holy name of the Lord or

the glorious and honorable cross of Christ our Savior on the forehead... Therefore my brethren, a terrible trial is ahead for all the Christ-loving people—that they not fear or fall into negligence until the hour of death during the time when the serpent will be marking [people] with his sign instead of the sign of the cross of the Savior... And if someone will not be marked with the mark of the beast, that person will not be taken captive with his fantastic signs. And likewise the Lord will not abandon such, but will enlighten them...

### **St. Paisios of Mt. Athos warns Orthodox not to take the 666 Mark**

The Christians who reject the “666” mark and refuse to worship the image of the Antichrist will be seen as religious rebels and extremists—unfortunately—and will be persecuted by the authorities, becoming martyrs for Christ as in the days of the Roman Empire. However, St. Paisios the Athonite warned that not all Christians will see any danger in taking the devil’s mark. He believed that even some Orthodox Christian priests will be fooled and will not warn their flocks. Instead they will “diaper” their spiritual children with comforting lies, telling them to take the “666” mark and not to worry, saying: “it does not matter, it is nothing.”<sup>33</sup> How sad! These clergy will *not* be able to discern the “signs of the times,” and will earn for themselves the same rebuke that the Lord Jesus gave to the Pharisees in His day: “You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3). Yet those Christian non-conformists who do actually refuse the “666” mark will be “hated by all nations” for Christ’s sake, as the Lord Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:9. Because of the Christian rebellion against the Antichrist’s claims, the Antichrist will launch the fiercest persecution of Christians ever seen in history, as the Lord predicted in Matthew 24:21—“Then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time.” But out of His mercy, for the sake of those faithful followers who are going to be saved, the Lord Jesus promised that “those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

### **The Great Tribulation—St. Ephraim the Syrian’s sermon**

St. Ephraim (fourth century) describes those End Days, the Antichrist, and the afflictions to come during the Great Tribulation:

Yet I shall begin my sermon with pain and with sighs shall I speak concerning the end of the present world and of the most shameless and appalling serpent [*i.e. Antichrist*] who will bring the world into turmoil and will put fear, cowardice and terrible disbelief into the hearts of men. He will work wonders, signs and terrifying spectacles, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Mat. 24:24), deluding all by false signs and semblances of miracles wrought by himself. For by permission of the Holy God, he will receive the power to deceive the world, because impiety will have filled the earth and every sort of horror will be committed everywhere. Therefore, the most pure Master will permit, because of the godlessness of the people, that the world should be tempted by the spirit of

falsehood, since men desired to separate from God and love the evil one. Great will be the contest, O brethren, in those times, especially for the faithful, when signs and wonders will be wrought with great authority by the serpent himself; when he will show himself in awful apparitions as being similar to God—he will fly about in the air and all the demons, like angels, will exult before the tormentor. For he will cry aloud with might, transforming his countenance and dismaying all men without measure. Who, brethren, will then prove to be guarded, unshakable, having in his soul the faithful sign—the holy coming of the Only-Begotten Son, our God—when he beholds the **unspeakable afflictions** which will come from every direction **upon every soul** and from which there will be utterly no comfort, no respite whatever, neither on earth nor on the sea, who will persevere when he beholds the whole world in turmoil, everyone fleeing to hide himself in the mountains and some dying from hunger, others melting like wax from thirst and no one who will take pity; when he sees every eye pouring forth tears and with strong desire asking, “Is the word of God to be found anywhere on the earth?” and hearing the answer, “Nowhere!” Who will endure the insufferable affliction when he sees the gathering of the peoples who will come from the ends of the earth to see the tormentor, many worshipping him, crying with trembling, “You are our saviour!” **The sea will rebel, the earth will dry up, the heavens will not give rain, plant life will wither**, and all those living in the eastern parts of the earth will flee to the west because of the great terror and those living in the western parts will flee to the east with trepidation. But the shameless one, having then taken power, will send the demons to all the ends of the earth to preach: “The great king has appeared in glory, come and see him.” And who will have such an adamant soul as to endure all these temptations? Where, as I said, will such a man be found whom all the angels would bless?<sup>34</sup>

## The Seven Bowls of Wrath

The difficulties of that final era of tribulation will **not** be limited to the persecution of Christians, but will come “**upon every soul**,” as St. Ephraim notes. Indeed, all men—all flesh—will suffer greatly at that time as the very **earth, sea and sun will rebel** against the Devil and his false “Christ”. St. Ephraim notes that “**the sea will rebel, the earth will dry up, the heavens will not give rain, plant life will wither.**” These actions are all foretold in the prophecy of Apocalypse. They are part of the “last plagues”—the seven Bowls of Wrath—spoken of by St. John in Revelation 15 and 16, when God will use strong measures in order to try to save rebellious, stubborn, idolatrous humanity from hellfire, by provoking them to repentance with harsh measures. The Lord will command seven angels to pour out seven “bowls of wrath” upon the earth. As a result, the water system of the sea, rivers, and springs will shut down, becoming like blood (Rev. 16:3-4). The sun will scorch this waterless earth and then go dark (Rev. 16:8-10). As a result, plant life will wither, which easily leads one to conclude that there will be massive crop

*Fresco from Dionysiou Monastery.*



failures everywhere, followed by widespread famine. People will be hungry, even those who took the mark of the beast in order to gain access to food in stores. Holy Russian Elder St. Lavrenty of Chernigov (†1950) agrees with St. Ephraim, saying that “there will likewise be no water; all the rivers and lakes will dry up. This disaster will last for three and a half years.” He further explains how “the entire feeble populace will go after satan, and when the earth will produce no harvest people will come to him [to *Antichrist, with Satan in him*] with the request to give them bread, but he will answer: ‘The land does not give any grain. I can’t do anything’.”<sup>35</sup>

### **The Antichrist and his Mark will fail**

The last trials will terribly affect the followers of the Antichrist. They who previously took his mark in order to be able to shop, and buy, and sell, will **not have any bread** to buy. They will turn to the Antichrist—their “savior” on whom all their hopes hang—asking for the bread that he promised them. But, he will have none to give, and will excuse himself, saying that he does not control the weather or the crops. He will leave humanity helpless.

Thus, taking **the mark of the Beast** in order to eat will prove to be a **failed hope, a terrible pain**, and an **eternal damnation**. It will be a **failed hope** because the ruined water system will destroy the whole of agriculture. People with the mark will *not* have any bread to buy or sell or eat, even though they had hoped that taking the mark would give them food to eat. It will be a **terrible pain**, because Rev.16:2 prophesies that terrible sores will come to all those who took the mark of the Beast or worshipped his image. Yet, despite these trials, humanity will still refuse to turn to God the Holy Trinity and repent (Rev. 16:9,11). Thus, the mark of the Beast will prove to be their **eternal damnation**, because in taking it, they refused (or cancelled) the saving mark of Jesus, the Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, given on their forehead and hands during Holy Chrismation. The mark of the Beast will damn them to eternal hellfire in the Lake of Fire when Jesus returns and judges the world (Rev. 14:9-11).

### **St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher offers a word of hope to End-Time believers**

St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher (d. 1651AD) forwarded this encouragement to the future Christians of the End-Times, prophesying of divine aid to be offered to the believers, and telling of forgiveness of sins and entrance into Heaven being the reward for not denying Christ (i.e. for not taking the “666” mark):

When the cursed glory [*i.e. Antichrist*] sees Enoch and Elijah preaching to the people and telling them not to receive the mark of the Antichrist, he will order to have them arrested. But they will be convincing the people not to receive the mark, saying that whoever shows patience and does not receive the seal [*i.e. the 666 mark*], **that one will be saved and God will receive him straight into the Paradise only for not receiving the seal**. And let each one sign himself with the sign of the honorable Cross, making the sign of the

cross at all times because the seal of the cross frees man from the torment of Hades; the seal of the Antichrist, though, brings one into the torments of Hades. **If you are hungry** and need food, endure for a short time and God, seeing your patience, will **send you help** from on high; **you will be livened again (fed full of life)** with the help of the God in the Highest. If you do not show patience, however, you will receive the mark of this unclean king, and will the regret it.

God will so love those who “endure to the end” in faithfulness to Him that He promises to liven them “full of life” when they are hungry, and to grant them salvation and entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom at the Judgment. Jesus promised: **“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”** (Matt. 24:13). St. Nilus is referring to Christ’s promise when he says that God will save you—even if you are not the best Christian—if only you remain faithful to Him to the End by not taking the mark or name of the Beast and by not worshipping the image of the Beast. For a little patience now, then at the Final Judgment God will open Paradise for you.

### **The Lord will cut short the days of the Great Tribulation**

Due to the severity of that time—with the persecution of Christians and the Seven Last Plagues—our Lord Jesus promised to “shorten” those days in order to prevent all humanity from dying, particularly the faithful Christians (the “elect”) who are patiently enduring to the end, hiding here or there. Even though the allotted time period of this Great Tribulation is supposed to last for the three and a half violent years during which the Antichrist will reign as global monarch (42 months are prophesied in Rev. 13:5-7), the time will be shorter than that in actuality. Jesus mercifully promised to intervene and **cut those days short**, in order to save the lives of believers.

“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but **for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.**” (Matthew 24:22)

So, there is hope that the time of great trial and tribulation will be in reality less than 3 ½ years.

### **The Lord’s Glorious Second Coming, the rapture, and the Final Judgment**

The Antichrist will be running around hunting down and persecuting Christians until the day of his own sudden destruction. The true Christ—the **Lord Jesus**—will **appear suddenly on the clouds of heaven** with great glory and power, with all His holy angels. **His appearance will destroy the Antichrist**, as St. Paul said, “whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). Judgment Day will spring suddenly upon the entire world, and the Devil, his Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all the demons will be thrown into eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10).

Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will

not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (Matthew 24:29-31)

The real rapture will then take place, as the believers on earth will be gathered by the angels up into the air to meet the Lord Who is coming in glory on the clouds to judge the world, which He made. All of humanity will be raised from the dead and stand to be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ. This will be the Final Judgment before the Throne of God, during which the “sheep” will be separated from the “goats” (Matthew 25:31-33). The damned (the goats) will enter eternal condemnation in the Lake of Fire, where the Devil, the Antichrist, and False Prophet were thrown, while the Righteous (the sheep) will enter Eternal Life in the Kingdom of God (the New Jerusalem), where they will reign with Christ **forever and ever**.

### The “1,000” year reign symbolism

The reign of the saints with Jesus Christ will be **eternal**, not a literal “1000 years” or “millennium” (Rev. 20:5-7). The early Church at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381AD rejected the literal 1,000 year interpretation of Rev. 20:5-7, taking the term “millennium” as symbolic for a long, perfection and completion of time “as the Church age, when Jesus reigns on earth in those who believe. It is that era between the first and second comings of Christ, also called the ‘last times,’ when Satan’s effectiveness at deceit is restricted through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, and the saints share in Christ’s earthly reign through the Church.”<sup>36</sup> Baptized Christians share in Christ’s Paschal victory over the Devil through their Holy Baptism, in which they are united to Christ and can enjoy His power over Satan, who for them is bound while at the same time he still runs around among the un-Baptized non-believers leading them to perdition until receiving his own eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire on Judgment Day. For those who join Christ in Baptism and never leave Him as Judas did, their victory over the Devil never ends. The Church Fathers at the Second Council opted to go with the clear and literal words of the Archangel Gabriel who told the Virgin Mary that Jesus’ **Kingdom will have no end** (Luke 1:33). This wording was put into the Nicene Creed in order to stop the heresy of chiliasm, which said that Christ’s reign would be merely a literal 1,000 years on earth<sup>37</sup>

### Christians must correctly ponder the subject of the End-Times and be watchful

Brothers and sisters, from these quotes we have seen that the Fathers of our Holy Orthodox Church over the centuries have held to a concrete idea that the Antichrist will be a real man, possessed by the devil, who will gain political global dominion and will seek to be worshipped and obeyed by all nations. Christians **need** to be **watchful** so as **not** to be deceived by the

Antichrist, whenever he finally comes. Do not get confused by all the competing apocalyptic ideas out there in the media and on the Internet concerning the topic of the Antichrist. Do **not** mistake the true Lord Jesus (Who will arrive in the clouds) for the Antichrist who will set up his kingdom on earth. As St. John of Damascus said: “**Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven.**” Let us stick to our Orthodox view, the only one that we can trust. After all, ours is the Church of history, of the Fathers, of the Apostles, and of Christ. As we ponder this topic, let us love God with all our hearts. Let us trust Him and never be [fearful](http://orthochristian.com/95814.html) <http://orthochristian.com/95814.html>. Let us ever remember that He dearly loves us and will always be with us and help us. Ours is **not** to be fearful—it is for us to love God and to be watchful. Pray Psalm 90 (91) always.

It is better to be knowledgeable about the Orthodox interpretation of the End-Time prophecies in order to be spiritually prepared than to be neglectful and ignorant and be caught unprepared when those days arrive. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his time, urged his fourth century listeners to be prepared and to think on these matters, and to speak of them to their friends and family members.

St. Ephraim in the fourth century **advocated** being knowledgeable with sound doctrine concerning the End. He taught that such matters will be “clear” to real believers as the events come to pass before their very eyes. If he preached on such matters so long ago, how much more should we in the twenty-first century ponder these things!

To those who have the knowledge, **the coming of antichrist will be obvious. But to him whose mind is in the matters of this life and loves the earthly, this will not be clear;** because those who are always tied down with the affairs of this life, even if they hear, they will *not* believe, despising those who will speak. And the saints will be strengthened because they have set aside all cares of this life.

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St. Paul reminded St. Timothy that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12). But Jesus **promises to help us share His victory** over these difficulties:

These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me **ye might have peace.**

In the world ye shall have **tribulation:** but be of **good** cheer, I have **overcome** the world.  
(John 16:33)

It is certainly better to have a *limited trial* on earth now (with Jesus sustaining us) followed by an *eternity with Him* in the Kingdom of Heaven, than to deny the true Christ and spend a few short years trying insufficiently to avoid sufferings on earth only to end up spending an eternity suffering in hell.

## Conclusion

**Stay true** to the Lord Jesus Christ to the very end, **trust in Him with all your heart**, and everything will turn out fine for you in the End. Christ will be with you—and will help you—His true and faithful followers, as He promised, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you”** (Hebrews 13:5). He promised to be with us, saying when He ascended, **“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”** (Matt. 28:20)

St. Paul experienced this when he was brought to his first trial in Rome. Though all his friends ran away, afraid for their lives, leaving him alone to face the Roman judge, the Lord Jesus Himself came and stood by St. Paul and helped him get through: **“At my first defense, no one stood with me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me”** (2 Tim. 4:16-17).

From the End-Times Prophecy of Joel, we hear the promise of merciful salvation — for **“everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”**

The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome Day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that **everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved**. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be **those who escape**, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:31-32)

Jesus promised that **“whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.”** (John 6:37)

Jesus said: **“At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”** He told them this parable: **“Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near.”** (Luke 21:27-31)

**“Yes, I am coming soon.”** Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:20)

*Fr. Andrew J. Anderson*

*10/4/2017*

<sup>1</sup> *Apostasy and Antichrist*, translated from the Russian, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1992, p. 25

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> P. 5, <https://christconquers.wordpress.com/2010/06/06/elder-paisios-against-zionists-and-cowardly-orthodox/>.

4 *Apostasy and Antichrist*, p. 28

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 29, citing Bp. Ignatius Brianchaninov, “Works,” vol. 4, p. 313

7 *Exact Exposition*, Bk.4, Chpt. 26.

8 *Apostasy and Antichrist*, p. 28.

9 *A Second Look at the Second Coming: Sorting Through the Speculations*, T.L.Frazier, Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1999, p. 251—citing St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15:12.

10 *Apostasy and Antichrist*, p.32

11 *Apostasy and Antichrist*, p.25

12 *A Second Look*, p. 251—citing St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15:11.

13 P. 5, <https://christconquers.wordpress.com/2010/06/06/elder-paisios-against-zionists-and-cowardly-orthodox/>.

14 *Apostasy and Antichrist*, p.29.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 (*Exposition*, Book 4, Chapter 26).

18 Ibid.

19 *A Second Look*, p.251—citing St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15:11 and 12.

20 Ibid.

21 Voices from Russia, Prophecies of Venerable St. Lavrenty Chernigovsky, <https://02varvara.wordpress.com/2014/09/09/prophecies-of-venerable-st-lavrenty-chernigovsky/>.

22 P. 6, <https://christconquers.wordpress.com/2010/06/06/elder-paisios-against-zionists-and-cowardly-orthodox/>.

23 Engleman, *Ultimate Things, An Orthodox Christian Perspective on the End Times*, Dennis E. Engleman, Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1995, p. 215.

24 *A Second Look*, p.251—citing St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15:12.

- 25 *Apostasy and Antichrist*, p. 34: Word 106, pt. 2. cf. Bp. Ignatius Brianchaninov, vol. 4, p. 301.
- 26 Engleman, *Ultimate Things*, pp. 141-2—citing St. Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” Book V, ch.29, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p.558)
- 27 Engleman, *Ultimate Things*, p. 201.
- 28 P. 6, <https://christconquers.wordpress.com/2010/06/06/elder-paisios-against-zionists-and-cowardly-orthodox/>
- 29 (Christodoulos, *Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain*, Greece: Holy Mountain, 1998, p. 94-97).
- 30 P. 6, <https://christconquers.wordpress.com/2010/06/06/elder-paisios-against-zionists-and-cowardly-orthodox/>.
- 31 (Christodoulos, *Elder Paisios*, p. 97).
- 32 (*A Second Look*, p.254—citing St. Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 37. Cited by Taushev, *Apocalypse*, 194.)
- 33 (Christodoulos, *Elder Paisios*, p. 95).
- 34 (*Apostasy and Antichrist*, p. 36-37—citing St. Ephraim the Syrian’s work: *Concerning Antichrist*).
- 35 (“Way Of The Orthodox: The Prophetic Gift in the Last Times, Schema-Archimandrite Lavrenty of the Chernigov-Trinity Convent”, St. John the Baptist Parish, Canberra, Australia website, <http://www.stjohnthebaptist.org.au/articles/way-lavrenty.html> —see this website for the complete article with much additional valuable information)
- 36 (See footnote in *The Orthodox Study Bible* for Rev. 20:2, p. 1743).
- 37 (*The Orthodox Study Bible* for Rev. 20:2, p. 1743).
- 38 “On the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the coming of the Antichrist” by St. Ephraim.