

An Overview of the Antichrist

by Randall Price

In premillennial eschatology the final world ruler who opposes God and His Christ (particularly in relation to His deity), oppresses God's Elect (especially the Jewish People), and seeks to usurp the place of divine worship through desecration of the holy (especially Jerusalem and its Temple) is known as the Antichrist. According to 1 Jn. 4:3 this anti-theocratic, anti-semitic spirit is characteristic of the present age, indicating that these are the Last Days (i.e. "last hour"). The designation "Antichrist," appearing only in the epistles of John (1 Jn. 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 7), is made up of the Greek words *anti* ("against, in place of") and *christos* ("Christ"), and indicates any agent of the evil one (Satan) who acts contrary to or as a counterfeit of God's Anointed who is destined to rule the world (Psa. 2:2, 6-8; 110:1-2; Isa. 9:6-7, et. al.). The plural use of this term allows for both a comprehensive and a concentrated expression of Antichrist, and ultimately the eschatological duo known as the "first Beast" (*the* Antichrist) and the "second beast" (the false prophet), who with the "dragon" (Satan) as the origin of their "power" (authority), form a sort of counterfeit trinity (Rev. 13:1-2, 11). While the specific term Antichrist may be rarely used, the Bible is filled with descriptive terminology of his diabolical and desecrating nature. Among the more obvious epithets are: "the little horn" (Dan. 7:8), "the insolent king" (Dan. 8:23), "the prince who is to come" (Dan. 9:26), "the one who makes desolate" (Dan. 9:27), "the despicable person" (Dan. 11:21), "the strong-willed king" (Dan. 11:36), "the worthless shepherd" (Zech. 11:16-17), "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:3), "the son of destruction" (2 Thess. 2:3); "the lawless one" (2 Thess. 2:8), "the beast" (Rev. 11:7; 13:1; 14:9; 15:2; 16:2; 17:3, 13; 19:20; 20:10). Only the futurist school (which includes premillennialism) has been able to develop a self-consistent interpretation of the Antichrist concept from the scriptural witness of the two testaments.

Antichrist in the Old Testament

While the term "Antichrist" is not employed until the New Testament, the apostle John's reference (1 Jn. 2:18) that many "antichrists" have arisen in token of the coming "Antichrist" that will arise during the Tribulation period, encourages an examination of the Old Testament text for proleptic imagery that suggests this eschatological figure. In the Old Testament this ultimate Antichrist is progressively revealed through a series of human "antichrists" who appear as opponents of the Jewish People, and especially as desecrators of Jerusalem and/or the holy Temple. Antichrist allusions usually take the form of a human being (usually a monarch or military commander) set in direct opposition to God. In this position the human personality often takes on super-human proportions by virtue of the divine/human contest, and as such, serves as a pre-figure or type of the eschatological Antichrist who will seek to usurp divine worship. Types of the Antichrist revealed during the biblical period are: (1) the serpent in Eden who deceived man and sought to corrupt the divine order (Gen. 3), (2) Nimrod, the blasphemous ruler who sought to usurp divine worship (Gen. 10:8; 11:1-9), (3) Amalek, the son of Esau (Gen. 36: 12, 16) whose descendants opposed Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 17:8-16; Deut. 25:19; 1 Sam. 15:2-3), (4) Balaam, the foreign prophet who opposed Israel (Num. 22-24), (5) the Pharaoh of the Exodus, who oppressed the Israelites in Egypt (Ex. 1:11, 22; 5:2) and was unnamed in Scripture, perhaps to emphasize his role as a divine adversary, (6) the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who oppressed the Northern Kingdom and arrogantly sought to capture Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 18:13-19:37), and (7) the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, persecuted Israel in exile, and usurped divine prerogative [sovereignty] (2 Kgs. 24:13-14; Dan. 4:30).

The most developed types appear in Daniel's blasphemous ruler designated as "the little horn," the blasphemous ruler who "makes war with the saints" and is destroyed by the "Ancient of Days" (Dan. 7:8,

21), the wicked and tyrannical king (Dan. 8:11-14; 11:31), assumed to be Antiochus IV Epiphanes who desecrated the Jewish Temple in 186 B.C., and "the prince that shall come" (Dan. 9:26), possibly the Roman general Titus who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. By comparing the more obvious types (the "antichrists") with the antitype (the Antichrist), we can observe first, that in every case the type is either a Gentile or one outside the legitimate line of inheritance and second, that there is a progressive development of opposition to God finally centering on the desecration of the Temple. The development of these figures from type to antitype reveals that the movement of the typological antichrist's actions begin with elements of opposition to the divine program, manifested as opposition to God and oppression of God's People, which escalates with each figure toward desecration of the Temple as place where the divine Presence is represented on earth. As Daniel's revelation (Dan. 8:9-25; 11:21-45) of the Antichrist imagery is the last and most highly developed of all the types (embodying all the previously revealed types), and focuses on his abominable desolation of the Holy Place (Dan. 8:11-14; 11:31), it casts the mold for the New Testament's portrayal of the future Antichrist (Dan. 11:36-45; cf. 2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 13:1-10; 17:11-17), and his end-time Abomination of Desolation in the Tribulation Temple (Dan. 9:27; 12:11; cf. Matt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:4).

Antichrist in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the witnesses to Antichrist are Jesus and the apostles Paul and John. However, this is to be expected since they present the most extensive treatments of eschatology (Olivet Discourse, Thessalonian epistles, and Revelation).

In the Gospels

Jesus assumes the Danelic figure that desecrated the Temple through the Abomination of Desolation will be understood by His future Jewish audience as the Antichrist who will set himself against the Nation and their God (Matt. 24:15/ Mk. 13:14). Implied in Jesus' selective description (primarily from Dan. 9:27; cf. 11:36-37) in the Olivet Discourse is the incompatibility of that which is holy with the Antichrist. Whether a holy city, a holy Temple, or a holy (Chosen) People, the Antichrist by his very nature must seek to destroy them all. For this reason the Jewish People living in Jerusalem in the day of Antichrist's power are warned to flee (Matt. 24:16-21/ Mk. 13:14b-19). Jesus' statement of the Antichrist's "abomination of desolation" is the signal event that marks the mid-point of the Tribulation. Studies in the chiasmic structure of Matt. 24/Mk. 13 reveal that the elements corresponding to the first and second half of the Tribulation are arranged with Matt. 24:15/Mk. 13:14 as the pivot. Thus, the prophecy of Antichrist is the chronological determinative for the Tribulation, with Antichrist's covenant with the Jewish leaders marking its beginning (Dan. 9:27a), the Temple desecration its middle (Dan. 9:27b; Matt. 24:15/Mk. 13:14a; 2 Thess. 2:4), and the Antichrist's destruction its end (Dan. 9:27c; cf. 2 Thess. 2:8).

In Paul

Paul also emphasizes the incompatibility of holiness and unholiness by contrasting Christ with Antichrist (2 Cor. 6:15-16), though he uses the cognomen "Belial" ("wicked" or "worthless one") familiar from the intertestamental Jewish literature (see **Antichrist, Jewish Views**). While some have thought Paul's reference is to Satan, Paul could have easily used the available Greek term *Satanas* ("Satan"). He more likely chose this obscure expression (used only here in the New Testament) because of its apocalyptic usage of Messiah's quasi-human end-time opponent. Furthermore, the context uses Temple imagery (vs. 16) and Paul's command for "separation" in verses 6:17; and 7:1 is "go out of their midst," an escapist tone analogous to Antichrist contexts such as 1 Jn. 10:39: "go out, escape" and Christ's warning to "flee" (Matt. 24:15-16/ Mark 13:14b). If Paul had these ideas in the background, Belial may be a more fitting allusion to

the Antichrist than Satan. Paul's more explicit statement concerning the character and activity of Antichrist is in 2 Thess. 2:3-4. The character of the Antichrist is defined in this text as "he who opposes" (vs. 4a), a word in the Greek which was used by the LXX in 1 Kgs. 11:25a as a rendering for the Hebrew word *satan* ("adversary"). This points to Antichrist's link with Satan, which verse 9 says more precisely is "in accord with the activity of Satan." Since Satan's adversary is God, and his original goal was to become like God (cf. Isa. 14:14; Ezek. 28:17), the Antichrist actions are apparently an attempt to fulfill this by usurping worship as God (vs. 4b; cf. Rev. 13:4-8). His counterfeit is apparently of the God of Israel, since in verse 4 he is pictured as one who will exalt himself above every "god or object of worship" (i.e. abode all pagan gods) and enthrones himself "in the Temple of God displaying himself as God," the language of theophanic installation (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:10; 2 Chron. 7:1-3; Ezek. 43:1-7). In this way the Antichrist appears as a rival to Christ, not by an assumption of the messianic role, but as His superior (economically speaking) - as God [the Father]. Note too, that in this passage, the Antichrist usurps the place of God in a blasphemous act of self-deification. This is why Paul uses the descriptive terms "the man of lawlessness" and "the son of destruction" (vs. 3). The word "lawlessness" apparently describes his nature as characterized by his opposition to the Temple as the repository of the Law (vs. 4), while the word "destruction" refers to his destiny, i.e. destined for "destruction" or "perdition" (vs. 8).

Paul seems to connect the "revelation of Christ" (vss. 1-2) with the "revealing of the Antichrist" (vss. 3-4) in such a way as to imply that Christ's return to earth is related to Antichrist rebellion on earth, a cause/effect relationship clearly drawn in Rev. 19:11-20. Because the Antichrist is here said to be "revealed," it has been suggested that his "revelation" is a counterfeit to that of Christ's (vs. 9). From Paul's description of the destruction of the Antichrist at the revelation of Christ (vs. 8), it appears that he identified "the lawless one" with Daniel's "little horn" (Dan. 7:8, 11).

In the Book of Revelation

In the Book of Revelation, the term "Antichrist" does not appear (although John previously used it in his epistles). The reason for this may be partly explained from the symbolic character of his prophetic vision, for his expression of the Antichrist is "Beast," a term descriptive of his inhuman nature which was often revealed to John in animal form. The Revelation provides the most complete information about the career of the Antichrist, even offering an identification of his person in the cryptogram 666 (13:16-18). Since the text does not give an explanation for this number, other than that it is the "number of a man" (i.e. Antichrist), no one until the appropriate hour in the Tribulation will be able to discern this meaning. John with Paul understands the Antichrist is to be energized by Satan, or in Johannine terminology, "the dragon" (13:2; cf. 12:5). John's picture of the Antichrist is of a world ruler (13:1, 4, 7; 17:12-13, 17) whose political position is so dominating that it encroaches into the religious realm (13:15). This is accomplished for the Antichrist by a diabolical religious figure John presents as a "second beast," who is a lesser antichrist. He is a duplicate of the Antichrist as the "first Beast" (13:12a), but inferior to him, having only "two horns" compared with his ten (13:11b).

In contrast to the first Beast who "arises out of the *sea*," the second beast "comes up out of the *earth*" (13:11a). These contrasting terms are indicative of the origin of the two beasts. "The sea" may symbolize the Gentiles (17:15; cf. Dan. 7:2-3), and if this is the case here, the opposite term "the earth" would symbolize the Jews. There is precedence for the Gentile origin of Antichrist in the Old Testament allusions, and the Jewish identification may be strengthened if here "the earth" has technical sense of "the Land" [of Israel] as it sometimes may in Revelation (11:18; cf. Dan. 8:9). While most premillennial interpreters have accepted the view that the Antichrist's *geographical* origin is in Europe as a revived Roman empire, based on Dan. 9:26 having Rome in the background, a Middle-eastern origin has been proposed, based on Assyria being the "slain" [kingdom] of Rev. 13:3 (cf. Rev. 17:9-11; Dan. 11:40) that is revived as Iraq (Goodman, Hodges).

The "second beast" acts as a lieutenant of the Antichrist in the religious realm, duplicating the miraculous "signs" of the biblical prophets (13:13-14). Just as many "antichrists" appeared during the Last Days to prepare for the Antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18, 22), so many "false prophets and false Christs" will appear throughout the Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:10, 24) to prepare for the greater deception of the second beast (Rev. 13:13-14) as the superlative "False Prophet" (Rev. 13:14 with Matt. 24:24; cf. Rev. 19:20). He possesses counterfeit, but subordinate, authority like that of the first Beast (13:4, 12), which is why he is called a "second" beast. In this position he promotes the universal worship of the Antichrist (13:16), who will apparently at this time claim the status of deity (Rev. 13:4-8, 12-13). While the False Prophet is said to "deceive" the "earth-dwellers" or Gentiles (Rev. 13:12), he is also shown to perform "signs" which are peculiar to Israel (Rev. 13:12b-15). Because these "signs" include the ability to restore life (vs. 12), call fire down from heaven (vs. 13), and to create (vss. 14b-15), his actions particularly recall those of the Prophet Elijah (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:36-38; 17:21-23; 17:14-16). This might imply that the False Prophet will, like Elijah (cf. Mal. 3:1-2; 4:5), act as a messianic forerunner proclaiming the Antichrist as Messiah, however, the Antichrist receives worship as a god exalted above all other gods (Rev. 13:4, 8; cf. 2 Thess. 2:4), so it is more probable that the False Prophet is for Israel also a False Messiah, who performs expected messianic signs (Isa. 35:5; 42:7; 61:1; cf. Matt. 11:3-5; Lk. 4:18-19) to confirm and magnify the supreme status of the Antichrist through their counterfeit god/prophet relationship (Jn. 5:36; 8:54; 10:18; 17:4; cf. Matt. 24:24 with Acts 2:22). This counterfeit messianic status accords with his description as having "horns like a lamb" (probably a counterfeit of the messianic nature, Rev. 5:6; cf. Isa. 53:7) and speaking as "a dragon" (Satanic empowerment), 13:11.

The two signs performed for/by the Antichrist: resuscitation and presence in the Temple are connected with each other and with messianic expectation. In accordance with messianic expectation of Messiah at the Temple as divine judge (Mal. 3:1-2), Jesus came into the Temple precincts, and acting judicially, overturned the tables of the money-changers (Jn. 2:13-21). After this act He was asked for a sign by the Jewish crowd who had apparently made the messianic connection. Jesus answered with the sign of resurrection. The Satanic resuscitation of the Antichrist may be an attempt to counterfeit this sign of resurrection (Rev. 13:3, 12-14) as a means to deification and enthronement as divine judge. The Antichrist's role as universal judge and executor may point to this investiture (Rev. 13:8-10, 15). However, the intention of the Antichrist in his persecution of Israel and invasion of the Land (Dan. 11:41; cf. 8:9-13) may be to reverse the demonstration of divine blessing, evident with the 144,000 and the Two Witnesses (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5; 11:3-12), by returning the whole Nation to an exilic (scattered) state. Dan. 9:27 describes the "desolation" that follows the Antichrist's "abomination." This same term is used to depict the condition of Israel and its Land as a result of desecration and exile (cf. Lev. 26:34, 35; Psa. 73: 19; 2 Chron. 30:7; 36:21; Jer. 4:7). This may occur with the worldwide Jewish persecution that follows Antichrist's enthronement in the Temple (12:13-17; cf. Matt. 24:16-22; Mk. 13:14b-18).

The defeat of the Antichrist accompanies the Second Advent of Christ (19:1, 19-20a) and apparently takes place in Jerusalem at the final campaign of Armageddon (cf. Zech. 14:1-4; cf. Dan. 9:27c). The eternal destination of the Antichrist is the Lake of Fire (19:20), designed especially for the punishment of Satan and the rebel angelic (demonic) order (Matt. 25:41) with whom these have joined ranks. The Beast and False Prophet are consigned to the Lake of Fire at the conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon (20:20c), but Satan is bound until the end of the Millennium (20:1-3, 7), at which time he is defeated and he is reunited to his Satanic trinity in eternal condemnation (20:9-10). The sober warning for the present unsaved and those who accept the mark of the Antichrist during the Tribulation is that they will share the eternal destiny of the Antichrist in the Lake of Fire (20:13-15; 21:8).

In Jewish Literature

The concept of the Antichrist was implicit in much of the Old Testament and explicit in the Book of Daniel. The figure of a last days opponent of the Jewish People and the Messiah is especially prominent in some of the Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings before the birth of Christ including the apocalyptic texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Michael Stone, a leading Israeli expert on this literature has observed that "the background to this figure lies in Jewish eschatology." A much stronger conclusion was drawn by Hebrew University professor David Flusser. As an expert on Second Temple Judaism and the origins of Christianity he categorically states: "The idea of Antichrist is strictly Jewish and pre-Christian." This is evident from the expression itself, for just as the Greek word "Christ" (*Christos*) is the translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah" (*Mashiach*), so "Antichrist is in fact "Anti-Messiah."

In Jewish apocalyptic literature a final rebellion by "the wicked" against "the righteous" in Israel is predicted to occur at the Last Day (cf. Jubilees 23:14-23; 4 Ezra 4:26-42; 6:18-28). The earliest references to a specific evil king over the forces of the "wicked" is of "Beliar" ("worthless one"), a superhuman being who is the embodiment of evil and who is destined to be the end-time opponent of God and His Messiah. In the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the figure of Beliar serves as a portent of the imminent conclusion of the age and its cataclysmic end (cf. *T. Joseph* 20:2; *T. Simeon* 5:3; *T. Naphali* 2:6; *T. Issachar* 6:1; 7:7; *T. Reuben* 2:1; *T. Dan* 5:10; *T. Levi* 18:12; *T. Judah* 25:3). Not only does Beliar lead astray, but whoever sins is said to be doing the works of Beliar (*T. Naphali* 2:8). He is attended by a contingent of seven evil spirits that comprise his unholy court (cf. *T. Reuben* 2:1; *T. Issachar* 7:7), and these spirits will in the last days be joined by a large company of men (cf. *T. Issachar* 6:1). The eschatological deliverance (redemption) of Israel cannot be obtained without the ultimate defeat and destruction of Beliar, and his defeat comes from the Lord from Levi and from the Messiah (*T. Dan* 5:10; cf. 5:3-7), who will fight with him and finally cast him into eternal punishment (*T. Dan* 5:10; *T. Issachar* 6:1; *T. Levi* 18:12; *T. Judah* 25:3).

In the Dead Sea (Qumran) literature (c.196 B.C. - A.D. 68), which had developed a complex eschatology based on a *pesher* (literalistic) interpretation of the biblical prophets. It has been thought, based on the assumption that Beliar/Belial = Satan, that Beliar was only a cognomen for the devil. Although Beliar is presented as the seducer and corrupter of Israel, he is a creation of God destined for this purpose (1QM 13:9-11), and appears as a quasi-human adversary. Even if there is an overlapping with Satan, some texts such as *Second Ezekiel* (4Q385-389) distinguish a "son of Beliar" and a "blasphemous/boastful king" who will arise and oppress the Jewish People. These titles occur in texts which are within a context alluding to the national re-gathering and restoration of Israel (from the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37:4-6), which is immediately followed by a prayer concerning the time of this end-time re-gathering.

In a fragmentary pseudo-Daniel text from Qumran Cave 4, the description of an evil end-time king who oppresses Israel includes the words: "[]he shall be great on earth ... [all] will worship and all will serve [him] ... great ... he shall be called and by His name he shall be designated. He shall be named son of God and they shall call him son of the Most High" (4Q246 1:8-10). This might appear to be a reference to the Messiah rather than the Anti-Messiah, if it were not describing an opponent of Israel. This seems confirmed in the words that follow where a contrast is made between the arrogant oppressor of Israel in these lines and the defender of Israel who makes peace and establishes their kingdom: "Like a shooting stars that you saw, so shall be their kingdom. They shall reign for [some] years on earth and will trample all. One nation [or people] shall trample on another nation and one province on another province [*vacat*] until the people of God shall arise and all will desist from the sword. His Kingdom will be an eternal kingdom and its/his ways will be in righteousness; He will [jud]ge the earth in righteousness, and all will have/make peace; The sword will cease from the earth and every nation will submit to/worship him (9-12)." Of importance is the *vacat* (a deliberate space separating ideas) which divides Israel's oppressor from her savior.

If this interpretation is correct, we have in this text the earliest Jewish commentary on Daniel's vision of the Anti-Messiah and a dramatic parallel to Paul's teaching in 2 Thess. 2:4. This is similar to what is said concerning Daniel's blasphemous tyrant who usurps the divine prerogative in the *Oracles of Hystaspes*. They describe a "king" that "shall arise out of Syria, born from an evil spirit, the over-thrower and destroyer of the human race ... that king will not only be the most disgraceful in himself, but he will also be a prophet of lies, and he will constitute, and call himself God and will order himself to be worshipped as the son of God" (*Lactantius Divinae Institutiones* 7. 17: 2-4). Likewise, the *Assumption or Testament of Moses* in which an end-time king of supreme authority persecutes the Jewish People, blasphemes God, violates the Law, and desecrates the Temple by forcing entrance to the Holy of Holies and offering pagan sacrifices on the altar (8:1-5). Temple pollution is also one of the three "nets of Beliar" according to the *Damascus Document* (CD 4).

These texts bear great resemblance to Jesus' Olivet Discourse in which is predicted a massive defection from the true faith, deceiving false prophets, and the Abomination of Desolation in the Temple (Matt. 24:10-15/Mk. 13:14-22).

Jewish apocalypses also developed certain themes concerning the Anti-Messiah. One example is the Roman origin of the Anti-Messiah (based apparently on the interpretation in Daniel's prophecy of a Roman connection, Dan. 9:26-27) in the *Sibylline Oracles* (4:119-39). Here the eschatological Anti-Messiah is cast in the mold of the worst of the deified Roman emperors, Nero, who was expected to re-appear in the end-time as Nero *redivivus* ("Nero risen [from the dead]"). In the *Ascension of Isaiah* Nero is the epitome of evil into whom Beliar entered to do wonders and much evil (4:3, 13). Early patristic writers were also influenced by the Jewish Nero *redivivus* tradition (e.g. Commodian, A.D. 250). Some, however, such as Hippolytus (*Commentary on the Benedictions of Isaac and Jacob* [Gen. 49:14]), who began the Christian tradition that the Antichrist originates from the Israelite tribe of Dan, apparently made this connection from the Jewish *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*T. Dan* 1:4-9; 5:6-7), which states that evil spirits would be active in the tribe (5:5), that "Satan" was "their prince" (5:6), and that they would be hostile in the future to the tribes of Levi and Judah (5:6-7).

The doom of the Anti-Messiah was predicted following the pattern presented in Daniel (9, 11). The *Psalms of Solomon* describes "the son of David" delivering Israel by destroying "the lawless one" with "the word of his mouth," purging Jerusalem and restoring the Promised Land to the Jews (17:13, 23-27). This is similar to the New Testament, where the coming of the Messiah ends Jewish persecution and destroys the armies of Antichrist (Matt. 24: 30-31; Mk. 13:26-27; Lk. 21:27-28; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:14-21).

In the *Jerusalem Talmud* (A), *Targum pseudo-Jonathan*, and the later Jewish Apocalyptic *Midrashim* (commentaries), the legendary name given to the Anti-Messiah is Armilus. Works such as *Sefer Zerubbavel* and those by Saadia Gaon reveal his characteristics in striking detail. According to these Jewish sources, Armilus will deceive the whole world into believing he is God and will reign over the whole world. He will come with ten kings and together they will fight over Jerusalem. Armilus is expected to persecute and banish Israel to the wilderness and it will be a time of unprecedented distress for Israel; there will be increasing famine, and the Gentiles will expel the Jews from their lands, and they will hide in caves and towers. God will war against the host of Armilus and there will be a great deliverance for Israel and the kingdom of Heaven will spread over all the earth. Other references further describe Armilus as arising from the Roman empire, having miraculous powers, and being born to a stone statue of a virgin, because of which he was called "the son of a stone." It is also interesting that he makes this statue "the chief of all idolatry" with the result that "all the Gentiles will bow down to her, burn incense and pour out libations to her." This resembles Daniel's wicked "king" and "coming prince" and his "abomination of desolation" (Dan. 18:1:31, 36-37), and

especially the Apocalypse's statute of the Beast which is brought to life and made an object of worship (Rev. 13:4, 15).

The Jewish hermeneutic of a literal, futurist interpretation was followed by the Jewish writers of the New Testament and Jewish views of the Anti-Messiah influenced both early Jewish-Christian interpretation and the interpretation of the many of the early (ante-Nicene) Church fathers. For example, Irenaeus (c. A. D. 185) wrote: "But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the Kingdom." Eusebius also mentions (scornfully) a Jewish-Christian writer named Jude (dated to A.D. 202-203) whose treatise on Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy held out an imminent expectation of the advent of Antichrist in his generation (*Ecclesiastical History* 6:6).

By contrast, the non-literal interpretation, also seen in later rabbinic Judaism, does not fully appear until the third-century A.D. with Origen and Augustine, who were influenced by the allegorical interpretations of the Hellenistic idealist school of the Jewish philosopher Philo. While in reality both Amillennial and (Pre)millennial interpretations had been influenced from Jewish sources, during the chiliast controversy the Amillennial charge against millenarianism was that it was "Jewish." While apocryphal elements in Jewish eschatology are to be rejected, Premillennialists should find support from the Jewish roots of their interpretation which attest to its proper biblical context.

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