

The Apostolic Churches

On the End-Time Events

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Irenaeus (AD120-202)

“And then he points out the time that his [Antichrist’s] tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight, they who offer a pure sacrifice unto God: And in the midst of the week, he says, the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and the abomination of desolation [shall be brought] into the temple: even unto the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete. Now three years and six months constitute the half-week.”¹

“In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord’s disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] shall be partitioned. ... And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the Church to flight. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of our Lord.”²

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

¹ Against Heresies, Book V, XXV

² Against Heresies, Book V, XXVI

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“Moreover, he (the apostle) has also pointed out this which I have shown in many ways, that the temple in Jerusalem was made by the direction of the true God. For the apostle himself, speaking in his own person, distinctly called it the temple of God. Now I have shown in the third book, that no one is termed God by the apostles when speaking for themselves, except Him who truly is God, the Father of our Lord, by whose directions the temple which is at Jerusalem was constructed for those purposes which I have already mentioned; in which [temple] the enemy shall sit, endeavoring to show himself as Christ, as the Lord also declares: ‘But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which has been spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains; and he who is upon the house-top, let him not come down to take anything out of his house: for there shall then be great hardship, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be’.”³

“This is also the unjust judge, whom the Lord mentioned as one ‘who feared not God, neither regarded man,’ to whom the widow fled in her forgetfulness of God, — that is, the earthly Jerusalem, — to be avenged of her adversary. Which also he shall do in the time of his kingdom: he shall remove his kingdom into that city, and shall sit in the temple of God, leading astray those who worship him, as if he were Christ. To this purpose Daniel says again: ‘And he shall desolate the holy place; and sin has been given for a sacrifice, and righteousness been cast away in the earth, and he has been active, and gone on prosperously.’ ... And then he points out the time that his tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight, they who offer a pure sacrifice unto God: And in the midst of the week, he says, the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and the abomination of desolation shall be brought into the temple: even unto the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete. Now three years and six months constitute the half-week.”⁴

“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

³ Against Heresies, Book V, XXV,1&2

⁴ Against Heresies, Book V, XXV, 2

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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, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that 'many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'."⁵

"For all these and other words were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in [the times of] which [resurrection] the righteous shall reign on the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord: and through Him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father, and shall enjoy in the kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels, and union with spiritual beings; and those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting Him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the Wicked one."⁶

Tertullian (AD145-220)

"In the Revelation of John, again, the order of these times is spread out to view, which 'the souls of the martyrs' are taught to wait for beneath the altar, whilst they earnestly pray to be avenged and judged: (taught, I say, to wait), in order that the world may first drink to the dregs the plagues that await it out of the vials of the angels, and that the city of fornication may receive from the ten kings its deserved doom, and that the beast Antichrist, with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God; and that, after the casting of the devil into the bottomless pit for a while, the blessed prerogative of the first resurrection may be obtained from the thrones; and then again, after the consignment of him to the fire, that the judgment of the final and universal resurrection may be determined out of the books. Since, then, the Scriptures both indicate the stages of the last

⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, XXX, 4

⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V, XXXV, 1

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times, and concentrate the harvest of the Christian hope in the very end of the world.”⁷

“Now the privilege of this favor [the resurrection] awaits those who shall at the coming of the Lord be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints; as he writes to the Thessalonians: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we too shall ourselves 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.”⁸

Hippolytus (AD170-236)

“When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them. When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.”⁹

“It is proper that we take the Holy Scriptures themselves in hand, and find out from them what, and of what manner, the coming of Antichrist is; on what occasion and at what time that impious one shall be revealed; and whence and from what tribe (he shall come); and what his name is, which is indicated by the number in Scripture; and how he shall work error among the people, gathering them from the ends of the earth; and (how) he shall stir up tribulation and persecution against the saints; and how he shall glorify himself as God; and what his end shall be; and how the sudden appearing of the Lord shall be revealed from heaven; and what the conflagration of the whole world shall be; and what

⁷ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, XXV

⁸ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, XLI

⁹ Hippolytus, Fragments from Commentaries, II, 7

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the glorious and heavenly kingdom of the saints is to be, when they reign together with Christ; and what the punishment of the wicked by fire.”¹⁰

“For the deceiver seeks to liken himself in all things to the Son of God. Christ is a lion, so Antichrist is also a lion; Christ is a king, so Antichrist is also a king. The Savior was manifested as a lamb; so he too, in like manner, will appear as a lamb, though within he is a wolf. ... The Savior raised up and showed His holy flesh like a temple, and he will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem. And his seductive arts we shall exhibit in what follows. But for the present let us turn to the question in hand.”¹¹

“As these things, then, are in the future, and as the ten toes of the image are equivalent to (so many) democracies, and the ten horns of the fourth beast are distributed over ten kingdoms, let us look at the subject a little more closely, and consider these matters as in the clear light of a personal survey.

“The golden head of the image and the lioness denoted the Babylonians; the shoulders and arms of silver, and the bear, represented the Persians and Medes; the belly and thighs of brass, and the leopard, meant the Greeks, who held the sovereignty from Alexander’s time; the legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible, expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present; the toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of the kingdoms that are yet to rise; the other little horn that grows up among them meant the Antichrist in their midst; the stone that smites the earth and brings judgment upon the world was Christ.”¹²

“But it becomes us further diligently to examine and set forth the period at which these things shall come to pass, and how the little horn shall spring up in their midst. For when the legs of iron have issued in the feet and toes, according to the similitude of the image and that of the terrible beast, as has been shown in the above, (then shall be the time) when the iron and the clay shall be mingled together. Now Daniel will set forth this subject to us. For he says, And one week will make a covenant with many, and it shall be that in the midst (half) of the

¹⁰ Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 5

¹¹ Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 6

¹² Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 27,28

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week my sacrifice and oblation shall cease. By one week, therefore, he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the whole world of which week the two prophets Enoch and Elias will take up the half. For they will preach 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth, proclaiming repentance to the people and to all the nations. For John says, And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. That is the half of the week whereof Daniel spake. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire will proceed out of their mouth, and devour their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.”¹³

“With respect to his name, it is not in our power to explain it exactly, as the blessed John understood it and was instructed about it, but only to give a conjectural account of it; for when he appears, the blessed one will show us what we seek to know. ... Wherefore we ought neither to give it out as if this were certainly his name, nor again ignore the fact that he may not otherwise be designated. But having the mystery of God in our heart, we ought in fear to keep faithfully what has been told us by blessed prophets, in order that when those things come to pass, we may be prepared for them, and not be deceived. For when the times advance, he too, of whom these things are said, will be manifest.”¹⁴

“Now concerning the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall upon the Church from the adversary, John also speaks thus, ‘And I saw a great and wondrous sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, ... And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.’ That refers to the one thousand two hundred and threescore days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church.... These things then, being come to pass, beloved, and the one week being divided into two parts, and the abomination of desolation being manifested then, and the two prophets and forerunners of the Lord having finished their course, and the

¹³ Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 43, 47

¹⁴ Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 50

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whole world finally approaching the consummation, what remains but the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope.”¹⁵

“When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them. When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.”¹⁶

“For when the threescore and two weeks are fulfilled, and Christ is come, and the Gospel is preached in every place, the times being then accomplished, there will remain only one week, the last, in which Elias will appear, and Enoch, and in the midst of it the abomination of desolation will be manifested, viz., Antichrist, announcing desolation to the world...”¹⁷

“Thus, then, does the prophet set forth these things concerning the Antichrist, who shall be shameless, a war-maker, and despot, who, exalting himself above all kings and above every God, shall build the city of Jerusalem, and restore the sanctuary. Him the impious will worship as God, and will bend to him the knee, thinking him to be the Christ. He shall cut off the two witnesses and forerunners of Christ, who proclaim His glorious kingdom from heaven, as it is said: ‘And I will give (power) unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.’ As also it was announced to Daniel: ‘And one week shall confirm a covenant with many; and in the midst of the week it shall be that the sacrifice and oblation shall be removed’ — that the one week might be shown to be divided into two. The two witnesses, then, shall preach three years and a half; and Antichrist shall make war upon the saints during the rest of the week, and desolate the world, that what is written may be fulfilled: ‘And they shall make the abomination of desolation for a thousand two hundred and ninety days’.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 60, 61, 64

¹⁶ Hippolytus, On Daniel, II, 7

¹⁷ Hippolytus, On Daniel, II, 22

¹⁸ Hippolytus, On Daniel, II, 39

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“By the stretching forth of His two hands He signified His passion; and by mentioning ‘a time, and times, and an half, when the dispersion is accomplished,’ He indicated the three years and a half of Antichrist. For by ‘a time’ He means a year, and by ‘times’ two years, and by an ‘half time’ half a year. These are the thousand two hundred and ninety days of which Daniel prophesied for the finishing of the passion, and the accomplishment of the dispersion when Antichrist comes. In those days they shall know all these things. And from the time of the removal of the continuous sacrifice there are also reckoned one thousand two hundred and ninety days. (Then) iniquity shall abound, as the Lord also says: ‘Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.’ And that divisions will arise when the falling away takes place, is without doubt. And when divisions arise, love is chilled. The words, ‘Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days,’ have also their value, as the Lord said: ‘But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.’ Wherefore let us by no means admit the falling away, lest iniquity abound, and the abomination of desolation — that is, the adversary — overtake us.”¹⁹

“‘And I inquired about the fourth beast’.” It is to the fourth kingdom, of which we have already spoken, that he here refers: that kingdom, than which no greater kingdom of like nature has arisen upon the earth; from which also ten horns are to spring, and to be apportioned among ten crowns. And amid these another little horn shall rise, which is that of Antichrist. And it shall pluck by the roots the three others before it; that is to say, he shall subvert the three kings of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia, with the view of acquiring for himself universal dominion. And after conquering the remaining seven horns, he will at last begin, inflated by a strange and wicked spirit, to stir up war against the saints, and to persecute all everywhere, with the aim of being glorified by all, and being worshipped as God.”²⁰

“For he says, ‘I shall make a covenant of one week, and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and libation will be removed.’ For by one week he indicates the

¹⁹ Hippolytus, On Daniel, II, 43,44

²⁰ Hippolytus, On Daniel, III, 7:19

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showing forth of the seven years which shall be in the last times. And the half of the week the two prophets, along with John, will take for the purpose of proclaiming to all the world the advent of Antichrist, that is to say, for a thousand two hundred and sixty days clothed in sackcloth; and they will work signs and wonders with the object of making men ashamed and repentant, even by these means, on account of their surpassing lawlessness and impiety. 'And if any man will hurt them, fire will proceed out of their mouth, and devour their enemies. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of the advent of Antichrist, and to turn waters into blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will.' And when they have proclaimed all these things they will fall on the sword, cut off by the accuser. And they will fulfill their testimony, as Daniel also says; for he foresaw that the beast that came up out of the abyss would make war with them, namely with Enoch, Elias, and John, and would overcome them, and kill them, because of their refusal to give glory to the accuser. That is the little horn that sprang up. And he, being lifted up in heart, begins in the end to, exalt himself and glorify himself as God, persecuting the saints and blaspheming Christ."²¹

"And at first, indeed, that deceitful and lawless one, with crafty deceitfulness, will refuse such glory; but the men persisting, and holding by him, will declare him king. And thereafter he will be lifted up in heart, and he who was formerly gentle will become violent, and he who pursued love will become pitiless, and the humble in heart will become haughty and inhuman, and the hater of unrighteousness will persecute the righteous. Then, when he is elevated to his kingdom, he will marshal war; and in his wrath he will smite three mighty kings, — those, namely, of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. And after that he will build the temple in Jerusalem, and will restore it again speedily, and give it over to the Jews. And then he will be lifted up in heart against every man; yea, he will speak blasphemy also against God, thinking in his deceit that he shall be king upon the earth hereafter for ever; not knowing, miserable wretch, that his kingdom is to be quickly brought to nought, and that he will quickly have to meet the fire which is prepared for him, along with all who trust him and serve him. For when Daniel said, 'I shall make my covenant for one week,' he indicated seven years; and the

²¹ Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXI

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one half of the week is for the preaching of the prophets, and for the other half of the week — that is to say, for three years and a half — Antichrist will reign upon the earth. And after this his kingdom and his glory shall be taken away. Behold, ye who love God, what manner of tribulation there shall rise in those days, such as has not been from the foundation of the world, no, nor ever shall be, except in those days alone. Then the lawless one, being lifted up in heart, will gather together his demons in man's form, and will abominate those who call him to the kingdom, and will pollute many souls."²²

"As these things, therefore, of which we have spoken before are in the future, beloved, when the one week is divided into parts, and the abomination of desolation has arisen then, and the forerunners of the Lord have finished their proper course, and the whole world, in fine, comes to the consummation, what remains but the manifestation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, from heaven, for whom we have hoped; who shall bring forth fire and all just judgment against those who have refused to believe in Him? For the Lord says, 'For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be; for wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together'."²³

Cyprian: (AD200-258)

"For even Antichrist, when he shall begin to come, shall not enter into the Church because he threatens; neither shall we yield to his arms and violence, because he declares that he will destroy us if we resist. ... It matters nothing to us by whom, or when we are slain, since we shall receive from the Lord the reward of our death and of our blood. Their concision is to be mourned and lamented, whom the devil so blinds, that, without considering the eternal punishments of Gehenna, they endeavor to imitate the coming of Antichrist, who is now approaching."²⁴

²² Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXV

²³ Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXXVI

²⁴ Cyprian, Epistle LIV, 19

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“The Lord hath foretold that these things would come. With the exhortation of His foreseeing word, instructing, and teaching, and preparing, and strengthening the people of His Church for all endurance of things to come. He predicted and said that wars, and famines, and earthquakes, and pestilences would arise in each place; and lest an unexpected and new dread of mischiefs should shake us, He previously warned us that the adversary would increase more and more in the last times.”²⁵

Lactantius: (AD260 – 330)

“But I will more plainly set forth the manner in which this happens. When the close of the times draws nigh, a great prophet shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God, and he shall receive the power of doing wonderful things. Wherever men shall not hear him, he will shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains; he will turn their water into blood, and torment them with thirst and hunger; and if any one shall endeavor to injure him, fire, shall come forth out of his mouth, and shall burn that man. By these prodigies and powers he shall turn many to the worship of God; and when his works shall be accomplished, another king shall arise out of Syria, born from an evil spirit, the overthrower and destroyer of the human race, who shall destroy that which is left by the former evil, together with himself. He shall fight against the prophet of God, and shall overcome, and slay him, and shall suffer him to lie unburied; but after the third day he shall come to life again; and while all look on and wonder, he shall be caught up into heaven. But that king will not only be 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; and power will be given him to do signs and wonders, by the sight of which he may entice men to adore him. He will command fire to come down from heaven, and the sun to stand and leave his course, and an image to speak; and these things shall be done at his word, — by which miracles many even of the wise shall be enticed by him. Then he will attempt to destroy the temple of God, and persecute the righteous people; and there will be distress and tribulation such as there never has been from the beginning of the world. As many as shall believe

²⁵ Cyprian, Treatise VII, 2

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him and unite themselves to him, shall be marked by him as sheep; but they who shall refuse his mark will either flee to the mountains, or, being seized, will be slain with studied tortures. He will also enwrap righteous men with the books of the prophets, and thus burn them; and power will be given him to desolate the whole earth for forty-two months. That will be the time in which righteousness shall be cast out, and innocence be hated; in which the wicked shall prey upon the good as enemies; neither law, nor order, nor military discipline shall be preserved; no one shall reverence hoary locks, nor recognize the duty of piety, nor pity sex or infancy; all things shall be confounded and mixed together against right, and against the laws of nature. Thus the earth shall be laid waste, as though by one common robbery. When these things shall so happen, then the righteous and the followers of truth shall separate themselves from the wicked, and flee into solitudes. And when he hears of this, the impious king, inflamed with anger, will come with a great army, and bringing up all his forces, will surround all the mountain in which the righteous shall be situated, that he may seize them. But they, when they shall see themselves to be shut in on all sides and besieged, will call upon God with a loud voice, and implore the aid of heaven; and God shall hear them, and send from heaven a great king to rescue and free them, and destroy all the wicked with fire and sword."²⁶

Victorinus: (AD. ?-304)

"He speaks of Elias the prophet, who is the precursor of the times of Antichrist, for the restoration and establishment of the churches from the great and intolerable persecution."²⁷

"The woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and wearing the crown of twelve stars upon her head, and travailing in her pains, is the ancient Church of fathers, and prophets, and saints, and apostles,..."²⁸

"He shall cause also that a golden image of Antichrist shall be placed in the temple at Jerusalem, and that the apostate angel should enter, and thence utter

²⁶ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, Book VII, ch. 17

²⁷ Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 7:2

²⁸ Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 12:1

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voices and oracles. ... [T]he Lord, admonishing His churches concerning the last times and their dangers, says: 'But when ye shall see the contempt which is spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, let him who readeth understand'."²⁹

"The 'little season' signifies three years and six months, in which with all his power the devil will avenge himself under Antichrist against the Church."³⁰

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: (3rd Century – Anonymous)

"Be watchful for your life. 'Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye like unto men who wait for their Lord, and when He will come, at even, or in the morning, or at cock-crowing, or at midnight. For at what hour they think not, the Lord will come; and if they open to Him, blessed are those servants, because they were found watching. For He will gird Himself, and will make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.' Watch therefore, and pray, that ye do not sleep unto death. For your former good deeds will not profit you, if at the last part of your life you go astray from the true faith. For in the last days false prophets shall be multiplied, and such as corrupt the Word; and the sheep shall be changed into wolves, and love into hatred: for through the abounding of iniquity the love of many shall wax cold. For men shall hate, and persecute, and betray one another. And then shall appear the deceiver of the world, the enemy of the truth, the prince of lies, whom the Lord Jesus 'shall destroy with the Spirit of His mouth', 'who takes away the wicked with His lips'; and many shall be offended at Him. But they that endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and afterwards shall be the voice of a trumpet by the archangel; and in that interval shall be the revival of those that were asleep. And then shall the Lord come, and all the saints with Him, with a great concussion above the clouds, with the angels of His power, in the throne of His kingdom, to condemn the devil, the deceiver of the world, and to render to every one according to his deeds. 'Then shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the

²⁹ Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, 13:13

³⁰ Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, 20:1-3

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righteous shall go into life eternal,' to inherit those things 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, such things as God hath prepared for them that love Him'."³¹

³¹ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book VII, XXXI, XXXII