

Lord. We have the Lord's own sketch of the characteristics of the age, given at the beginning of the Olivet Discourse. The three concluding verses of Matt 23 anticipate the rejection of Jesus by the leadership of Israel, and lead to the predictions of the desolation of Jerusalem, and, following the interval of Israel's separation from her land, the prediction of her believing acceptance of Christ as He returns in glory. There follows a sketch of the present age in the Olivet Discourse, before the Lord focuses attention on the future complex of events in which Israel's believing welcome will be heard. Sometimes the historicist view is so attenuated and loosely conceived that it does not effectively attempt to calculate the times. I am arguing for the rejection of the principle, in favor of the Lord's statement: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons ..." (Acts 1:7).

Irenaeus of Lyons

Let us take Irenaeus and his great work, *Against Heresies*, as representative of ancient premillennialism. Irenaeus witnesses, I believe, to a premillennial and futurist reading of the Revelation. Irenaeus speaks of a future apostasy in the time of Antichrist, whom he understands to be a particular individual.¹ He expected a future complex of events in which Antichrist would appear. He at no point makes a statement as to how long the interval would be from his own time to that future complex. He simply puts the future complex in the context of the empire which now rules the earth. Irenaeus' reserve is harmonious with the futurist view of the break in the Roman Empire caused by the "deadly wound," followed by the reemergence of the Roman Empire in an eschatological ten-horned kingdom.

A further proof of Irenaeus' futurism is shown in his handling of Rev 17. In Book V, 26, Sect. 1, he quotes Rev 17:12-14, and then comments: "It is manifest, therefore, that of these [potentates], he who is to come shall slay three, and subject the remainder to his power, and that he shall be himself the eighth among them." Irenaeus is bringing together Daniel and Revelation, because in introducing his quotation of Rev 17:12ff, he says: "He teaches us what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel." In his exposition he injects the reference to Dan 7:20 which tells of the elimination of three horns by the little horn, thus leaving seven. John's statements assume knowledge of the Daniel context, so that he is able to say that the beast is the eighth among his contemporaries. Irenaeus understands and repeats this.

Irenaeus thus thrusts into the future the final phase of the world empire headed by the beast and speaks of the partitioning of "the empire which now rules [the earth]...." In doing so he avoids the confusion of saying that Rome of his day was the last phase of that world empire. He is obviously in harmony with Rev 17:10 with its enumeration of seven kings: five fallen, one existing, and one not yet come. He clearly stands apart from the attempt to equate the ten-horned kingdom with Rome of his day. There is no mention of Rome having seven hills. Irenaeus has a consistent futurist system: he simply looks for a future phase of Rome. Of course, Irenaeus could not tell, and did not suggest, how long the interval might be