

Apostasy or Rapture?

(2 Thessalonians 2:3A)



Dr. Andy Woods

Senior Pastor – Sugar Land Bible Church

President – Chafer Theological Seminary

2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy [apostasias] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”





2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- Problem (2:1-2)
- Prerequisites for the Day of the Lord (2:3-12)
 - ◆ The apostasy (2:3a)
 - ◆ Advent of the lawless one (2:3b-4)
 - ◆ Removal of the restrainer (2:5-7)
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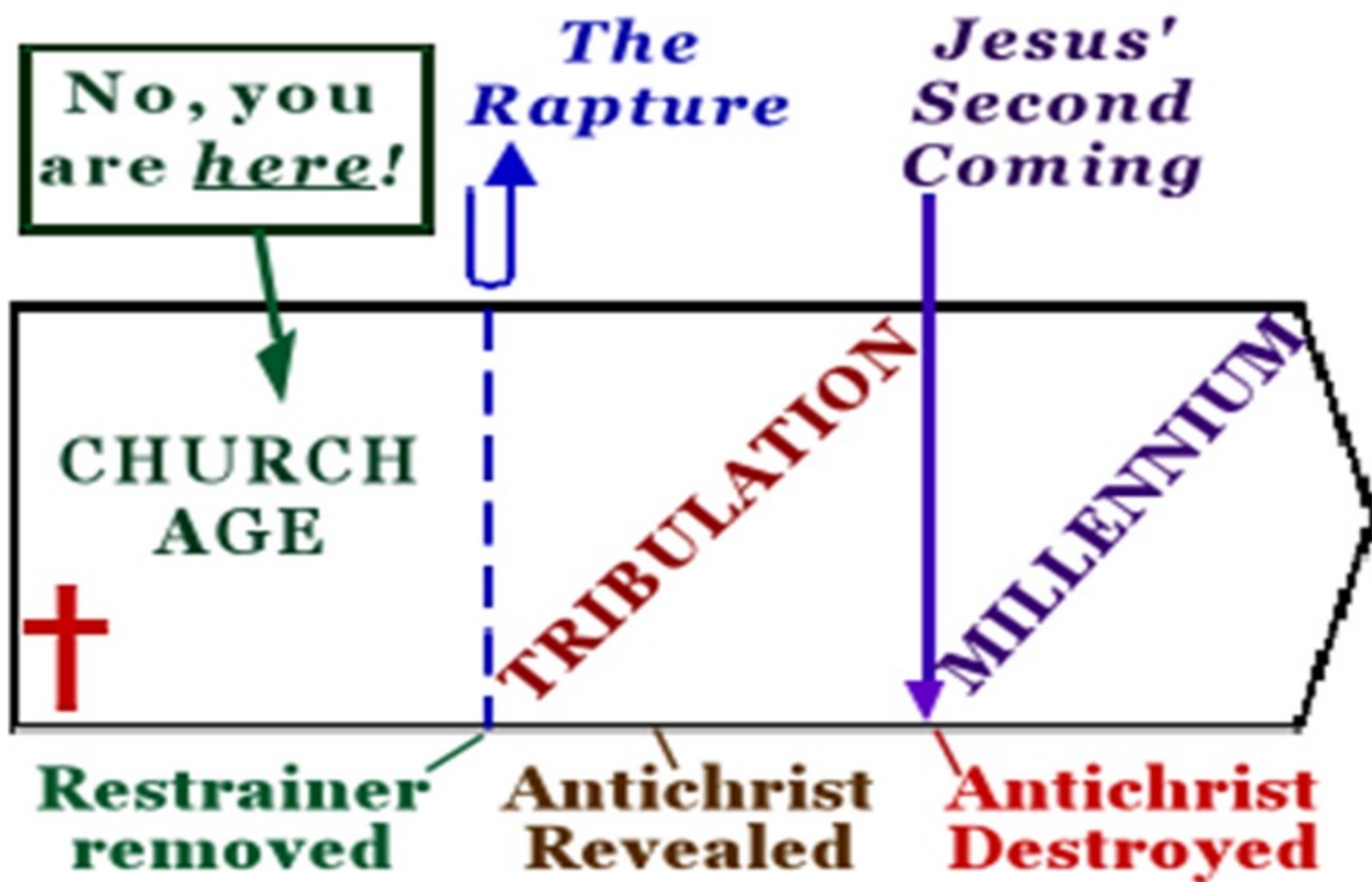


2 Thessalonians 2:2

“that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”



Paul's Correction of their Error



The Thessalonians' False Idea



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Apostasy? (2:3a)

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Spiritual Departure Options

1. Apostasy of the Church (pre-rapture)
2. Apostasy of the World (post-rapture)
3. Apostasy of Israel (Dan. 9:27)



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Order of Paul's Letters

1. Galatians (A.D. 49)
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5. Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians (A.D. 60–62)
6. 1 Timothy, Titus (A.D. 62–66)
7. 2 Timothy (A.D. 67)



Unique Characteristics of 1 Thessalonians

- Every chapter ends with a reference to the Second Advent
- Small amount of time in between planting of the church and the first letter to the church



2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless **the apostasy [apostasia] comes first [prōton]**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”



C. Gordon Olson

C. Gordon Olson, *The Resurrection New Testament* (Lynchburg, VA: Global Gospel Publishers, 2017), 261, n. B.

“Let no one deceive you in anyway, for that day will not come unless the departure comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.’The Greek *Apostasy* means a departure, as does its verb *aphistēmi*. It can refer to a physical departure, a spiritual departure, or a rebellion. The rapture of Christians would be a physical departure, which is supported by his announced subject in 2:1, ‘our gathering together unto him’ (cf. 1 Th. 4:13-18). Otherwise, Paul never returned to his declared topic in a lapse of thought, which raises questions. Only two other versions so render it: GNV & WEB.”

Spiritual Departure Options

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God's Estimate of the Lost

Lightner, *Salvation*, Class notes of Andy Woods

- Lost (Luke 19:10)
- Perishing (John 3:16)
- Condemned (John 3:18)
- Lovers of darkness/evil (John 3:19-21)
- Under divine wrath (John 3:36)
- Without spiritual life (John 3:36)
- Of their father the devil (John 8:44)
- Dead (Eph 2:1)
- Demonically energized (Eph 2:2)

God's Estimate of the Lost

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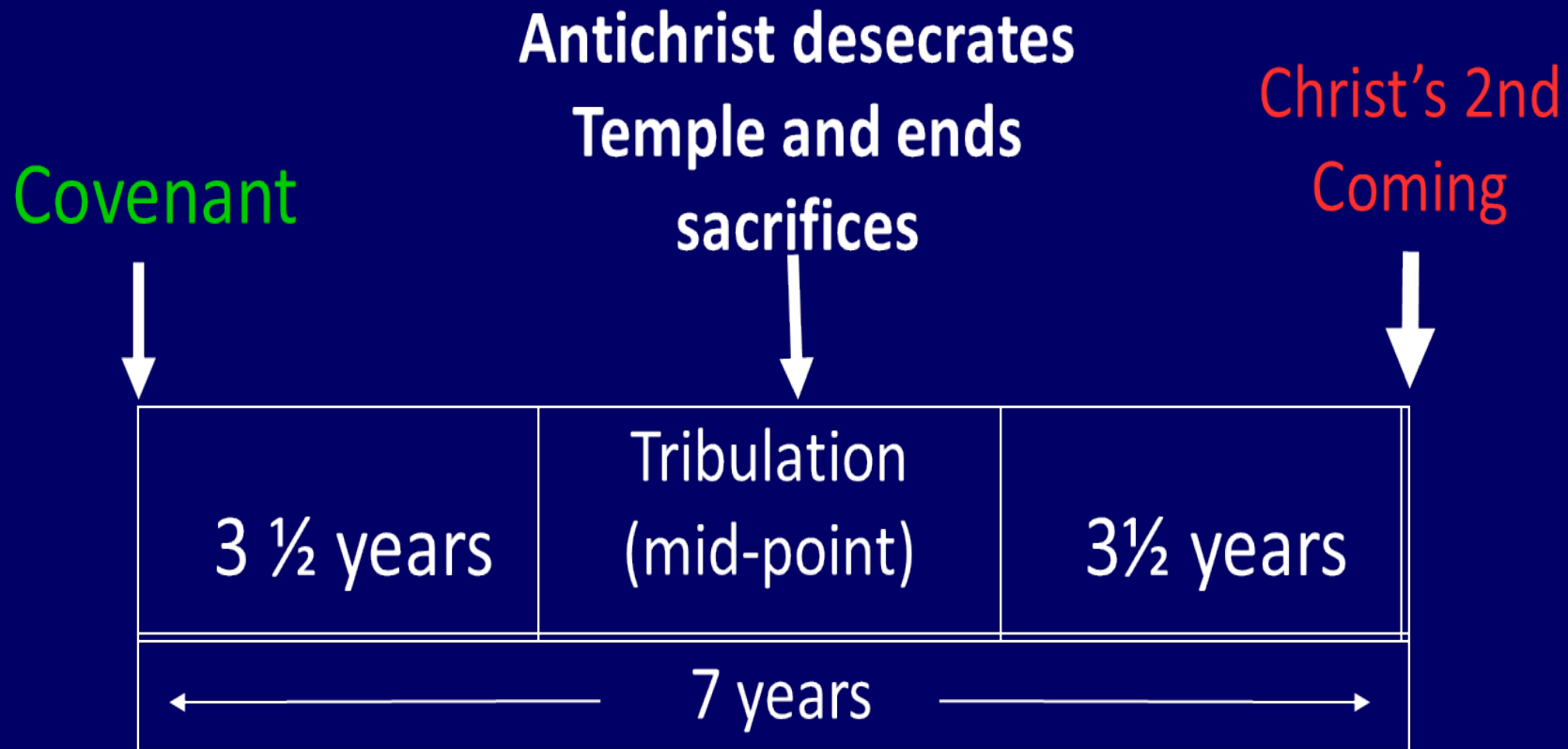
- Depraved (Eph 2:3a)
- Doomed (Eph 2:3b)
- Held captive (Col 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:26; Acts 26:17-18)
- Unable to receive truth (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3-4)
- Under the control of Satan's world system (1 John 5:19)
- Filled with all unrighteousness (Rom 1:29-32)
- Unable to seek God (Rom 3:10-18)
- Conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5)
- Desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9)

Spiritual Departure Options

1. Apostasy of the Church (pre-rapture)
2. Apostasy of the World (post-rapture)
3. **Apostasy of Israel (Dan. 9:27)**



DAN 9:27 OVERVIEW OF TRIBULATION PERIOD



Matthew 12:24

“But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, ““This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.””



Apostasy? (2:3a)

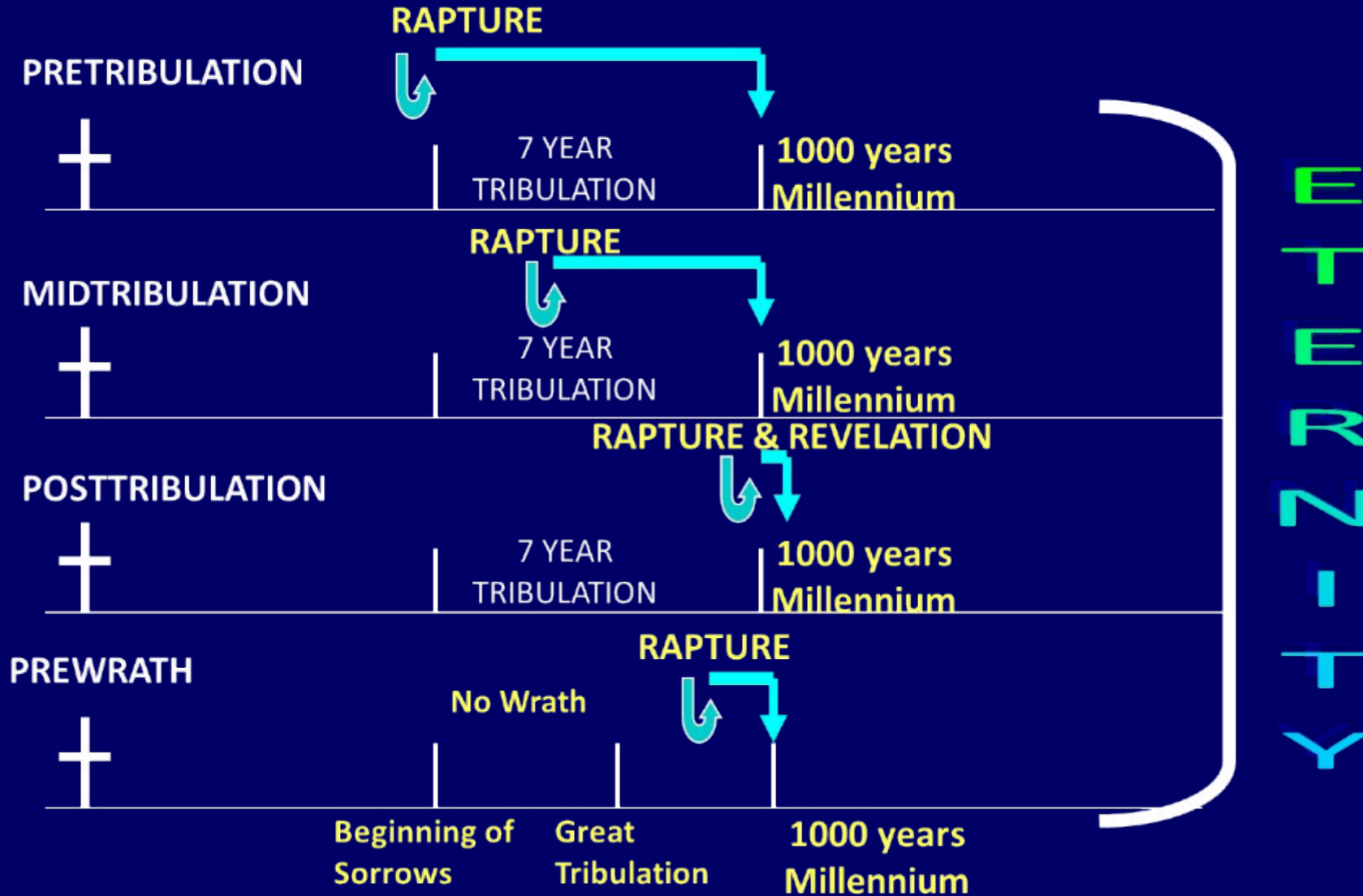
- Spiritual departure (Acts 21:21) – Unbelieving world embracing the antichrist
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When Will the Rapture Take Place Relative to the Tribulation Period?

- Pre-tribulation rapture theory
- Mid-tribulation rapture theory
- Post-tribulation rapture theory
- Pre-wrath rapture theory
- Partial rapture theory

RAPTURE VIEW COMPARISON



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2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless **the apostasy [apostasia] comes first [prōton]**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

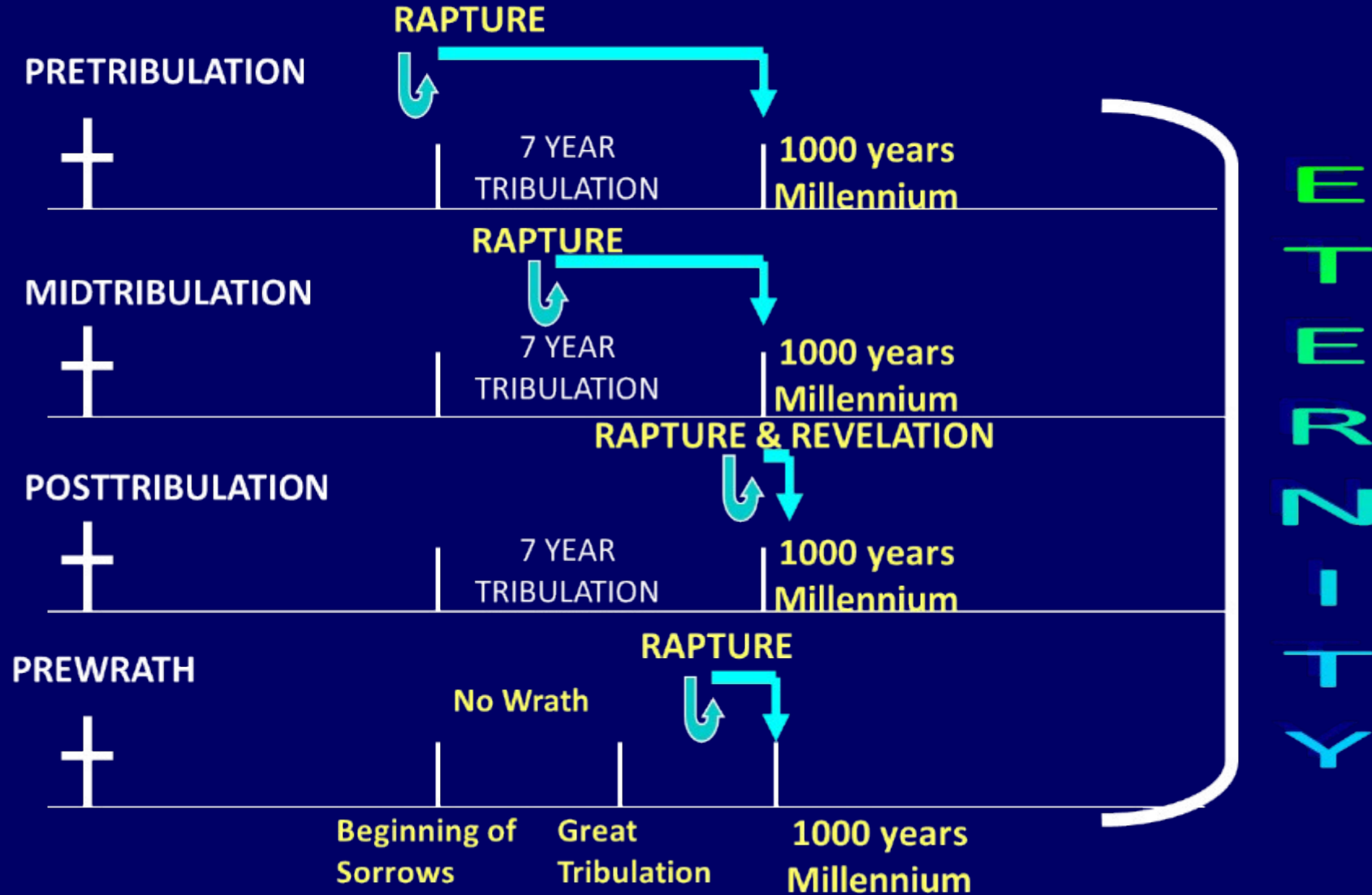


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RAPTURE VIEW COMPARISON





Mark Hitchcock

Mark and Jeff Kinley Hitchcock, *The Coming Apostasy: Exposing the Sabatoge of Christianity from Within* (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale, 2017), 191

“Since the word *apostasia* means ‘departure,’ some have understood the term ‘the apostasy’ to be the physical departure of the church itself—that is, the Rapture, since the Rapture will be a physical departure of believers from the earth. If this view were correct, it would definitely place the Rapture before the Tribulation, which would be a slam dunk for the pre-Tribulation Rapture position.”

10 Reasons Favoring Physical Departure

1. There have always been doctrinal departures
2. 2 Thess. was an early letter
3. The definite article before *apostasia*
4. Noun *apostasia* can refer to physical departure
5. Verb *aphistēmi* can refer to physical departure



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9. Early Bible translations favor physical departure
10. Physical departure is held by credible scholars

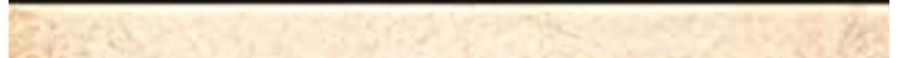




The
FALLING AWAY

SPIRITUAL DEPARTURE OR PHYSICAL RAPTURE?

A second look at 2 Thessalonians 2:3



Dr. Andy Woods



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Acts 20:29-31

“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.” (Italics added).



Acts 19:10

“This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”



2 Timothy 1:15

“You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.”



The 7 Churches in Revelation

Rev. 1:11



Rev 2:4-5

Apostasy

“⁴ But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.
⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.”



2 Thessalonians 2:7

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.”



1 John 4:3

“and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.”



Harvard University



“Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. And seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of Him (Prov. 2, 3). Everyone shall exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein.”

Henry M. Morris

The Defender's Study Bible: King James Version (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1995), 1338.

“2:3 ***falling away***...The entire context, before and after, fits this understanding of the text better than the idea of the apostasy from the faith. **Over the 1950 years since Paul wrote these lines, there have been numerous great apostasies from the faith, and none of these introduced the day of the Lord,** although the persecuted believers in each case might easily have so interpreted them.”



Jimmy De Young

Prophetic Prospective – Daily Devotional

“If the word ‘*apostasia*’ was communicating that ‘apostasy’ was what it was talking about then the Rapture and **the coming of the Antichrist would have happened during the writing of II Thessalonians. Apostasy had infiltrated the early church by the time Paul wrote this passage.** What Paul is saying here is that the Antichrist, the ‘Son of Perdition’, would not come until the Church departs from one place and goes to another. That is what happens at the Rapture. The scenario for the future according to all prophetic passages is that the Rapture takes all Christians into Heaven and then the Antichrist appears on earth. Let me . . .



Jimmy De Young

Prophetic Prospective – Daily Devotional

. . . remind you that all preparations have been made for the temple to be built in Jerusalem. False teachers and deception presently are a part of our society today, which indicates that Antichrist is nearing his appearance on earth. Remember, before the appearance of Antichrist and the temple is built, the Rapture happens. Actually the Rapture could happen at any moment. Be ready!”

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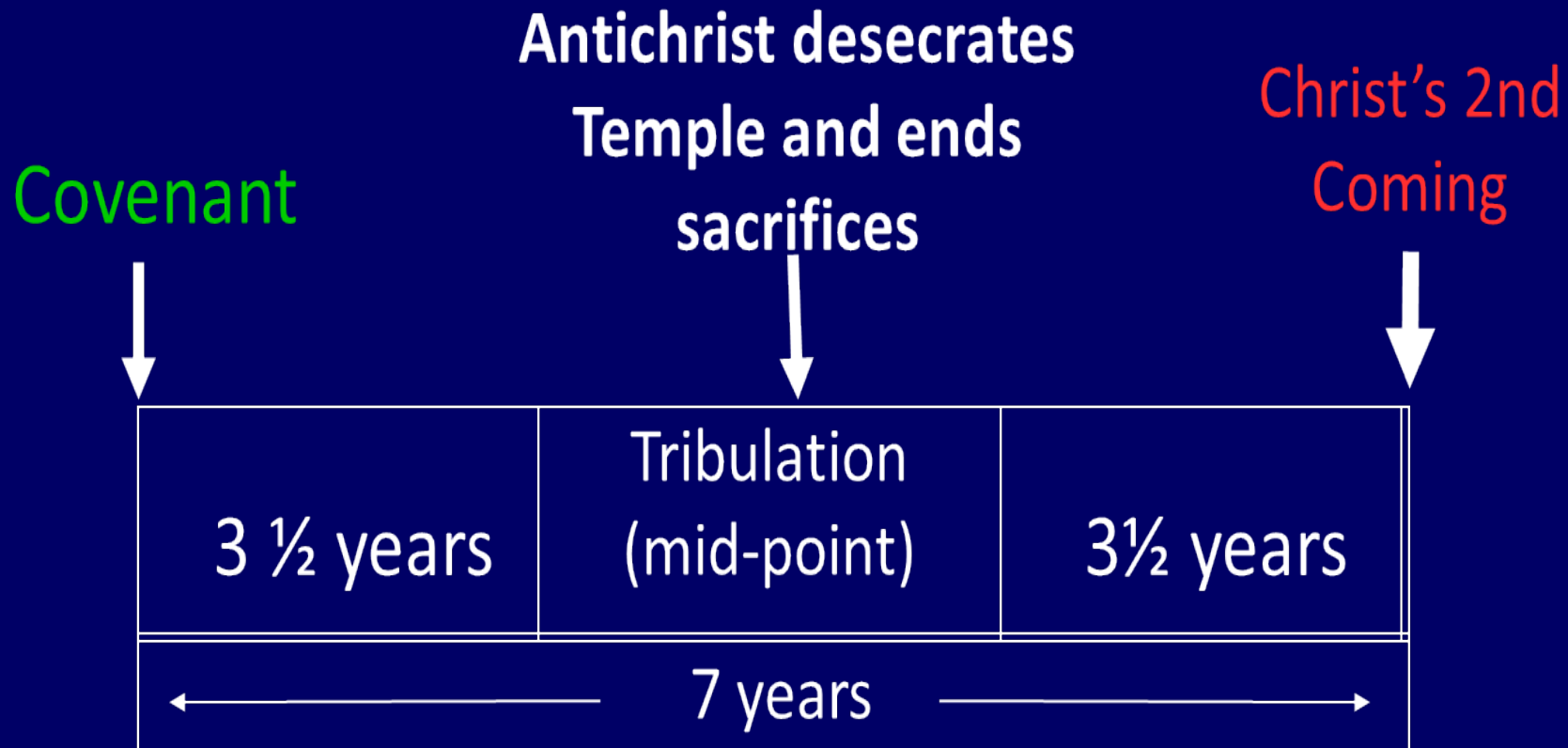


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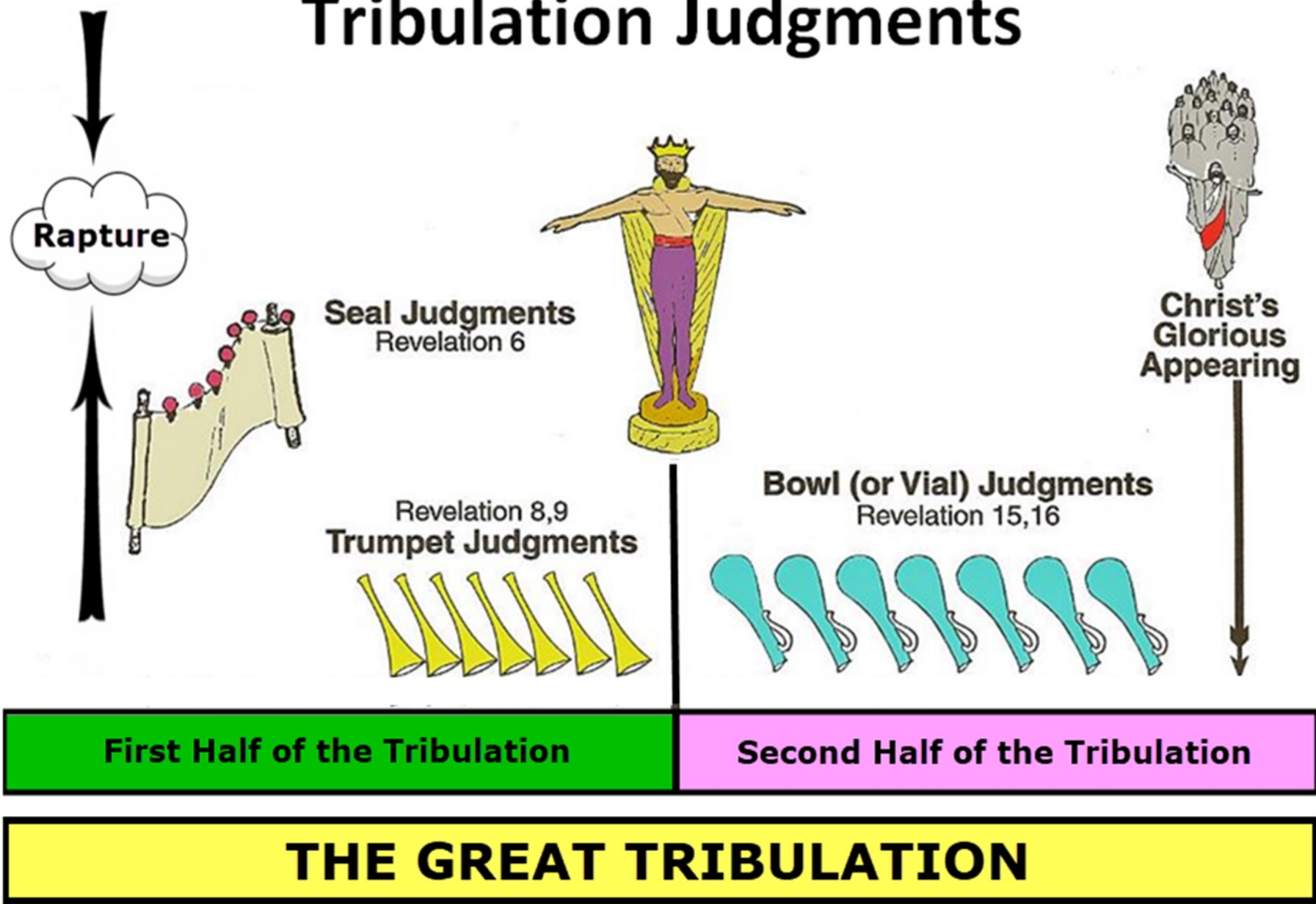
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Tribulation Judgments



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Apostasy

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1 Corinthians 15:52

“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”



1 Corinthians 15:52

“in a moment [*atomos*], in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”



Instantaneous

(1 Cor 15:52)

- Twinkling of an eye
- Flash or moment
- Split second
- *Atomos* (Greek) = atom (English)



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Acts 21:21

“and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake [apostasia] Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”



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Entries for *Apostasia* in Liddell & Scott

- Rebellion against God
- Apostasy
- Departure
- Disappearance
- Distance



Entries for *Apostasia* in Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*

- Revolt
- Defection
- Apostasy from paganism, Judaism, Christianity, orthodoxy
- Divorce
- Departure
- Standing aloof



H. Wayne House

"Apostasia in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: Apostasy of Rapture?," in *When the Trumpet Sounds: Today's Foremost Authorities Speak out on End-Time Controversies*, ed. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 273.

“The noun form allows for *apostasia* as a simple departure in the classical period, proved by examples from Liddell and Scott...If one says that this is not important because the meaning is only classical or ancient and thus lost its meaning by the time of the New Testament, then I may turn to the same root meaning of *apostasia* in the patristic era immediately following the New Testament period, as indicated in the definitions for the noun form in Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Although the noun used in the sense of spatial departure is not the normal meaning...during New Testament times, the word is found with this meaning in time periods before and after the New Testament era, and it is likely to have been understood this way at least sometimes.”

Matthew 5:32

“It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce [*apostosion*]’”



Definition of “Apostasy”

- *apos* = away from
- *histēmi* = to stand
- Apostasy = to stand away from
- Apostasy = a departure
- A departure from what?
 - ◆ From previously known truth
 - ◆ Physically from something



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New Testament Meanings of *Aphistēmi*

- 15 New Testament uses
- Spiritual departure – Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12
- Physical departure – Luke 2:37; 4:13; 13:27; Acts 5:37-38; 12:10; 13:13; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29; 2 Cor. 12:8; 2 Tim. 2:19



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George Gunn

John 14:1-3 – The Father's House: Are We There Yet?, 30. www.pre-trib.org

“I ran out of ingredients for the salad, so I decided to make a quick run down to the store. While at the store, I left the car engine running while I made my purchase, thinking that I would be right out again. However, while I was in the store, I ran into my good friend Edward who was running for county supervisor. This resulted in my having to endure a somewhat long-winded rundown on how his campaign was running. Finally, fearing that my car would run out of gas, I ran with great haste out to the parking lot and returned home with the car surely running only on fumes.”

Illegitimate Totality Transfer

D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 60-61.

“Unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic field: The fallacy in this instance lies in the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word’s entire semantic range. This step is sometimes called **illegitimate totality transfer.**”

Acts 21:21

“and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake [apostasia] Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”

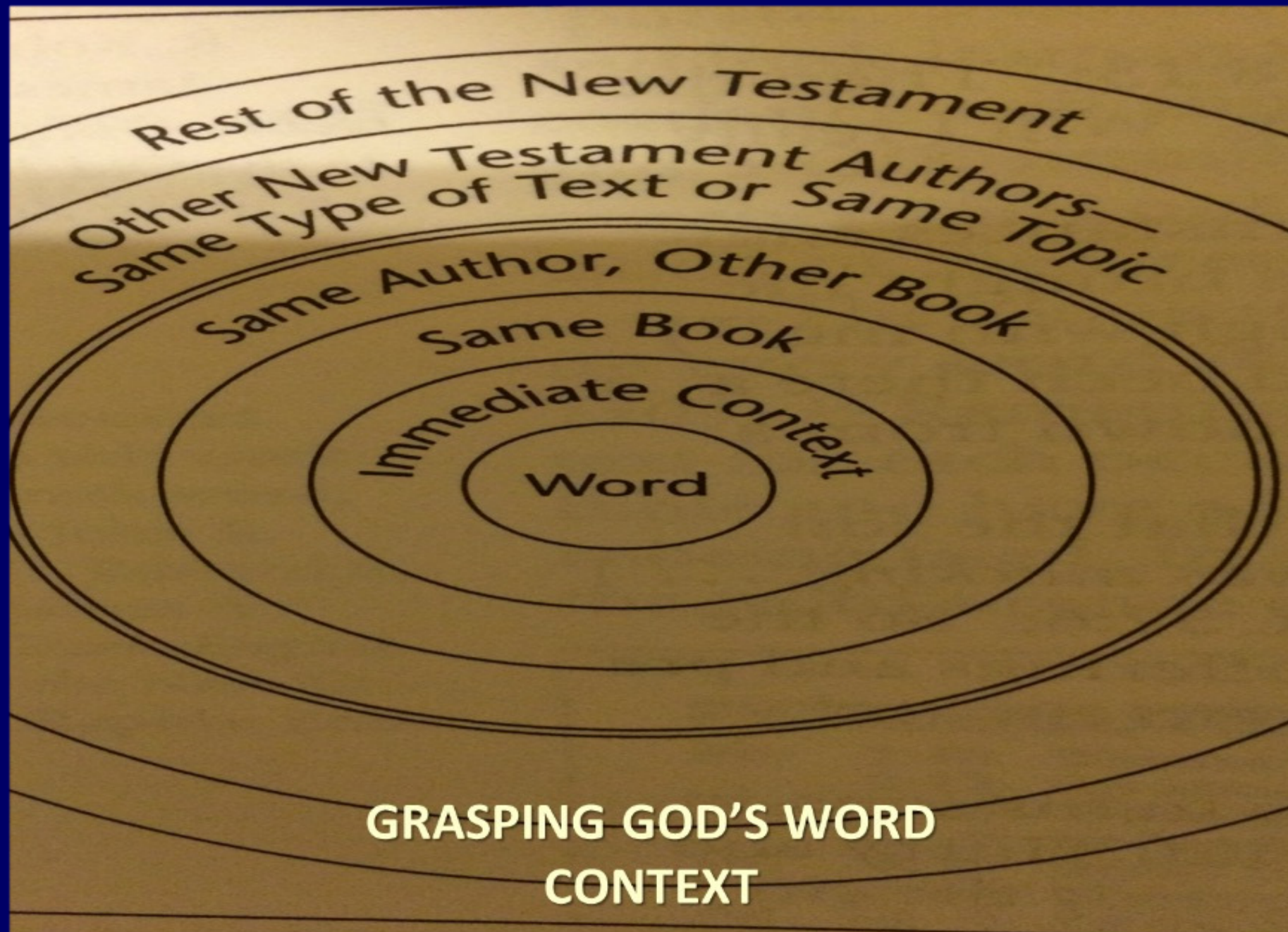


The best way to interpret a word in the Bible is to find where else it appears in the Bible. The word ἀποστασία appears only twice in the New Testament: Acts 21:21 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3. In both places it's falling away or departing from the right way and not to be taken away!

10:24 AM · 5/5/20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

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Acts 21:21

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THE APOSTASIA

2 Thessalonians 2:3a

Acts 21:21

Pauline authorship

Lukan authorship

Paul speaking

Paul not speaking (v. 20)

Mosaic Law not mentioned

Departure from the Mosaic Law

Epistolary genre

Narrative genre

Definite article

No definite article

10 Reasons Favoring Physical Departure

6. Extended context favors physical departure
7. Immediate context favors physical departure
8. 2 Thess. 2:2 is a review course
9. Early Bible translations favor physical departure
10. Physical departure is held by credible scholars



Unique Characteristics of 1 Thessalonians

- Every chapter ends with a reference to the Second Advent
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1 Thessalonians 1:10

“and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues (*rhyomai*) us from (*ek*) the wrath (*orgē*) to come..”

~~WRATH~~



1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from . . .



1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

...heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."



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2 Thessalonians 2:1

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.”



2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- Problem (2:1-2)
- **Prerequisites for the Day of the Lord (2:3-12)**
 - ◆ The apostasy (2:3a)
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2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

⁶And you know what restrains [*katechō; neuter*] him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains [*katechō; masculine*] will do so until he is taken out of the way.



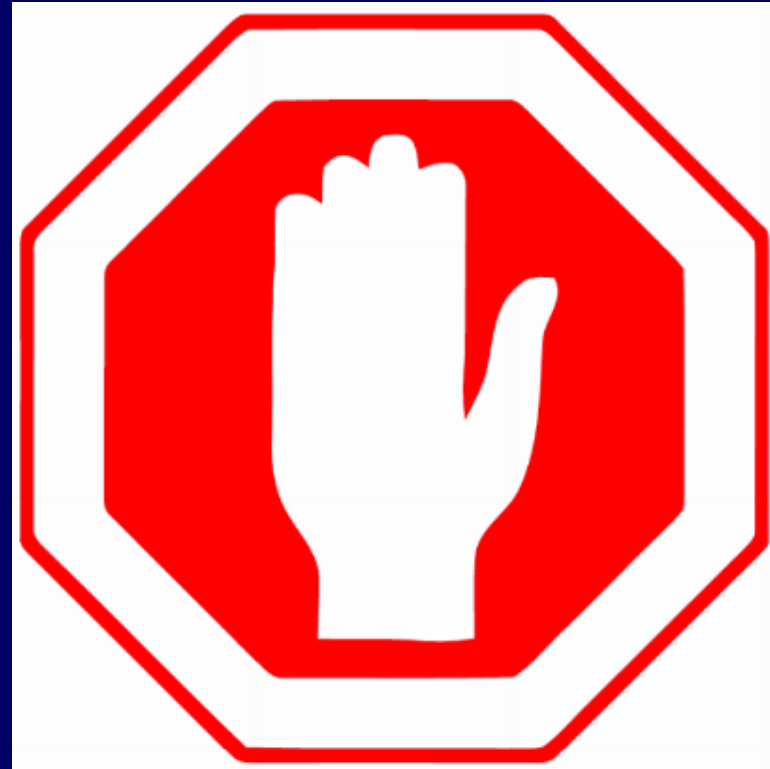
Restrainer? (2:6-7)

- Rome?
- Satan?
- Government?
- Michael?
- Spirit?



Restrainer? (2:6-7)

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Trinity

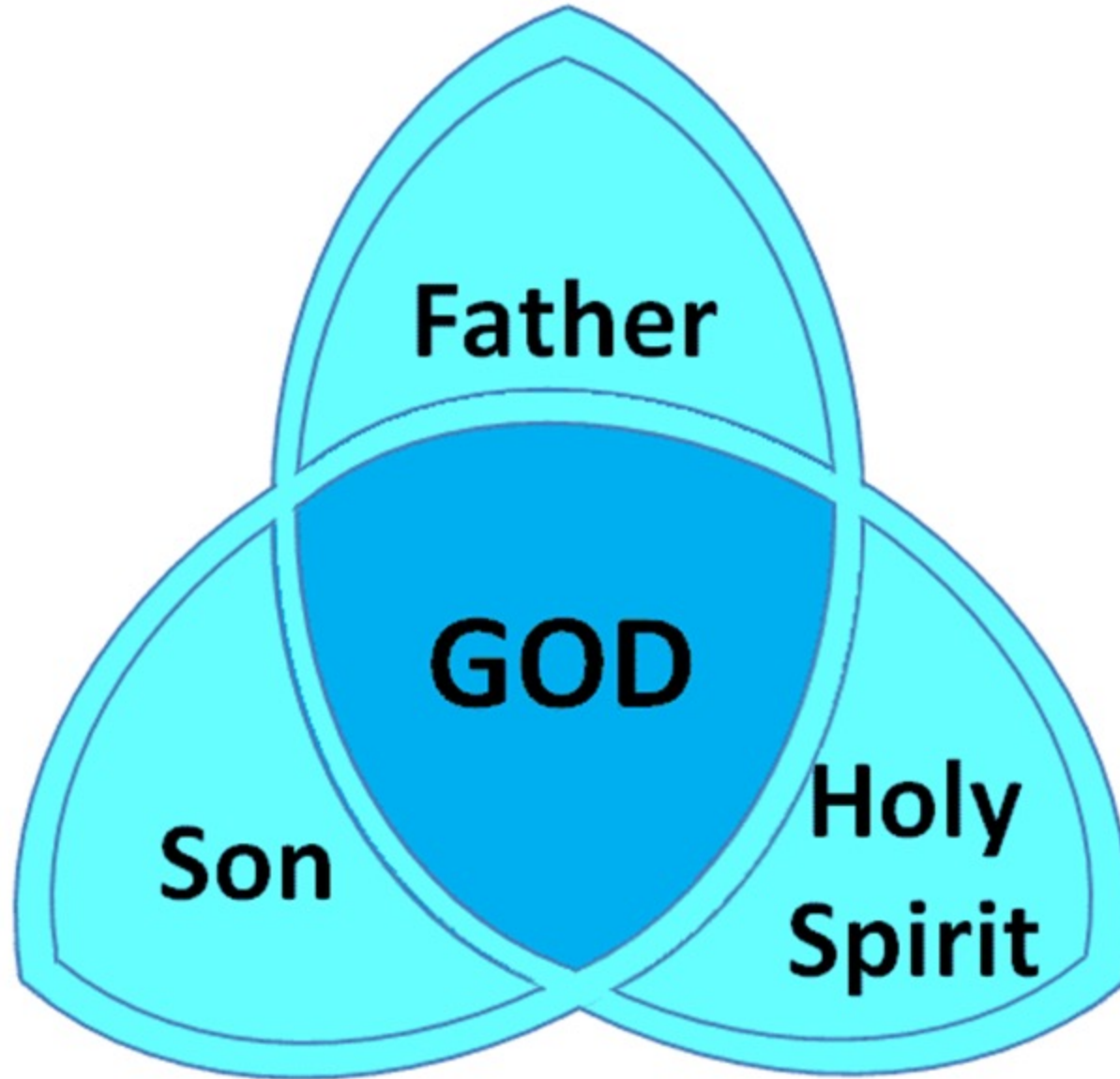
Father

Son

Holy
Spirit



TRINITY



3 Reasons Why the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit

(2 Thessalonians 2:6-7)

- The Holy Spirit is omnipotent (2 Thess. 2:9)
- The Holy Spirit is active in the world (Gen. 6:3; John 16:7-11)
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2 Thessalonians 2:9

“that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders.”



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Genesis 6:1-3

“¹ Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”



John 16:7-11

“⁷ But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”



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2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

⁶And you know what restrains [*katechō; neuter*] him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains [*katechō; masculine*] will do so until he is taken out of the way.



John 14:16-17

¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.



John 16:7-11

“⁷ But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”



Restrainer Must First be Removed

- Restrainer holds back the Antichrist (2 Thess 2:6-7)
- Restrainer = the omnipotent Holy Spirit (2 Thess 2:9)
- Holy Spirit permanently indwells all Christians (John 14:16; Rom 8:9)
- Spirit indwelt Christians must first be removed prior to the Antichrist's advent



1 Samuel 16:13-14

“¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah. ¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.”



John 14:16-17

¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.



Guessing the Identity of the Antichrist?

Irenaeus Against Heresies 5.30.3

“We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist. But if it had been necessary to announce his name plainly at the present time, it would have been spoken by him who saw the apocalypse. For it was not seen long ago, but almost in our own time, at the end of the reign of Domitian.”



Psalm 50:10

“For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills.”



10 Reasons Favoring Physical Departure

6. Extended context favors physical departure
7. Immediate context favors physical departure
8. **2 Thess. 2:2 is a review course**
9. Early Bible translations favor physical departure
10. Physical departure is held by credible scholars



1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up [*harpazō*] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.



2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy [apostasia] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”



Paul's Various Rapture Terms

parousia

2 Thess. 2:1

episynagōgē

2 Thess. 2:1

apokalypsis

1 Cor. 1:7

epiphaneia

Titus 2:13

rhyomai

1 Thess. 1:10

harpazō

1 Thess. 4:17

apostasia

2 Thess. 2:3a



Exemption from Death

(1 Cor 15:54-56)

- Enoch (Gen 5:24)
- Elijah (2 Kings 2)
- Christ (Acts 1:11; Rev 12:5)
- Philip (Acts 8:39)
- Paul (2 Cor 12:2, 4)
- John (Rev 4:1-2)
- Two witnesses (Rev 11:12)



2 Thessalonians 2:5

“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”



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“Departing First” or “Falling Away”

Year	Bible	Translation
1384	Wycliffe Bible	Departynge First
1526	Tyndale Bible	Departynge First
1535	Coverdale Bible	Departynge First
1539	Crammer Bible	Departing First
1576	Breeches Bible	Departing First
1583	Beeza Bible	Departing First
1608	Geneva Bible	Departing First
1576	Rheims Bible	The Protestant “Revolt”
1611	King James V.	Falling Away

House, When the Trumpet Sounds, p. 270.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

Rheims Bible 1576

“Let no man deceive you by any means, for unless there come a revolt [*apostasia*] first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”



Matthew 3:1-2

“Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent [*metanoēō*], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΩ

metanoēō / change one's mind; repent



Matthew 3:1-2

Rheims Bible 1576

“AND in those days cometh John the Baptist preaching in the desert of Judea. And saying: Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

μετανοέω

metanoēō / change one's mind; repent



Acts 2:38

“Peter said to them, “Repent [metanoēō], and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for (eis) the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΩ

metanoēō / change one's mind; repent



Acts 2:38

Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA)

“But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”



2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”



2 Peter 3:9

Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA)

“The Lord delayeth not his promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.”



“Departing First” or “Falling Away”

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1535	Coverdale Bible	Departynge First
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1583	Beeza Bible	Departing First
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House, When the Trumpet Sounds, p. 270.

Thomas Ice

“The ‘Departure’ in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,” online: www.pre-trib.org, accessed 7 May 2017, 2.

“Most scholars say that no one knows the reason for the translation shift. However, a plausible theory has been put forth by Martin Butalla in his Master of Theology thesis produced at Dallas Theology Seminary in 1998. It appears that the Catholic translation into English from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate known as the Rheims Bible (1576) was the first to break the translation trend. “*Apostasia* was revised from ‘the departure’ to ‘the Protestant Revolt,’” explains Butalla. “**Revolution** is the terminology still in use today when Catholicism teaches the history of the Protestant Reformation. Under this guise, *apostasia* would refer to **a departure of Protestants from the Catholic Church**.” The Catholic translators appear eager to engage in polemics against the Reformation by even allowing it to impact Bible translation.”

NKJV, NIV, RSV, ASV, JB, NASB

- “apostasy”
- “falling away”
- “revolt”
- “rejection”
- “rebellion”



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Physical Departure Adherents

Kenneth Wuest		Paul Lee Tan*
E. Schuyler English		Arnold Fruchtenbaum*
J. Dwight Pentecost		Tim LaHaye
H. Wayne House		Thomas Ice
Stanley Ellison		Don Stewart
J.S. Mabie		Robert Thieme
Allen McRae		Gordon Olson*
Gordon Lewis		J. Vernon McGee*
Henry Morris*		Jimmy DeYoung*
John. R. Rice		J.D. Farag
David Olander*	David Hocking	
J. Carl Laney*		



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), xviii.

“The 2020 revision primarily focuses on correcting some formatting and spelling inconsistencies of the 2003–edition of this work as well as the editing of the text to improve its readability. Furthermore, it includes a new topical index as well as **my altered view of II Thessalonians 2:3**, which I developed after additional research of new scholarly work, such as Dr. Andy Woods’ *The Falling Away – Spiritual Departure or Physical Rapture?*, published in 2018 by Dispensational Publishing House.”



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), 546-47.

“In previous editions of this work, I presented a different viewpoint: that the term *apostasia* was referring to the apostasy of the church. The fact that in the last days, the church will depart from the faith is clearly taught in other passages, such as I Timothy 4:1-3. But is that true also of II Thessalonians 2:3? That was my assumption for many years, but at one point I began questioning this conclusion. One reason I held this position was based on viewing II Thessalonians 2:3 from the perspective of systematic theology where conclusions are drawn from all sources. My conclusions on the II Thessalonian passage were drawn from the I Timothy passage.”



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), 546-47.

“The second reason was based on another fact. I already knew that the Greek term *apostasia* could refer to a physical departure as well as a moral, ethical, or spiritual departure. In the vast majority of appearances, the term is used in the latter sense. Hence, the vast majority of theologians, including me, interpret II Thessalonians 2:3 according to this meaning of the term. Rather than continuing to interpret the verse primarily from the viewpoint of systematic theology, I decided to research it from the perspective of biblical theology, which focuses more on a specific biblical writer and/or book.”



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), 546-47.

“In this case, the focus was on both epistles to the Thessalonians before interpreting one verse in one of the epistles through a verse from a different book by the same author, but addressed to a different audience and written in a different context. Paul wrote I and II Thessalonians to the same church responding to questions they had written to him. In the first epistle, Paul dealt with the rapture of the church (4:13-18) and the day of the Lord (5:1-11). He clearly taught that the day of the Lord will not overtake the believer, but only the unbeliever, since believers are not appointed to wrath (v. 9) and the antecedent to wrath is the day of the Lord (v. 2).”



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), 546-47.

“The verses show a pre-tribulational rapture. Between the two epistles, false teachers had come into the church announcing that the day of the Lord had begun. The news troubled the Thessalonians greatly, since it was the opposite of what Paul had taught them both in person and in writing (in the first epistle). So, Paul wrote them the second epistle to let them know that it was not possible for them to be in the day of the Lord since two things had to precede this time, the first of which was the *apostasia*. This fact raised a question in my mind: Is it possible that Paul mentioned the apostasia in II Thessalonians 2:3 in order to reaffirm what he had written in the first epistle, namely, that the believers would not enter the day of the Lord?”



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), 546-47.

“What finally helped to convince me is Dr. Andy Woods’ booklet *The Falling Away: Spiritual Departure or Physical Departure?*, published by Dispensational Publishing House in 2018. Among the points Woods makes are the following: 1. There have always been doctrinal departures, even in the first century (p. 6-8). 2. There is a definite article before the noun *apostasia*, just as there is a definite article before ‘man of sin’ in the same verse. Woods states: ‘By providing these two definite articles essentially Paul is indicating that the apostasy will be something that has specific, time-bound qualities just like the man of sin’s coming has such qualities.’”



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), 546-47.

“In other words, just like the advent of the man of sin will be specific and an instantaneous event in future history, the coming *apostasia*, or departure, will similarly be specific and time bound . . . [It] will also take place instantaneously.’ (p. 15-16). 3. The Greek noun *apostasia* can refer to a physical departure, and examples include Matthew 5:31, 19:7; and Mark 10:4 (p. 17-20). 4. The verbal form of *apostasia* is *aphistēmi*. Woods states: ‘Only three times does the verb *aphistēmi* mean a spiritual departure [Lk. 8:13; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12] . . . However, the majority of times, or a full seventy-five percent of instances where *aphistēmi* is used in the Greek New Testament, it does not refer to a spiritual departure, but rather to a physical departure.’”



Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2020), 546-47.

“Thus, while this verb is used 15 times, only three times does it mean a spiritual departure. The remaining twelve times it clearly means a physical departure.” (p. 21). Woods made additional observations in his booklet, but these four were the main points that finally convinced me that II Thessalonians 2:3 is speaking of a physical departure, which will be the rapture of the church. Hence, the verse provides additional evidence for a pre-tribulational rapture.”

C. Gordon Olson

C. Gordon Olson, *The Resurrection New Testament*
(Lynchburg, VA: Global Gospel Publishers, 2017), 261, n. B.

“Let no one deceive you in anyway, for that day will not come unless the departure comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.’The Greek *Apostasy* means a departure, as does its verb *aphistēmi*. It can refer to a physical departure, a spiritual departure, or a rebellion. The rapture of Christians would be a physical departure, which is supported by his announced subject in 2:1, ‘our gathering together unto him’ (cf. 1 Th. 4:13-18). Otherwise, Paul never returned to his declared topic in a lapse of thought, which raises questions. Only two other versions so render it: GNV & WEB.”

Henry M. Morris

The Defender's Study Bible: King James Version (Iowa Falls, IA:
World Bible Publishers, 1995), 1337-38.

“2:3 ***falling away***. The ‘falling away’ (Greek *apostasia*) has commonly been translated as the apostasy (the definite article in the Greek indicates Paul had already told them about it), and then assumed to apply to the final, great religious apostasy at the end of the age. The context, however, as well as the etymology of the word itself, makes this interpretation unlikely. In this precise form, it is used nowhere else in the New Testament, so its meaning must be defined by its context here. It is derived from two Greek words, *apo* (meaning ‘away from’) and *stasis* (meaning ‘standing’). It could properly be rendered ‘standing away’ instead of ‘falling away.’”

Henry M. Morris

The Defender's Study Bible: King James Version (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1995), 1337-38.

“In Paul’s previous letter, he made no reference to a coming departure from the faith, but he had discussed, at length, a coming departure from the earth by all believers when Christ returns to meet them in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). **This standing away from, in context, seems to refer to all the raptured believers standing away from the earth, as they stand before their returning Lord when they meet Him in the heavens.** Here, Paul is reminding them that the ‘sudden destruction’ that would come upon unbelievers when the day of the Lord begins could not happen until the rapture - the standing away from the earth before Christ (Romans 14:10) - had taken place.”

Henry M. Morris

The Defender's Study Bible: King James Version (Iowa Falls, IA:
World Bible Publishers, 1995), 1337-38.

“The entire context, before and after, fits this understanding of the text better than the idea of the apostasy from the faith. Over the 1950 years since Paul wrote these lines, there have been numerous great apostasies from the faith, and none of these introduced the day of the Lord, although the persecuted believers in each case might easily have so interpreted them.”

J. Carl Laney

J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Kregel: Grand Rapids, 1997), 289.

“The Greek word *apostasia* it is derived from a verb meaning ‘depart from’ (*aphistēmi*). The most basic root meaning of *apostasia* is ‘departure.’ While the word can be used metaphorically of departure from doctrine (Acts 21:21), the context of the passage must ultimately determine its meaning. It is significant that in 2:1 Paul is writing about ‘the coming of our Lord Jesus’ and particularly about the aspect of the event, which relates to ‘our gathering to Him.’ A comparison of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 suggests that this is a clear reference to the Rapture. Two events, then, must precede the Day of the Lord—the rapture of the church and the revelation of the Antichrist. Believers who have not experienced these events can be assumed that they are not suffering Tribulation judgments.”

J. Vernon McGee

Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee. 5 vols. Pasadena, Calif.: Thru The Bible Radio; and Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1983. 5:413.

“Paul says that before the Day of the Lord begins there must first come a removing. There are two kinds of removing that are going to take place. First, the organized church will depart from the faith—that is what we call apostasy. But there will be total apostasy when the Lord comes, and that cannot take place until the true church is removed. The Lord asked... ‘when the Son of man cometh [to the earth], shall He find faith...?’ (Luke 18:8). When He says, ‘the faith,’ He means that body of truth which He left here. The answer to His question is no, He will not find faith here when He returns.”

J. Vernon McGee

Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee. 5 vols. Pasadena, Calif.: Thru The Bible Radio; and Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1983. 5:413.

“There will be total apostasy because of two things: (1) the organization of the church has separated from the faith—it has apostatized and (2) there has been another departure, the departure of the true church from the earth. The departure of the true church leads into the total apostatizing of the organized church. The Day of The Lord cannot begin—nor the Great Tribulation period—until the departure of the true church has taken place.”

David Olander

David Olander, *The Greatness of the Rapture* (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2015). 100-101.

“Apostasy has a basic root meaning of departure, departure from, or standing apart from. The question in Second Thessalonians is a departure from what? Context is the key for understanding many words in the text. Scripture uses the term apostasy in several ways...Paul had written to the Thessalonians about another departure of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18) and her gathering together unto Him (2 Thessalonians 2:1). This is the rapture and a legitimate use of the word departure, stand apart, or apostasy. Historically the word can easily mean this. Once the church has departed. (been raptured) there is not one believer left on the planet. This would be a total complete apostasy in several ways. In essence, one departure, or an apostasy causes the other and Paul could have easily used the word he did, referring to the secondary part (those left behind on the planet) in total.”



Jimmy De Young

Prophetic Prospective – Daily Devotional

“Our key verse for this devotional, verse 3, has become somewhat controversial. There are those that believe that the Antichrist will come when the ‘falling away’ of the church, apostasy in the Church, has happened. This then seems to be saying that the church will be here when the Antichrist appears. This belief comes from a wrong understanding of the Greek word used in the passage and translated, ‘a falling away’...A close and careful word study of the Greek word apostasia will conclude that the true meaning of the word is found in the phrase, ‘departing from one place and going to another’, not a falling away from the doctrines of the church.”



Jimmy De Young

Prophetic Prospective – Daily Devotional

“If the word ‘apostasia’ was communicating that ‘apostasy’ was what it was talking about then the Rapture and the coming of the Antichrist would have happened during the writing of II Thessalonians. Apostasy had infiltrated the early church by the time Paul wrote this passage. What Paul is saying here is that the Antichrist, the ‘Son of Perdition’, would not come until the Church departs from one place and goes to another. That is what happens at the Rapture. The scenario for the future according to all prophetic passages is that the Rapture takes all Christians into Heaven and then the Antichrist appears on earth...Let me remind you that all preparations have been made for the temple to be built in . . .



Jimmy De Young

Prophetic Prospective – Daily Devotional

. . . Jerusalem. False teachers and deception presently are a part of our society today, which indicates that Antichrist is nearing his appearance on earth. Remember, before the appearance of Antichrist and the temple is built, the Rapture happens. Actually the Rapture could happen at any moment. Be ready!”

Study Guide for 2 Thessalonian...

the Lord had come. The Christians were being taught that the day of God's wrath was upon them, and that they were in the Tribulation period.

v.3 The "day" referred to here is the Day of Judgment. "Falling away" comes from the Greek word for "depart." This may refer to the Rapture of the Church, for the Day of Judgment will come after the Rapture. It may be a reference to people departing from the faith, for Paul spoke of another departure (1 Timothy 4:1) and used the same Greek word. However, in 1 Timothy Paul added the words "depart from the faith" instead of "depart" alone.

Paul Lee Tan

Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Dallas, TX: Paul Lee Tan Prophetic Ministries, 2015; reprint, Dallas, TX: Paul Lee Tan Prophetic Ministries, 2015). 341.

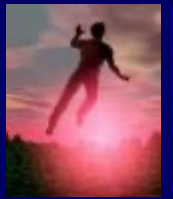
“What precisely does Paul mean when he says that ‘the falling away’ (2:3) must come before the tribulation? The definite article ‘the’ denotes that this will be a definitive event, an event distinct from the appearance of the Man of Sin. The Greek word for ‘falling away’, taken by itself, does not mean religious apostasy or defection. Neither does the word mean ‘to fall,’ as the Greeks have another word for that. The best translation of the word is ‘to depart.’ The apostle Paul refers here to a definitive event, which he calls ‘the departure,’ and which will occur just before the start of the tribulation. This is the rapture of the church.”

Paul Lee Tan

Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Dallas, TX: Paul Lee Tan Prophetic Ministries, 2015; reprint, Dallas, TX: Paul Lee Tan Prophetic Ministries, 2015). 341, n. 2.

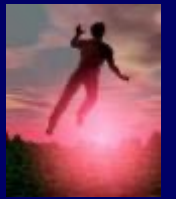
“The apostle Paul uses this word in 1 Timothy 4:1, ‘some shall depart from the faith.’ The necessity for qualifying the word with the phrase “from the faith“ shows of the word taken by itself has no such connotation.”

Answering Objections to the Physical Departure View



1. Greek from the *Koine* period?
2. Subtraction from the Last Days will be characterized by continual apostasy?
3. Rapture is passive and apostasy is active?
4. Incongruence with verse 1?
5. Paul is re-assuring the Thessalonians that they had not already missed the rapture; therefore, it would be incomprehensible to read, “the rapture cannot have happened unless the rapture happens first”

Answering Objections to the Physical Departure View



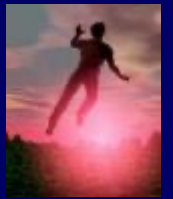
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H. Wayne House

"Apostasia in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: Apostasy of Rapture?," in *When the Trumpet Sounds: Today's Foremost Authorities Speak out on End-Time Controversies*, ed. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 273.

“The noun form allows for *apostasia* as a simple departure in the classical period, proved by examples from Liddell and Scott...If one says that this is not important because the meaning is only classical or ancient and thus lost its meaning by the time of the New Testament, then I may turn to the same root meaning of *apostasia* in the patristic era immediately following the New Testament period, as indicated in the definitions for the noun form in Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Although the noun used in the sense of spatial departure is not the normal meaning...during New Testament times, the word is found with this meaning in time periods before and after the New Testament era, and it is likely to have been understood this way at least sometimes.”

Answering Objections to the Physical Departure View



1. Greek from the *Koine* period?
2. **Subtraction from the Last Days will be characterized by continual apostasy?**
3. Rapture is passive and apostasy is active?
4. Incongruence with verse 1?
5. Paul is re-assuring the Thessalonians that they had not already missed the rapture; therefore, it would be incomprehensible to read, “the rapture cannot have happened unless the rapture happens first”

Order of Paul's Letters

1. Galatians (A.D. 49)
2. 1–2 Thessalonians (A.D. 51)
3. 1–2 Corinthians (A.D. 56)
4. Romans (A.D. 57)
5. Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians (A.D. 60–62)
6. 1 Timothy, Titus (A.D. 62–66)
7. 2 Timothy (A.D. 67)



1 Timothy 4:1

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away [*aphistēmi*] from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”

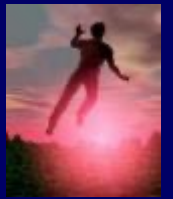


2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless **the apostasy [apostasia] comes first [prōton]**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”



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Mark Hitchcock

Mark and Jeff Kinley Hitchcock, *The Coming Apostasy: Exposing the Sabatoge of Christianity from Within* (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale, 2017), 191

“Since the word *apostasia* means ‘departure,’ some have understood the term ‘the apostasy’ to be the physical departure of the church itself—that is, the Rapture, since the Rapture will be a physical departure of believers from the earth. If this view were correct, it would definitely place the Rapture before the Tribulation, which would be a slam dunk for the pre-Tribulation Rapture position. While this is attractive to pretribulationists, there are six main reasons to reject a physical departure as the meaning of *apostasia* in this context:”



Mark Hitchcock

Mark and Jeff Kinley Hitchcock, *The Coming Apostasy: Exposing the Sabatoge of Christianity from Within* (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale, 2017), 191

“(1) In classical Greek, *hē apostasia* (‘the apostasy’) was used to denote a political or military rebellion. (2) In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), this term was used of rebellion against God (see Joshua 22:22; Jeremiah 2:19). (3) In 2 Maccabees 2:15 (a noncanonical book written in the time between the Old and New Testaments), it is used of apostasy to paganism. (4) In Acts 21:21, the only other use of the noun in the New Testament, it refers to apostasy or spiritual departure from Moses.”



Mark Hitchcock

Mark and Jeff Kinley Hitchcock, *The Coming Apostasy: Exposing the Sabatoge of Christianity from Within* (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale, 2017), 191

“(5) The Rapture is not an act of departure by the saints; the saints are passive not active participants. (6) In 2 Thessalonians 2:1, Paul refers to the Rapture as ‘our gathering together to Him.’ It seems strange to use this unlikely term (‘the apostasy’) for the same thing in the immediate context. (These six points are from D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1971], 331.) For these reasons, most expositors have understood ‘the rebellion’ (*apostasy*) not as the physical departure of the church at the Rapture but rather as doctrinal, theological, and moral departure from the truth.”

D. Edmond Hiebert

The Thessalonian Epistles. Chicago: Moody Press, 1971. Page 306

"Nowhere else does the Scripture speak of the rapture as 'the departure.' A departure denotes an act on the part of the individual or company departing. But the rapture is not an act of departure on the part of the saints. In the rapture the church is passive, not active. At the rapture, the church is 'caught up' or 'snatched away,' an event wherein the Lord acts to transport believers from earth into His presence (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Everything that takes place with the believers at the rapture is initiated by the Lord and done by Him."

Matthew 4:4

“But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”

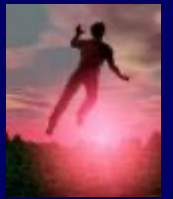


Matthew 5:18

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not *the smallest letter or stroke* shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”



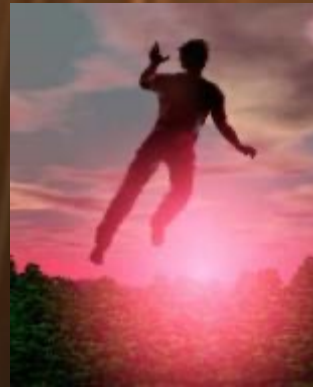
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2 Thessalonians 2:1

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering [episynagōgē] together to Him.”



2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless **the apostasy [apostasia]** comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”



D. Edmond Hiebert

The Thessalonian Epistles. Chicago: Moody Press, 1971. Page 306

"Paul has just referred to the rapture as 'our gathering together unto him' (v. 1); why then should he now use this unlikely term to mean the same thing?"



Paul's Various Rapture Terms

parousia

2 Thess. 2:1

episynagōgē

2 Thess. 2:1

apokalypsis

1 Cor. 1:7

epiphaneia

Titus 2:13

rhyomai

1 Thess. 1:10

harpazō

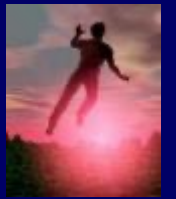
1 Thess. 4:17

apostasia

2 Thess. 2:3a



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2 Thessalonians 2:2 (NKJV)

“not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.”



2 Thessalonians 2:2 (NASB)

“that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”



2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- Problem (2:1-2)
- Prerequisites for the Day of the Lord (2:3-12)
 - ◆ The apostasy (2:3a)
 - ◆ Advent of the lawless one (2:3b-4)
 - ◆ Removal of the restrainer (2:5-7)
 - ◆ Destruction of the lawless one (2:8-9)
 - ◆ Destruction of lawless one's followers (2:10-12)



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Conclusion

10 Reasons Favoring Physical Departure

1. There have always been doctrinal departures
2. 2 Thess. was an early letter
3. The definite article before *apostasia*
4. Noun *apostasia* can refer to physical departure
5. Verb *aphistēmi* can refer to physical departure

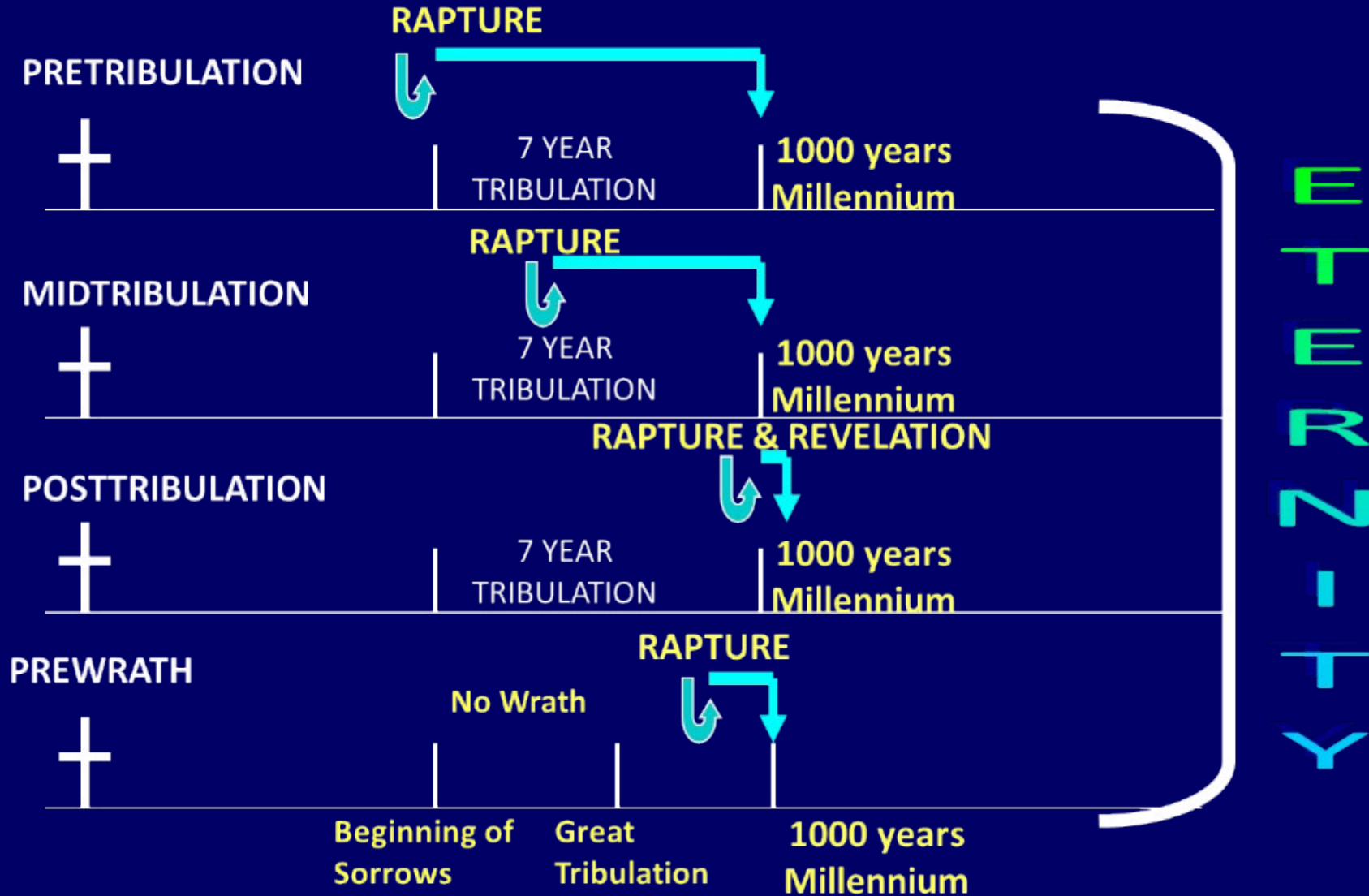


10 Reasons Favoring Physical Departure

6. Extended context favors physical departure
7. Immediate context favors physical departure
8. 2 Thess. 2:2 is a review course
9. Early Bible translations favor physical departure
10. Physical departure is held by credible scholars



RAPTURE VIEW COMPARISON



Titus 2:13

“Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”



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