

Apostasy or Rapture?

(2 Thessalonians 2:3A)



Dr. Andy Woods

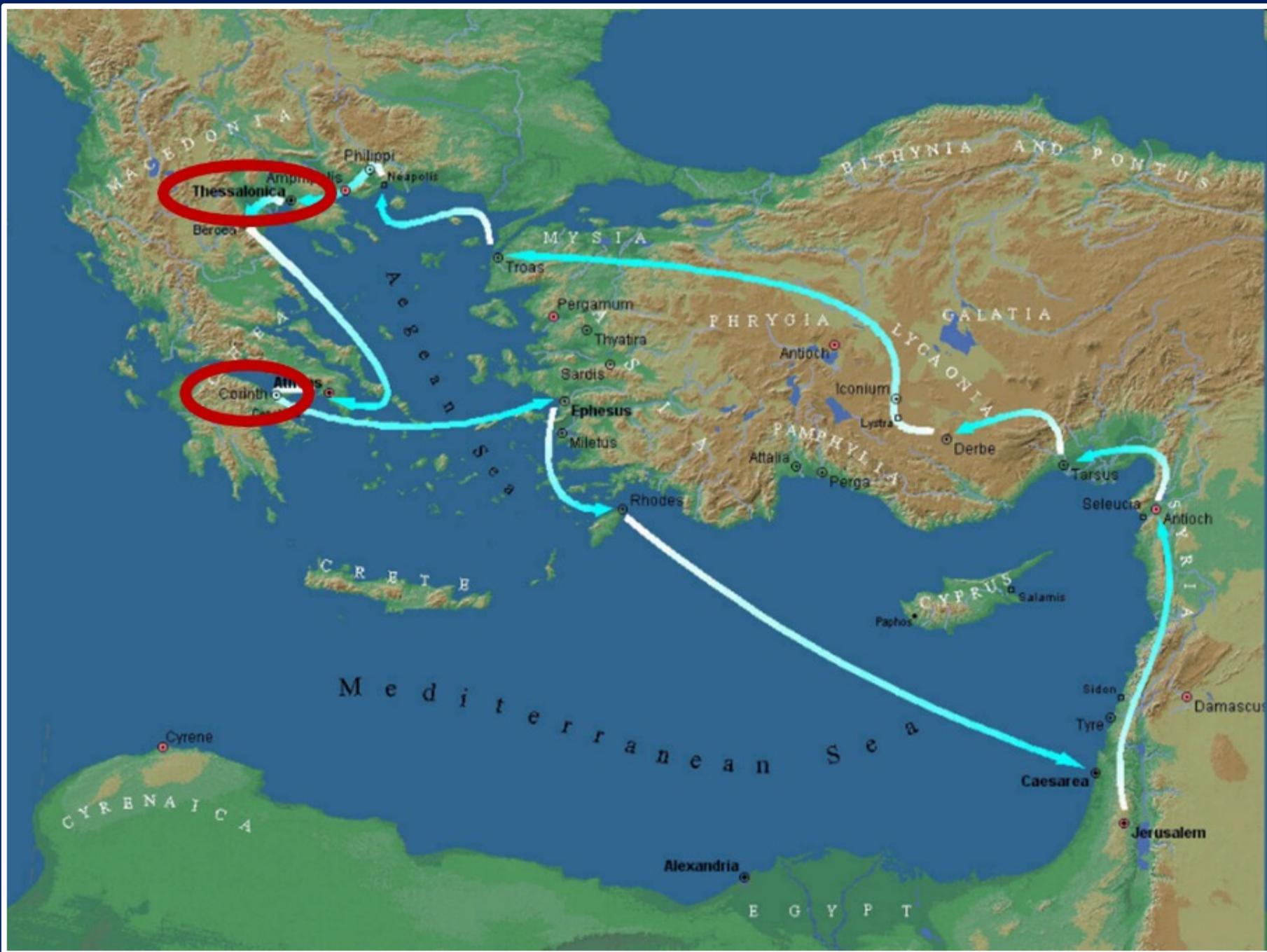
Senior Pastor – Sugar Land Bible Church

President – Chafer Theological Seminary

2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless **the apostasy [apostasia; departure]** 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)
 - ◆ Destruction of the lawless one (2:8-9)
 - ◆ Destruction of lawless one's followers (2:10-12)

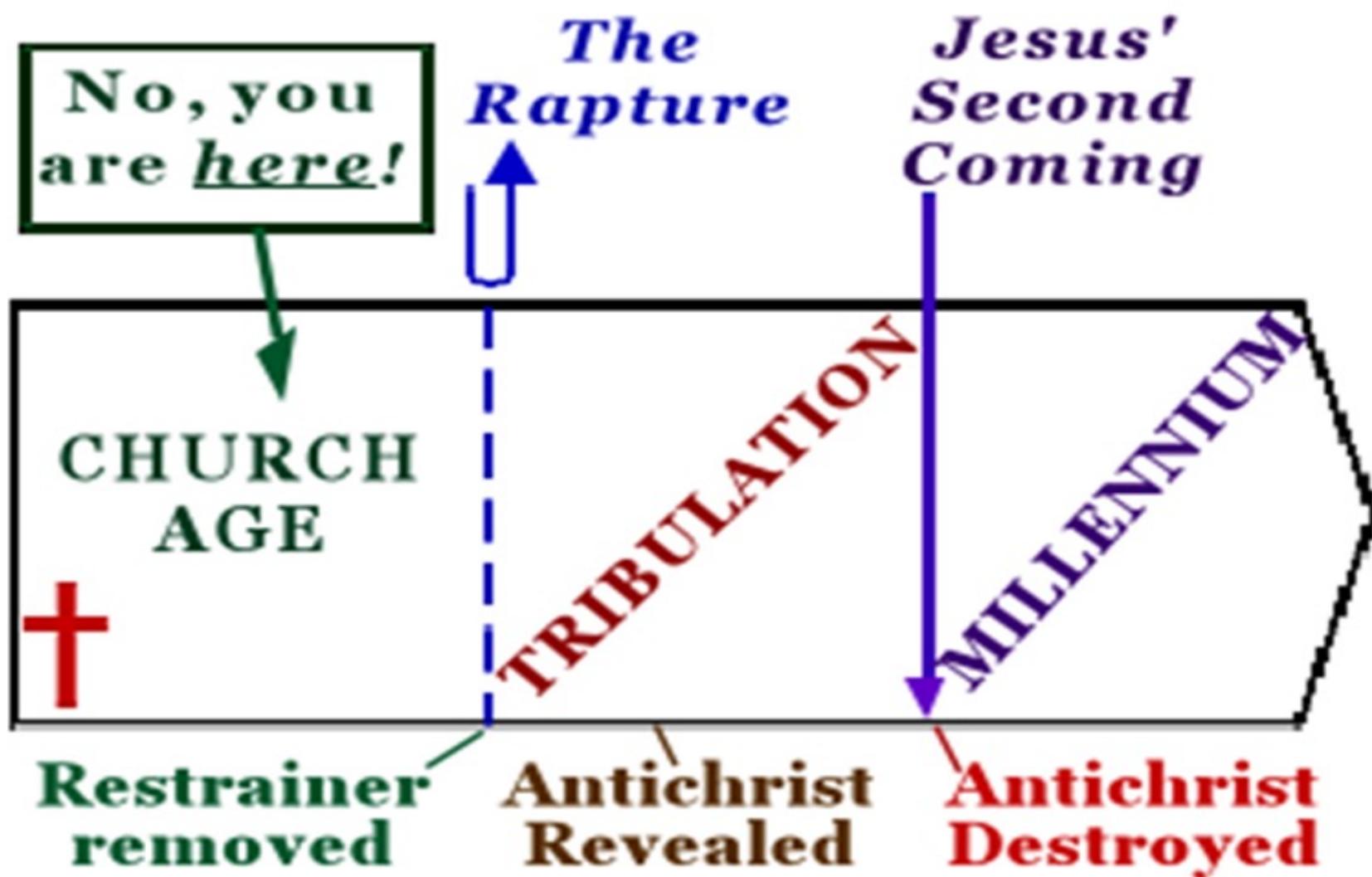


2 Thessalonians 2:2

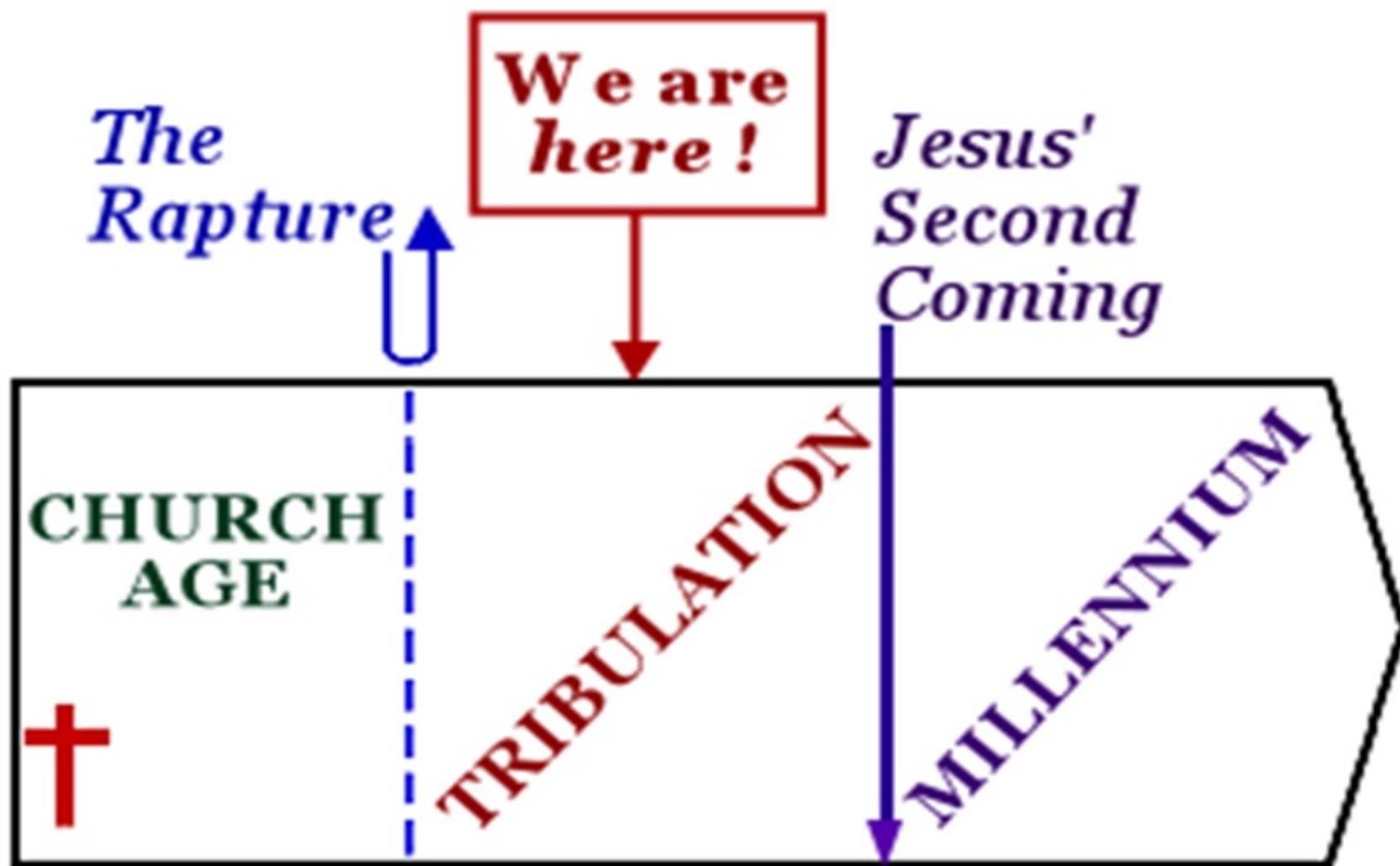
“that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord [the Tribulation] has come.”



Paul's Correction of their Error



The Thessalonians' False Idea



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Apostasy? (2:3a)

- Spiritual departure (Acts 21:21) – Unbelieving world embracing the antichrist
- Physical departure (Acts 12:10; 2 Cor. 12:8) – Rapture



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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)



Apostasy? (2:3a)

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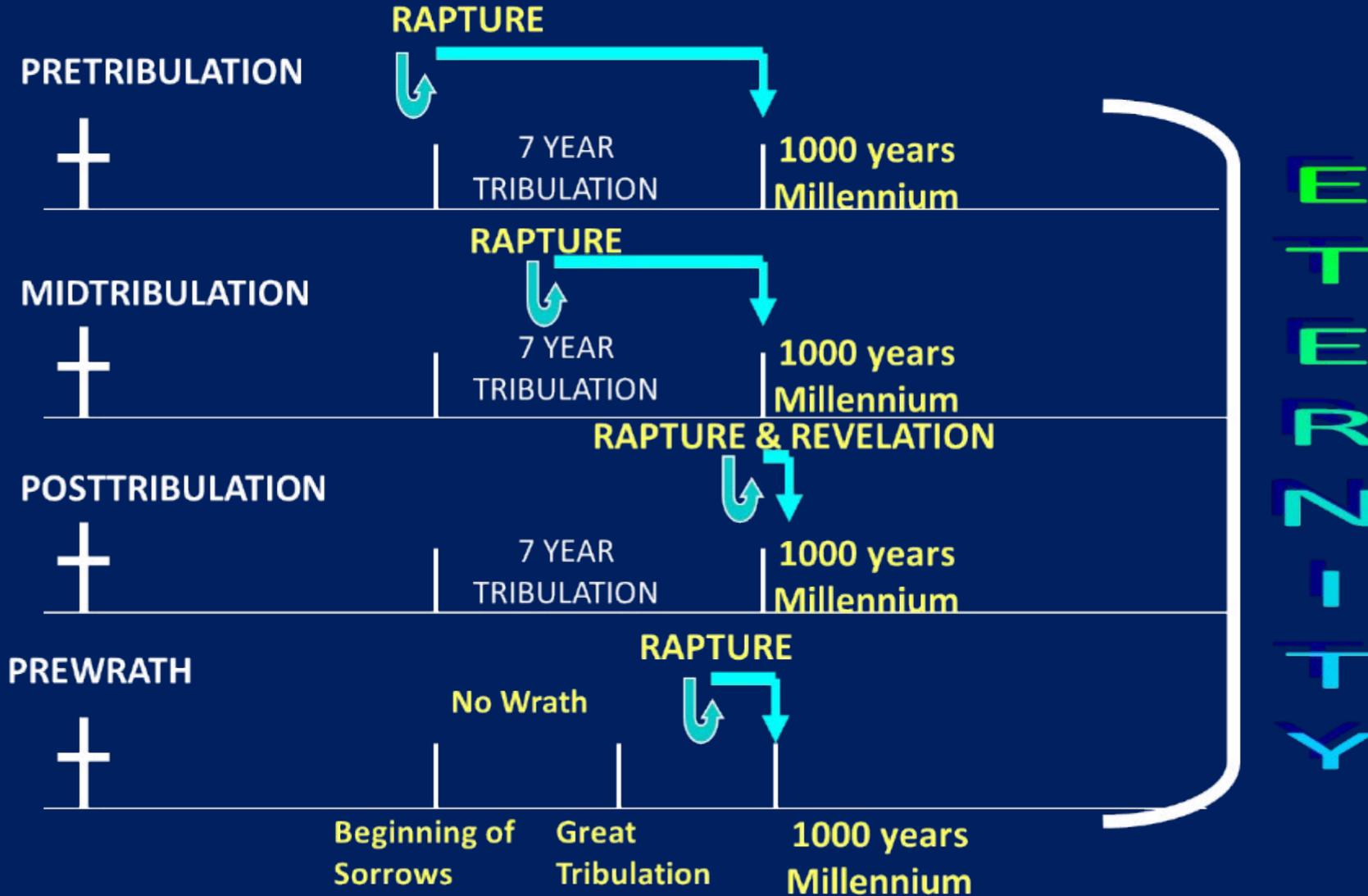


2 Thessalonians 2:3

“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.”



RAPTURE VIEW COMPARISON





The
FALLING AWAY

SPIRITUAL DEPARTURE OR PHYSICAL RAPTURE?

A second look at 2 Thessalonians 2:3

Dr. Andy Woods



10 Cumulative 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 Cumulative 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



Physical Departure Adherents

Kenneth Wuest

E. Schuyler English

J. Dwight Pentecost

H. Wayne House*

Stanley Ellison

J.S. Mabie

Allen McRae

Gordon Lewis

Henry Morris*

John. R. Rice

David Olander*

J. Carl Laney*

Grant Jeffrey

Myron Houghton*



Paul Lee Tan*

Arnold Fruchtenbaum*

Tim LaHaye

Thomas Ice

Don Stewart

Robert Thieme

Gordon Olson*

J. Vernon McGee*

Jimmy DeYoung*

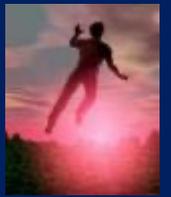
J.D. Farag

David Hocking

Jimmy Swaggart*

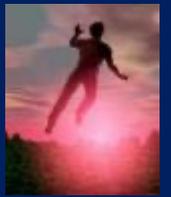
Chuck Smith*

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”

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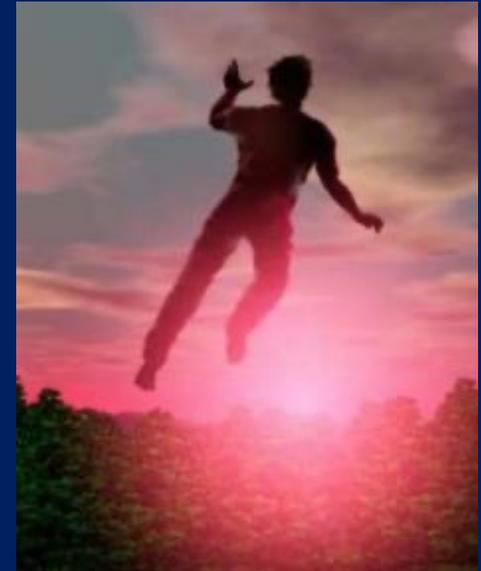
H. Wayne House

"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.”

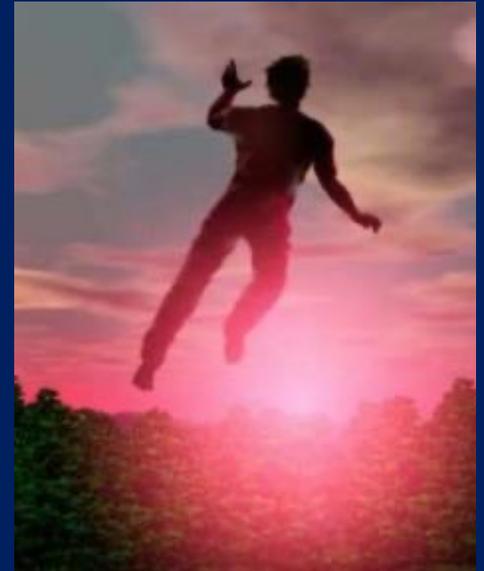
Entries for *Apostasia* in Liddell & Scott

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

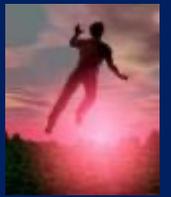


Entries for *Apostasia* in Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*

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



Answering Objections to the Physical Departure View



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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.”

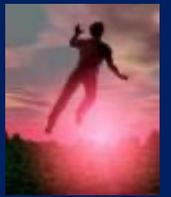


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Mark Hitchcock

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:”



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“(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.”



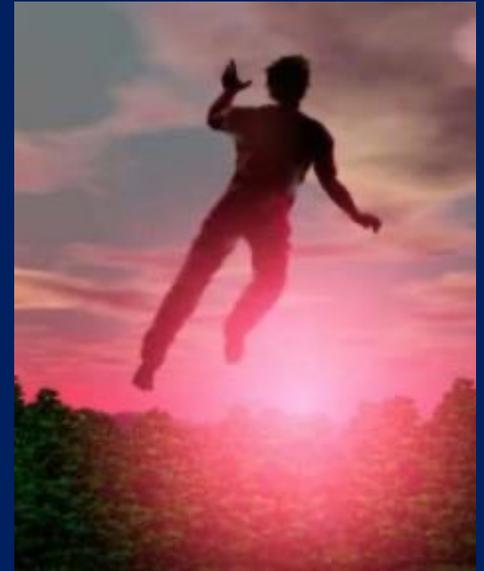
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Acts 21:21

“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.”



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.”

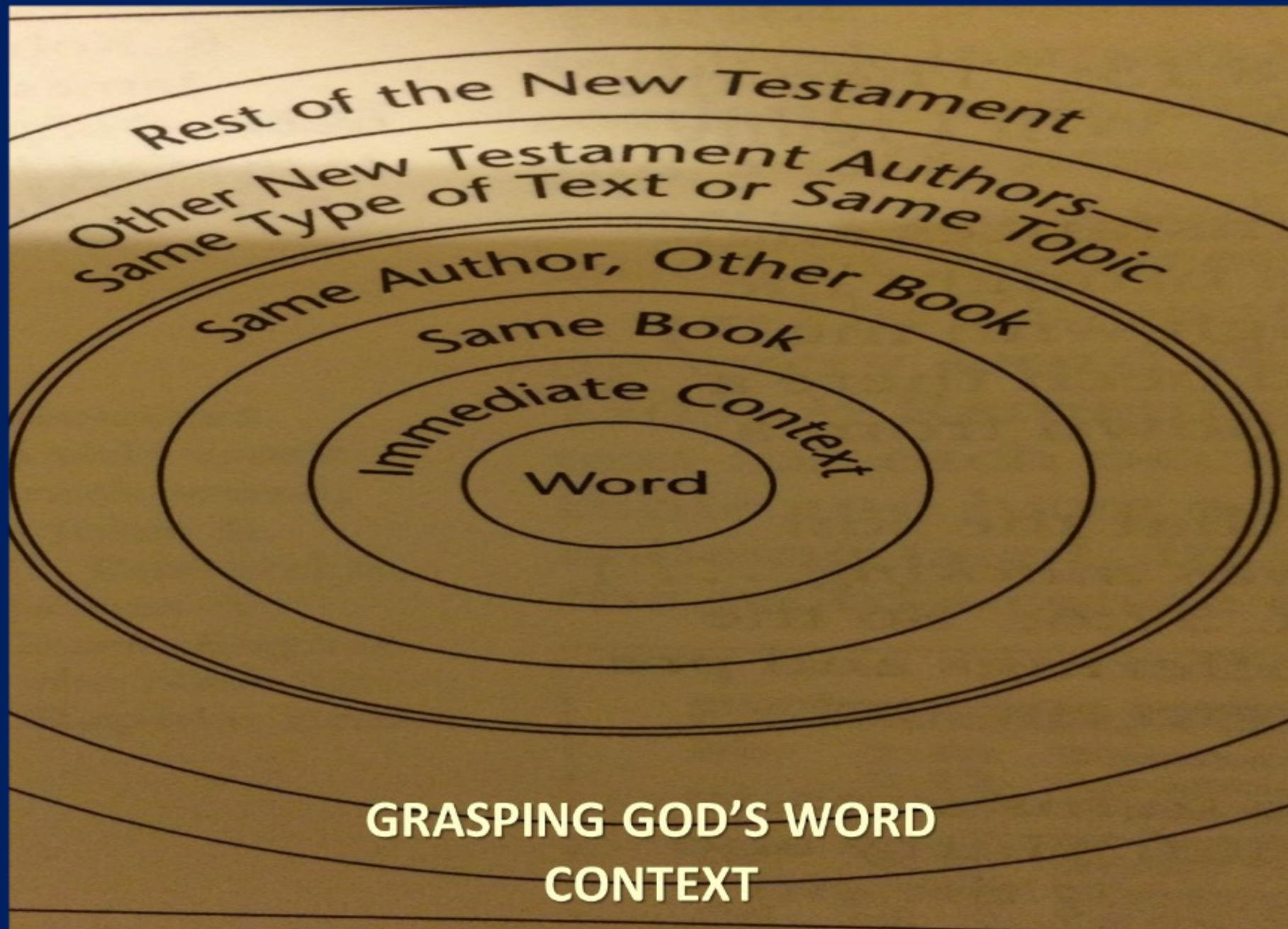


The best way to interpret a word in the Bible is to find where else it appears in the Bible. The word ἀποστασία appears only twice in the New Testament: Acts 21:21 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3. In both places it's falling away or departing from the right way and not to be taken away!

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**GRASPING GOD'S WORD
CONTEXT**

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



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“(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.”



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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.”



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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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."

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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 [apostasias]** 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?"





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2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 (NKJV)

“² 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.³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for **that day** shall not come, except there come a **falling away first**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”



2 Thessalonians 2:3 (NASB)

“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. ³Let 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.”



Genesis 1:5

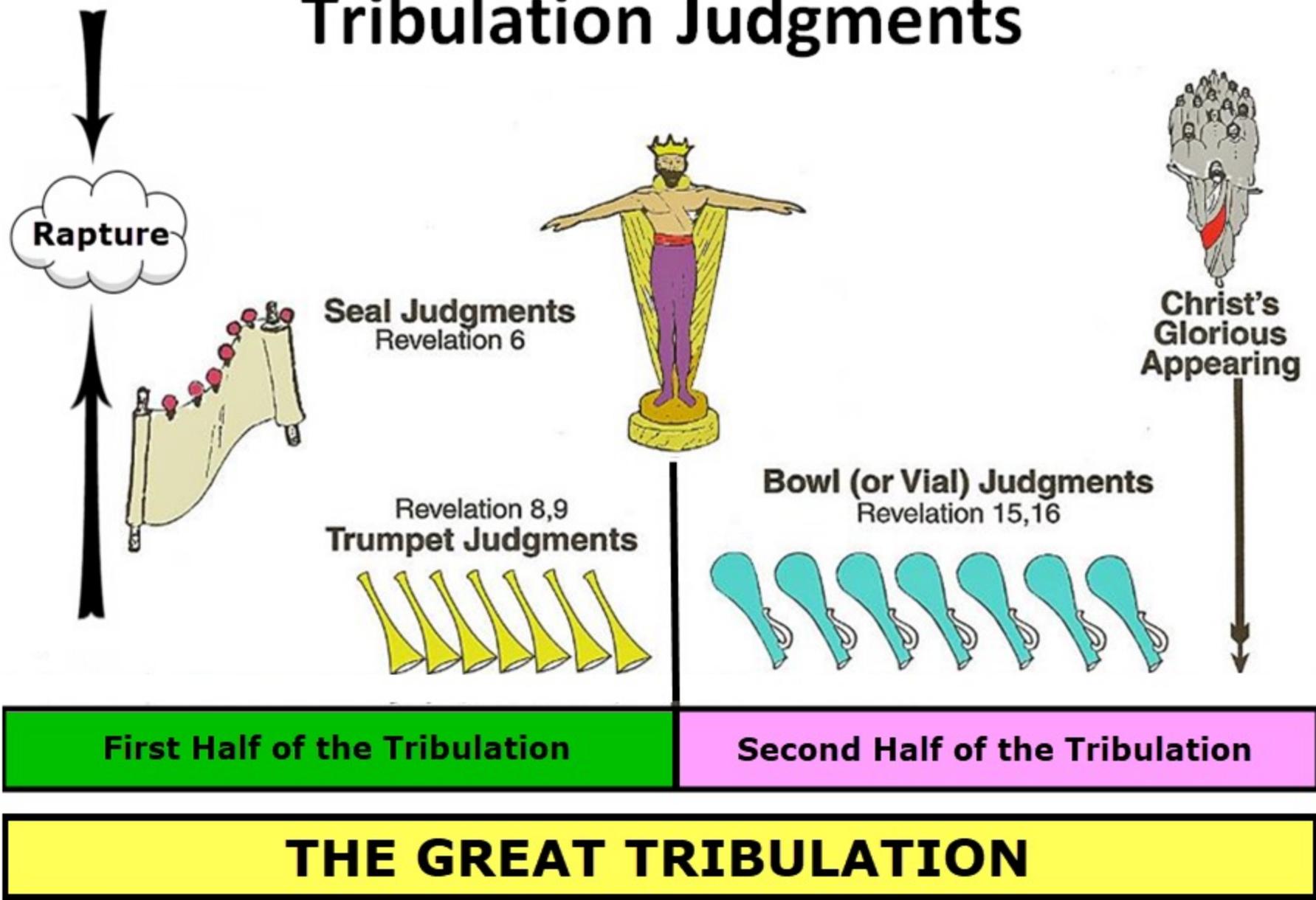
“God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.”



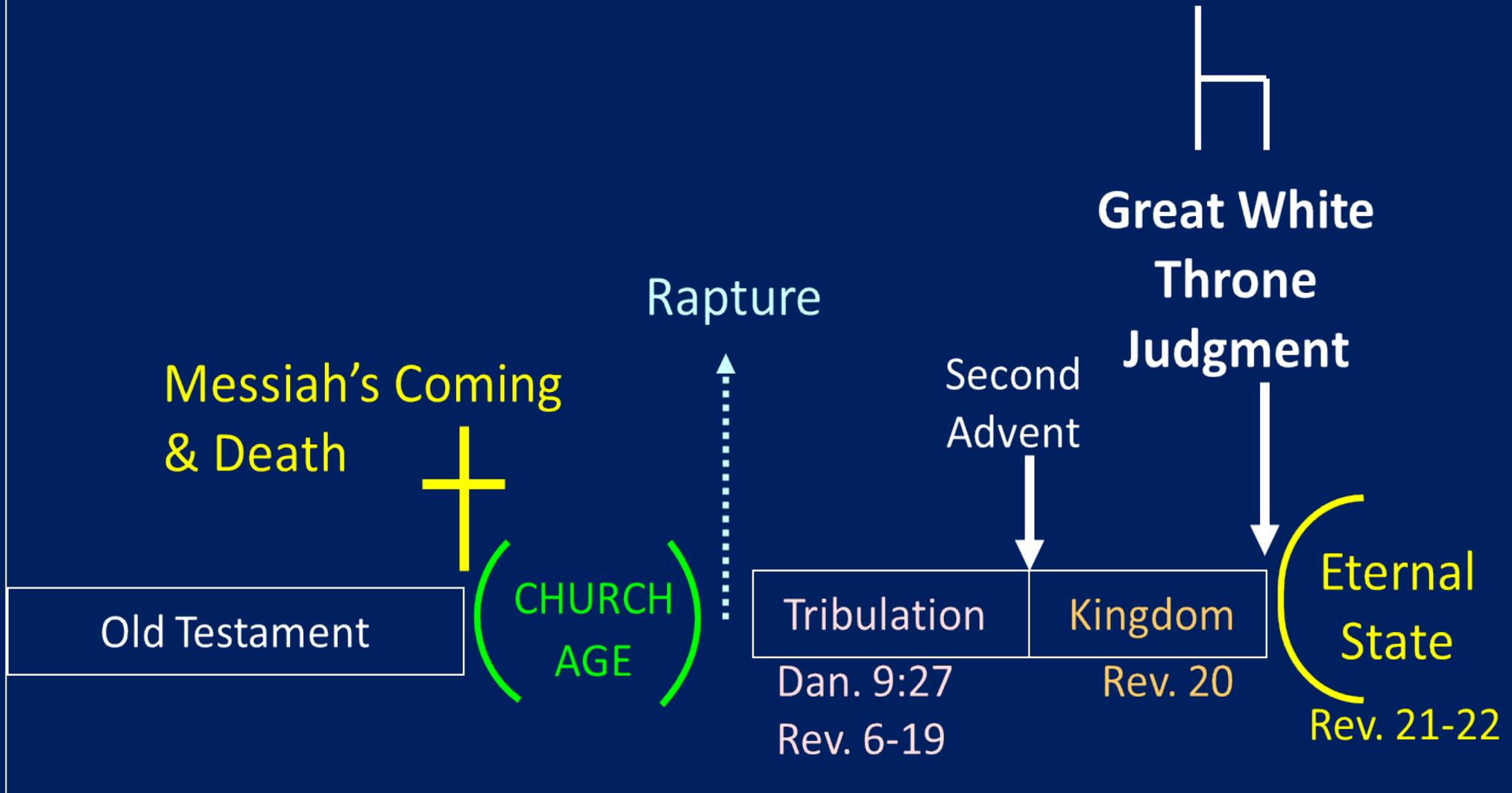
DAN 9:27 OVERVIEW OF TRIBULATION PERIOD



Tribulation Judgments



Prophecy Panorama



1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 (NKJV)

“² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”



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 [the Tribulation] has come.”



2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- Problem (2:1-2)
- Prerequisites for the Day of the Lord (2:3-12)
 - ◆ The departure (2:3a)
 - ◆ Advent of the lawless one (2:3b-4)
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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

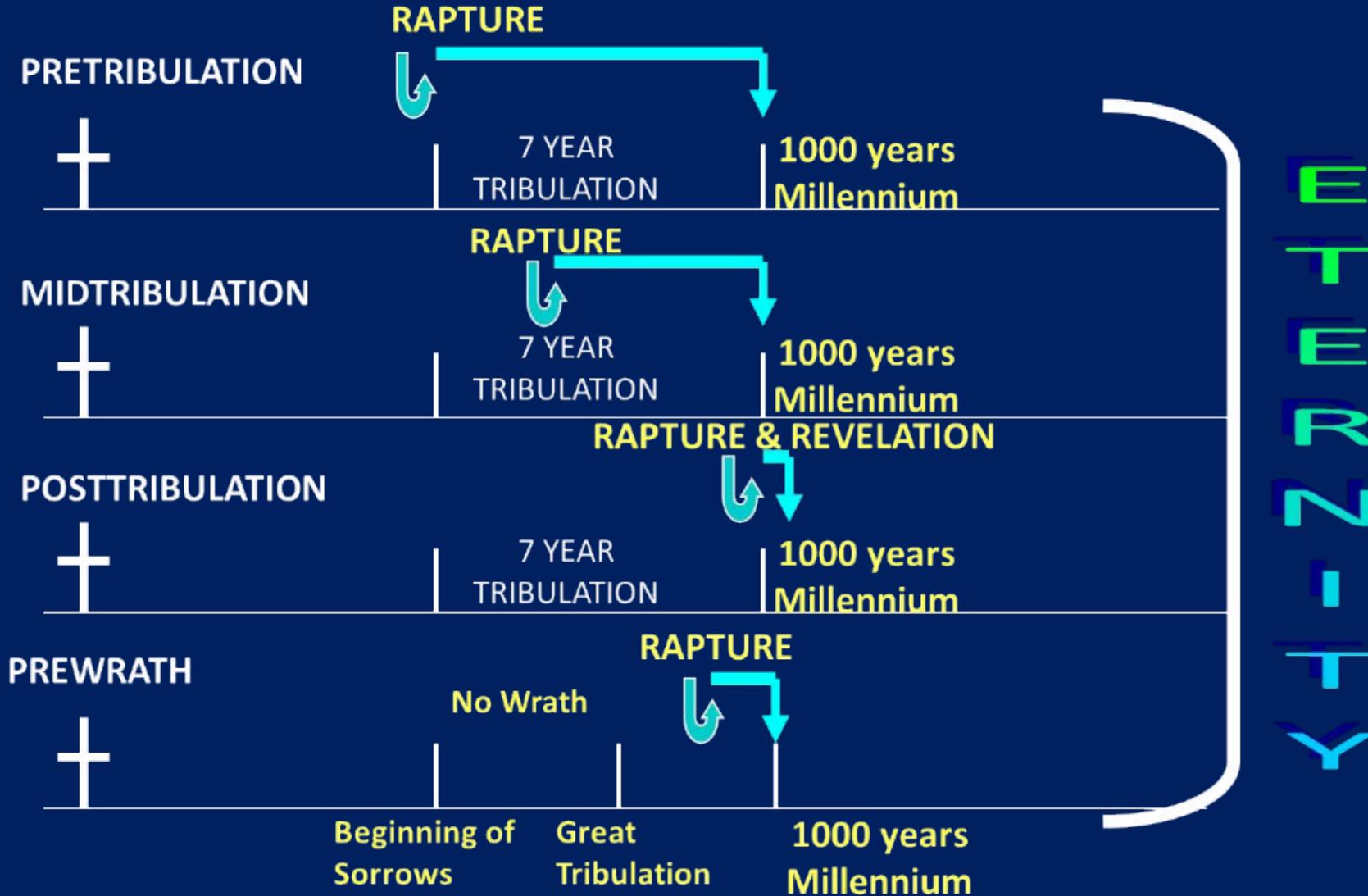


2 Thessalonians 2:3

“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.”



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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