

REBELLION, FALLING AWAY, OR DEPARTURE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I believe it was Melville who said, "To write a mighty book, you must have a mighty theme. The theme of this paper may not be the search for the great white whale, but to attempt to overturn hundreds of years of accepted Bible translations and to contradict leading scholars who hold to the same point of view in eschatology as the author is certainly a daunting task. Further, to examine simply the evidence and exegete the appropriate passages involved while attempting to keep presuppositions from forcing the outcome, I have found to be particularly difficult.

The task before us is to determine the appropriate translation for the word **αποστασια** that appears in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. As anyone familiar with the original language will quickly notice, the word is employed in the passage absolutely. There are no prepositional phrases or other modifiers telling the reader "from whom," or "from what" the individuals in mind are falling away.

Modern versions imply that what is in view is a "departure, defection, or falling away from a previously known and believed truth of God" or a "falling away from God Himself." [1] Our procedure for examining this problem of translation and ultimately interpretation will be to present evidence in at least five areas arguing for a spatial meaning to the word as opposed to a specialized sense of "political or religious revolt." First, we will examine the grammar of the passage taking special note of the usage of the definite article. Next to be examined will be the lexical data. This will encompass several areas since the word is very low in density in the New Testament. Included in this review will be the verbal cognate of the noun in question. Next we want to examine the structure of both Thessalonian epistles as well as the structure of our passage. Much progress has been made in studies of literary and especially Semitic language structures recently. The research in this area is enormous leading Welch and McKinlay to publish a Chiasmus Bibliography of 175 pages. Next, to do justice to the discussion, parallel passages as well as the passage in question must be examined for any clues that help the discussion of the problem passage.

Possible Translations of **αποστασια in 2 Thessalonians 2:3**

Historically, scholars have understood **αποστασια** in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 to have four possible interpretive meanings: (1) used in apposition to the man of sin (or lawlessness depending on one's understanding of the textual variant); (2) as a falling away by the body of Christ from the content of Christian truth; (It should be noted that in this author's opinion there are sufficient contextual clues to eliminate

the body of Christ from consideration); (3) as a revolt and a rebellion against God by unspecified participants; or (4) the departure or translation of the body of Christ. [2] Butalla, "The Departure of the Restrainer." Thesis presented the faculty of DTS, August 1998, p.3. A brief discussion of these four views follows.

Ἡ ἀποστασία Used as an Appositive

This interpretation fails because of the structure of the passage. Basically, the protasis of the conditional sentence has two compound sentences contained in it. Both sentences of the protasis contain an articular subject with two verbs. However the first verb ἐλθῆ is an active subjunctive, and the second verb is a passive subjunctive ἀποκαλυθῆ suggesting a difference. Further, the first verb is modified by the adverbial comparative πρῶτον suggesting a sequence or a list is being presented. Third the man of sin and the following descriptive terms in true apposition have modifiers, the word "apostasy" does not. Our research has shown that Aquila in his translation of the Septuagint consistently uses ἀποστασία to translate the Hebrew "Belial." This may have been the source of the interpretation held by early church fathers.

Ἡ ἀποστασία as a Falling Away from the Faith

As stated above, this writer sees little evidence in the passage for the interpretation being the church or individuals in the church falling away from the faith. Interestingly Ryrie opts for the term apostasy relating to people within the professing church.[3] Lewis Sperry Chafer identifies it as the final form of religious union and profession of non-Christians during the tribulation, and offers his understanding of the definite article with ἀποστασία:

Here the definite article isolates this apostasy from every other (agreed). It precedes the day of Jehovah, and is evidently that final form of religious union and profession that will obtain in the tribulation AFTER (my emphasis) the true church has been removed from the earth.[4]

Now notice the internal inconsistency in Chafer's statement. "The apostasy" is a false religious union that forms AFTER the rapture. Yet it forms BEFORE the appearance of the man of sin who will be the object of worship in this false system.

Ernest Best presents the basic issues of tension in pursuing this interpretation.

"There is nothing in the Pauline letters to suggest that he expected the church to apostatize, and, in particular, he is confident of the ability of the Thessalonians to endure...

If then the apostasy is not of Christians of whom does Paul expect it? Does he expect it of unbelievers? But apostasy assumes an original relationship with God." (We might add it assumes a covenantal relationship)[5]

In summary we could ask, "How much apostasy is enough to qualify as 'THE APOSTASY'? Why does Paul or any of the other NT writers not point out this significant event in eschatological passages? We can accept that conditions in the churches can deteriorate but these verses do not use the word apostasy nor deal with issues of eschatology.

For a more favorable option under this category, Rosenthal has recognized the difficulty with viewing "the apostasy" as pertaining to the believing church. His extensive discussion and evidence from intertestamental history must not be ignored.[6] He lists the following points of analogy between Antiochus and the Antichrist (we prefer to us the term Man of Sin/Lawlessness since the anti-Christ would more legitimately be a title for the false prophet.

1. Both Antiochus and the anti-Christ enter into a covenant/treaty to protect Israel. Concerning Antiochus it is written "In those days lawless (non-Torah observant) men (literally "sons) came forth from Israel, and persuaded many, saying "let us go and make a covenant with the nations round about us, for since we separated (probably religious separation) many evils have come upon us . . . And He [Antiochus] gave them permission to practice the ordinances of the nations. (1 Macc. 1:11-12) Of Antichrist it is written "And he shall confirm the covenant/treaty with [the] many for one week [of years]."(Dan. 9:27a)

However, observe how Rosenthal makes a mistake here in thinking that both covenants are the same. The Maccabean covenant is a treaty granting non-religious Jews the right to practice Hellenism. In contrast, the treaty of Antichrist is to allow the Jewish people to rebuild their temple and reestablish animal sacrifices.

2. Both Antiochus and Antichrist make their covenant with the many in Israel. The Antichrist shall not gain universal acceptance.

3. Those Jews who enter into the covenant are in both instances said to APOSTASIZE. "Concerning Antiochus it is written, "Then the king's officers who were enforcing the APOSTASY came to the city of Modein to make them [the Jews] offer sacrifice [to the Greek gods] (1 Macc. 2:15). Paul wrote of the Antichrist and the future Day of the Lord, "Let no man deceive you by any means; for [that day shall not come] unless the falling away (apostasy) comes first, and [unless] the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition . . . 2 Th. 2:3

Now here Rosenthal makes a serious mistake in his analysis. The king's officers are trying to enforce THE APOSTASY after the abomination of desolation has occurred in what would be the second half of the tribulation not during the first half of the period when the covenant was in place. (1 Macc. 1:54) We agree with the fact that apostasy occurs in 2 Thessalonians 2 but apostasy cannot occur until after the Antichrist has been revealed, not before. As in Acts 21:20, the apostasy in view in 1 Maccabees 2:15 is apostasy from Moses.

'Η ἀποστασία as Revolt or Rebellion Against God.

The idea that apostasy is an active idea rather than a passive idea is popular with scholars today. Indeed, one of the reasons this seems so is because in the LXX, the word apostasy and its cognates translates the Hebrew root (מרד) twenty five times. The verb can mean either rebellion against man (twelve times) or rebellion against God (twelve times.)[7]. Not surprisingly however, this rebellion is always in the context of the ANE political/religious world. Rebellion in Israel is always against the king. Rebellion against outside powers is also possible when a suzerain-vassal relationship has been established between someone like Nebuchadnezzar and the king of Israel as a vassal. Since Yahweh's relationship with Israel is defined using a suzerain-vassal model, rebellion against the Lord is analogous to rebellion against the earthly king.

In the passage under consideration, 2 Thess.2: 3, we should ask, "what covenant is in place? And who is doing the rebelling?" Against whom are they rebelling? Let us look at the options.

First of all, the rebels cannot be the world of unbelievers since no covenant is in place with them other than the covenant of Noah.

Secondly, the rebels could not be members of the church the body of Christ since one of the promises included in the New Covenant is rescue from the day of the Lord/day of wrath to come. (1Thess.1: 9-10)

Thirdly, the rebels could not be non-religious Israelites since the Antichrist has not yet appeared to lead the rebellion.

Lastly, the rebellion could no be against the Man of Sin since the passage later teaches that a deluding influence would be sent upon unbelieving Israel to cause them to believe the Man of Sin rather than rebel against him.

'Η' ἀποστασία as the Rapture

This leaves us the final option that is the subject of the paper. Does the evidence show that there is sufficient justification for understanding ἀποστασία in 2

Thessalonians 2:3 as a reference to the departure of the body of Christ prior to the start of Daniel's 70th week? English has advanced this view, saying:

"This [instructed departure] is not conjecture but fact: it is the rapture of the church, described in 1 Thess.4: 13-26." [8]

Wuest, an eminent Greek scholar supports this by saying,

"These are acquired meanings of the word gotten from the context in which it is used, not the original, basic, literal meaning, and should not be imposed upon the word, when the context does not qualify the word by these meanings, as in the case of our Thessalonians passage." [9]

Thesis to be defended:

There is sufficient evidence to view η αποστασια used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 as a reference to the departure/spatial removal/rapture of the church.

CHAPTER 2

THE ARGUMENT FROM GRAMMAR

The Importance of the Definite Article

The definite article is one of the most fascinating areas of study in Greek grammar. It is also one of the most neglected areas of study. We cannot treat it lightly, for its presence or absence is the crucial element to unlocking the meaning of hundreds of passages in the New Testament.[10] The article was originally derived from the demonstrative pronoun. That is, its original force was to point out something.[11] Wallace continues in his discussion of the article with a seven-fold breakdown of the use of the article with the substantive. He lists the following: (1) Simple Identification; (2) Anaphoric (previous reference); (3) Deictic ("Pointing"); (4) Par Excellence ("Numero Uno") (5) Monadic ("One of a kind" or "unique"); (6) Well-known ("Celebrity"); (7) Abstract (or the article with Abstract Nouns).[12]

After we understand the possible options in the use of the definite article in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 before the word αποστασια, we can rule out the Simple Identification usage of the article which Wallace calls the "drip-pan" category. He advocates using this as only a last resort. Very few if any examples of the article fit under this category only. [13]

We can also eliminate the Deictic or Pointing Use of the article. The reason of course is that an object or person has to be present now of speaking to which the article refers.[14]

Next, we can eliminate the Par Excellence Usage of the article. This is used by the speaker to point out an object as the only one worthy of the name. This is done even though there may be many other objects with the same name. We have already discussed above that there is a severe shortage of other usages of the word in the NT. So hardly, would this usage be called "the apostasy par excellence."

The Monadic Usage is a possibility. We would then understand Paul to say, "the day of the Lord cannot come until the 'one of a kind' apostasy comes first."

The Well-Known or Celebrity Usage also is a possibility provided that the noun to which it refers has not been mentioned in the preceding context. (but in this case it may have been.

Gundry, in an attempt to avoid the issue of the article raise by Wuest opts for the Celebrity Usage or the One of a Kind Usage. He says the following:

"As for the use of the article with **αποστασια** Wuest contends that individual identity must be explained in the foregoing context. But that is wrong. [Hence there seems to be no such thing as the anaphoric use of the article in his field of thinking] Although a writer may have already explained individual identity, he may just as well anticipate a following explanation. [Do we any examples of this?][15]"

Further, he says:

"We have at least three possible explanations [of the usage of the definite article in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

1. First the article points to a previous explanation (v. 1; 1 Thessalonians 4:16ff. But is unthinkable that Paul would use for the rapture a word the connotation of which overwhelmingly has to do with civil and religious defection.[16]"

Notice the circular reasoning here. The article could point to the referent in verse 1 ("our gathering together to Him"). But this can't be since the lexical data supports another meaning. We could argue the reverse. The grammatical data supports a referent in the previous context so the lexical meaning Gundry advances must be wrong.

Gundry continues:

2. "Secondly, the article points to a well-known apostasy about which Paul had already informed the Thessalonians through his oral teaching." [17]

Here Gundry arbitrarily assumes that Paul's oral teaching is somehow disconnected from the first epistle to the Thessalonians, certainly a dubious assumption. We will discuss the structure of the two epistles in a later section, but it is sufficient here to say that 1st Thessalonians falls rather easily into a five-part structure discussing faith, hope, and love as the major subjects. In 2d Thessalonians the structure is also in five parts but in 2d Thessalonians hope take the center section. So it really seems to be a case of special pleading to say that the article next to our word in question only refers to Paul's oral teaching and ignore the immediate context and the preceding epistle altogether.

Lastly, Gundry insists:

3. Third, the definite article point to a special apostasy that gets further explanation in the ensuing discussion. [18]

Interestingly for Gundry's position, the word is never again repeated in the passage even the word **παρουσια** and **αποκαλυψω** are each mentioned three times.

The Anaphoric Use of the Article

There is one usage of the article, however, that screams from the text itself to be considered. It is the anaphoric usage. Wallace again says:

"Dana and Mantey define the anaphoric article (i.e. The article denoting previous reference): 'The article may be used to point out an object the identity of which is defined by some previous reference.'" [19]

This usage is definitely the case in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Paul introduces the topic of the following verses as: "Now with reference to the **παρουσια**... (coming) and our **επισυναγωγην** (gathering together) to Him..." We should note that a single article governs both of these important nouns. Thus, they are closely related. We could paraphrase "Now with reference to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as it related to our gathering together to Him." These two events relate to the beginning and end of the 7-year tribulation period. Later we are told "that [day will not come] unless the apostasy/departure comes first..." The definite article is referring to a synonym in the preceding context. Gundry's insistence that the definite article refers to the following context seems to be a case of ignoring the obvious. If we take up his position, we arrive at the strange

result that Paul says the topic is "our gathering together to Him" and yet never refers to it again in the entire passage at which we are looking.

CHAPTER 3

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE LEXICAL DATA

Introduction

The amount of material available here is exhausting. Our goal is to examine lexical data in six different time periods to see whether the semantic range of the word or its cognates ever bore a meaning like "spatial removal" or "departure". We will examine Classical, LXX, Koine, New Testament, Patristic, and Translation data in chronological order.

Classical Greek Usage (4th Century B.C. and earlier)

Its meaning as "defection or revolt. According to Liddell and Scott, the classical Greek noun ἀποστασις shows evidence for the meaning "defection" or "revolt" in Herodotus Historicus, Thucydides Historicus, and Plato.[20] Our basic question then is whether a meaning of "active revolt" or "defection" without some sort of spatial element can be supported for the context.

Herodotus. The phrase to be considered in the original is as follows:

ει ενδεξαιατο αροστασιν απο Οροιτεω.

"...if they would consent to a revolt against Oroetes.[21]

This translation by Godley is a bit askew and a correct translation gives:

"...if they would consent to a departure or defection from Oroetes"

If the author had wanted to say, "...revolt against" he would have used the Greek preposition επι not απο. The context means a departure from a previously formed alliance not a revolt against political authority.

Thucydides. In looking at his writings, the original passage reads as follows:

Μετα δε την των Αργειων αποστασιν εκ της Ξυμμαχιας και οι Μαντινης, το μεν πρωτον αντεχουστες, επειτ' ου δυναμενοι ανευ των Αργειων, ξυνεβησαν και αυτοι τοις Λακεδαιμονιοις και την αρχην αφεισαν των πολεων.

Smith gives us the following translation:

After the withdrawal of the Argives from the alliance, the Martineans also, although at first opposed to this course, afterwards, finding themselves unable to hold out without the Argives, like wise made an agreement with the Lacedaemonians and relinquished their sovereignty over several cities.[23]

Here again the translation of **αποστασια** could just as easily mean "departure" in a context very similar to that of Herodotus. In other words, the soldiers would withdraw from the alliance, get in their ships, and depart for home.

Its meaning as "departure from".

Euripedes. The original text reads:

"θανειν. ασιτει δ' εις αποστασιν βιου."

This text is translated by Way, "To die; she fasteth to make an end of life."
[25] An equivalent translation could be "To die: she fasts for the purpose of departure from life."

Aristotle in *Historia Animalium* contains the following original:

μετεωροτερος δε εστυ τη απο της γης αροστασει των σαυρων, τας δε καμ πας των εκελων καθαπερ οι σαυροι εχει.

Peck translates: "It stands further off from the ground than the lizards, but the flexions of the legs are as in lizards." [27] An alternate translation could be distance from the ground.

Aristotle's work in *de Audibilibus* reads:

"δηλον δε τουτ εστιν. ουδε γαρ των αλλων μοριων ουθεν εκ μικρος αποστασεως δυναται ποιεισθαι την πληγην ισχυαν." [28]

Hett renders: "This is evident: for none of the other parts of the body can deliver a violent blow from a short distance." [29]

Aristotle's work in *de Caelo* contains the following:

υποθεμενοι δε παντα και τας ταχυτητας εκ των αποστασεων εχεις τους των συμφωνιων λογους εσαρμονιον φασι γιγισθαι την φωνην φερομεσων κυ κλω των αστων."

Guthrie renders the passage:

"Taking this as the hypothesis and also that the speed of the stars, judged by their distances, are in the ration of the musical consonances, they affirm that the sound of the stars as they revolve is concordant."[31]

We have now examined both major meaning groups in the lexicon and have discovered that is a spatial element or a departure nuance in every case. Indeed, this author has serious doubts whether the lexical category of "revolt" or "rebellion should be listed in the semantic range of the word. Certainly the evidence does not support the outlandish statement by Gundry,

"But even in classical Greek simple departure by no means predominates."[32]

LXX Usage

1. Joshua 22:22:

Ο θεος θεος εστιν κυριος και ο θεος θεος κυριος αυτοσ οιδεν, και Ισραηλ αυτος, ει εν αποστασια επλημελνσαμεν ες αστι του κυριου, μη ρυσαιτο εν ταυτη.

"The LORD is God of gods and the Lord knows that He is God of gods, and let (all) Israel acknowledge Him, if we (the trans Jordan tribes) have transgressed before the Lord by apostasy, do not rescue us in the matter."

The issue in the above passage in the issue of the establishing of an apparent separate altar by the trans Jordan tribes. This would have had the effect of separating physically as well as religiously the tribes of Israel.

2. 2 Chronicles 29:19

και παντα τα σκευν, α εμιανεν Αχαξο βασιλευσ εν τη βαιλεια αυτον εν τη αποστασια.

"...and all the sacred vessels which King Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his rebellion."

3. 2 Chronicles 33:19

προσευχης αυτου και ως επηκουσεν και πασαι αι αμαρτιαι και αι αποστασεις αυτου ανδ οι τοποι.

"His prayer and thus how God was entreated by him, and all his wicked sins, and his wicked deeds, and the places..."

Here our word is in the plural and must mean something like "wicked deeds" or "acts of apostasy" referring to establishing alternate places of worship.

4. Isaiah 30:1

Ουαι τεκνα αποστατει, ταδε λεγει κυριος.[36]

Woe to you, rebellious children, says the Lord.

5. Jeremiah 2:19

παιδευσι σε η αποστασια σου, και η κακια σου ελεγξει σε, καγνωθι και ιδε οτι πικρον σοι το καταλιπεν σε εμε, λεγει κυριος ο θεος σου.^{ε 5}

"...your own apostasy will correct you, and your evil will reprove you; know therefore and see that your abandoning of me has been bitter to you says the Lord God."

One thing we must note in this last passage, the Lord says that their apostasy will instruct them. But that seems strange. Here it would even possible to substitute "you departure (into exile) will instruct you" and we would not lose any sense of the passage.

Therefore, we conclude for the LXX usage that there have been two other instances of αποστασια with the definite article found in the LXX and one in the Apocrypha. We have already looked at the occurrence in 1 Maccabees 2:15 and shown that it means, "to abandon the Mosaic worship system and support the worship of idols in the instance of the Abomination of Desolation. In 2 Chronicles the usage is plural as is still probably looking at "acts of apostasy" or establishing rival worship centers. In 2 Chronicles 29:19 a personal history of a king is being referenced. In all these cases we really don't have a strict parallel to the case in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

Koine Greek Usage (299 B.C.-A.D. 99)

The noun αποστασια exhibits evidence from the Koine Period for the meaning "defection" or "revolt" in the works of *Dionysius Halicarnassensis* (1st century B.C.); Josephus Historicus in *Vita* (1st Century A.D) and Plutarchus *Biographus et Philosophus*(1st/2d Century A.D.)

Evidence exists for ἀποστασία to mean a physical "distance" early in this period in the works of Archimedes Geometra (3d Century B.C. [38])

Evidence exists during this period in support of ἀποστασία as carrying a physical "distance" connotation alluding to some sort of separation.

New Testament Usage

As widely noted in the literature, the noun ἀποστασία is rare in the NT, appearing only in Acts 21:21. In Acts, the object or qualifier is immediately apparent. Paul was accused of teaching the Jews (converts) ἀποστασία ... ἀπο Μωυσεως, that is "to depart from Moses." We should hasten to point out that often this meant actually physically departing from the synagogue and perhaps meeting somewhere else as in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus.

These two usages in the NT appear not to be similar. In Acts there is the qualifying prepositional phrase. In 2 Thessalonians there is not. In 2 Thessalonians the word is used absolutely as if Paul expected the audience to understand the object implicitly. Wood agrees by saying,

"Its usage is of an altogether different nature and so has no bearing on the question." [39]

One usage of a cognate is sometimes overlooked in the New Testament. This is the word ἀποστασιον that is translated "bill of divorcement" both in the Old and New Testament. (Deut. 24:1,3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8, Matthew 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4). This is a significant contribution since in divorce proceedings the husband was required to strip the wife naked and literally drive her from the home. They were to be physically separated as well as legally separated.

Patristic Usage

In reviewing the post-New Testament period, Lampe offers evidence for ἀποστασις to refer to "a departure, absence," or "separation" in addition to the traditional renderings of the word. [40]

In all three of these possible meanings, a physical or spatial connotation may apply.

With the word ἀποστασία, although not predominant, Lampe sees the possibility of physical "departure, removal, or spatial separation as in divorce." [41] Sufficient evidence exists for Liddell and Scott to offer their second meaning of

αποστασια as "departure" or "disappearance" a physical or spatial connotation.[42]

Modern Translations

The history of translations of η αποστασια varied little for the first fifteen centuries. Jerome's Latin Vulgate contains the word "*discessio*" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, meaning simply "departure".[43] Other translations up to the King James Version of 1611 use variations of "departure."

Usage Aspects of Cognates

The cognate Verb αφιστημι

According to Liddell and Scott evidence exists for αφιστημι to mean "remove" transitively or "depart from" in an intransitive sense. [44] One of the most intriguing usages comes from online correspondence from Carl Conrad, a classical Greek scholar, that is so valuable that it is worth quoting at length. He is dealing with the Classical meaning of the verb.

For what it is worth...the background of this word (αποστασια) is the political usage of αφιστημι and αφισταμαι is earlier Greek. Αφιστημι is used of uprooting a person or a community from his/their fixed habitation, as in the case of forced immigration. Αφισταμαι is used of uprooting oneself and going elsewhere. I recall one vivid text in Demosthenes where a suppliant seated on an altar is asked αφισταθαι, to leave the altar and his stance of supplication and accept the reconciliation offered him.

It may be used of a group leaving a homeland to establish a new colony somewhere; that's the way Peisetairos and Euelpides use the verb in Aristophanes' Birds, where they leave Athens to establish a "trouble-free" colony in the sky between heaven and earth.

But one of the most common senses in the 5th/4th century is for political rebellion against an internal or external power--for social rebellion (of a repressed majority against a dominant minority) or for political freedom (of a colony or group of colonies against a dominant foreign power...No doubt they very old simple concrete sense of striking one's tent and migrating elsewhere (like Abraham leaving Ur of the Chaldees and going to Haran/Paddan-Aram) is still there in the NT era; the question is the likelihood of that being the sense in this apocalyptic passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.[45]

The point of quoting this communication at length is to show that even though the verb is a cognate, one field of meaning clearly approximates the departure/spatial removal idea that is being considered for our word. The departure of a group of people to a "trouble-free" colony in the sky between heaven and earth could be the best secular description of the rapture of the church that is available.

In addition, the writer is Aristophanes (5th/4th Century B.C.) one of the principal authors from the Grecian Golden Age. His plays were widely performed for several hundred years in the Grecian world by the time the Apostle Paul reached Thessalonica. Therefore, the idea of a departure of a group of citizens to a colony in the sky must have been a widely known concept in the Greek world.

After this we again consider the Koine usage of the verb. According to Moulton and Milligan, **αφιστημι** exhibits a sense of spatial departure along with an intransitive sense of removing oneself. They cite at least three examples of spatial departure.[46]

Schlier argues that the verb can be translated "to remove" either spatially or from the context of a state or relationship or from fellowship with a person.[47]

Concerning the usage in the Old Testament, Feinberg writes:

The verb **αφιστημι** is clearly used of a physical departure in both testaments. In the OT (LXX) the verb is used in Genesis 12:8 of Abram's departure from Shechem...of physical separation of persons as in 1 Samuel 18:13, where it is used of David's departure from Saul, and in Psalm 6:8 of the physical separation of the wicked from God's presence.[48]

In the New Testament usage, the verb **αφιστημι** occurs fifteen times, twelve of which carry a spatial departure meaning "physical departure". In Luke 2, the phrase "...she never left the temple...(Luke 2:37) means a physical departure from the temple. "When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time." (Luke 4:13) means a spatial departure from the presence of Jesus. It may even mean a disappearance which would be appropriate for a spirit being. In Luke 13, the phrase "Depart from me, all you evil doers (Luke 13:27) means a spatial departure. The same spatial departure meaning is present in all the following verses: (Acts 5:37, 38; 12:10; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29; 2 Corinthians 12:8; 1 Timothy 6:15; 2 Timothy 2:19). The other three instances of the verb refer to religious defection. (Luke 8:13; 1 Timothy 4:1; and Hebrews 3:12). In each case, the context tells the reader from what the subjects are departing.

Conclusion

There is abundant lexical data to support the translation of ἀποστασία as "the departure" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The cognate verb as well has substantial support for the translation "to physically depart." A number of questionable assignments of categories in the standard classical lexicons contribute to the confusion in our understanding of the word.

CHAPTER 4

THE ARGUMENT FROM STRUCTURE

The Structure of First Thessalonians

An exegete must not only be aware of the grammatical and lexical portions of the text under examination, but the importance of understanding the literary structure of the passage has been realized within the last decade. It is important to understand the literary structure of the two Thessalonian epistles so accurate contextual comparison can be made. If Paul is dealing with eschatology in both letters then we should be able to make use of insights gained in one when talking about the other.

The literary structure of 1st Thessalonians is a five-part structure based on the familiar Pauline triad found in 1 Thessalonians 1:3a. In that verse Paul calls to mind their "work produced by faith," their "labor produced by love" and their "steadfastness produced by hope." (Author's translation reflecting his understanding of the nature of the genitives) This leads to a five-part structure:

- I. Opening: (1:1-10)
- II. Work of faith: (2:1-3:10)
- III. Labor of love: (3:11-4:12)
- IV. Steadfastness of Hope: (4:13-5:11)
- V. Closing: (5:12-28)

There may be some overlap in these sections, but this outline is not hard to justify. In chapter 2 Paul reminds them of his initial proclamation of the gospel and how they had afforded him and his companions an excellent reception. However, his premature departure had made him anxious for their spiritual

progress especially since the church apparently was under severe persecution. In chapter 3 there are five occurrences of the word "faith" to include Paul's stated desire and perhaps the purpose of the letter, to "complete what is lacking" in regards to the content of their faith. Then in the next section the issue of love is introduced. Paul wants them to "increase and abound in love toward one another and all men." (3:12) Finally in the last major section (4:13-5:11) the letter concerns itself with eschatology and the believers' future hope. So we can see in the first letter the issue of love seems to take a central place.

The Structure of 2 Thessalonians

Now if we accept the previous structure of 1st Thessalonians, the structure of 2d Thessalonians becomes very interesting.[49] The reason it become noteworthy is because the ordering of topics is changed. Eschatology has now taken center stage.

- I. Opening (1:1,2)
- II. Work of Faith (1:3-12)
- III. Steadfastness of Hope (2:1-17)
- IV. Labor of Love (3:1-16)
- V. Closing (3:17-18)

Now if this is understood, the effect is to help us understand that the hope section in 2d Thessalonians is a more detailed discussion of what had already been discussed in 1st Thessalonians which allows us to make exegetical comparisons between sections.

The Structure of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Powell has given us insight into the structure of this passage with his suggestion that a chiastic arrangement exists that centers are the verses dealing with the Restrainer. (2:5-7) He views our word in question to be parallel with verses 2:10-12 where the activities of the followers of the Man of Lawlessness are spelled out. Consider his structure as follows:

- A. Verses 1-3a Warning
 - B. Verse 3b The apostasy
 - C. Verses 3c-5 The revelation of the Man of Lawlessness.
 - D. Verses 6-7 The Restrainer
 - C.' Verses 8-9 The revelation of the Lord and the annihilation of the Lawless One.
 - B.' Verses 10-12 The leading astray of unbelievers
 - A.' Verses 13-15 Thanksgiving and exhortation

However, we find a problem with his presentation. First of all the chiasmic structure needs to extend to verse 17. The leg A' should start at verse 15. The exhortation to stand fast in the apostolic traditions is really a different topic than verses 13-14 which is dealing with their future acquisition of salvation (cf. 1st Thessalonians 5:9). The believers acquire their future salvation when they participate in the rapture and their future acquisition of glory comes immediately afterward at the judgment seat of Christ. We suggest the following structure.

[Now concerning how the coming of the Lord and the Rapture relate to each other. Notice the word Parousia does not occur again until much later in the passage. Since Biblical writers and speakers often answer questions in reverse order, we should expect to see a discussion of the Rapture in the first seven verses.]

- A (2:1-3a) A Warning not to be shaken in mind by a spiritual utterance, a pseudo letter, or an oral teaching that the Day of the Lord had already arrived.
 - B (2:3b) The Departure of the Church
 - C (2:3c-5) The Revelation of the Man of Sin by his desecration of the temple.
 - D (2:6-7) The Departure of the Restrainer
 - C' (2:8-12) The Revelation of the Man of Sin by signs and wonders.
 - B' (2:13-14) The Return of the Lord who will destroy the Man of Sin and grant salvation to the returning church.
 - A' (2:15-17) Exhortation to the believers to stand fast in the traditions which they were taught by word or epistle.

CHAPTER 5

THE ARGUMENT FROM PARALLEL PASSAGES

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Sometimes other passages can supply hints that will help with understanding the passage under consideration. We have already argued that our 2 Thessalonians passage and this passage are parallel. We note first that Paul is responding to a

subject raised by the Thessalonians. He uses the standard Pauline formula for changing the subject, **περι δε**. We also note in verse 14 that God will bring back (in the rapture) "those who sleep because of Jesus." What is often overlooked here is that martyrdom for the faith is in view. Because of their testimony to Jesus, some of the believers had suffered death. This would certainly be a cause for anxiety among the rest. This certainly explains the identity of the "saints" mentioned in 3:13. These martyrs come back with Jesus at his Parousia which in this case must be understood as referring to the Rapture. In 2:19 we are told that this will be the time that the apostles receive their crowns indicating that the judgment seat of Christ and the Rapture are closely related.

In verse 4:16 we have another clue to help in our other passage. Paul says, "the dead bodies **νεκροί** shall rise first **πρωτον**. Paul only uses this adverb two places in his writings: here and in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Here he is giving a sequential order or a list. It seems safe to assume he is also giving a sequential order in the other passage.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

In this next section, we again have the special formula **περι δε** that indicates the subject is changing. However, in verse 5:1 there is an interesting phrase that many seem to over look. What does Paul mean when he says, "now concerning times and seasons...?" This is of interest because the subject being discussed in the day of the Lord the same topic as in 2 Thessalonians. This is the content of the Thessalonians question. The first word is **χρονος** a word apparently dealing with periods. The second word is **καιρος** dealing with "points in time". The two words are only used in combination in two other verses in the whole of Scripture: Daniel 2:21 and Acts 1:7. The occurrence in Acts 1:7 is instructive, "Lord is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" The Book of Daniel also deals with the establishment and removal of earthly kingdoms as the dream in Daniel 2 shows. The word **καιρος** is used in the familiar phrase "time, times, and half a time". Apparently, the Thessalonians are asking for a detailed chronology of the Tribulation period and how it relates to the Rapture. We know that this word is used in 2 Thessalonians to specify the revelation of the Man of Sin will be at the appointed time. The point of this is that if the Thessalonians were interested in "points of time," i.e. dates or feast days, then it appears logical that Paul in 2 Thessalonians would present the start of Daniel's 70th week, the midpoint in the Tribulation period, and the return of Jesus in chronological order.

We are surprised then to discover that Paul essentially tells them that they do not have a need to know. The reason why they have no need to know is that the day of the Lord will come "like a thief in the night". A thief gives no warning signs. This concept of the thief was first introduced by the Lord in Matthew 24:43

and is a standard simile referring to the Rapture which is also the Day of Judgment for the church. Like any good Hebrew day, the day of the Lord begins at night.

In 5:3, there is more of interest. We could translate, "whenever they (Israel) are saying 'peace treaty' and 'secure borders' then destruction (understood here as physical death) will come upon them suddenly. Von Rad reasons,

"Since the Hebrews sometimes use בְּרִית for this kind of an alliance, it is not surprising that shalom occurs when there is a reference to a covenant. Indeed, the connection between the two words is so strong that in this context shalom seems to have become an official treaty term. Ezekiel 34:25 and 37:26 talks about a treaty of peace."^[50]

Further in 5:3 "the birth pangs" are a standard expression indicating the start of the seven-year treaty period of Jacob's trouble. This is the third proof that Paul is mentioning the beginning of the day of the Lord as coterminous with the Rapture.

Thus the phrase "they shall not escape" means, "escape in the Rapture. (cf. Luke 21:36)

In summary, when asked about dates and time periods, Paul spends all his time talking about the opening event in the day of the Lord. The believers have no need to know because they will be gone while the events of the day of the Lord are played out.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

The first thing we notice is that Paul introduces the subject as "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him." Since the two nouns are governed by one article it seems apparent that Paul wants to explain how "the coming and the gathering" are related. Notice that the word **παρουσία** is not mentioned until we get to 2:8. If that is the case, where is our gathering together to him being discussed?

The disturbing teaching was that "the day of the Lord had already arrived" and apparently the Thessalonians had missed the rapture. The verb **ερχομαι** is also used in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 to describe the coming of the day of the Lord.

The whole complex of verses about the man of sin is very date specific. It happens at the midpoint through the tribulation period. He is called the Son of Destruction (**απωλεια**) because his abomination is related to the rise of Apollyon in Rev. 9:11. As has often been noted, there are presently chained groups of angels who have been confined to the Abyss because of their behavior in the

pre-Flood world. Half way through the Tribulation period, these chained demons are released by an angel from heaven who has the keys to the Abyss. They have a king over them called Abaddon or Apollyon. This is very appropriate since there was a worship center to Apollo located on the isle of Patmos where John was exiled. One of the symbols for Apollo was the locust. He then indwells the physical body of the Man of Sin whose identity has not been revealed until that time. If we assume that the treaty that starts the Tribulation is signed on Passover to coincide with Jewish expectation of the arrival of Elijah, then the Man of Sin would appear 1260 days later at the Feast of Tabernacles. Since this is the feast day when all the nations are invited to come up to Jerusalem and worship, what better time for the Man of Sin to declare his deity before the eyes of a watching world. His major act of desecration is related to a rebuilt Jerusalem Temple. Those who follow him are described as those "who are being destroyed" in the Greek **απολλυμι**. The only other person called the Son of Destruction is Judas Iscariot in John 17:12. It is another case of demonic possession. This individual's coming is viewed in our passage as a "working of Satan" which is a case of demonic possession. This is when the treaty with the nation of Israel to grant permission to restore the temple and sacrifices will be broken. This is when he starts his desolation of the righteous 144,000 of Israel in the last half of the tribulation period. But at the end of the Tribulation period 1260 days later, the Lord returns and destroys the Lawless One with the breath of his mouth. How ironical that the false prophet was given power to "give breath" to the image of the beast.

Conclusion

A close examination of parallel passages leads us to understand that Paul is presenting in detail in 2 Thessalonians 2 a more detailed description of the chronology he already started in 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5. This adds to the possibility that "departure" should be the translation and not "apostasy."

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this brief study we have set out to examine the possibility that the word **αποστασια** normally translated "falling away" or "rebellion" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 should be translated "departure." We have examined the grammatical evidence first and found that the anaphoric use of the article leans heavily to that understanding.

Next we surveyed the lexical data for both the word **αποστασια** itself as well as its cognate verb and found that there is substantial evidence to suggest that the word had within its semantic range the notion of "physical or spatial departure".

Third, we looked at the literary structure of both epistles and suggested a literary structure for the section of scripture in which our word was found. We discovered the possibility of a chiastic arrangement that established our word as parallel conceptually to the idea that the believing church has been chosen for the "acquisition" of "glory" which we suggested happened at the rapture and the judgment seat of Christ.

Lastly, we examined the two eschatological sections of the two epistles to the Thessalonians and found there was strong evidence that Paul was presenting the day of the Lord as a programmed event. He chose to mention the starting point, the midpoint, and the ending point of the seven-year tribulation period.

After all this research, we believe that the evidence is overwhelming that the word **αποστασια** refers to the Rapture that has the effect of starting the seven-year tribulation period.

[1] Following are translations of **αποστασια** from several modern or popular translations: "falling away" (1901 American Standard Version), "apostasy" (New American Standard Bible), "rebellion" (New International Version), "falling away" (King James version), "Great Revolt" (New Jerusalem Bible), "rebellion" (Revised Standard version), and "rebellion" (New Revised Standard Version).

[2] Butalla, "The Departure of the Restrainer." Thesis presented the faculty of DTS, August 1998, p.3.

[3] Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 151.

[4] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) IV: 353.

[5] Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1988), 282.

[6] zionshopeorg/html/z9601.html

[7] Harris TWOT, vol. I, p. 525

[8] English, *Rethinking the Rapture*, 70

- [9] Kenneth S. Wuest, "The Rapture Precisely When?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 114 (January. 1957): 65
- [10] Dan Wallace, Unpublished Notes in Greek Grammar and Syntax, Dallas Theological Seminary, 3d edition corrected, 79.
- [11] Ibid. Notes, 79
- [12] Ibid., Notes, 81.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] Ibid., 83
- [15] Robert Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 117
- [16] Gundry, Ibid., 117
- [17] Gundry, Ibid., 117
- [18] Gundry, Ibid., 117
- [19] Wallace, Notes, 82
- [20] Henry George Liddell and Henry Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon revised with a supplement* [1968] by Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, 218)
- [21] A.D. Godley, trans., *Herodotus*, vol. II, books III and IV (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971) 158-59
- [22] Charles Forster Smith, trans., *Thucydides*, vol. III, Books V and VI (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 148
- [23] Smith, Ibid. 148
- [24] Arthur S. Way, trans., *Euripedes*, vol. IV. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964) 182
- [25] Way, Ibid., 183
- [26] A.L. Peck, trans., Aristotle, *Historia Animalium*, vol. I. Books I-III (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965)108.

[27] Ibid. 108-9

[28] W. S. Hett, trans. Aristotle: Minor Works (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) 52

[29] Hett, Ibid.. 53

[30] W.C.K. Guthrie, trans., Aristotle: On the Heavens (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 192

[31] Guthrie, Ibid.,193

[32] Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 115

[33] Sir Lancelot Brenton, trans., The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English, Reprinted 1986,1987(Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987) 310

[34] Ibid, 603

[35] Ibid, 610

[36] Ibid.,863

[37] Ibid, 903-904

[38] Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 218-19

[39] Leon J. Wood, *Is the Rapture Next?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956) 63-4.

[40] G.W.H. Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) 208; Liddell and Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, 218-19

[41] Lampe, Ibid.,200

[42] Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 218

[43] Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, trans., Harpers Latin Dictionary, A New Latin Dictionary,(New York: American Book Company, 1907), 587

[44] Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, 291

[45] Carl W. Conrad, Department of Classics, Washington University, St. Louis, MO

[46] James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930) 98

[47] Kittel, TDNT, I:512-13

[48] Paul D. Feinberg, "2 Thessalonians 2 and the Rapture" in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, ed. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995) 309-311

[49] Maarten J.J. Menken, "The Structure of 2d Thessalonians" *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (ed. Raymond F. Collins, *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum louvaniensium* 87; Leuven; Leuven University Press, 1990 (373-383)

[50] von Rad, TDNT, II:403