

Apostasia by Dr. David R. Nicholas, Th.D., President of Shasta Bible College & Graduate School

The Greek word apostasia is used twice in the New Testament, and is variously translated "forsake," "turn away," "turn the back on," (Ac 21:21), and "falling away," "apostasy," "rebellion," "final rebellion" (2Th 2:3). The word is also found a number of times in the Septuagint (Josh 22:22; 2Ch 29:19; Jer 2:19; 1Esd 2:14,17; Ezr 4:12,15; 1Mc 2:15). In Attic Greek the word meant "rebellion" or "defection," and is also used in the papyri to refer to political rebels, but most of the biblical and apocryphal references are to religious apostasy. Based on etymology (Gk. apo "away from" + stasis "standing") and the meaning of some cognate forms (aphistemi, apostasios), some scholars (notably E. Schuyler English, K. Wuest, and more recently H. Wayne House) have postulated a sense of physical departure from." The most theologically significant passage is 2 Thessalonians 2:3 where the apostasia is mentioned as one of two events which must precede the Day of the Lord. In that passage there are at least four views on the meaning of apostasia: (1) a designation for the Man of Sin (Chrysostom, Theophylact, Augustine, Alford, Moffatt); (2) the religious apostasy that will precede the second coming of Christ (Calvin, Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie, Gundry); (3) the religio-political rebellion against Christ that will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon (Hogg and Vine, Moore, Morris, Bruce); and (4) the rapture of the Church, in the sense of physical departure from the earth (English, Wuest, House).

Bibliography:

Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, University of Chicago Press; E. Schuyler English, Re-Thinking the Rapture, South Carolina: Southern Bible Book House, 1954; H. Wayne House, unpublished paper presented to the Pre-Trib. Study Group at Dallas, TX, 1994; Liddell & Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford: Clarendon, 1940.