

2Thessalonians 12-09-07b

We pick up our study in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. We are looking at the statement made that we should not be deceived, a command to not allow ourselves to be deceived, for that day will not come unless the rebellion or falling away comes first. If you have an RSV it says rebellion, if you have a New King James it says falling away. This is a translation of the word apostasia, A-P-O-S-T-A-S-I-A.

It's composed of two words, apa and stasis. We know what stasis is, if somebody is in stasis it means they are not progressing in one direction or the other, they are standing still. Apa means from or away from and this is a compound word that normally would simply derive its meaning from these two parts.

We have to be careful about this, I was pointing it out to my daughter the other day, we were going somewhere in the car and the oldie station was on and there is one of these songs from the 70s, it's got real high, fast electric guitar figures going on and some guy is saying do a little dance, etc., etc., get down tonight. Whenever I hear something like that, often I think of how difficult it would be for somebody 2,000 years hence with only partial access to our culture to look at the lyrics and to look at that particular phrase where it says get down tonight and you think alright, get down, what does get mean? Well get means to acquire, to lay hold of, down of course is directional but then it can also be attitudinal, I'm feeling a bit down today, so get down might be to acquire a depressed point of view. So why would I do a little dance and then get depressed at night? And well to me it's an illustration of the care with which we must address at our distance from Koine Greek word study.

There are many, many fallacious interpretations that are made. So if we're going to depart from the scholarly consensus on what a word means and the scholarly consensus is that this means rebellion. The reason they conclude this is that one of the ways in which this word was used in secular Greek was for military troops who did not follow orders any longer, they mutinied.

We would say mutiny if it was the Navy. So what we want to do is do the best we can, hopefully somebody 2,000 years from now if they run across the lyrics of Do a Little Dance or whatever the name of that song is, would have enough access to our culture to be able to discover that this is an expression, a figure of speech that means party hard, you know, have a good time. I say all that to say we want to try to survey the literature and see if this is what we want to go along with and I'll tell you why.

It doesn't make sense to me semantically. It doesn't make sense to me in the context. Why would Paul be writing to comfort the Thessalonian believers and say, look, don't be troubled and discouraged because the day of the Lord can't come until there's a gigantic apostasy and all the believers fall away and there's rampant lack of biblical faith and nobody cares anything about God or the Bible anymore.

So take courage. And they're looking around saying, well, we kind of feel that way now in Thessalonica. We're a tiny little, that's the whole reason we feel isolated is that nobody else believes what we believe.

If there's an apostasy, look at these Jews, look at the synagogue. So in what, how could this word from Paul be a comfort when it plays into their cause for concern? I just don't think he would say, don't be deceived. That day won't come until there comes first.

I mean, what do the Thessalonians think that they're in the midst of a giant revival? Has Paul just been talking about crowds and scores of Greeks and, and heathens coming to faith? And let me tell you what happened when we hit Antioch and Philippi and all these other places. Oh, that's, you know, it's just growing and abounding and there's hundreds of thousands of believers. That isn't what he said.

He said, look to God. He said, wait for God. There's coming a day of recompense and a day of judgment.

Wait for that. And he says, but don't let somebody tell you that that day has already come. That day will not come unless something happens first.

And it is something recognizable. It is something they can identify in Thessalonica easily. Paul says, look, sit down, calm yourself.

Don't be troubled. Remember, that day can't come until this other thing comes first. And whatever this other thing is, it's blindingly obvious.

You can't miss it. And this is what Paul leads with. He says, look, has this happened yet? No.

So calm yourself. It's got to be something. They don't have to take a survey or a poll and find out how many Christians there are in their region or in Greece or are there any left in Jerusalem? Let's get a daily report.

It's not that complex. He says, this is something you can immediately observe for yourself. Has this thing happened yet or not? Right? I just don't think some sort of empire-wide apostasy fits the purpose just semantically, just from a literature point of view.

So apostasia. The 105 millimeter howitzer here is my old friend, Moulton & Milligan's Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament. This is a classic, more than 100 years old reference.

When was this thing published? Erdman's. This one volume edition came out in 1930, but it's older than that. It's been around a long time.

It's a great, great reference. It's a survey of how these words are used. It's the vocabulary of the Greek New Testament.

It just looks at words that you find in the New Testament that might be illuminated by parallel and contemporary usages of those words in other Greek literature that has come down to us. So, I go to the a's, I go to the apas, and I look up apostasia. It says the noun apostates, and in the Septuagint it's found in Daniel 3.32, and then it occurs and he starts giving some cryptic references to some Greek manuscripts where this thing is used.

And he gives the Greek. And he translated in English that there's a certain man named Paon, P-A-O-N, who is sailing up the Nile, and he wants to reduce his katastasi. And the idea is, I think, and I'm not that great in secular Greek, but as near as I can tell from this long Greek phrase in here, he is sailing up the Nile with a powerful wind, and he wants to take off, sail.

He wants to reduce his sail. So he's going to take some sails off the mast. He's going to stand down.

What this is often used for is a legal document. For example, in Matthew, I believe it's 5.31 of Matthew, where Jesus says, you have heard it said that Moses said, if you want to get rid of your wife, issue her a certificate of divorcement. Well, divorcement is apostasion, and it means we're going to quit.

We have a legal document called a quit claim, and it's very closely parallel to the apostasion that they had in ancient Greece, where it is a document that says, I quit my interest. I will stay away from this thing. A bond of relinquishing is how they translate it in English here under the next article, which is apostasion, and apostasia and stasion, very closely related words.

Why am I going through all this agony? Because the whole rest of this chapter depends on what this word means. What are we watching for so that we know what's going to happen before the man of lawlessness is revealed? Well, what is it? We really wish that Paul would have slowed down and written a little bit more. The apostasia of who? The apostasia of you Thessalonians, the apostasia of believers, the apostasia of the body of Christ, the apostasia of the faithless, the apostasia of the demons.

He just kind of assumes that they know what he's talking about. Do a little dance, get down tonight, let's move on. They know what he's talking about because he has spoken of this when he was with them.

So it's a reference and he has given a meaning to this word that they know that we have to exert some effort to acquire. It was also called a contract of renunciation. And this would be a graphe with this or a soon graphe and then accompanied by this.

So it's a bill or a certificate of getting away from. The expression has hitherto always been found in connection with translations of deeds concerning the renunciation of rights of ownership. The soon graphe apostasia being contrasted with the process, the contract concerning the receipt of the purchase price.

So it was a legal thing and it says you have officially quit the property. You have officially quitted your claim, your right to, your association with this thing. You stand apart from it now.

You have no connection to it anymore. And you can see why it would be used for a bill of divorcement. We're done.

We have officially and literally split the blanket and everything else in the house. You got yours. I got mine.

We are disconnected. I stand apart from you. You stand apart from me, right? There was a guy that got mad at another fellow named Panas.

Panas was giving him a hard time, kept coming around harassing him. So he said, I want a restraining order. I want a restraining order is what he wants.

And so in Greek, it says, kai apostasion egrapsata toi panai, that's your Panas guy, me epeleusestai meth alon methene ton par autu, which is a long way of saying, or a Greek way of saying, he had a bill of ejectment or a bill of stay away from me drawn up against Panas so that neither he nor any person connected with him should trespass on the property. You stay away. This is the official writing of stay away.

And there are many, many references to documents of this. There's another one where it says apostasio may be short for sou grafes apostasio. And this is the Matthew 531 reference, an abbreviation for the Bill of Divorcement.

And of course, that in turn goes back to Deuteronomy 24. And you would have the Septuagint translation of that, where a divorce could be enacted under the law of Moses. That's about as much as is useful from this 105 millimeter reference.

But remember, where are we talking? We're talking to people up in Thessalonica, right? It's up there in the heart of the Greek speaking world. These people are smart. They've got access to a lot of classical Greek references and writings and philosophy.

They're not speaking the sort of degenerated Greek that might be spoken in a province that mostly spoke Aramaic. These people are Greek from birth. They speak Greek.

They're native speakers. It's not their second language like the Apostle Peter, let's say. So for that, we go to Liddell and Scott.

This is the classical Greek lexicon, and it's big because we've got an enormous amount of Greek literature that has come down to us. So we get the big one out. And we go to apostasia and see what the uses of it were in non-biblical contexts.

The print in this thing is small and the light is dim. So apostasia, it says it's a late form for

apostasis, which in the first meaning they give is defection or revolt, hence apostasy or rebellion. You have departed from something that you would normally be with.

Defected from the military. You've departed from your spouse, whatever it might be. It's used in Plutarch and some other places for that.

Especially in religious sense, rebellion against God or apostasy. And then they give some references such as our passage, the second epistle to the Thessalonians 2.3. And in the Septuagint, they cite Joshua 22.22 and say, well, what could that possibly be? So we hook back there because this will be the Greek translation of the Hebrew. Did not Achan, the son of Zerah, commit a trespass in the accursed thing and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? Well, that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.

And so this is the story of Achan. Remember, he was separated from the congregation. This is the idea.

So that is referenced here at the beginning. So that's definition one. Number two is departure or disappearance, and that's given in a reference.

Number three is distinguishing. You distinguish something, you separate it out. This is distinct.

This is separate. This is apart from. The fourth definition is distance.

Archimedes used this somewhere. Apostasyu, action against a freed man for having forsaken his prostates and chosen another. So he used for forsaking.

You were at a place. This was the normal state of things. You had a relationship.

That was the normal state of things. You have left it. You have quit it.

No longer involved with it. The second Roman numeral definition here is the apostasyu biblion, biblion meaning a writing, a writing of separation. We've talked about that in the other book, and it gives some of the same references here and cites the Matthew 5, 31 or 32, the Bill of Divorcement.

The third is apostasyu sugrafe. We also saw that in the other one. We had a biblion and a sugrafe, grafe, to write, soon, with, writing with, writing about.

This is a deed of session. This is a quitclaim deed, even as we have today. Then it goes on to talk about a causing for revolt.

It's used one place for a military revolt. But here's where it gets interesting, because we've got a whole big, long two-thirds of a column here on other uses, singular uses, because this word was very flexible. So, for example, it is used of emanation, something has gone forth from a thing and is no longer with it, you know, emanation, that there was a doctrine, a false doctrine of

emanation, that the Holy Spirit emanated from God, which is a separate subject, but, you know, to go forth in the sense of emanate from.

We say light emanates from a star. Slackness of bandages. Well, what happens if your bandage goes slack? What has it done? It has separated from the wound.

The bandage is supposed to be holding the wound tight, keeping in liquids or whatever it's supposed to be doing, and it has gone slack. It has separated. It's away from where it was before.

So you can kind of see the locus of meaning clarifying here. Depart from life, B-I-O-U, B-O-S, B-U, depart from life. Separation of effect from cause.

I want to distinguish or separate, here's the cause, here's the effect, they are not the same thing. The cause is not the effect, the effect is not the cause. I feel sunshine on my shoulder, but the sun is not on my shoulder.

The sunshine came from the sun, the sun is the cause, the heat on my shoulder is the effect, they are not the same, yet they stand apart. Just for distance between people or between things, looking at things according to their standing, according to where they stand apart from one another is the idea. And some of this you'd have to go in and translate all the Greek sources.

It's used as the place where something is put away, a repository or a storehouse, and this is used in three or four different Greek references. This is the standing away place. We say, I've got a storehouse, I've got a shed, I've got a storeroom.

We say store, but they would say, it's the apart place, I keep it apart, I've got a separate garage idea. In medicine, it was separative inflammation, throwing off liquids, there is something oozing out and away from the wound, it's coming out, it's emanating, idea. So in all of these things, what is the common element? You have something that moves either literally or figuratively away from where it used to be.

There was a closeness, there was an association, and it has moved away. Sometimes it is used of a rebellion, you were loyal and now you're not. Sometimes it doesn't say what the cause is, you were married and now you're not.

You had ownership of this land and now you don't. You used to come onto this property, but I have a restraining order, now you can't come in there anymore, you are restrained, you are forbidden. So it reminds me of when we studied the word *betula* and *alma*, the two words in Hebrew that are translated virgin.

One of them truly means virgin, but the other one, if you want it to mean virgin, you have to add a phrase, because it just means young woman, a young woman who has not known a man. If you say a virgin who has not known a man, it is redundant. If they have to put the phrase, who has

not known a man, what does that tell you? The word itself does not carry that virgin idea intrinsically, or you wouldn't have to modify it.

In the same way, if you have to modify apostasia to indicate that this was a military rebellion or revolt, with other details, you can't just say, oh, there was a, when I say mutiny, you don't need to know anything else. These people were under orders, they took an oath, now they're disobedient and they're trying to take over the ship, they've revolted against the captain. Mutiny has the whole meaning in it, right? Apostasia, when you look at all of these uses, does not.

My bandages don't mutiny away from my wound, right? My writing of separation so you can't come on my property doesn't mean that you rebelled against me, or that I rebelled against you, or that the land rebelled against your feet. There's no idea intrinsic to the word. This is why we went to these, because.

With that, let's just leave it as, let's just say the departure, the standing away. Apostasia literally translated is stand away. Makes sense in all of these contexts, doesn't it? Man and woman get divorced, they stand away.

Restraining order, don't come on my property, you stand away. Bandage comes loose from the wound, stands away. Take the sails off the mast, they stand away.

It's all moving something away, and now there is a distance and separation when formerly they were together. That's a requirement. You cannot apostasia unless you start out together.

You can't depart unless you were there, right? Beware lest any of you depart. Well, that doesn't apply to unbelievers. How can you depart what you never arrived at? So looking at our passage again, we have that day, let no one deceive you for that day will not come except first there comes the apostasia, the departure first, apostasia proton.

You know what protos means? That is first, in order of sequence, some sort of standing away. We don't even have to decide what it is yet, but some sort of, and this has to be recognizable, something easily grasped by the relatively new believers that Paul has spent a few weeks with in Thessalonica, right? It can't be some esoteric far out end of the limb of the tree doctrine. This is a real basic easy to see thing.

He says, look, you know that that day can't come except first proton. There is this apostasia. So it's got to be easily recognizable.

And we get another detail. And I want to point this out just so you can be watching for it ahead of time. Take a look at your chapter.

Look at verse 13. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation. Does this sound familiar? Does this hark back to what we saw in chapter one? There's a sort of a chiastic envelope type of

structure to this.

And when you look at verse five, he says, do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things and now you know what is restraining. You know what is restraining because the protest thing has not happened yet. And he says, you know, I've mentioned this.

And not only has the lawless man not been revealed, but you know what is keeping him from being revealed. He cannot be revealed. He can't show up unless the protest happens first, unless the apostasia happens first.

First things first. Now, you know, when I was with you, I told you these things. That's how they know what apostasia means.

We weren't there when he told him at first. And look at verse 13, we are giving thanks for you. He called you to our gospel, verse 14, therefore, verse 15, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

That's what I was looking for. And it's split on the page in this Bible where it isn't on my other one. Notice he says the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

What did he begin this section with? Don't be troubled by a spirit or a word or an epistle as if from us. That's that's a bracket. Here's another reference to the same thing.

What you need to remember is what you were taught by word and by epistle from us. Don't be deceived by fake words and epistles. Stick with what you know from the real words and the real epistles.

This is why our concentration on the word of God is so important. So going back now to let no one deceive you by any means for protoss. The standing away, the separation, the departure comes first and the man of sin is revealed.

Man of sin is an interesting phrase, because when you look at the adjective here, this is the Anthropolos teios anomios. Nomos is the word in Greek that means law. We talk about something being nomenclature and nominal, and we derive a lot of words from this that have to do with name.

But this actually means the law. The law was the naming of what a crime is, the naming of right and wrong, the naming of a standard. This is the standard.

Well, if it's anomia, that's the alpha privative, and it means the opposite. He doesn't pay any attention to law. He doesn't pay any attention to the Constitution.

He doesn't pay attention to the legislature, or the legislation, or the precedent, or what it has been understood to mean. He is a man above the law, beyond the law, not subject to or respectful of

the law. Not just a man of sin.

You say, oh, the man of sin, he's profligate, he's promiscuous, he's committing crimes. No. He is a man who operates above and beyond any legal constraint.

That's the foremost description of the Antichrist. He's like many a dictator who has come before, the law doesn't apply to me. You've got the Koran and the principles that it enshrines for Islam that says a man can have up to four wives, but not Muhammad.

Muhammad is above that law. He can have many, many more wives. He can take his son's wife.

He can take a 14-year-old child for a wife. He can do all kinds of things. He is not subject to the very law that he allegedly brought down from heaven and helped to author.

He's above it. Many, many dictators, well, that doesn't apply to me. That's what's going on here.

So there will be a standing away and then the lawless man will be revealed. Now you know what it is that restrains. Everything in between is a description of what the lawless man is and does.

But if you skip on down, he says in verse six, you know what is restraining that he may be revealed in his own time. This signal event of standing away, of departing, of separating from something that was associated, which I think is believers on this earth, representing the temple of the Holy Spirit both individually and collectively is taken away. It is divorced.

It quits the property. It stands apart and away. That sail is no longer on the mast.

That bandage is no longer on the wound. It's taken away. Now the man of lawlessness is revealed.

So do you know what it is that's restraining until he can be revealed? That thing that hasn't been, that hasn't left yet, that hasn't stood away yet. There is no hint, there's no description of, can you imagine if there was an apostasy, wouldn't Paul say, be sure you don't partake of the apostasy, be sure you don't get, let no man deceive you that you become a part of the apostasy and are still on the earth when the man of lawlessness is revealed. I mean, it just completely does not fit.

So we are going to conclude, I'm going to conclude, you're welcome to disagree, but for the sake of this study, the apostasia is the rapture of the church. I think you find as you look at it and meditate on it, it's the only thing that really makes sense of this passage. Now you know what it is that restrains.

The man of lawlessness cannot be revealed. Satan could try dictator after dictator. He could try Hitler.

He could try Mussolini. He can try Pol Pot. He can try Ho Chi Minh.

He can try Castro. He can try anybody he wants. He can try whoever the dingbat is over in Korea.

He can try any one of those guys, but he's not going to succeed in creating a man of lawlessness and perpetrating the worldwide empire that he so craves so long as the church is here. It restrains. It limits.

Paul is going to tell us in this passage, the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but it is constrained. It is restrained. And when that restraint is removed, when that bandage is taken off, the wound is going to separate.

It is going to ooze and all of the evil is going to come forth. The man of lawlessness will be revealed. Now you know what it is that restrains when it is taken out of the way.

And is this not the best answer to the concern of the Thessalonians? Don't let anybody tell you the day of the Lord has come because the day of the Lord comes to end the rule of the Antichrist. You can imagine that they're saying, look, the Roman dictator is the Antichrist. Look at who's up here ruling Rome.

He's the Antichrist. And there's people that try to say, you know, 666, Nero, etc. He says, no, the day of the Lord can't come because the man of lawlessness has not yet been revealed.

You know why he hasn't been revealed? Because you're still here. We have not yet departed. Now you know why it's impossible for the man of lawlessness to be revealed.

Therefore, it is impossible for the day of the Lord to come. That's why I encourage you, oh, Thessalonians, wait for God's judgment. Wait for God's recompense on those who are troubling you in that day when it comes.

But it's not here yet. So this provides now a ground and a starting point for this description of the tribulation. Here's your quiz question between now and next week.

Why does Paul go to such great lengths to describe the man of lawlessness and the time of the tribulation if the Thessalonians aren't going to be here? This is one of the questions raised by your mid and post-tribulational interpreters who think, well, they don't understand the apostasia this way. They think we will be here for half or all of the tribulation. They think this is why Paul describes it, so that the Thessalonians can be ready.

Well, if we're checking out ahead of time, why do we need to know this stuff? Well, there is an answer and it's right in the passage. So that's what we'll look at next time. Let's remember as we close, what is our point of application? Let no man deceive you, not just on eschatology, but on anything.

It is the word, it is the epistle from God's authorized messengers, the inspired truth from heaven that sustains us, that stabilizes us, that gives us power. If we ever feel like we are powerless or

we're not coping well, we need to go back to the word. We need to go back to the truth of God.

This is what the pile driver puts down as our foundation. Look at those verses in the first chapter. It is God, it is God, it is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what counts. That's what matters. When you're in His hands, you cannot be moved.

Jesus is my Savior, I shall not be moved. Just like a tree that's planted by the waters, I shall not be moved. I will not be troubled, I will not be disturbed, because I have the word of God in my soul.

That's why you're in Bible class, that's why you come so consistently, and why you meditate on it so faithfully, because this is our strength, this is our stability. And that is one thing that we certainly never want to apostatize from. If there's any apostasy to be worried about, that's the one.

We do not want to depart from our faith, it is our life. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the gift of your word, for the tools and the resources we have to enable and guide our understanding of it.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will be our teacher, will not only enable us to perceive the truth, but also to understand it, to draw conclusions from it, and to implement it in our thoughts and in our actions in the time that remains to us in this life. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.