

In view of the content and emphases of these Scriptures, it would appear that the eschatological Day of the Lord brackets the time period from Christ's Second Coming to the Final Judgment of the wicked. Whether this includes or excludes the Tribulation period depends on the time of the Rapture relative to the Tribulation.

In regard to this passage, it would appear from verse 2 that there was a possibility that some of the Thessalonian believers were disturbed and upset, thinking that the Day of the Lord had come and had caught them like a thief in the night, and that the wrath of God was about to fall upon them. In his previous epistle (in I Thessalonians 5:1-11) Paul had told them that the Day of the Lord's wrath would not overtake them like a thief (5:4) and that God had not destined them for wrath (5:9). In this second epistle he now assures them that the Day of the Lord has not yet come, and for two reasons: the ἀποστασία has to come first, and the "man of lawlessness" has to be revealed. Since neither of these things had as yet occurred, the Thessalonian believers did not need to be shaken or disturbed, even if someone were to claim that the Day of the Lord had come.

- b. The ἀποστασία of verse 3 is sometimes transliterated and sometimes translated. The A.V. translates it "falling away," the NASB transliterates it "the apostasy", and the NIV translates it "the rebellion". Since ἀποστασία is used only twice in the NT, an examination of the usage of its cognate ἀφίστημι in the NT is needful. This is facilitated by classifying its uses according to meaning in context with the help of a chart. Such classification shows that ἀποστασία should simply be translated as "departure." (See next page for chart)

The word ἀποστασία can mean either a physical departure of a person or persons from one location to another, or an ideological departure from one set of beliefs to another. The difference between these two kinds of departure is that a person can depart physically (move from one location to another) without changing his beliefs, and he can depart ideologically (change his beliefs) without moving physically.

On the basis of usage alone, it would appear at least as likely that ἀποστασία means a physical departure as an ideological departure. If it refers to a physical departure, it could be an allusion to the event Paul mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:17 -- the Rapture. If this is the case, then in his second epistle Paul was telling the concerned believers in Thessalonica that before the Day of the Lord can come, the Rapture must occur first, and then the "man of lawlessness" will be revealed, whom the Lord will destroy at His coming in power and glory.

- c. The "man of lawlessness" in this passage is spoken of in terms of various actions and characteristics. The following truths are taught in this account:
- (1) As the personification of evil, he will be restrained for a time (verse 6).
  - (2) At a certain point in history, he will be revealed to the world (verses 3, 8a).