

Matthew 24:15-28 – The Abomination of Desolation

If you remember last week, we started looking at what is known as the Olivet Discourse. It's the fifth and final discourse given to us in Matthew's Gospel. In verses 3-14 who was Jesus speaking about when He began addressing their questions? He is speaking to the Jewish nation and not to the gentiles. Why? Because these events, the end of days events, the tribulations are reserved for the nation of Israel after the end of the church age. If you recall our Revelation study, the first half of the seven years will be filled with false prophets and deceptiveness. This is what Jesus was referencing there. Beginning with verse 15, Jesus begins describing events that will take place during the tribulation period. **SEE TITUS 2:13**

What is the Abomination of Desolation? Jesus spoke of a coming "abomination of desolation" in the [Olivet Discourse](#) as He referenced a future event mentioned in [Daniel 9:27](#). In [Matthew 24:15–16](#), Jesus says, "So when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place . . . then those in Judea must flee to the mountains" (CSB). An *abomination* is "something that causes disgust or hatred;" and *desolation* is "a state of complete emptiness or destruction." Jesus warned that something (or someone) that people detested would stand in the temple someday. When that horror occurred, residents of Judea should seek cover without delay. Other translations speak of "the abomination that causes desolation" (NIV), "the sacrilegious object that causes desecration" (NLT), and "that 'Horrible Thing'" (CEV). The Amplified Bible adds the note that the abomination of desolation is "the appalling sacrilege that astonishes and makes desolate."

Jesus referenced Daniel in His words in the Olivet Discourse. The prophet Daniel mentioned the abomination of desolation in three places:

"He will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and offering. And the abomination of desolation will be on a wing of the temple until the decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator" ([Daniel 9:27, CSB](#)).

"Forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily *sacrifices*, and place *there* the abomination of desolation" ([Daniel 11:31, NKJV](#)).

From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there will be 1,290 days*" ([Daniel 12:11, NASB](#)).

The wording in the above translations indicates that the abomination of desolation is an object; in some other translations, the abomination appears to be a person: "On the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate" ([Daniel 9:27, ESV](#)).

Regardless of whether the abomination of desolation is a person or a thing, Daniel predicted the following:

1. A future ruler will make a treaty with the people of Israel.
2. The terms of this treaty will be for a "week"—which we take to be a period of seven years.
3. Midway through this time, the ruler will gather his troops and put an end to the sacrifices and offerings in the temple.
4. At that time, the ruler will desecrate the temple, setting up some type of sacrilegious object.
5. The desecration of the temple will continue until the judgment of God is finally meted out on the ruler and his followers, 1,290 days (3½ years and 1 month) later.

Daniel's prophecies about the abomination of desolation seemed to have at least a partial fulfillment in 167 BC when a Greek ruler by the name of [Antiochus IV](#) desecrated the temple in Jerusalem. Antiochus called himself "Epiphanies" ("illustrious one" or "god manifest"). He set up an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offering, and he sacrificed a pig on the altar. Antiochus went even further in his atrocities, slaughtering a substantial number of the Jews and selling others into slavery. And he issued decrees forbidding circumcision and requiring Jews to sacrifice to pagan gods and eat pig meat.

What Antiochus did qualify as an abomination, but it was not a complete fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. Antiochus Epiphanies did not enter a covenant with Israel for seven years, for example. And in [Matthew 24](#) Jesus, speaking some 200 years after Antiochus's evil actions, spoke of Daniel's prophecy as having a still future fulfillment.

The question then becomes, when, after Jesus' day, was the abomination of desolation prophecy fulfilled? Or are we still waiting for fulfillment?

We need to pause here for a bit and decide on something before we can go further. Do we take the [preterist view](#) that Jesus' warning in [Matthew 24:15](#) concerned events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In this view, the abomination of desolation occurred during the Roman occupation of Jerusalem when the Roman army brought their heathen images and standards into the temple courts. Preterism denies the future prophetic quality of the [book of Revelation](#). Preterism teaches that all the end-times prophecies of the New Testament were fulfilled in [AD 70](#) when the Romans attacked and destroyed Jerusalem. Preterism teaches that every event normally associated with the end times—Christ's second coming, the tribulation, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment—has already happened. (In the case of the final judgment, it still is being fulfilled.) Jesus' return to earth was a "spiritual" return, not a physical one.

Or, do we take the [futurist view](#), which sees the abomination of desolation prophecy as still in the future. This view understands that Jesus was referring to the [Antichrist](#) who, in the end times, will establish a covenant with Israel for seven years and then break it by doing something similar to what Antiochus Epiphanies did in the temple. The sacrilegious object Jesus called "the abomination of desolation" could be the "image of the beast" that the Antichrist's right-hand man, the [false prophet](#), will order to be set up and worshiped ([Revelation 13:14](#)). Of course, for [Matthew 24:15](#) to be yet future, the temple in Jerusalem will have to be rebuilt before the tribulation begins.

Those who are alive during the [tribulation](#) should be watchful and recognize that the breaking of the covenant with Israel and the abomination of desolation will herald the beginning of the worst 3½ years in history (see [Matthew 24:21](#)). "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man" ([Luke 21:36](#)). I've said this before, and I'll remind you once again, discussions surrounding End Times (Eschatology) are complex. There is room for some disagreement within Christianity about these things. However, full preterism has some serious flaws in that it denies the physical reality of Christ's second coming and downplays the dreadful nature of the [tribulation](#) by restricting that event to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.