

Session 4 Abomination of Desolation: Understanding the Basics

Jesus called us to see the abomination of desolation

Jesus called His people “to see” the abomination of desolation, and then pointed us to the book of Daniel to grasp the main Old Testament idea behind it (Mt. 24:15). In the New Testament, our understanding is greatly expanded by what John (Rev. 13) and Paul taught (2 Thes. 2).

¹⁵“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...

²¹then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been...”

(Mt. 24:15-21)

Jesus made it clear that Daniel’s “abomination of desolation” is the central event that helps us to understand His view of the end times. Jesus only identified this one specific political event, which will let His people know that they are in the generation of His return and that the Great Tribulation has started. There are many implications associated with this key event.

In order for the Antichrist to put an image of himself in the temple in Jerusalem, Israel must be a nation, with Jerusalem under its jurisdiction, and the temple must be built on its original site (Solomon’s temple), functioning with sacrifices according to the law of Moses.

One major obstacle to the temple being rebuilt is that Al-Aqsa Mosque (Islam’s third most holy site) and the Dome of the Rock stand on the Temple Mount (original site of Solomon’s temple). Someone must bring peace to the Middle East before this can happen.

The Antichrist will make a covenant with many nations that will allow this to take place (Dan. 9:27). Then he will betray the covenant and he will seek to force Israel and the nations, under threat of death, to embrace the abominations and worship him.

The abomination of desolation is the single key event that Jesus highlighted to help us understand many other events that will be connected to this terrible abomination.

The abomination of desolation is referred to eight times in the Scripture. Daniel used a form of this phrase four times (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), two passages quote Jesus’ use of the phrase (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14), and it is described by Paul (2 Thes. 2:3-4) and John (Rev. 13:12-18). We will best understand the abomination of desolation by comparing Daniel’s four references to it with what Jesus, Paul, and John said about this abomination.

In Matthew 24 Jesus gave His most detailed teaching on the end times. He mentioned the message of two Old Testament men that we must understand if we are to view the end times from God’s perspective—**Daniel** and **Noah**. Jesus established His end-time teaching in relation to what happened in their ministry. He made three direct references to Daniel’s prophesies:

the *abomination of desolation* (Mt. 24:15; Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), the *Great Tribulation* (Mt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1), and the *Son of Man coming on the clouds* (Mt. 24:30; Dan. 7:14).

Jesus compared people in the end times to those *in the days of Noah* (Mt. 24:37-43; Gen. 6-9).

what is the Abomination Of Desolation? a quick overview

The abomination of desolation refers to specific deeds being done that are abominable to God. These deeds lead to the desolation (destruction) of many people and nations. In other words,

it speaks of abominations (deeds) that lead to the desolation (destruction) of the nations, etc.

What are these abominable deeds, and what are the desolations that result from them?

The main event emphasized in the NT in the setting up the abomination of desolation is the Antichrist *placing*

his image in the temple (2 Thes. 2:3-4; Rev. 13:12-18). The main event emphasized in the OT, by Daniel, is the *stopping of the sacrifices* (Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

This abomination to God will occur in two ways—each involving several different dynamics.

The demands of the Antichrist: The Antichrist will *demand* that he be worshiped as God after he sits in the holy place in the temple in Jerusalem and stops the daily sacrifices. He will force others to accept this under the threat of death.

The responses of the people: Hundreds of millions of people will *accept* his claims.

The desolation will occur in two ways—both are related to worshiping the Antichrist.

Antichrist will cause desolation: He will seek to destroy any *who refuse* to worship him. He will bring desolation to the people, cities, and nations who refuse to worship him.

God will cause desolation: God will destroy any *who agree* to worship the Antichrist. He will bring judgment on the people, cities, and nations that worship the Antichrist.

⁹If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. (Rev. 14:9-10)

the abomination of desolation: a closer look

John described the abomination of desolation in Revelation 13. Two main components of the abomination of desolation will *deceive* the multitudes in the nations and *force* them to worship the Antichrist. These two components are the *image of the Beast* and the *mark of the Beast*.

¹⁵He [**False Prophet**] was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶He causes all...to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark... (Rev. 13:15-18)

Image of the Beast: An image of the Antichrist will be placed in the holy place of the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. The False Prophet will deceive many by making it breathe and talk. This image will be the greatest abomination in history, because it will deceive untold millions into worshiping the Antichrist.

The image may combine cutting-edge technology (holograms?) and supernatural demonic elements, causing this image to breathe and speak. There may be a global network of statues (holograms?) in local “worship sanctuaries” connected to the temple in Jerusalem.

The “image of the Beast” is one of the most significant signs of the end times.

John emphasized it 10 times (Rev. 13:14, 15 [3x]; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

Mark of the Beast: The mark will be a significant part of the abomination of desolation (Rev. 13:16-17). It will be illegal to refuse the mark. Those refusing it will not be allowed to buy or sell the necessities of life. They will be seen as criminals of the state, guilty of the death penalty. They will be sought out, as criminals dangerous to society.

Paul described the abomination of desolation in 2 Thessalonians 2.

³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [**Jesus’ return**] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [**Antichrist**] is revealed, the son of perdition,

⁴who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God [**associated with God**] or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God...

⁹The coming of the lawless one [**Antichrist**] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders... (2 Thes. 2:3-9)

Summary: The great abomination will include the Antichrist claiming to be God and forcing the nations, by

state law and with state resources, to worship him as God, under the penalty of death. This will be the greatest abomination to God in history, yet it will be the Church's greatest hour.

The magnitude of the desolation

Jesus referred to Daniel's teaching on the abomination of desolation and the Great Tribulation.

¹⁵“...when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’...¹⁶let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...

²¹There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time...²²And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [**from physical death**]; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.” (Mt. 24:15-22)

Tribulation: Jesus referenced what an angel told Daniel about unprecedented trouble.

¹“At that time...there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered...” (Dan. 12:1)

No flesh saved: If the time of the Great Tribulation lasted much longer than 3½ years, no one would be saved from physical death, but all would be killed by the Antichrist's rage or by God's judgment. These 3½ years will threaten the life of the majority of the earth.

¹⁵The four angels...were released to kill a third of mankind. (Rev. 9:15)

³³The slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth to the other... (Jer. 25:33)

¹The Lord makes the earth empty [**of people**]...³The land shall be entirely emptied...⁶The inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:1-6)

The end-time harvest

“Therefore,” in verse 15, points back to the gospel being preached to all nations in verse 14.

¹⁴“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.¹⁵Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel...standing in the holy place...” (Mt. 24:14-15)

There is a dynamic relationship between the gospel being preached in power to all nations and the setting up the abomination of desolation (with its escalating martyrdom and deception).

We can easily overlook “therefore” in verse 15 and not tie it to verse 14. Those involved in world missions will be more equipped if they understand the abomination of desolation.

God will release great power to believers to reach the harvest in the context of exposing the Antichrist's deception and overcoming his persecutions, as seen throughout Matthew 24.

Many will be deceived by the Antichrist—even some who profess Christ will fall away. The falling away and the revealing of the Antichrist on the world stage are the two signs that Paul said should alert the church to the nearness of the Day of the Lord and Jesus' return.

³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed, the son of perdition... (2 Thes. 2:3)

Daniel's prophecies about the Abomination of Desolation

The abomination of desolation was referred to four times by Daniel (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). We will understand it best by comparing these references with what Jesus, Paul, and John said.

The abomination of desolation will need to be “set up.” A whole “system” will need to be set up.

This system will involve setting up an image of the Antichrist in the temple, removing the daily sacrifices, and setting up a worldwide infrastructure to enforce Antichrist worship (Rev. 14:9-11).

¹¹“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days [**1,290 days**].” (Dan. 12:11)
Paul confirmed that it will be “set up” yet he emphasized that *a man* will sit in the temple declaring to be God (2 Thes. 2). John emphasized that *an image* will be set up (Rev. 13).
Jesus insisted that something will be “standing” in the holy place but without telling us if it was *a man* or *an image*. Some say that this was all fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. However, the Romans did not “set” an idol or anything else in the holy place in 70 AD; rather, they tore down the holy place and burned it with fire.

¹⁵“...when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’...standing in the holy place”...
(Mt. 24:15)

¹⁴“So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’...standing where it ought not” (let the reader understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”
(Mk. 13:14)

The Antichrist’s armies will “place there,” in the temple, the Antichrist’s image (11:31).

³¹“They shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation... ³²But the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits [**miracles**]. ³³And those of the people who understand shall instruct many... ³⁴Now when they fall [**martyrdom**], they shall be aided with a little help...
³⁵And some of those of understanding shall fall [**martyrdom**], to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.” (Dan. 11:31-35)

Daniel 11:31-35 connects the activities concerning the abomination of desolation to operating in God’s power, receiving the spirit of revelation, and more. Notice seven themes that are brought together in five verses—the abomination of desolation (11:31), knowing God (11:32a), doing miracles (11:32b), receiving understanding (11:33a), reaching many in the harvest (11:33b), receiving supernatural help in persecution (11:34), and being brought to maturity (11:35).

Gabriel urged Daniel to search out and understand the vision concerning the 70 weeks and the abomination of desolation (9:23-27). Here, Daniel gave more insight about the abomination of desolation—he revealed that it is not only an image that is set up in the temple, but it involves a person, the Antichrist, “one who makes desolate” (9:27). Paul referred to this in 2 Thes. 2:4.

²³“Therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision... ²⁵Know therefore and understand... ²⁷In the middle of the week he [**Antichrist**] shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate...” (Dan. 9:23-27)

Daniel gave three details that give us insight into what the Antichrist will do. He will defile the temple by *removing the daily sacrifices, trampling the sanctuary and the host and committing the transgression*,” or setting up the abomination that results in the desolation of nations.

¹³I heard a holy one speaking..., “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?” ¹⁴And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days [**2,300 days**]; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” (Dan. 8:13-14)

The sanctuary will eventually be cleansed 2,300 days later when Jesus returns.

The abomination of desolation cannot occur until Israel rebuilds the temple and offers daily sacrifices. The

Scripture makes clear that the temple will be rebuilt and that sacrifices will occur (Dan. 9:26, 27; 11:31; 12:11; Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 11:1-2; 13:12-18).

Even now, plans to rebuild the temple (Third Temple) are being aggressively pursued in Israel.

The Third Temple is not the same as the Millennial Temple. Two distinct temples in Jerusalem are prophesied in Scripture, what some call the Tribulation Temple (Third Temple), which will be built by unbelieving Jews and then desecrated by the Antichrist, and the Millennial Temple.

The Millennial Temple will be built by Jesus (Isa. 2:3; 60:6, 10, 13; Ezek. 37:26-28; 40-48; Zech. 2:11; 6:12-15; 14:16-21).

Removing the sacrifices

There are six verses in Daniel that give us information into the daily sacrifices being removed (Dan. 8:11, 12, 13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). When these six verses are considered together (in letting Scripture interpret Scripture), then we can more clearly see the purpose that God intended to be understood related to “taking away” or “bringing an end to” the daily sacrifices in the end times.

In each passage, in which the abomination occurs, a man “takes the sacrifices away.” This is an evil man—he exalts himself seeking to rival Jesus the Prince (8:11); he casts truth down (8:12); he tramples underfoot the temple (8:13); he confirms a deceitful covenant (9:27); he leads forces that defile the temple and places the abomination of desolation in the temple (11:31); and he takes the sacrifices away and sets up the abomination of desolation for 1,290 days (12:11).

¹¹He exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away... ¹²an army was given...to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground... ¹³concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?” (Dan. 8:11–13)

²⁷Then he shall confirm a covenant...he shall bring an end to sacrifice... (Dan. 9:27)

³¹And forces shall be mustered by him...then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. (Dan. 11:31)

¹¹“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days [1,290 days].” (Dan. 12:11)

Why the Prince in Daniel 9:27 is not Jesus

Some isolate the abomination and the removing of the sacrifices in Daniel 9:27 from how they are defined throughout the book of Daniel. Thus, they wrongly conclude that Jesus is making the covenant and stopping the sacrifices. The context in Daniel is of an evil man removing sacrifices and setting up an abomination in the temple (8:11, 12, 13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

²⁷“Then he [**Antichrist**] shall confirm a covenant with many [**nations**] for one week [7 years]; but in the middle of the week [**3½ years**] he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one [**Antichrist**] who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate [**Antichrist**].” (Dan. 9:27)

Jesus did not make a seven-year covenant, but an eternal covenant. Jesus pointed to this passage as a key sign of Great Tribulation and His coming (Mt. 24:15, 21). The clear antecedent of “he” is “the prince that shall come” (9:26), not Titus, or Antiochus or Jesus. The sacrifices did not stop “in the middle of the week” (seven-year period), but 40 years later, in 70 AD. The Roman army stopped the sacrifices, not Jesus. Yes, Jesus made them

invalid in a spiritual way, but He did not stop them in the temple as the text demands. The sacrifices are taken away for 1,290 days in the end times (12:11). The “consummation” of God’s judgment being “poured out on the desolate” does not have an historical fulfillment in Titus after he destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD.