

# Matthew 24:15 Commentary

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[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)

Click chart to enlarge

**Matthew 24:15 Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand):**

**Greek** - hotan oun idete (2PAAS) to bdelugma tes eremoseos to rethen (APP) dia Daniel tou prophetou estos (RAP) en topo hagio, ho anaginoskon (MSNPAP) **noeito** (2SPAM)

**Amplified** - So when you see the appalling sacrilege [the abomination that astonishes and makes desolate], spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the Holy Place—let the reader take notice and ponder and consider and heed [this]—

**KJV** When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

**NET** "So when you see the abomination of desolation- spoken about by Daniel the prophet- standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

**ESV** "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

**NIV** "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel-- let the reader understand--

**NLT** "The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about-- the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place." (Reader, pay attention!)

**YLT** 'Whenever, therefore, ye may see the abomination of the desolation, that was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever is reading let him observe)

**NRSV** "So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand),

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## THE BEGINNING OF THE END

**CAVEAT EMPTOR** (Latin = "let the buyer [cf "reader"] beware"): Read the Scriptures before you read the commentaries or study Bible notes, so that you can read the text without bias. In other words, as much as possible, try to read the text you are studying as if you have never seen it before, never heard a related sermon, or never read a commentary on it. Humbly seek the attitude of the noble-minded Bereans (Acts 17:11-note) and in dependence on the filling and teaching ministry of your resident Teacher **the Holy Spirit** (cf Ep 5:18-note, 1Jn 2:27--note), **prayerfully** and carefully read and **observe** (See topic: **Inductive Bible study**) the three versions of Jesus' Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 so that you will then be able to read the commentaries (and these notes!) on Matthew 24:15 with wisdom and discernment (cp Heb 5:14-note). It is my intent to interpret the text as **literally** as possible, and to try to alert you when a comment may be speculative. (See topic: **Interpretation**)

Many if not most commentators appeal to Lk 21:20-24-note to help explain the abomination of desolation in Matthew 24:15. While Luke's description is very similar to Matthew's description, there are significant irreconcilable differences which are discussed in detail in the **Luke 21:20-24 Commentary**. See simple chart comparing Matthew and in Luke -- see **Chart Summary**. Suffice it to say that careful observation and comparison of these two sections leaves little doubt that Jesus is describing different events. I emphasize this point because most, if not all, commentators who interpret Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD make a strong appeal to Luke 21:20-24 in an attempt to substantiate their interpretation of the identity of the abomination of desolation.

Highly respected expositor **D Edmond Hiebert** (not a dispensationalist) makes an interesting comment on the Luke 21 passage to which many writers make an appeal to defend their 70AD interpretation of Mt 24:15 -

Because of the close parallels between the two events (**Ed**: Hiebert is referring to the 70AD events and future events related to Jerusalem), interpreters have always found it difficult to distinguish the two (**Ed**: Fulfilled in past or yet to be fulfilled) in Jesus' answer. The **sign** given in Luke 21:20 relates to the historical fall of Jerusalem. But Luke's **sign**, Jerusalem surrounded by armies, is not the same as that given in the other Synoptics, namely, the **abomination of desolation** in the temple. **Luke 21:20-24 records a part of the Olivet Discourse which has not exact parallel in the other two Gospels**. It vividly pictures the capture of the city and the resultant condition reaching to the end of the age. The **similarity** of Luke's picture to that of the other Synoptics had generally led to the assumption that they refer to the **same** event. While the two events have much in common, there are features in Mark's (**Ed**: And Matthew's) account which clearly look beyond the fall of Jerusalem and relate to the eschatological end. This is evident from the close connection which the paragraph has with the **Second Coming** described in the following verses (Lk 21:24-27). Second Thessalonians 2:3-10 (note) supports the view that the **abomination of desolation** refers to the eschatological **Antichrist**. The tribulation connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, standing in the foreground of the Olivet Discourse, foreshadows and contains the essential features of the Great Tribulation of the end time. ([The Gospel of Mark- An Expository Commentary- D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) (Bolding added)

So now let's carefully observe the text and **context** of Matthew 24:15 seeking to glean the plain sense of the text while assiduously avoiding looking for hidden meanings (allegorical, mystical, idealistic, spiritualized). As you read the text, keep the following simple axiom in mind:

**If the plain sense makes good sense in context,  
seek to make no other sense or it may be nonsense!**

Note that this rule should also be applied when one reads text that is clearly figurative language, as when Jesus says "I am the door." (Jn 10:9). Clearly He is not a literal door, and yet the figure conveys a literal meaning. In other words when a text must be read **figuratively**, it is important to remember that the Spirit still intends for the figure of speech to signify a literal meaning. Figurative language does not give the reader "[carte blanche](#)" to let the imagination "run wild" in an attempt to make the text confirm to one's preconceived notions of what the text means.

I agree with **Dr John Walvoord** who wrote "**This portion of the Olivet discourse is crucial to understanding what Christ reveals about the end of the age. The tendency to explain away this section or ignore it constitutes the major difficulty in the interpretation of the Olivet discourse.** In the background is the tendency of liberals to discount prophecy and the practice of some conservatives of not interpreting prophecy **literally**. If this prediction means what it says, it is referring to a specific time of great trouble which immediately precedes the second coming of Christ. **As such, the prediction of the great tribulation is "the sign" of the second coming, and those who see the sign will be living in the generation which will see the second coming itself.**" ([The Signs of the End of the Age](#))

To amplify Dr Walvoord's comments, to misinterpret Jesus' specific sign in Matthew 24:15 is analogous to driving to some desirable destination but to fail to correctly interpret one very crucial, strategically placed sign (how many of us haven't done that!) with the result being that one ends up lost and/or at the wrong destination! Just as it is best to read road signs "**literally**," so too it is best to read Jesus' sign in Mt 24:15 literally (and in context) lest one ends up "dazed and confused" in Matthew 24!

**Stuart Weber** observes that "Of course, the fact that Israel has reestablished itself as a national political entity and occupied the holy temple site again has many scholars anticipating the end times very soon. No other nation has experienced two thousand years of cultural dispersion and retained their national integrity. God is not yet finished with the Jewish people. And the Great Tribulation to come in the seventieth and final of the "seventy weeks" (periods of seven years) predicted for Israel by the prophet Daniel (Da 9:24-27) will see the nation purged and prepared for the return of its Messiah-King." (Holman New Testament Commentary)

**THEREFORE**

**Therefore** - This is a **term of conclusion** which should always prompt the question "What's the *therefore* there for?" What has Jesus just clearly stated? "**The end will come.**" (Note that Luke does not have a verse that parallels Mt 24:14 while Mk 13:13 does refer to "the end.") From the context, it is clear that **therefore** connects "**the end**" with the event being introduced in Mt 24:15. But this begs the question "**the end**" of what? Careful attention to the **context** gives us the answer. Recall that Jesus is addressing the disciples' question about "**the end of the age**" (Mt 24:3). In Mt 24:15 Jesus gives a visible sign which marks the beginning of **the end** of this present age which will be consummated by the **Second Coming** of Christ described in Mt 24:27-31.

**Alan H McNeile** says "**oun** (therefore) connects the section with the preceding "*to telos*" (**the end** - Mt 24:14)." ([The Gospel according to St. Matthew - 1915](#))

**McNeile** also observes that whereas Matthew begins Mt 24:15 with "Therefore when," Mark's version (Mk 13:14) begins with '**But when**' "which introduces a new stage in the progress of events."

**Robert Gundry** on **therefore** - "**Therefore**" indicates that because the preceding paragraph detailed events that will characterize the church age but not signal the nearness of the end, the present paragraph is going to detail events that will signal its nearness. (Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation)

**Broadus** on **therefore** - What inference is expressed by '**therefore**'? He has said that **the end** is coming (Mt 24:14), and that those who endure to **the end** shall be saved (Mt 24:13); *when therefore* they see a certain sign, let them promptly flee, in order to save themselves. (Matthew 24:16f.) ([John Broadus' Commentary on Matthew](#))

**Leon Morris** - **Therefore** connects with the preceding statement and leads into what follows. It is because **the end will certainly come** that the disciples are to be on their guard. (Pillar NT Commentary-Matthew)

**Thomas Constable** - "**Therefore**" or "So" (Gr. *oun*) ties [pericope](#) very closely to the preceding one. ([Matthew 24 Commentary - Expository Notes](#))

**Hiebert** comments - "Jesus describes the end-time crisis, the **sign** that the disciples had asked for (Mt 24:3). They were ardently hoping that their Master would speedily establish His earthly kingdom (**Ed**: see their question in Acts 1:6, cf Lk 19:11). Their views of the future were still essentially Jewish, and they conceived of the anticipated Messianic Kingdom in relation to the people of Israel. As yet, they had no clear concept of the coming church. If Jesus had spoken to them of the rapture in the future, He would only have added confusion to the limited understanding they had of what He had already said." (**Ed**: As an aside, most commentators agree that there is no mention of the Rapture in Matthew 24-25.) ([The Gospel of Mark- An Expositional Commentary- D. Edmond Hiebert](#))

## SUMMARY INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 24:15

Here is my summary interpretation of Mt 24:15 which will be explained in more detail in the remainder of the comments and compared with other interpretations. This summary is based primarily on simple observation of the Scripture, reading the text for the plain sense (literally), not looking for hidden meanings and comparing the text with related or parallel Scriptures to help understand Jesus' intended meaning. This summary is not based on a specific system of interpretation. Even though some might say the summary sounds like a dispensational interpretation, I am not a dispensationalist. That said, without further qualification, here is the summary of Matthew 24:15 (**Note**: the "+" identifies a link to notes related to the passage):

Jesus has just ended Mt 24:14-note with the words "**the end**" (the very last Greek word in Mt 24:14) and now responds to the disciples' initial request for a sign (Mt 24:3+) by giving them a very unique sign which will mark the beginning of **the end** of this age (Mt 24:3+). And so Jesus describes a specific sign, one which has not occurred in the past (but which had been foreshadowed-see [Da 8:13](#), [Da 11:31](#)), and which will literally be fulfilled in the future. Recall that a sign is something that one can see which points to something else. In Mt 24:15 Jesus says "when you see" indicating that this is a visible sign. He explains that the sign is the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. He also explains that study of the book of Daniel will help the reader understand the sign. The Temple was destroyed in 70AD, but Jesus says the sign is of some one or some thing standing in the Temple (holy place). Of course the problem with Jesus' prophecy is that there is currently no Temple. It follows that the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem ([see note](#)). If God can cause the nation of Israel to be reborn in May, 1948 against all odds, then a rebuilt Temple will not be too difficult for Him (Jer 32:17+, Jer 32:27+). Does this take faith to accept? Of course it does, but the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen (a rebuilt Temple, Heb 11:1+) are based not on an active imagination but on our faithful God (Lam 3:23) and His faith producing Word (Ro 10:17+, cf John's description of the temple in Rev 11:2+, compare Paul's mention of Antichrist taking his seat in the Temple in 2Th 2:3+, 2Th 2:4+, [see note on Tribulation Temple](#)). Daniel 9:27+ describes a prince who is to come (Da 9:26+) who will make a 7 year covenant ("one week" - see Daniel's Seventieth Week) with the "many," the "many" clearly being the Jews in context ("your [Daniel a Jewish man's] people" Da 9:24+).

This "prince" is the Antichrist (name used only in 1Jn 2:18+) who Daniel identifies as the "Little Horn" and who rises to power out of a 10 nation confederacy (Daniel 7:8+, cp Da 2:44-45+ where "the days of those kings" = "10 toe stage" [Da 2:42+] = 10 horns = 10 kings - cp Da 7:24+). The first 3.5 years, his devilish character is not obvious (see [note](#) on Rev 6:2), but in the middle of the 7 year "peace" covenant, he breaks the covenant with Israel and puts a stop to sacrifices and offerings in the [rebuilt Temple](#) (Da 9:27+) fulfilling Jesus' prophecy in Mt 24:15. Daniel says he also (as the "Little Horn") will overpower 3 of the original 10 members of the confederacy (Da 7:8+, Da 7:20+). Paul adds that the Antichrist (aka "man of lawlessness...son of perdition") will go into the "holy place," the [rebuilt Temple](#), and take "his seat in the Temple of God, displaying himself as being God." (" 2Th 2:3+, 2Th 2:4+, cp Da 11:36 2Th 2:3- 2Th 2:3- 2Th 2:3-+) In so doing he will commit the abomination that makes the Temple desolate. Note that this sign is *not* the Roman army surrounding Jerusalem in the past (70AD - cp Lk 21:20+), but a real person who will commit a real act of defilement (abomination) of the Jewish Temple in the future. At this same time, in the midpoint of the 7 year covenant, the Antichrist (aka "[The Beast](#)") is empowered by the dragon (the devil) for 42 months or the last 3.5 years of the 7 year period (Rev 13:4-5+) However, since it is unlikely the Antichrist will personally remain standing in the holy place, it is more likely that it is his image which the false prophet creates and commands the world to worship, which will remain standing in the holy place (cp Rev 13:14-15+, Rev 14:9, 11+, Rev 16:2+, Rev 19:20+, contrast Rev 20:4+)

During this last 3.5 years, the Antichrist will begin to pursue and persecute the Jews, which is the impetus for Jesus taking five verses to command and convince the Jews to flee when they see the sign of the abomination of desolation! During his last 3.5 years of the Seventieth Week, the Antichrist "will speak out against the Most High (beginning in Mt 24:15, 2Th 2:4 2Th 2:4, blaspheming God - Rev 13:6+, cp his great, boasts - Da 7:8+, Da 7:11+, Da 7:20+) and wear down the saints of the Highest One, with the intent to make alterations in times and in law (cp Da 9:27+ "stop to sacrifice and grain offering"); and they (the Jews) will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." (Da 7:25+ = Da 7:21+ = the Little Horn who "was waging war with the [Jewish] saints and overpowering them") In other words, after the Antichrist breaks his covenant with the Jews, they will be given into his hand for "time, times and half a time" (3.5 years, John says 1260 days in Rev 12:6+, which he repeats in Rev 12:14+ = "time, times, and half a time" = 42 months). John records "it was given to him (the Antichrist) to make war with the saints (the Jews first, but then to all who refuse to worship his image - Rev 13:15+) and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him." (Rev 13:7+) For how long? Three and one-half years beginning with the unmistakably clear sign in Mt 24:15 which inaugurates the time Jesus calls the "Great Tribulation" (Mt 24:21+ = Mk 13:19 = the "time of Jacob's distress" = Jer 30:7+) a time "such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall," a time which Daniel describes as "a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time" (Da 12:1+) but a time which "shall be cut short" (Mt 24:22) after "a time, times, and half a time" (Da 12:7+), during which "many (Jews) will be purged, purified and refined." (Da 12:10+, cf Zech 13:8, 9, Zech 12:10, Ro 11:26-27+) God will allow the Antichrist 1260 days (42 months) to do his worst, but not one day longer, because the true Christ will return and bring that Lawless One "to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2Thes 2:7-8, 9-10). Then the true Christ will fulfill many OT prophecies (Amos 9:11,12, Jer 30:9+, Jer 31:28+, Jer 32:42, 43+, Jer 33:14, 15, 16+, Ezek 37:22, 23, 24, 25+, Zech 14:11, 16, 17), and set up His 1000 year Kingdom on earth (cp Acts 1:6, 15:13-14, 15-18, Lk 19:11 Rev 20:4-5+), demonstrating God's *best* after 3.5 years of Satan's *worst*! Indeed, "Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him." (Da 7:27+)

**Ray Stedman** comments - "**Then shall the end come!**" (Mt 24:14) With these dramatic words, Jesus begins to answer the question of the disciples, "**What will be the sign of...the close of the age?**"...Now He focuses upon the (to the disciples) far-distant period, which He calls "**the end of the age.**" Without further delay He describes, in Matthew 24:15-22, the *sign* of the close of the age....The Lord's language here is the most somber He could employ. He is speaking of a time of trouble that is coming, the like of which has never been seen before in all human history. It will be a time of superlative distress, of unprecedented peril to human life, a time of shattering, staggering suffering, such as has never been seen before. There have been many black moments in history, but never one like this (Mt 24:21). For those who will be living in Judea (in and around Jerusalem), it will be a time to act promptly and quickly to get out of the city. It will be a time for emergency action. There will be no time left for the usual occupations of life." ([The Worship of Man - Matthew 24:15-22](#))

## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE END OF THE AGE

**John Phillips** writes "The Lord's reference to **telos** and "**enduring to the end**" (Mt 24:13, 14) forms a natural bridge from the first topic (the nations of the world) to the second topic (the nation of Israel). By far the most dramatic and terrible end-time events for Israel will be the coming of the antichrist, the great tribulation, and the battle of Armageddon. These national disasters will prune the fig tree of all its bad fruit and prepare the remnant for the return of Christ." (Exploring the Gospel of Matthew)

In the preceding **context** Jesus links the "**sign**" of the **abomination of desolation** with the worldwide preaching of **the Gospel**

predicting...

And this **GOSPEL** of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then **the end (telos) shall come.** (Mt 24:14-note)

**First**, notice that the immediate context of Jesus' "**sign**" in Mt 24:15 is "**the end shall come.**" **The end** of what is the question? Some writers ignore the immediate context and say this is "a sign of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem." But the second question of the disciples in Mt 24:3 was for Jesus to give them a sign of **the end of the age**, not the end of the Temple. If you ask the wrong question, you will very likely arrive at the wrong interpretation as does [Smith's Bible Dictionary](#).

**Second**, Jesus prophecy of the **Gospel Going Global** begs the question as to whether there are any other Scriptures that make a similar declaration? In Revelation the apostle John declares...

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an **ETERNAL GOSPEL** (Ed: cp "the eternal covenant" Heb 13:20-note) to preach (Ed: More literally "*gospelled the gospel*") to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people (Ed: compare Jesus' phrase "**the whole world**" in Mt 24:14); and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." (Rev 14:6-7-[note](#))

**Comment:** Notice that an angelically proclaimed global Gospel will be a clear sign to all of the world that the end is near! It won't be a man in Times Square wearing a sandwich sign that proclaims "The end is near"! No it will be God's messenger, an angel in midheaven! And no one will miss this sign! Of course if they don't have eyes to see or ears to hear (spiritually), they won't fully understand the implications of "**the hour of His Judgment.**" So what is the "**hour of His judgment**" that "**has come**?" At this time in the progressive sequence of the divine judgments, the world has already experienced the 7 Seal and 7 Trumpet judgments (the Seventh Trumpet sounding in Rev 11:15) and in Revelation 14 the world is on the verge of the final outpouring of God's righteous wrath from the "seven angels who had seven plagues (referring to the Seven "Bowl" or "Vial" judgments - Rev 15:7-[note](#), Rev 16:1-[note](#)), which are **the last**, because in them **the wrath of God is finished.**" (Rev 15:1-[note](#)) While space precludes a detailed chronological review of the events in the Revelation, upon careful observation it is very probable that this **Eternal Gospel** will be proclaimed at the mid-point of the last Seven years of this age (aka Daniel's Seventieth Week). And as [summarized above](#), the Global Gospel proclamation is contemporaneous with the unveiling of **the abominable sign** in Matthew 24:15! And so the world will see the convergence (if you will) of the greatest outpouring of divine wrath (3.5 years = the **Great Tribulation**) and the the greatest proclamation of the Gospel (Global for ALL to hear!) In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy and as Jesus prophesied "**then the end shall come.**" (Mt 24:14)

**John MacArthur** commenting on Rev 14:6-7 adds that "God will graciously offer sinners another opportunity to repent before unleashing the terrifying bowl judgments (Rev 16:1ff.)....Jesus declared that before **the end** comes the whole world will hear the Gospel of the kingdom (Mt. 24:14). The preaching of this angel will reach any who still have not heard the Gospel message. As earth's darkest hour approaches, the angel will proclaim the Good News that it is not too late. **There is still time to repent before God's judgment**" is consummated. (Revelation 12-22 Commentary)

## **WHEN YOU SEE A VISIBLE SIGN**

**When** ([hotan](#)) - **Hotan** is a "temporal particle, with a conditional sense, usually of things expected to occur in an indefinite future." (Abbott-Smith) Stated another way, the Greek particle **hotan** is an **expression of time** which should stimulate the question "**To what time does when refer?**" In this **context** Jesus is clearly referring to the time when the **abomination of desolation** stands in the **holy place** of the Temple.

**Leon Morris** - **When** has the force of "*whenever*"; Jesus is giving no indication of the exact time **when** what He speaks of will take place. It will surely happen, but it is the occurrence and not the precise timing that occupies His interest. (Pillar NT Commentary-Matthew)

**Hiebert** adds that **when you see** "looks forward to a definite, observable future event, but the time is left indefinite, "whenever ye may see." ([Ibid](#))

**Spiros Zodhiates** on **when** - The **when** is eclipsed by a "*what*", that is, some physical object called an "**abomination of desolation**" is given in place of a date. There will be a day and hour when (the abomination of desolation stands in the holy place)." (Exegetical Commentary - Matthew)

**You see** ([3708](#))([horao](#)) means literally to see with one's eyes. Jesus describes an event which would be visible to the sight. It would not be subtle or difficult to discern. As His next words suggest, if one misses this sign, there will be disastrous consequences,

including potentially the loss of one's life. Don't miss this sign! And the sad thing is that those who will be living in Jerusalem (and in the world in general) when this event takes place may not have spiritual eyes to **see** the sign because they have been misled (compare Jesus' repeated warning = Mt 24:4, 11) into believing that the sign was fulfilled in 70AD! **Lenski** says the abomination "is something unmistakable and easy to see."

**Ray Stedman** - "When you see," said Jesus, "the man who fulfills the qualifications described in the Book of Daniel, sitting in the temple and claiming to be God, then you will know that the end of the age has arrived." It will be a literal event to occur in a specific spot on earth at a definite moment in time. The prophecy of the seventy weeks in Daniel, already referred to, clearly indicates that there yet remains a seven-year period to be inaugurated before the prophecy is fulfilled. It also declares that it is in the middle of these seven years that the Antichrist will desecrate the Jewish Temple by his claim to be God. It is evident, therefore, that it is only the last three and one half years of this seven year period which can be properly called "the end of the age." This is also designated in other places as lasting for forty-two months (Revelation 13); a time, two times, and half a time, (Daniel 7); and one thousand two hundred and sixty days, (Revelation 12). These all add up to three and one half years. Daniel also calls this the "time of the end." ([The Worship of Man - Matthew 24:15-22](#))

**Zodhiates** notes that **see** is "the aorist active subjunctive of *eídon* from [horao](#), to see and perceive with emphasis on perception. Believers will see or perceive this disgusting thing at the completion of **the age** (Mt 24:3). Furthermore, they will need to "mind" what was written in the book of Daniel to perceive accurately how this event fits into the general scheme.

**Tony Garland** addresses the timing of "**when you see**":

Jesus warns believers of the time of the end, especially those in Judea, to watch for this event. The event marks the near and definite approach of the end of the age. My view is that this event occurs at the midpoint of the final seven year period prior to Jesus' return.

**I. Daniel 9:27** seems to indicate it takes place at the mid-point of the final of Daniel's seventy sevens, 3.5 years after the final seven is initiated by the signing of a covenant, apparently which includes permission for establish Jewish sacrifices within their temple.

**II. Daniel 7:25** indicates the authority of the little horn, the Antichrist, extends over the saints for a period of 42 months, or 3.5 years.

**III. Revelation 13:5** indicates the beast from the sea, the Antichrist, is granted authority for 42 months, or 3.5 years. Since his authority ends with the Second Coming of Christ, his stranglehold on power commences with this act of desecration.

**IV. Revelation 12:6** and **Revelation 12:14** indicate that the Jewish remnant which flees from the persecution of the Antichrist is protected and nourished by God for 1260 days or a time and times and half a time: a period of 3.5 360-day years. This protection is needed until the arrival of Jesus at the Second Coming ([Matthew 24 Commentary Notes](#))

## THE DEFINITE SIGN OF THE END: THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

**The abomination of desolation** (to *bdelugma tes eremoseos*) - this phrase which is also found in the book of Daniel (see [discussion below](#)) may be translated, "*the abomination which makes desolate or lays waste.*" **Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary** adds that "Daniel prophesied that the Temple would be used for an *abominable* purpose at some time in the future. As a result, God's faithful people would no longer worship there—so great would be their moral revulsion, contempt, and abhorrence at the sacrilege—and the Temple would become *desolate*."

**Hiebert** - The **abomination** denotes an object of disgust, something loathsome and detestable, while the genitive of **desolation** describes the effect produced, causing something to be deserted and left desolate....The expression thus denotes that which, as a symbol of heathenism, is detestable to God and His people. It portrays not the *destruction* of the temple but rather its *profanation*." ([Ibid](#)) Note Hiebert's distinction between **destruction** and **profanation** -- Luke 21:20-24 does not use the word abomination, because there Jesus describes not it's **profanation** but its **destruction**!

- See [Chart Summarizing differences between Matthew 24:15ff and Luke 21:20-24](#)

**John Broadus** on **abomination of desolation** - The Greek construction makes it the abomination characterized by desolation, which might be as a token or as a cause of desolation. ([Ref](#))

**John MacArthur** on **abomination of desolation** - In other words, the abomination causes the desolation. (Matthew: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

**Thomas Constable** - The **abomination of desolation** "describes something that because of its abominable character causes the godly to desert the temple on its account."

**D A Carson** says the **abomination of desolation** "means "the abomination characterized by desolation," leaving it unclear whether the abomination "causes" desolation (NIV; cf. McNeile, "*the abominable thing that layeth waste*"; RSV, "*the desolating sacrilege*") or is simply a token of it. **The former is more likely.** The expression occurs four times in Daniel (Da 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). (Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Bolding added)

**R C H Lenski** on **abomination of desolation** - "Abomination" is the main term, something that is utterly abominable in God's sight, and **this will occur right in the Temple** that is consecrated to God. The genitive "**of desolation**" characterizes the **abomination** according to the effect it must produce, namely desolate the desecrated Temple, leave it empty of worshippers. The moment the believers see this (and it is something unmistakable and easy to see) they are to flee the country posthaste. (The Interpretation of St Matthew's Gospel)

Note that **Lenski** (who interprets Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in 70AD) reads "**holy place**" literally recognizing the **abomination** as something that "will occur right in the Temple" and also acknowledges that the **abomination** will be a clear, visible warning, one which allows those who see it time to flee the fury that follows!

So what is the sign? What is the **abomination of desolation** that makes desolate and serves as a signal to those who see it to flee?

While there are many interpretations of the identity of the **abomination of desolation** (including Pilate, Caligula, Hadrian, etc) there really only 3 main interpretations, and remember only one can be the correct interpretation.

**(1) The Future Antichrist** - This is only futuristic interpretation and it refers either to the Antichrist himself and/or his blasphemous image.

**(2) The Roman Army** - This is by far the *most popular* interpretation, but as will be shown [below](#) is also the *most improbable* interpretation! Most commentators base this interpretation on Luke's similar (but note carefully -- **not identical**) description in Luke 21:20-24. See [Chart comparing and contrasting the descriptions by Luke and Matthew](#). Most Bible Dictionaries favor this interpretation ([Easton](#), [Smith](#), but the [Morrish Dictionary](#) is an exception)

**(3) The Jewish Zealots** - "Shortly before A.D. 70 the Zealots were in the temple precincts during the war with Rome, and their presence could have been considered a desecration." (Reformation Study Bible) Henry Alford holds this view ([Ref](#)). Why would the Zealots be offered as a candidate for the abomination? It is because these commentators recognize the problem of identifying the Roman Army as the abomination and understand it could not possibly be the Roman Army because it would have been too late to flee the city once the Army had broken into the city.

All of the most "highly acclaimed" commentaries on Matthew interpret the **abomination** in light of Luke 21:20-24 and thus usually interpret the abomination as the Roman Army. A survey of Matthew commentaries written prior to 1900 as show that **almost all** of these commentaries also identify the **abomination of desolation** as the **Roman Army** and very few even mention the possibility that this might be related to the Antichrist ([Trapp](#) is an exception).

The paucity of older (and even newer) commentaries that mention the possibility that the **Antichrist** is the **abomination of desolation** is surprising in light of the fact that "the earliest and best supported identification equates this desecration with the **Antichrist**. As early as [Hippolytus](#) (170-235AD; [click for eschatology of Hippolytus](#)) and [Irenaeus](#), (130-202AD) 2Th 2:3-note, 2Th 2:4-note had been associated with Mk 13:14. This adversary (1) exalts himself and opposes everything connected with God, (2) sits in the sanctuary of God, and (3) proclaims that he is God. Since Mark had used a masculine participle, *hestēkōnta*, where the antecedent would normally have demanded a neuter, this connection seems secure." (ISBE, revised edition) (**Related resource:** [References to the Antichrist in the Early Church](#))

Some like **Albert Barnes** (published in the 1880's) flat out stated "The **abomination of desolation** means the Roman army, and is so explained by Luke 21:20."

One modern writer, **Larry Chouinard**, has an interesting comment on the identification of the **abomination** writing - Some have speculated that the presence of Roman soldiers and the planting of their shields in the temple precincts might be the detestable act that will signal the necessity of flight. However, once the Romans had entered the city and planted their shields on holy ground it would have been too late to safely flee the city (see Josephus, J.W. 6.6.1, 316). **Other attempts to identify some specific event that might be understood as the "desolating sacrilege" can at best be viewed only as guesswork.** The most that can be said



is that the disciples were to flee when events associated with the Jewish wars (A.D. 66-70) so compromised the sanctity of the temple that its destruction was inevitable. (Matthew, College Press, 1997) Can you see the basic flaw in his logic? Jesus is describing a clearly visible sign ("**When you see...**"), but if it is something that can be "*viewed only as guesswork*," then it is hardly a reliable sign! A sign points to something, but you have to be able to read and **understand** (just as Jesus' commanded in Mt 24:15 "**let the reader understand**") the sign in order to recognize the thing to which it points. So this issue is more than a matter of intellectual debate, for in the future when the **abomination** stands in the **holy place**, it is Jesus' clear signal to flee for your life!

**Adam Clarke** also dogmatically states that the "**abomination of desolation**, St. Luke, (Luke 21:20, 21:21), refers to the **Roman army**; and this abomination **standing in the holy place** is the Roman army besieging Jerusalem....The Roman army is called an **abomination**, for its ensigns and images, which were so to the Jews. Josephus says, (War, b. vi. chap. 6 - see this quote in my comment below), the Romans brought their ensigns into the temple, and placed them over against the eastern gate, and sacrificed to them there. The Roman army is therefore fitly called the abomination, and the abomination which maketh desolate, as it was to desolate and lay waste Jerusalem; and this army besieging Jerusalem is called by St. Mark, Mark 13:14, standing where it ought not, that is, as in the text here, the **holy place**; as not only the city (**Ed**: Mt 24:15 makes NO mention of "the city!"), but a considerable compass of ground about it, was deemed holy, and consequently no profane persons should stand on it." ([Ref](#))

**Comment on Adam Clarke's interpretation** - First let's read the quote from **Josephus** to which **Clarke** alludes =

*"And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their **ensigns** ([See Kitto's diagrams](#)) to the temple, (18) and set them over-against its eastern gate. And there (**Ed**: **Where?** At the Eastern Gate!) did they offer sacrifices to them: and there did they make Titus Imperator(19) with the greatest acclamations of joy." ([Josephus- Of the War, Book VI. Chapter 6.1](#))*

**What do you observe about the sequence of events?** Note that the "*holy house itself and all of the buildings round about*" was burned. You may be asking "So what?" Well, the point is that Jesus clearly stated the **abomination** would stand in the **holy place**, but that is a problem, because there was no **holy place** in which the **ensigns** could be **standing**! Jesus' words literally interpreted are thus not fulfilled by the placement of the **ensigns** "over-against its eastern gate." You may say that is simply semantics but the simple fact is that these sacrifices, as abominable as they were, were **NOT** performed in the **holy place** because the **holy place** had been burned! Words mean something and the point is that Jesus' words are not fulfilled by the Roman Army according to Josephus' description (see following discussion).

## **WHY THE ABOMINATION IS NOT THE ROMAN ARMY**

It is surprising that so many writers interpret the Roman army as the entity which Jesus predicted would be "**standing in the holy place**," the Jewish Temple (Mt 24:15)! Below is a summary of the reasons that illustrate why such an interpretation is very unlikely.

(1) If one reads **Jesus'** words literally, the interpretation of the Roman Army as the **abomination** is not even logical. **Why?** Because it is not even a physical possibility--there would not be enough room for the Roman army to stand **IN** the Temple! Of course commentators are forced to "interpolate" Jesus' words and say He did not mean the Temple proper but the Temple grounds, or something to this effect.

(2) **Jesus** clearly stated the **abomination** will be **standing in the holy place**. He did not say it would be encircling or surrounding the city. **Standing** (Mt 24:15) and **surrounded** (Lk 21:20) are distinct, different verbs indicating different actions.

(3) **Jesus** did not generalize and say the **abomination** would occur in the city of Jerusalem. but clearly stated that the abomination would take place **in the holy place**, the Jewish Temple.

(4) Compare the parallel passage in Mark: "the abomination of desolation standing where **he** ought not to be." (Mk 13:14ESV)

**Comment:** Notice that the ESV does have have "standing where **it**" but "standing where **he**" which is an accurate translation of the Greek verb **standing** which is **masculine gender** and **singular**. It would be difficult to say this "**he**" of Mk 13:14ESV is the Roman Army! It follows that Mark's use of the **masculine singular** to describe the abomination is much more compatible with an *individual* rather than an *army*!

Indeed, the well respected **ESV Study Bible** note on Mark 13:14ESV reads "The **abomination of desolation** (cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) points to the **Antichrist's** ultimate desecration of God's temple." (Bolding added for emphasis)

(5) Jesus refers the reader to Daniel, explaining that **Daniel** spoke about the **abomination**. In light of Jesus' recommendation, it is notable that Daniel spoke extensively about the Antichrist in chapters 7, 9 and 11 (the "Little Horn", "the Beast," "the King"). So this begs the question, did Daniel speak about the Roman army?

While the King James Version has a translation note on Da 9:27 that says "*with the abominable armies*," the Hebrew word this **marginal NOTE** (not the actual translation) translates as "armies" is **kanaph** which is better translated *wing*. In fact not one of the 85 uses of **kanaph** in the Old Testament is translated as **army** in either the **NAS** [bird\*(1), corner(1), corners(4), covering(1), each other(1), edge(5), edges(1), ends(3), fold(2), garment(1), kind(3), skirt(3), skirts(1), sorts(1), wing(14), winged(5), wings(58), wings were each other(1), wingspan(1).] or the **KJV** (wing 74, skirt 14, borders 2, corners 2, ends 2, feathered 2, sort 2, winged 2, misc 8)! In sum, to appeal to the lone **KJV translation NOTE** which is not found in any other version is tenuous, especially if one seeks to use this point as a major argument that Mt 24:15 is a description of the Roman army.

**(6)** By the time the Roman Army was "**standing**" in the **holy place**, it would have been too late to flee. (See also point #7)

Many of the commentaries which favor a 70AD interpretation of Mt 24:15 are forced to admit that this fact creates a serious problem with their interpretation. For example, the Pulpit Commentary writes

"If the Temple itself is meant (referring to the phrase "holy place"), **it is plain that it would be too late to fly from that doomed city** when the Roman eagles were already in the hallowed courts."

The respected theologian **D A Carson** (discussed more below) states

"The obvious occasion (**Ed**: of the occurrence of the abomination of desolation), in general terms, is AD 70, though **certain difficulties must be faced.**"

**Carson** explains one serious difficulty with a 70AD interpretation writing that

"by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the Temple in AD 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee."

**John Broadus** recognizing problem #6, writes

"**Holy place** cannot well mean distinctively the temple in this case, for when the Roman standards stood in the temple it was too late for fleeing to the mountain." ([Ref](#))

Broadus makes at least two errors. (1) As discussed in #7 the Roman standards were never placed in the actual Temple. (2) Broadus is so committed to the 70AD interpretation that he is willing to say **holy place** does not really mean holy place, the Temple!

Beloved, Jesus was very clear about where the abomination of desolation would stand, unless one seeks to attribute to Mt 24:15 an interpretation which Jesus never intended!

**(7) Josephus** writes that when the city walls were finally scaled, the Temple itself was actually burned. Therefore it would not have been possible for the Roman Army to place their idolatrous ensigns in the holy place. In fact Josephus says that they placed them against the gate on the East. The gate on the East is **NOT** the holy place. (See [Josephus- Of the War, Book 6, Chapter 6, Paragraph 1](#) )

**(8) Josephus** records that Titus had a "retaining wall" constructed around Jerusalem prior to entering the city which would have removed all hope of escape for Jews still in the city. (**See Josephus' record**)

Notice that this retaining wall was built **before** the Roman Army even broke through the walls of Jerusalem, **before** the Roman Army could even have stood in the holy place!

Another historical fact recorded by **Thoralf Gilbrant** is that "the Romans cut down every tree within a mile of Jerusalem, so there would be no cover to help people escape or to allow food or supplies to be brought in. Thus the conditions mentioned in this verse fit the later time of tribulation foretold in the Book of Revelation and in Daniel 9 (Daniel's 70th Week), rather than 70 AD." (The Complete Biblical Library: The New Testament Study Bible - Matthew).

**(9) Another reason** that the Roman Army is unlikely the **abomination** in Mt 24:15 is that as Jesus presents the sign, the sign seems to happen rather abruptly, which implies that it will take the spectators by surprise. And yet clearly there was no surprise when the Romans advanced and began to lay siege to the city for seven months before its fall in September, AD 70. Admittedly this argument is somewhat "softer," but still has merit.

**David Guzik** - Through the centuries, the most common interpretive approach to the predictions Jesus made in this chapter is to see them all or mostly all fulfilled in the great destruction that came upon Jerusalem and Judea in a.d. 70. This approach is attractive in some ways, especially in that it makes the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:34 easy to understand. **Yet the approach that sees this chapter as all or mostly all fulfilled in a.d. 70 is completely inadequate in its supposed fulfillment of the abomination of desolation.** In this approach, the abomination of desolation is almost always understood to be the Roman armies or the ensigns

they carried.

Yet when we understand the importance and what is said about this event - **the abomination of desolation** - we must give priority to this event, even more than the easiest interpretation of Matthew 24:34 .

- It is the critical sign mentioned in Matthew 24.
- It is the warning to flee mentioned in Matthew 24.
- It is the sign of the consummation of all things in Daniel 9:27 .
- It is the sign foreshadowed by Antiochus Epiphanies in Daniel 11:31 .
- It is the precise marker of days to the end in Daniel 12:11 .
- It is the revelation of the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 .
- It is the image of the beast in Revelation 13:14-15 .

Taking these passages in their most plain meaning, **the abomination of desolation** cannot be the Roman armies or the ensigns they marched under; it cannot be totalitarian governments or any other conjecture. The abomination of desolation must be some kind of image of the Antichrist set in an actual temple, and is the decisive sign for **the end**. ([Enduring Word Bible Commentary Matthew Chapter 24](#))

### MATTHEW AND LUKE GIVE DIFFERENT "SIGNS"

Most of the writers who favor Mt 24:15 as historically fulfilled in 70AD appeal to Luke 21:20-24 ([see commentary](#)) to support their interpretation, as this passage clearly describes the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. These writers seem to automatically default to the assumption that Luke 21 is describing the same event as Matthew. However, if one **carefully observes** the parallel passages in Luke and Matthew, there are a number of differences ([See Chart Comparison](#)). In fact, if one reads Mt 24:15-22 and Lk 21:20-24 literally, it seems clear that Jesus is describing two distinctly different events, one that is yet to occur in the future (Mt 24:15) and one that has occurred in the past (Lk 21:20)!

**Hiebert** comments on the differences in the **signs** in Mark 13:14 (and Mt 24:15) and Luke 21:20 -

The **sign** given in Luke 21:20 relates to the **historical fall of Jerusalem**. But Luke's **sign, Jerusalem surrounded by armies**, is **not the same** as that given in the other Synoptics, namely, **the abomination of desolation in the temple**. Luke 21:20-24 records a part of the Olivet Discourse which **has no exact parallel** in the other two Gospels. It (Ed: Mk 13:14) vividly pictures the capture of the city and the resultant condition reaching to the end of the age. The similarity of Luke's picture to that of the other Synoptics had generally led to the assumption that they refer to the same event. While the two events have much in common, there are features in Mark's (Ed: and Matthew's) account which clearly look beyond the fall of Jerusalem and relate to the eschatological end."

### ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

**Abomination** ([946](#))(**bdelugma**) is derived from the verb **bdelusso** which means to emit a foul odor or to turn away on account of a stench. Figuratively **bdelusso** speaks of that which causes loathing or disgust. An "abomination" is something detestable or loathsome and in Mt 24:15 the genitive of **desolation** describes the effect produced, causing something to be deserted and left desolate.

In short, **bdelugma** describes something detestable, especially that which is detestable to God and thus that which He rejects (such as pagan gods or things associated with idolatry). As discussed below, the **abomination** that Jesus describes appears to refer to an idol (an image to be worshipped) which is set up in the Temple (cp Rev 13:14-15-[note](#)). In the Old Testament, the term abomination denoted idolatry or sacrilege (Dt. 29:16-17; 1Kings 11:6-7; 2Kings 16:3; 23:13; Ezek 8:9-17). In 1Maccabees 1:54NRSV "an abomination of desolation" is used to describe the altar of Zeus.

**Vincent** has a note on **bdelugma** - The cognate (related) verb, *bdelussomai*, means to feel a nausea or loathing for food: hence used of disgust generally. In a moral sense it denotes an object of moral or religious repugnance. See 2Chr 15:8; Jer. 13:27; Ezek. 11:21; Da. 9:27; 11:31. It is used as equivalent to **idol** in 1Ki 11:17; Dt. 7:26; 2Ki 23:13. It denotes anything in which estrangement from God manifests itself; as the eating of unclean beasts, Lev 11:11; Dt. 14:3; and, generally, all forms of heathenism. This moral sense must be emphasized in the New Testament use of the word. Compare Lk 16:15; Rev 17:4, 5; 21:27. It does not denote mere physical or esthetic disgust."

**Comment:** Unfortunately **Vincent** then proceeds to speculate that "The reference here is **probably** to the occupation of the

temple precincts by the idolatrous Romans under Titus, with their standards and ensigns." Josephus says that, **after the burning of the temple** the Romans brought their ensigns and set them over against the eastern gate, and there they offered sacrifices to them, and declared Titus, with acclamations, to be emperor."

**Think about what Vincent has just stated** -- He reasoned that offering sacrifices at the eastern gate is the equivalent of the **abomination** standing in the holy place, the Temple! In fact as Vincent acknowledges, the Temple had already been burned to the ground by the time the soldiers offered their sacrifices. Jesus' prophecy was therefore not literally fulfilled by sacrifices at the eastern gate! If Jesus had meant the eastern gate (a very specific location), would He not have stated it clearly? After all, recognition of this sign was to be followed by fleeing for one's life. Jesus would hardly have been ambiguous! Furthermore, any Jews who could have witnessed this pagan sacrifice would hardly have been able to flee to safety given that the city had already been taken and the Temple sacked! This is a major difficulty with the speculation that the Roman Army is the abomination of desolation! Furthermore, Jesus' call to **flee** upon seeing the sign would have been superfluous! The point is that words mean something and the words of warning from Jesus mean something and they will be especially meaningful in the future when the Jews read the Gospel of Matthew and actually see the **abomination of desolation** in the Temple! A 70AD fulfillment simply makes no sense if one allows the text (and Jesus) to say what it (He) says!

**A T Robertson** says the cognate verb ( *bdelussomai*) means "to feel nausea because of stench, to abhor, to detest. Idolatry was a stench to God (Lk 16:15; Rev 17:4)." Then **Robertson** like most commentaries speculates that "the **desolation** in the mind of Jesus is **apparently** the Roman army (Lk 21:20-**see note**) in the Temple, an application of the words of Daniel to this dread event. Josephus tells us that the Romans burned the temple and offered sacrifices to their ensigns placed by the eastern gate when they proclaimed Titus as Emperor." As noted above a burned temple simply would not allow Jesus' prophecy to be literally fulfilled!

**Robert Gundry** - "**Of desolation**" describes the sacrilege as causing worshipers of the one true God to desert the temple, to abandon it, because it has been profaned. "**Desolation**" can hardly refer to destruction; for then the **abomination** wouldn't be standing there, and it would be too late to flee. So Jesus is still ignoring the disciples' question about the time of the temple's destruction. (Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation)

**Desolation** ([2050](#))(**eremosis** from **eremoo** = to desolate, lay waste) means a state of being made uninhabitable = devastation, destruction, depopulation. Luke 21:20 refers to the city of Jerusalem. Matthew 24:15 refers to the holy place (the Temple). Mark 13:14 clearly parallels Mt 24:15 but instead of "standing in the holy place" Mark has "standing where it should not be."

**Eremosis** - 3v - Mt 24:15, Mark 13:14, Luke 21:20

Lk 21:20-note "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her (Jerusalem's) desolation is at hand."

The related adjective **eremos** was used by Jesus when He prophesied to the Jews "Behold, your house (Temple) is being left to you **desolate!**" (Mt 23:38). In Mt 24:26 **eremos** is translated wilderness, which is the most frequent way it is translated in the NT.

**Eremosis** - 26x in 23v in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** - Lev 26:34-35; 2Chr 30:7; 36:21; Ps 73:19; Jer 4:7 ("To make your land a **waste**"); Jer 7:34 ("the land will become a **ruin**"); Jer 22:5; 25:18; 44:6, 22; Dan 8:13; 9:2, 18, 25, 27; 11:31; 12:11. See discussion of Daniel passages in discussion of **abomination of desolation** below.

Leviticus 26:34-35 'Then the land will enjoy its Sabbaths all the days of the **desolation** (Hebrew = **shamen/samen**; Lxx = **eremosis**) while you are in your enemies' land; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. 35 'All the days of its **desolation** it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your Sabbaths, while you were living on it.

2Chronicles 36:21 - (verse 20 for context) And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation (Hebrew = **shamen/samen**; Lxx = **eremosis**) it kept Sabbath until seventy years were complete.

Jeremiah 7:34 "Then I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land will become a **ruin**. (Hebrew = **chorbah** = waste, desolation; Lxx = **eremosis**)

Jeremiah 22:5 "But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself," declares the LORD, "that this house will become a **desolation** (Hebrew = **chorbah** = waste, desolation; Lxx = **eremosis**)."

Daniel 9:2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the **desolations** (Hebrew = **chorbah** = waste, desolation; Lxx = **eremosis**) of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

## DANIEL THE PROPHET SPOKE ABOUT THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

**Which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet** - Jesus in essence calls for us to examine the book of Daniel to help determine the meaning of the sign, the **abomination of desolation**. The words of God spoken through His prophet Daniel are to be studied in order to gain insight into the identification of the strategic sign. Now pause for a moment and think about the implication of this statement. Many see the **abomination of desolation** as the Roman army in 70AD, but is there any passage in the book of Daniel that describes the Roman army? As we discussed above any mention that might be interpreted as the Roman Army is tenuous at best. So just by reasoning from Daniel (as Jesus exhorted us to do), it follows that the *popular* interpretation of the Roman Army as the abomination is highly unlikely to be the *correct* interpretation. As the brilliant scientist Albert Einstein once quipped "What is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right."

One would think that since Jesus instructs us to consult Daniel for insights into the meaning of **abomination**, then Daniel should give us clear insight, which is not the case if we try to interpret **abomination** as an army. The fact that Daniel does not substantiate the Roman Army as the abomination is clearly a major difficulty with the interpretation that the Roman army was the abomination in 70AD. ([See summary of points against a historical fulfillment](#)).

**Stedman** commenting on our Lord's words "**spoken of through Daniel the prophet**" explains that "No book of the Old Testament has been so unfavorably dealt with by the critics as the Book of Daniel. The validity of its authorship by Daniel has been scorned and it has been ascribed to some unknown writer who lived no more than a 100 to 160 years before Christ; its prophetic content has been flatly denied; and in many ways it has been more violently attacked than any other book in the Bible (See [Defense of Daniel by Tony Garland](#)). Yet it is **sheer presumptive arrogance** for any alleged disciple of Jesus Christ to take a view of Scripture that contradicts the view of the Master! The Lord Jesus here (Mt 24:15) clearly regards the Book of Daniel as a valid prophecy, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and accurate in detail." ([The Worship of Man - Matthew 24:15-22](#))

### FOUR PROSPECTIVE PASSAGES IN DANIEL

**There are primarily 4 prospective passages in Daniel** to which Jesus could have been referring in Mt 24:15: (1) Daniel 8:13, (2) Daniel 9:27, (3) Daniel 11:31, (4) Daniel 12:11. All are discussed in more detail below. Suffice it to say here that Daniel 8:13 and Daniel 11:31 are unlikely as even prior to Jesus' prophecy both of these prophecies had been fulfilled by the Antiochus IV Epiphanes circa 167BC. Of course although both of these passages have been fulfilled, they still serve to **foreshadow** the event Jesus described in Matthew 24:15.

As an aside notice that Daniel 9:26 clearly predicted the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD

Then after the sixty-two weeks (plus 7 weeks = 69 weeks) the Messiah will be cut off (crucifixion) and have nothing, and the people (the Romans) of the prince who is to come (the Antichrist) will destroy the city (of Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (the Holy Place = the Temple). And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (Da 9:26-note)

And so we are left with Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11 as the two passages that are most helpful in giving one insight into the identity of the **abomination of desolation**. In a careful study of the book of Daniel both of these passages are clearly positioned in the end times and refer to events which have not yet been fulfilled. This statement of course is based upon a literal interpretation of Daniel's prophecies and not an approach which spiritualizes the text looking for hidden meanings. My approach is to read the plain text in its normal sense paying close attention to the context. In short, if the plain sense makes good sense in context, I seek to make no other sense (contrived, spiritualized, imagined, etc), or it is very likely to be nonsense!

**D A Carson** agrees writing "Jesus, then, is identifying Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 with certain events about to take place." (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

Notice that while Daniel 12:11 has the identical phrase (**abomination of desolation**) which Jesus used in Mt 24:15, Daniel 9:27 also uses both **abomination** (Hebrew = **shiqquts**; Lxx = **bdelugma**) and **desolation** (Hebrew = **shamen/samen**; Lxx = **eremosis**).

Notice also that Jesus did not quote a specific Scripture reference in Daniel, and therefore He left open the entire prophecy of Daniel as potentially useful to help understand the identity of the **abomination of desolation**. In fact, if one views the **abomination of desolation** as the Antichrist (either he himself or his image), it is clear that Daniel speaks about this man, referring to him by three names including "**little horn**," (Da 7:8-note), "**the beast**" (Da 7:11-note, cp Rev 13:2-3, 4-5) and "**the king**" (Da 11:36-45-note).

Let's look at these four passages in obedience to Jesus' command to **let the reader understand.** **May God's Spirit grant us His understanding in the Name of Jesus. Amen.**

**For background note that** the Hebrew word for **abomination** ([08251](#)) is **shiqquts** which is found in all passages except Daniel 8:13. **Shiqquts** is a very strong word referring to that which is filthy, detestable, abhorrent, or disgusting. In the OT **shiqquts** was always used in connection with idolatrous practices, either referring to the idols themselves as being abhorrent and detestable in God's sight, or to something associated with the idolatrous ritual (Jer 16:18, 2Ki 23:13, 24, Ezek 5:11, 7:20, 11:18,21). In the Septuagint, **shiqquts** is translated with **bdelugma** in Da 11:31-note, Da 12:11 and Da 9:27.

Note also (although it is a bit technical) the Greek phrase used by Jesus in Mt 24:15 is **bdelugma tes eremoseos**" which is very similar to 3 "candidate" passages in Daniel. The Greek phrase in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** (Greek translation of the Hebrew text) of Daniel 9:27 = "**bdelugma ton eremoseon**," and of Daniel 11:31 and Daniel 12:11 = **bdelugma eremoseos**." Daniel 9:27 comes closest to the Greek phrase in Matthew as both use the definite Greek article (tes, ton).

**(1) THIS PROPHECY FULFILLED - Daniel 8:13-commentary** Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision *about* the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror ("the transgression that makes desolate"), so as to allow both the holy place (Temple) and the host (the Jews) to be trampled?"

**This prophecy was fulfilled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes**, the "Antichrist of the Old Testament" as some have called him, when he caused an altar to be set up in the Temple and placed an idolatrous image of Zeus on the altar (see 2Macc 6:2NRSV below). In addition, he turned the priest's chambers into brothels, creating an "abomination that causes desolation". In other words, the Temple was desolate to pious Jews because of the desecration of the holy altar. The Jews had no desire to worship in such a polluted environment and thus the Temple was deprived of (made "desolate" of) Jewish worshippers.

In a similar way the future **Antichrist** will set up an **abomination** in the sanctuary, which is counterfeit worship (Da 9:27-note; Da 12:11-note). Even more blatantly defiant of God, the **Antichrist** will command worship of himself and his image! (2Th 2:3-note, 2Th 2:4-note, Rev 13:14-note, Rev 13:15-note) God will allow this gross evil because He is using this devilish man to fulfill His purging and purifying purpose in the nation of Israel (cp Da 12:10-note). While the infinitely good and holy God does not cause evil, in His infinite wisdom and omnipotence is able to bring good out of what others mean for evil. (cf Ge 50:20, Ro 8:28-note)

The Apocrypha records the desecration of the holy place by **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** when he commanded that an abomination be carried out in the Temple in approximately 168-167BC:

**1 Maccabees 1:54NRSV** (Context = 1Mac 1:41-64NRSV) "Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a **desolating sacrilege** (*bdelugma eremoseos*, cp the Greek in Mt 24:15 = *to bdelugma tes eremoseos*) on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah"

**1 Maccabees 1:46-50NRSV** = "[The king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, gave written orders = 1Maccabees 1:44NRSV] to defile the sanctuary and the priests, 47 to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, 48 and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable (Verb = *bdelusso*) by everything unclean and profane, 49 so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. He added, "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die."

**2 Maccabees 6:2NRSV** also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus-the-Friend-of-Strangers, as did the people who lived in that place.

**(2) THIS PROPHECY NOT YET FULFILLED - Daniel 9:27-commentary** "And **he** (the prince in Da 9:26-commentary) will make a firm covenant with the many (the Jews) for one week (7 years = Daniel's Seventieth Week), but in the middle of the week (3.5 years) **he** will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of **abominations** will come one who makes **desolate**, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes **desolate**."

The NIV translation of Da 9:27 says he "will set up an **abomination** that **causes desolation** until the end that is decreed is poured out on him" (Da 9:27NIV)

**Comment:** Notice that both Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11 refer to the abolition of sacrifices and association with **abomination** that makes **desolate**. The question arises as to who is "**he**" in Daniel 9:27? Without going into a detailed discussion, this individual has all the attributes of the future "Antichrist." (See also Da 11:36-note where he is referred to as "the king" who "will do as he pleases.") For an in depth discussion of "**one week**" and the identity of "**he**" as the future Antichrist see the **commentary** on Daniel 9:27.

**See also: Time Phrases** - 3.5 years, "Time, times, half a time", 42 mo, 1260 days - The chances that the Spirit inspired these

identical time phrases as simply coincidence is highly unlikely. Any intelligent observer must be struck by the fact that they are (1) identical times and (2) used in a similar, sometimes identical eschatological context. To interpret these time phrases as figures of speech is as absurd as interpreting Jesus' promise to rise from the in 3 days! Just as Jesus literally meant what He said, so too these time phrases are to be interpreted literally. To not do so is to not be intellectually honest (in my opinion)!

**(3) THIS PROPHECY FULFILLED - Daniel 11:31-commentary** - "And forces from him ([Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#)) will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the **abomination of desolation**."

**Comment:** In the **context** of Daniel 11:1-45, this prophetic passage was fulfilled in 167 BC when [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) (the "Rather Small Horn" of Da 8:9-commentary) placed an idol in the Temple to honor the pagan god Zeus. Antiochus' soldiers even profaned the Temple by spreading sow's broth on the altar and banning daily sacrifices (see comments on Da 8:14). This passage would not fulfill Matthew 24:15 because it was past history at the time Jesus spoke His words of warning. Remember that the **context** is Jesus giving His disciples a sign of sign of His "coming, and of the end of the age" (Mt 24:3). As noted earlier the abomination committed by Antiochus in 167 BC clearly foreshadowed the future **abomination**.

**John MacArthur** - He took to himself the title Theos Epiphanes, which means "manifest god," but his enemies nicknamed him Epimanes, which means "madman" or "the insane one." Ironically, when he died in 163, he was totally insane, outraged to the point of madness because of his military defeats by the Jewish rebel Judas Maccabaeus. The text of Daniel 11:21-35 perfectly describes the rule of Antiochus, who gained his throne "by intrigue" (Da 11:21), made numerous excursions into Egypt (Da 11:24-27), broke his covenant with Israel (Da 11:28), and desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem (Da 11:31). The apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees vividly portray the time of Antiochus and the Jews' zealous resistance to his brutal and sacrilegious tyranny. He slaughtered countless thousands of Jewish men, sold many of their wives and children into slavery, and tried to completely obliterate the Jewish religion. He desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig, the most ceremonially unclean of all animals, on the altar and forcing the priests to eat its flesh. He then set up in the Temple an idol of Zeus, the pagan deity he fancied himself as manifesting. That horrible defilement by Antiochus was a preview of the even greater abomination of desolation to be committed by the Antichrist in the end time. (MacArthur NT Commentary - Matthew)

**(4) THIS PROPHECY NOT YET FULFILLED - Daniel 12:11-commentary** "And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, and the **abomination of desolation** is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

**Comment:** In the **context** of Daniel 12:1-13 (end times), this could be the passage to which Jesus referred in Mt 24:15. If one compares Scripture to Scripture, the seminal event (abolition of regular sacrifice and setting up the abomination of desolation) is similar to Daniel's description of the sacrifices in Daniel 9:27.

**John MacArthur** on the 1290 days - From the time the daily sacrifice is canceled and the abomination of desolation begins, 1290 days will pass until the end, 30 more days than three and one half years. Yet according to Revelation 12:6, the Great Tribulation will last 1260 days. It seems that the best explanation for those additional days is that they will cover the time when the Messiah descends to the Mount of Olives, creates the great valley in which the nations of the world will be judged, and executes that judgment (see Zech. 14:4-5; Matt. 25:31-46).

**So who or what is the abomination of desolation?** As alluded to in the discussion of Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11 it seems relatively clear (if one reads the text literally = "let the reader understand") that the **abomination** has some association with that future figure known as the **Antichrist**. The **abomination** could either be the presence of the Antichrist himself **standing in the holy place** or the placing of his image in the holy place. The following Scriptures from Paul and John help shed light on the identity of the **abomination**.

### **PAUL'S "MAN OF LAWLESSNESS" IN SECOND THESSALONIANS**

In his second letter to the Thessalonians Paul describes the Antichrist, the end times man of lawlessness admonishing the saints...

Let no one in any way deceive you, for (term of explanation) it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed (**apokalupto** = to reveal by "removing the cover" exposing to full view) , the **son of destruction**, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that (term of purpose) **he takes his seat in the temple of God**, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? (2Th 2:3-note, 2Th 2:4-note 2Th 2:5) (See similar description in Da 11:36, where the "**king**" is the Antichrist)

Paul warned the believers at Thessalonica about the **man of lawlessness** and gave a description that would enable one to clearly recognize him = he "takes his seat in the **Temple** (cp "**holy place**" of Mt 24:15) of God, displaying himself as being God." Clearly, any man who went into the Temple and claimed deity would blaspheme God, which would be an **abomination** to the Jews and they would abhor the defiled area (it would become a "desolation"). Comparing Paul's description with the descriptions of Jesus (Mt

24:15, Mk 13:14) and Daniel (Daniel 9:27, Daniel 12:11), there is little doubt that they all refer to the same man, the Antichrist (see **Antichrist**). Remember that Antichrist (a title used only once for a specific individual = 1Jn 2:18) can mean one who opposes Christ. But the prefix "anti-" also means in place of, so this last Antichrist will be a supplanter and will seek to replace the true Messiah. Notice also that just as Jesus links the **abomination of desolation** with His Second Coming (Mt 24:30), Paul links the abominable event of 2Thes 2:3-4 with the Second Coming writing "that lawless one (Antichrist - 2Th 2:3) will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming." (2Thes 2:8-9) This further substantiates the premise that Jesus and Paul are referring to the same man, the Antichrist, and the same sign the **abomination** that makes the holy place desolate!

## JOHN'S "BEAST" IN REVELATION 13

In the Revelation 13 John writes..

And he (False Prophet) deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast (Antichrist), telling those who dwell on the earth to make an **image to the beast** who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. (Rev 13:14-15-[note](#))

**Tony Garland** summarizes how the descriptions by **Paul** and **John** help us understand the nature of the **abomination of desolation**:

While Scripture does not say, it would appear that one purpose of the icon (image) is to occupy the place of worship in the "holy place" (Mt. 24:15) on an ongoing basis as the focal point of worship. The image serves as the center of worship allowing the Beast to go about his other affairs of state. This probably occurs after the initial declaration of deity made in the person of the Beast himself (2Th. 2:4).

The term **abomination** refers to an image or an idol. This event is also mentioned in Matthew 24:15-16: . . . The only clue given is that it will be something standing (like an image or idol) in the Holy Place. . . . the **Abomination of Desolation** must include something more than merely the Antichrist's self-proclamation of deity. Furthermore, the Daniel and Matthew passages implied an image or idol that would be erected in the Temple. (Arnold Fruchtenbaum)

The fact that nothing like what is recorded in our text happened in the first century represents no problem for preterists who find fulfillment in the time of Nero. The details are simply swept aside. Typical of preterism's refusal to interpret the text at face value is the example found in Gregg:

The making of an image to the beast (Rev 13:14), or an image of the beast (Rev 13:15), the giving breath to the image, and the requirement that all men worship it **are difficult features to correlate with any action known to have occurred in Israel in the first century. This need not be taken literally**, however, and can simply refer to the Jew's general homage to Rome's authority. [**emphasis added**] (Steve Gregg - Revelation Four Views: A Parallel Commentary)

Here we see an excellent example of the exegetical gearshift we mentioned related to the [Preterist Interpretation](#) of this book. Their technique is to search first century documents for an approximate "fulfillment" of the literal text. When the documents cannot produce even an approximate connection, then the gear shifts to non-literal interpretation in order to move over the "speed bump." With such a fluid means of interpretation, the authority of Scripture to specify what constitutes fulfillment is subverted. ([A Testimony of Jesus Christ - Dr Tony Garland](#))

## TAKING A STAND

**Standing in the holy place** - As discussed below, this **place** is the **holy place**, the Temple and **NOT** the holy city of Jerusalem, which is never called the "holy place" but "the holy city" (Mt 4:5, 27:53, Rev 11:2). An **abomination** that stands in this place would cause **desolation** of the holy place because it would defile that which was supposed to be kept holy.

Many commentaries refuse to take Jesus' words **holy place** literally because to do so makes it virtually impossible to say the Roman Army was the **abomination**. For example, **Matthew Poole** ([ref](#)) writes "When, saith our Lord, you shall see the abominable armies stand in the holy place, that is, upon the holy ground, (as all Judea was)...." Notice how **Poole** gives his "amplified" definition of **holy place** to include not only "holy ground" but even "all Judea!" This is simply not good hermeneutics, but is a good example of what occurs when one jettisons the plain sense meaning of a word or phrase.



**Standing** (2476)([histemi](#)) means to stand or appear before some one or some thing and thus to be situated in a particular place or position. Matthew uses the **perfect tense** which speaks of an action that takes place at a specific point in time and manifests continuing results or effects. In other words it conveys the sense that the **abomination of desolation** will take a stand at some time in the future and will remain **standing in the holy place**. While my view sees this **abomination** as the person of the Antichrist or his image ([see summary](#)), the verb *histemi* here in Mt 24:15 is not masculine but **neuter** and so some appeal to this as a finding which excludes the Antichrist. However, Mark's version (Mk 13:14ESV) uses the same verb ([histemi](#)) also in the **perfect tense**, but changes the gender to **masculine**, which counters those who attempt to use Matthew's neuter gender to exclude the Antichrist.

## THE ABOMINATION: AN "IT" OR A "HE"?

This point was mentioned above, but is so important it is discussed in more detail. While most of the versions translate Mk 13:14 as an "*it*" rather than a "*he*," the **ESV translation** is more accurate in emphasizing the masculine gender -

Mark 13:14ESV = "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where **he** ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

**Comment:** The masculine, singular translated **he** in Mk 13:14ESV counters the neuter singular *it* in Mt 24:15. Why is this important? Because some commentators like **Lenski** categorically exclude an individual from being the abomination based primarily on the neuter gender in Mt 24:15. Clearly Mark's version leaves open the possibility of a man, which parallels nicely with Paul's description of the "man of lawlessness" committing an abominable act in the Temple (the Holy Place) in 2Thes 2:3-4!

In fact there is a very logical way to resolve the use of both the **masculine** and the **neuter** -- The Antichrist (a "he") goes into the holy place and declares himself to be "God" which would clearly be an abomination to orthodox Jews. But because he has wars to fight and peoples to suppress (cf Da 11:39-45-note) he cannot continue to remain standing in the holy place. His right hand man, the false prophet, commissions an image (an "it") of the Antichrist (the Beast) and places it in the holy place (cp Rev 13:14-15) where it remains standing (Greek = perfect tense in both Mt 24:15 and Mk 13:14) for the [earth dwellers](#) to worship. You might be saying that I am making too much of the details but as someone has well said especially in eschatological passages (but applicable to all of God's Word) "**the divine is in the details!**"

**See Related:** [The Image of the Beast](#)

**R T France** the used of the **neuter** by Matthew "is apparently a deliberate change from Mark's **masculine**, and so denotes an object or occurrence rather than a person." (NICNT)

**McNeile** (1915) adds that "In Mark the reference (to the location of the abomination) is vague and cryptic, the **masculine** estekota (perfect tense of *histemi* = standing) implying a person or personification, who will stand...the mysterious vagueness of Mark's **masculine** estekota, with no reference to city or Temple, is probably an allusion to the dread figure of Antichrist, analogous to the 'Man of Lawlessness' in 2Th 2:4, whose appearance is preceded by a 'revolt' from God (**Ed**: cf apostasy - 2Th 2:3-note)...This cryptic language is unlike anything attributed to Jesus elsewhere. The author of the passage shared the widespread Jewish expectation of the coming of Antichrist." ([The Gospel according to St. Matthew](#))

**D Edmond Hiebert** commenting on **abomination of desolation** in Mk 13:14 explains that "Mark's expression laid stress on the violation involved. **Standing** is a masculine participle, although the noun **abomination** is neuter. The fact that Mark deliberately, though ungrammatically, used the masculine points to the fact that he regarded the **abomination** as personal ("*he*" rather than "*it*"). **It seems clear that Mark was thinking of the personal Antichrist** (2Th. 2:3-10; Rev. 13:1-10, 14-15). In time, the scene relates to the prophecy of Daniel's seventieth week (Da 9:24-27), when the prince that shall come "shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Da 9:27). This interpretation of the words of Jesus presupposes the end-time reestablishment of the Jewish temple and worship (**Ed**: As does Paul's description in 2Th 2:4-note and John's description in Rev 11:1-2-note)." (**Ibid**) (Bolding added)

## THE LOCATION OF THE STAND THE HOLY PLACE

**Holy place** - This phrase refers to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and not the holy city of Jerusalem. **Holy place** is used 10 times in the NT and **never once** refers to the city of Jerusalem but always to the **Holy Temple** - Mt 24:15; Acts 6:13; 21:28; Heb 9:2, 8, 12, 24-25; 10:19; 13:11. Notice that Jesus specifically says "holy place," not "holy city," not "holy mountain," not "holy land," etc. A simple interpretation of Jesus' plain words is very clear - the location is the holy Jewish Temple! No other location fits so well with Jesus' description. Several commentaries (see below) are forced to say the **holy place** is something besides the holy place, because they have difficulty in interpreting the Roman Army standing in the holy place.

**John Wesley** ([ref](#)) simply does not take Jesus literally when He said the **'holy place.'**" Thus Wesley wrote

Not only the temple and the mountain on which it stood, but the whole city of Jerusalem, and several furlongs of land round about it, were accounted holy; particularly the mount on which our Lord now sat, and on which the Romans afterward planted their ensigns.

Beloved, do you see what happens when you ignore the plain sense of the text? It begins to be nonsense! Why not go ahead and call the entire nation of Israel the "holy place", for after all they were originally referred to as "holy to the LORD?" This example is not meant to denigrate Wesley, but simply to demonstrate the genre of loose interpretation that begins to flow when one does not read the text literally.

The respected writer **Philip Schaff** (1819-1893) ([reference](#)) gives us another example of misinterpretation because of refusal to read Jesus' plain words literally. Schaff writes

Jerusalem was 'the holy city' (Mt 4:5). The near approach of the Roman army is probably meant (**Ed**: He is referring to the phrase "standing in the holy place" and sees the approach of the Roman army as fulfilling that statement) The Roman eagles, rising on the heights over against the temple, were the sign of the fall of the city. In fact they stood on the Mount of Olives, 'the holy place,' in a higher Christian sense, where our Lord was now teaching and whence He ascended."

Notice how Schaff speculates, equating the city of **Jerusalem** with the **holy place**. He then compounds his error by referring to the Mount of Olives as the "holy place!" There is absolutely no Scriptural support for such an interpretation! In short, Schaff gives us an example of failing to allow the **Scripture to help interpret the Scripture** and what happens when one fails to interpret literally and begins to speculate on the text rather than accurately **observe** the text!

**Peter Pett** ([ref](#)) who interprets Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in 70AD provides another example of a non-literal interpretation of **holy place**. **Pett** is forced to do this because if he interprets the **holy place** as the Temple, it creates a significant problem in his interpretation of Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in 70 AD. And so **Pett** reasons

In Scripture Jerusalem was regularly called **'the holy city'** (Nehemiah 11:1; 11:18; Isa 48:2; 52:1) and it is especially to be noted that it is so-called in Da 9:24 which is in the context of Daniel's prophecy concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary (Daniel 9:26) (**Ed Comment**: Notice that Pett conveniently ignores the fact that Da 9:24 also mentions the **holy place!** Pett continues...). This would support the idea that **'the holy place'**, when quoted in the context of Daniel's prophecy ('spoken of by Daniel the prophet'), is to be seen as indicating Jerusalem and its environs, **'the holy city'**. And this view is supported by Luke 21:20 where Luke's Gospel interprets **'standing -- in the holy place'** as signifying **'when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies'**

**Comment**: Do you see the problems with Pett's comments? First notice that he says **standing nit the holy place** is the same sign as when **Jerusalem is surrounded by armies!** Beloved, in plain English they are clearly DIFFERENT signs! (**See chart comparing Matthew and Luke**) Second, notice how Pett attempts to show that Jesus' plain statement of **'holy place'** does not really mean **"holy place"** (the Temple) but really means **"the holy city!"** I would submit that Jesus said **holy place** and that is what He meant! To say that is not what He meant is to distort or twist His words! A more useful maneuver would be to search the Scriptures for every place the phrase **holy place** is found. Indeed, the phrase **holy place** is found 60 times in 60 verses in the entire Bible (NASB) and always refers to either the Tabernacle (OT) or Temple (on earth, twice in heaven = Heb 9:12, 24; God's presence = Heb 10:19) and **never** refers to the holy city of Jerusalem, the surrounding environs of Jerusalem, or the Mount of Olives.

**Johann Bengel** also does not accept the simple, plain sense of Jesus words **'holy place'** because to do so would make his interpretation (of the **abomination** as the Roman army) absolutely impossible! And so he writes

The **holy place**, therefore, **does not here signify the temple, or the holy of holies**, for it would have been too late to flee after that had been profaned, but a definite place without and near the Holy City; in short, that very place which our Lord (as He had often done) regarded as made holy by His presence, whilst He was uttering these words (**Ed**: i.e., on the Mount of Olives). ([Ref](#))

Dear reader, do you see what commentators are forced to do if they do not accept Jesus' prophecy literally? A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. I would posit that the interpretation of the abomination of desolation in Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in 70AD is at best a "weak" interpretation, because of a number of "weak links." (cf [The Problems of the Roman Army as the Abomination](#))

Well respected Lutheran commentator **R C H Lenski** (who favors a 70AD fulfillment) concludes that "Those are excluded which make **"the holy place"** the Jewish land, or which think that the **abomination** occurred during or after the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. The latter views are shut out by the fact that it would then be impossible to flee the land." (The Interpretation of St Matthew's Gospel)

**J Vernon McGee** makes the point "that the **Holy Place** was given only to the nation of Israel. It was a special place in the Temple on earth. The church has no Holy Place." (Thru the Bible)

The problem of course if one interprets Matthew 24:15 as referring to a yet future event is that there is currently no **holy place** (no Temple) in Jerusalem in which the **abomination of desolation** could stand. Clearly a futuristic interpretation requires that the Jewish Temple be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Other prophetic passages by Paul (2Th 2:3-4-note) and John (Rev 11:2-note) (if interpreted literally) would also call for a future rebuilt Temple. If God can cause the entire nation of Israel to be reborn "in a day" ([May, 1948](#)), He can easily enable the Temple to be rebuilt. In fact, the [The Temple Mount Faithful - Working to Rebuild the Temple on the Temple Mount](#) is a group of orthodox Jews in Jerusalem who have been preparing for many years to rebuild the Temple on a moment's notice!

**Ray Stedman** addresses the **rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem** - Perhaps you are asking, "If the Temple was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70, what is this 'holy place' in which the Antichrist will appear?" The obvious answer is, the Temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The Lord is clearly indicating that there will come a time when the Jews will repossess the temple area. In view of that expectation perhaps the most important event since the first century was the capture of Old Jerusalem by the Jew in the [Six-Day War of 1967](#). For the first time in 1897 years (since A.D. 70) Jews were once again in possession of the Temple site ([Temple Mount](#)). It is now occupied by the Moslem mosque called the [Dome of the Rock](#) and the existence of that shrine raises a tremendous obstacle to the rebuilding of a Jewish Temple. But there is no other place it can be built, for God decreed in the Old Testament that Jewish sacrifices can be offered there and nowhere else on earth. No one knows whether the present possession of Jerusalem by the Jews can be maintained. And how they will surmount the problem of rebuilding a Temple on the place now occupied by an Arab holy place is anyone's guess. **But rebuild it they shall, for as Jesus said in another connection the "scripture cannot be broken."** (cf Jer 32:17, 27-note) ([Sermon](#))

- See [Tony Garland's discussion on The Tribulation Temple](#)

**Holy** ([40](#))(**hagios**) refers to that which is set apart (sanctified) for a special purpose.

**Place** ([5117](#))(**topos**) any space marked off as if it were marked off from a surrounding space.

## UNDERSTANDING COMMANDED!

**Let the reader understand** - The implication of this command is that the reader can understand this prophecy, but the understanding will require careful observation and analysis. A second implication is that this parenthetical statement by Jesus broadens the audience of this discourse to more than just the first century disciples. The point is that in whatever century this warning is read, it must be understood, so that appropriate action can be taken by the reader (i.e., **Flee!** - Mt 24:16-20), if he or she sees the **abomination of desolation!** This of course is assuming that this is a yet to be fulfilled prophecy.

**David Guzik** on **let him understand**: Here Jesus (assuming that He said these words, and that they were not added by Matthew) directed us again to the central place of understanding, **the abomination of desolation**. It was almost as if Jesus said, "**Don't miss this. If you don't understand this, you won't understand many other things.**" And this is exactly the error of many who, with good intentions, misunderstand the plain meaning of **the abomination of desolation**. Let him understand! ([Enduring Word Bible Commentary Matthew Chapter 24](#))

**Ray Stedman** on **Let the reader understand** - These words are so fantastically suggestive that we must not hurry over them. In the words appearing in parentheses, "**let the reader understand**," the apostle Matthew is warning us that there are things hidden here which are not apparent on the surface. He is urging us to think, investigate, examine, and thus understand all that may be involved. We must be careful, then, to relate these words to other Scriptures (**Ed: See Compare Scripture with Scripture**), and especially to those in the Book of Daniel (**Ed: See my verse by verse Daniel Commentary**) which Jesus specifically mentions. ([The Worship of Man - Matthew 24:15-22](#))

**Hiebert** on **Let the reader understand** - The parenthetical command, found also in Matthew, may be regarded as spoken by Jesus Himself or as an addition by the Gospel writers. Under the former view, Jesus is calling attention to the prophecy of Daniel, bidding the reader to understand its fuller significance; under the latter, the Gospel writer calls attention to the importance of what is written. Since the true text in Mark contains no reference to Daniel, the latter view may be preferred. ([Ibid](#))

**Reader** is the verb **anaginosko** which is from **ana** (again) and **ginosko** (know by experience) which conveys the idea that each

individual should read these Scriptures over and over again until he or she understands what is meant and what they should do when the **abomination of desolation** comes on the scene of world history in the future. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear (spiritually speaking) will clearly recognize this as the signal that sets off the time of the horrible three and a half year **great tribulation** ("then" = Mt 24:21-note), which is the same time the Antichrist breaks his seven year covenant with Israel at the midpoint (3.5 years) (see Da 9:27-note). See **Daniel's Seventieth Week** chart followed by a summary of the events.

**Reader** (314)(**anaginosko** from **anã**; = emphatic, again + **ginosko** = know by experience) literally means to know again or to recognize again. It came to mean to distinguish between, to know accurately and then to read.

**Fenton** says **let the reader understand** "means, Look more deeply into this, because what is said is less than what is meant". ([The Gospel of Saint Matthew](#))

**Let...understand** (3539)(**noeo** from **nous** = mind, the seat of moral reflection) has the basic meaning of directing one's mind to something which clearly calls for more than just a glance! Jesus uses the **present imperative** which is a command for the **reader** to keep pondering this prophecy (weighing it in one's mind, thinking quietly, soberly and deeply). Jesus is calling on the reader to carefully think and reflect upon the prophecy in order to grasp His meaning. Notice Jesus did not advise the reading of many commentaries, many of which do not interpret His words literally! He uses the **active voice** which calls for the reader to carry out serious personal reflection with the implication that one is not simply to read what other men have written. Unless the **reader** himself or herself carries out their own **inductive study** on these important declarations by Jesus, how can they "comment on the commentaries?" (including the one you are currently reading!) In other words, how can one be confident that what the commentaries have written is an accurate **interpretation**? As an aside, in order to obey Jesus' command, the only way possible is by continual reliance on the Holy Spirit's filling and empowering (Eph 5:18-note, 1Jn 2:27-note)!

**MacArthur** agrees writing "The exhortation **let the reader understand** reinforces the fact that Jesus was not giving the warnings in the Olivet discourse to the disciples themselves or to their generation but to believers in the end time, who will read those truths in Scripture and thereby be enabled to **understand** the trials they are enduring."

While I basically agree with **MacArthur**, he does extrapolate more than the phrase allows. In other words, focusing only on the plain sense of the text, it seems a bit of a stretch to say this phrase is **not** giving warnings to other Jews of the same generation as the disciples. There is nothing in that phraseology which justifies the statement that it refers only "*to believers in the end time.*" While I agree with MacArthur's statement that this applies to readers in the end time, that conclusion can only be reached by interpreting the phrase in its entire context. So even those of us who believe in a future fulfillment of Mt 24:15 need to be careful to let the text speak for itself!

**J Vernon McGee** ends his comment on Mt 24:15 writing "Now we are given another *time* word. When the **abomination of desolation** appears, "**Then**." McGee is referring of course to Mt 24:16, **when** the people living in Israel in that future day see the abomination of desolation, **THEN** it is time to **FLEE!**

Here is an example from the usually excellent **HCSB Study Bible** which demonstrates the "corner one paints ones self into" when interpreting Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in 70AD -

"These verses **probably** (**Ed Comment:** Probably clearly expresses uncertainty. If this is a life and death sign [which it is!], it is very unlikely Jesus would make it an ambiguous sign!) describe events related to the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70. However, Mt 24:29 closely associates this tribulation period with the Second Coming of Jesus. This implies that these events closely parallel things that will occur immediately before Jesus' return (2Th 2:3-4) (**Ed comment:** Can you see the difficulty? They have just stated 70AD. But now they state "these events closely parallel" events preceding the Second Coming! That does not make good sense! But then they ascribe a meaning to the "great tribulation" that is more nonsensical writing...). The entire period ranging from the destruction of the temple to the events preceding Christ's return may be described as a period of **great tribulation** for Christ's followers. The abomination that causes desolation is an idolatrous object that will desecrate the Jerusalem temple as foretold in Dan 9:27 (**Ed comment:** I agree with them). Though Josephus identified it as the shedding of priestly blood in the sanctuary several years before the destruction of the temple ( War 4.147-201; 4.343; 5.17-18; cp. Mt 23:29-36), Jesus' description of the abomination as standing in the temple implies that it is an object, not an event. (**Ed comment:** And so they leave the reader "hanging" so to speak! They don't venture a comment on the identity of the abomination. To reiterate, Jesus wanted those who saw the abomination to know that is what it was so that they might respond appropriately = Flee! The only interpretation that makes sense is that the abomination is the future Antichrist and/or his image standing in the rebuilt holy place!)" (Bold Italics Mine for emphasis) ([HCSB Study Bible](#))

While much of the following discussion is somewhat redundant, the purpose is to provide actual examples of interpretation found in Matthew commentaries which are highly recommended.

**Did Jesus refer to the coming destruction of the Temple in 70AD or did He refer to a future event which has yet to take place? Or did He refer to both the past and the future.** As will be explained, a plain, literal reading of Jesus' words and comparison to the prophecies of Daniel, especially Daniel 9:27 leaves little doubt that Jesus is referring to the same yet future event described by Daniel and not to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. This latter view is the prevalent interpretation in the highest ranked commentaries on Matthew, but if one adheres to this interpretation it is difficult to rationalize several key facts in Jesus' discourse, especially if those facts are taken at face value.

A few commentaries give a "**double fulfillment**" interpreting Mt 24:15 as a yet future event, and also see a fulfillment in the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70AD. The respected **ESV Study Bible** is an example which writes...

Daniel 9:27 tells of the **abomination of desolation**. Several times in Jewish history it was thought that this prophecy was being fulfilled—most notably during the days of the Maccabees when Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, ordered that an altar to the Greek god Zeus be constructed in the temple (167 B.C.). He also decreed that swine and other unclean animals were to be sacrificed there, that the Sabbath was to be profaned, and that circumcision was to be abolished. But Jesus clarifies that the complete fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy will be found in (1) the Roman destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 and (2) the image of the Antichrist being set up in the last days (cf. 2Th 2:4; Rev. 13:14).

**Ed comment:** Notice that the ESV makes an excellent start in interpreting Mt 24:15 in referring to Daniel 9:27-note, but unfortunately sees the yet future prophecy of the **Seventieth Week** of Daniel as having already been fulfilled in the past. That is not the correct interpretation. Clearly, the destruction did **NOT** set off an unprecedented **great tribulation**, of which there can be only one since Jesus' description makes it a unique, once in a lifetime period of distress, never to be repeated (Mt 24:21-note, cp Mk 13:19 and Daniel 12:1-note). To say 70AD was also the "**great tribulation**" is to spiritualize the plain meaning of Jesus' words in Mt 24:21-note! In regard to Daniel 9:27-note, there is nothing in Scripture or historical records from the first century that describes a **seven year covenant with Israel that was broken after 3.5 years** (as described in Da 9:27-note). Attempts have been made to suggest secular events that "came close" to being a Seven Year treaty, but these efforts have proved futile as one would expect since Da 9:27 speaks of a yet future event.

And so if one allows the Scripture say what it says and does not add to it or take away from it because of a particular system of theology or preconceived ideas, it is very clear that Daniel 9:27-note (1) correlates very nicely with Jesus' description in Mt 24:15 and (2) will be fulfilled only one time and that is in the future when the **man of lawlessness** (the Antichrist) is revealed (apokalupto) and takes his seat in the **holy place** (the rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem) and proclaims that he is God! (2Th 2:3-4-note, cf John's prophecy Rev 13:14-15-note).

**David L. Turner** (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary) also posits a "double fulfillment" interpretation writing - "In the view taken here, this warning primarily relates to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, but there is good reason (esp. Mt 24:21-22-note) to see it as ultimately intended for God's people in the end times who will face the ultimate Antichrist."

**Ed comment:** There is a difference between **foreshadow** and **fulfill**. While it could be reasonably suggested that the destruction in 70AD **foreshadowed** the end time **abomination of desolation**, there are many problems with saying Mt 24:15 was **fulfilled** in 70AD. It seems the interpretation of Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in 70AD is so "ingrained" in the literature (past and present), that few writers are willing to abandon that interpretation. Turner goes so far as even acknowledging that Mt 24:21 makes a 70AD fulfillment "*difficult*" (his words) and yet he still chooses to favor a "*preterist*" interpretation. However Turner does admit that "It is difficult to accept the preterist view that this language was totally fulfilled by the events of AD 70." Beloved, we need to come to the Scriptures each time we read them as if we have never read them before, so that we might be as open as possible to what the Spirit of Truth would teach us! A particular mode of interpretation once learned is like a habit -- very difficult to break as Turner's comments illustrate!

**Grant Osborne** commenting on Jesus' warning to flee in Mt 24:17-18 says "These two cases (vv. 17-18) apply both to the historical arrival of the Romans in AD 66-70 and to the imminent Second Coming of Christ (Mt 24:27).....it also goes beyond AD 70 to the events of Rev 13. As Nolland says, "it is hard to avoid the suspicion that even in Matthew and Mark the urgency is being given an ultimacy that has more to do with being in place for an eschatological denouement than with a realistic response to a particular political and military development." (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)

## EVIDENCE FOR/AGAINST A 70 AD FULFILLMENT OF MATTHEW 24:15

What is the evidence for or against the interpretation that Mt 24:15 was historically fulfilled in 70AD when the Roman general Titus destroyed the Holy Temple and the Holy City? We will seek to address this question by examining the plain reading of the **text** and the **context** (with the introduction of some extra-biblical historical material). Below are several reasons which would support the interpretation that Matthew 24:15ff was **NOT** fulfilled in 70AD.

### GREAT TRIBULATION UNPRECEDENTED

(1) **Let's begin by examining the context.** Jesus clearly stated that this time of **Great Tribulation** would be unprecedented in world history and would never occur again. At the outset note that this clear statement is the **major stumbling block** for every interpretation that says 70AD was the "Great Tribulation"!

**for** (term of explanation - **What is Jesus explaining?** He is explaining why He has just spent FIVE verses trying to convince the Jews to get out of Jerusalem FAST! Mt 24:16-20) then (**tote**) (This begs the question - **"What does then follow?"** Answer - Checking the context, "**then**" is when the **abomination of desolation** is **standing in the holy place** of the Temple." Mt 24:15) there will be a **Great Tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. (Mt 24:21-Matthew 24:21 Commentary)

The **United Bible Service Handbook** writes that "*No, and never will be may be translated "and nothing as terrible as this will ever happen again."* I like that rendering as it makes it very clear that this Great Tribulation is unique in the history of the world.

While Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD was horrible with reports of many Jews dying (Josephus says as many as 1.1 million but others feel the number may have been exaggerated), the 70AD "holocaust" does not come close to fulfilling Jesus' description in Mt 24:21. How can we be so sure? Because there was a **greater** "tribulation" than 70AD in World War II when over 6 million Jews were killed by Hitler's Nazi henchmen! Jesus' words are very clear predicting that "**then (When?** In context = when you see the **abomination of desolation** in Mt 24:15!) there will be a **Great Tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall." So Jesus plainly states that the future "**Great Tribulation**" will be even greater than the 1.1 million Jews who died at the hands of the Romans in 70 AD and even greater than the 6 million Jews who died at the hands of Hitler in World War II! **Woe!** There is simply NO WAY Jesus' words can be twisted to make them mean anything else! Oh, I suppose one could postulate Jesus was speaking with hyperbole, and that He was really exaggerating the severity of the Great Tribulation. But to do so is to refuse to take His words as He plainly spoke them. And the failure to take Jesus' words at face value opens one to misinterpretation of Matthew 24:15!

Even resources that interpret Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in 70AD are forced to acknowledge the difficulty of their proposed interpretation. Thus **A L Williams** in the [Pulpit Commentary on Matthew](#) favors the identity of the **abomination** as the Roman army and as with most similar commentaries, appeals to Jesus' description of the "**sign**" in Lk 21:20-note (cf Lk 21:6-7) to support his interpretation of Mt 24:15. And yet **Williams** admits that

the presence of the Latin forces would be no new sign to the Jewish people, as they had been familiar with such a sight for many years. If the Temple itself is meant (referring to the phrase "holy place"), **it is plain that it would be too late to fly from that doomed city** when the Roman eagles were already in the hallowed courts.

I agree with **Williams** on this point. It would be TOO LATE TO FLEE! In addition **Williams** records that Josephus states that Titus had a wall constructed which encompassed the entire city of Jerusalem

to guard against the Jews' coming out....So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city

Here is **Josephus' record** of the Roman General Titus building a "retaining" wall around Jerusalem to remove all hope of escape...

That therefore his opinion was, that if they aimed at quickness, joined with security, they must build a wall round about the whole city. Which was, he thought, the only way to prevent the Jews from coming out any way. And that then they would either entirely despair of saving the city, and so would surrender it up to him; or be still the more easily conquered when the famine had farther weakened them. For that besides this wall, he

would not lie entirely at rest afterward; but would take care then to have banks raised again, when those that would oppose them were become weaker. But that if any one should think such a work to be too great, and not to be finished without much difficulty, he ought to consider, that it is not fit for Romans to undertake any small work: and that none but God himself could with ease accomplish any great thing whatsoever.....When Titus had therefore **encompassed the city with this wall**, and put garrisons into proper places, he went round the wall, at the first watch of the night, and observed how the guard was kept...3. **So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city.** Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families. The upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine: and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged. The children also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead, wheresoever their misery seized them. [Read [Josephus's description of the wall in Book 5, Chapter 12, Verses 1-3](#)].

**Notice** that this retaining wall was built **BEFORE** the Roman Army even broke through the walls of Jerusalem, **BEFORE** the Roman Army could even possibly stand in the **holy place**! **Do you see the problem one encounters** by identifying the **abomination of desolation** in Mt 24:15 as the Roman Army surrounding Jerusalem, the sign for the Jews to flee the city? (Mt 24:16) In short, this historical record by Josephus makes it virtually impossible that the Roman Army could be the **abomination of desolation** in Mt 24:15! In other words, if the Roman army is the **abomination** and it must stand in the **holy place** and that would be the warning to the Jews to flee, then the warning sign was (as they say) "*too little, too late!*" So from both historical and Biblical perspectives, the interpretation which identifies the **abomination** as the Roman army is nigh to impossible **IF** one interprets the Scriptures **Literally!**

**Williams** goes on to propose the idea that the [Zealots](#) were the **abomination** but then admits

"I must confess that neither of these explanations satisfies me. The primal (first) fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy is found in the erection of the statue of Jupiter in the temple by the order of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the pollution of the altar by the sacrifice of swine thereon. Our Lord would seem to refer to something analogous which should give the Christians a signal for escape before the complete investiture of the city. (**Ed comment:** Which indeed He does when He sends us to Daniel to glean understanding of the nature of the abomination! When the "*he*" of Da 9:27 breaks a covenant in the middle of 7 years and puts a stop to sacrifice and grain offering that is clearly the sign to flee the city. And Paul helps understand this event in 2Th 2:3-4 if one reads the text literally. Of course that means that a Jewish Temple has to be rebuilt, but that will occur when God's plan begins to take shape in the future! Williams continues...) The deeds of Zealots and assassins, however atrocious, could not with any propriety be described as "abomination that maketh desolate standing in the holy place." The term, according to scriptural analogy, must refer to some sacrilege and pollution connected with idolatry, of which certainly the Zealots were not guilty." (**Ed comment:** And Daniel 9:27 helps us discern the identity of the abomination. And there is no passage in Daniel which makes mention of either the Roman Army or Jewish Zealots as the abomination of desolation.) ([Matthew 24 Commentary](#))

**NET Note** - Some refer this event (Mt 24:21-note) to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. While the events of A.D. 70 may reflect somewhat the comments Jesus makes here, the reference to the scope and severity of this judgment strongly suggest that much more is in view. Most likely Jesus is referring to the great end-time judgment on Jerusalem in the **Great Tribulation**.

**John MacArthur** commenting on Mt 24:21 - No time or event in the history of Israel fits the description of the holocaust Jesus is here speaking of. The horrifying time is further described in some detail in Revelation 6:1-16:21, where the **Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments** exhibit the escalating intensity of God's wrath upon sinful, rebellious mankind. Both the books of Revelation and of Daniel make clear that the Antichrist will tyrannize the world for "**a time, times, and half a time**" (Da 7:25-note; Da 12:7-note; Rev 12:14-note)(**Ed:** And the time phrase in Rev 12:14 is clearly explained in the parallel passage Rev 12:6-note!), that is, a year, two years, and a half year, or **three and one half years** (Rev. 11:2-note; Rev 11:3-note, Rev 13:5-note). **Clearly, the events described by our Lord, by Daniel, and by John must refer to the same great holocaust at the end time, just before the millennial kingdom is established on earth.** (Bolding added) (Matthew: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

**J Vernon McGee** - "For then shall be great tribulation"—in Revelation 7:14-note the literal translation is "the tribulation the great one," placing the article before both the noun and the adjective for emphasis. In other words, this tribulation is unique; there has been nothing like it in the history of the world, and there will never again be anything like it. And notice that our Lord is the One who labels the end of the age as the **Great Tribulation**. (If you want to find fault with it, talk to Him, not to me.) **Such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.**" Since that is true, believe me, people will know it when it gets here! I hear people today talking about the church going through the Tribulation, and they don't seem to realize how severe it will be. In fact, some folk say that we are in the Great Tribulation at the present time! Well, things are bad in our day, I'll grant that,

but this period can be matched with many other periods in history. When the Great Tribulation gets here, there will be nothing to match it in the past or in the future.

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on Mt 24:21 - The additional description, **not since the beginning of the world**, makes Christ's reference to Da 12:1 unmistakable. The further notice, nor ever shall be, prevents our identification of this with anything less than the final tribulation under Antichrist.

Below are some attempts to disregard Jesus' clear description of the **Great Tribulation** as an event without precedent or successor in the history of the world:

**R T France** commenting on the nature of the **abomination of desolation** acknowledges that "the context requires that it be of such a nature and at such a time as to allow those who see it to escape before it is too late." If the Roman army is the **abomination** and it stands in the holy place, it is clearly too late to flee! **France** then says "In passing, we should note that "nor ever will be again" confirms that this passage is about a historical event, not about the end of the world!" (NICNT - The Gospel of Matthew).

**Comment: France** in making this last "dogmatic statement" however fails to consider the context. Simply put, the disciples did not ask about the end of the world (kosmos - cf 2Pe 3:6, 10 where "world" = kosmos) but about "**the end of the age** (aion)" (Mt 24:3)! (**Note:** In fairness, it must be stated that the word **aion** can refer to the created world [Heb 11:3] but in the context of Matthew 24 it refers to an "age.") The disciples were not referring to the end of the world. In Acts 1:6 the disciples ask the resurrected Jesus "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (cf Lk 19:11) And notice that while He did not specifically answer their question in Acts, neither did He refute them or correct them. The disciples knew Jewish eschatology which told of a better coming age and so they clearly were not looking for the end of the world but the beginning of the next age, the kingdom age of the Messiah!

**R C H Lenski**, Lutheran commentator (1864-1936) writing on Mt 24:21 says "who can object when the destruction of Jerusalem, like the Flood and like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is made a **type** of the end of the world?...The word of Jesus about the "**great tribulation**," thlipsis, Bedraengnis, that will then ensue, the like of which has not been witnessed since the world's beginning and will never again occur, is **literally true**—read the detailed account of Josephus in his Wars. No nation had ever piled up a guilt such as that of the Jews who were chosen of God, infinitely blessed, and yet crucified God's Son and trampled upon all his further grace (**Ed comment:** I think Lenski is a bit harsh - every person who ever sinned holds some responsibility for the Crucifixion of Christ - had no one ever sinned, there would have been no need to crucify Jesus!) No judgment had ever and can ever be so severe. In the history of the world no judgment can be compared with this that wiped out the Jews as a nation."

**Comment - Lenski** commenting on Mt 24:31 makes the rather dogmatic statement that "**no judgment can be compared with this that wiped out the Jews as a nation.**" Notice that Lenski actually died in 1936 prior to (1) the massive genocide of Jews by Hitler and the Nazis and also prior to (2) Israel's miraculous re-birth as a nation (which negates his dogmatic statement that the Romans in 70AD "*wiped out the Jews as a nation!*"). Similarly, there is nothing in Matthew 24 that supports his statement that "the destruction of Jerusalem, like the Flood and like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is made a **type** of the end of the world." As we caution elsewhere on this website, one needs to be very careful in invoking typology (**See Typology-Study of Types**), and in this case **Lenski** is clearly not warranted in calling Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD a **type** of the **end of the world**.

## **JESUS' REPEATED WARNINGS TO FLEE**

(2) In the immediate **context**, Jesus strongly emphasized the need for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to flee the city when they see the **abomination of desolation** being set up in the **holy place**.

**Then (tote)** (This time sensitive word means subsequently -**WHEN** you see Mt 24:15 fulfilled, flee!) let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; 17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19 "But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! 20 "But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath (Mt 24:16-20-note)

Clearly Jesus wanted to make sure His warning to flee was heard and thus He spoke about fleeing for FIVE VERSES! This is a very important fact. Jesus had clearly stated the words "**when you see**" so this was an event that the Jews in the city of Jerusalem would have been able to **see**. Jesus wanted them to be sure to **see** it, so they would be sure to **flee**! That association is crystal clear from a plain reading of Jesus' words.

**Now if one holds to a 70AD fulfillment of this prophecy, Jesus words of warning would have been superfluous!Why?** Because as has been stated previously by the time the Romans had set up an **abomination of desolation** in the **holy place** (something that the Jews could have **seen**), the city walls would have already been broken through and the Roman soldiers would



have been slaughtering the inhabitants (not to mention that Josephus records that Titus had built an enclosure around the city to trap any Jews who attempted to escape!) It does not take much imagination to realize that it would have been too late to flee, which was the very thing Jesus spent **FIVE** verses emphasizing! Beloved, words mean something, especially if they are the words of Jesus!

**Constable** remarks on those who hold that this prophecy was fulfilled "when the Romans brought their standards bearing the image of Caesar into the temple and offered sacrifices to their gods they set up the abomination that Daniel predicted. The main problem with this view is that Jesus told the Jews living in Jerusalem and Judea to flee *when* the **abomination appeared** in the temple (Mt 24:16-20). However when the Romans finally desecrated the temple in 70 A.D. most of the Jews had already left Jerusalem and Judea." (Emphasis added) ([Matthew 24 Commentary](#))

**Ron Bigalke** notes that "Titus did not enter the city of Jerusalem until after the construction of his wall and the famine consumed the Jews. Therefore, it would be impossible to heed the commands of Jesus to **flee** the city because of witnessing the **abomination of desolation** spoken in Matthew 24:15 (**Ed comment:** Bigalke is saying the preterist interpretation that the Roman army is the abomination in Mt 24:15 does not allow the inhabitants to flee!). It should be mentioned again that any sacrilege on the part of the Romans was after the city and Temple were destroyed." ([Preterism And Antiquity- Was Preterism a View of the Early Church](#))

(3) This point is somewhat similar to the previous one but has slightly different emphasis. It is notable that not once did Josephus (The Wars of the Jews) record an "**abomination of desolation**" in the holy place PRIOR to the Temple's destruction (as a literal reading of Mt 24:15 would demand). In fact **AFTER the Temple was destroyed** Josephus wrote

"And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and **upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it**, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy [[Josephus- Of the War, Book 6. Chapter 6. Paragraph 1](#)]."

In other words the **holy place** was no longer intact when the Romans offered sacrifices to their pagan gods. It is also worth noting that the Christian historian Phillip Schaff alluded to the preceding quote by Josephus in his multi-volume History of the Christian Church writing "*Thus was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place.*" Notice that either Schaff misquoted Josephus or he offered his own conclusion in an attempt to validate his belief that the "**abomination of desolation**" Jesus description in Mt 24:15 was committed by the Romans in 70AD. But Josephus never made that statement! Not only does a non-literal approach necessitate twisting of the inspired Scriptures, but also frequently involves distortion of secular historical records!

(4) If the **elect** are Christians who escaped to [Pella in the Transjordan](#) as described in extra-biblical literature, what need would there have been for shortening of those days (Mt 24:22)? In other words, those who had heeded Jesus' warning in Luke 21:20-note (which I believe does indeed refer to the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem -**see explanation**) had already fled and thus preserved their lives.

(5) Mt 24:29-30 states that Jesus returns **immediately after** the **Great Tribulation**. If Mt 24:15-28 was fulfilled in 70 AD, one would have to totally spiritualize Jesus' words and say that He came spiritually but not visibly, which is what preterist interpretations are forced to do. **R C Sproul** (see note below) for example writes "The **great tribulation** refers to the siege of Jerusalem." (He is referring to 70AD).

But a normal reading of the text does not leave room for spiritualization of Jesus' Second Coming! Notice Jesus' words in Mt 24:27 "For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." What is He saying? Is He describing something that is not normally visible to all who have eyes to see? Of course He is. He is saying very plainly that the coming of the Son of Man will be a visible event, like lightning when it lights up the entire sky! And in Mt 24:30 He describes "the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory." That sounds like an event which is visible. The plain reading indicates a literal, visible return, just as the angel had promised in Acts 1:11 and as John attested to in Revelation writing that at the return of Jesus "every eye will see Him" (Rev 1:7-[note](#)). Beloved, He did not return immediately after the events described in Mt 24:15-28!

**Related Resource:** [See Tony Garland's refutation of R C Sproul's unusual teachings on the last days](#)

(6) Mt 24:14-note speaks of **the end of this age** ("then the end shall come") which is connected to the following section (Mt 24:15-28) with a "**therefore**" ("So when" - ESV, NET, NIV) It follows that Jesus' description in Mt 24:14-28 is also related to the end of this age. If one holds that Matthew 24 was fulfilled in the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70AD, it would be very difficult to explain Mt 24:15-28.

(7) In Matthew the **abomination** comes first (Mt 24:15), and then is followed by the **Tribulation** (Mt 24:21). In 70AD the siege of Titus which many interpret as the abomination was contemporaneous with the *great distress* (Lk 21:23).

## THE FOLLOWING WRITERS FAVOR MATTHEW 24:15-26 AS A FUTURE EVENT

**Thomas Constable** - There are several reasons why the **abomination of desolation** must be a future event in God's eschatological program. First, verse 15 is in a context of verses that describes events that have not yet happened (vv. 14-21; cf. v. 29). Second, Daniel's seventieth week with its unique tribulation has not yet happened. Third, Mark described Jesus saying that the abomination of desolation would stand (masculine participle *estekota*) as a person who set himself up as God in the temple (Mark 13:14). This has never happened since Jesus made this prophecy. Fourth, other later revelation points to the future Antichrist as the abomination of desolation (2Thes 2:3-4; Rev. 13:11-18). ([Matthew 24 Commentary](#))

**Ray Stedman** writes that in Matthew 24 and 25 "we have instructions to individuals again. This is what we call the Olivet discourse - instructions to the believing remnant on what to do until He comes again. It reveals how world history is going to shape up; what will happen in the intervening years; what forces will be loosed upon the earth; how the forces of darkness are going to take God's own people and test them, try them, and shake their foundations. He declares that they can only stand as they learn to reckon upon the inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit." ([The Message of Matthew BEHOLD YOUR KING!](#))

**J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)** actually favors a double fulfillment - But we must not suppose that this part of our Lord's prophecy (Mt 24:15-28) is exhausted by the first taking of Jerusalem (Referring to 70AD). It is **more than probable** that our Lord's words have a further and deeper application still. It is **more than probable** that they apply to a second siege of Jerusalem, which is yet to take place, when Israel has returned to their own land (**Ed:** Note Ryle wrote this before Israel's rebirth in May, 1948) --and to a second tribulation on the inhabitants thereof, which shall only be stopped by the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a view of this passage may sound startling to some. But those who doubt its correctness would do well to study the last chapter of the prophet Zechariah, and the last chapter of Daniel. These two chapters contain solemn things. They throw great light on the verses we are now reading, and their connection with the verses which immediately follow. ([Matthew 24 Commentary](#))

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**Kent Hughes commentary** on Mark 13:14 "**Abomination of Desolation**" - Perhaps Jesus motioned toward the Temple radiating in the late afternoon sun as he said, "When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak" (vv. 14–16).

The inner circle knew exactly what Jesus meant by "the abomination that causes desolation." This term originated in the prophetic section of Daniel (in 9:27, and then in 11:31), which described a coming figure who would desecrate the Temple and abolish daily sacrifice there. It meant "an abomination so detestable it would cause the Temple to be abandoned by the people of God and provokes desolation." This had happened 150 years earlier when the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem and attempted to Hellenize the people, forbidding them to circumcise their children (1 Maccabees 1:60) or offer Levitical sacrifices (1 Maccabees 1:45), and forcing them to sacrifice swine (1 Maccabees 1:47). In the words of the writer of Maccabees, "on the fifteenth day of Chislew [December we think] in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering" (1:54). It was a statue of Zeus and probably an image of Antiochus himself! Antiochus also set up a brothel in the Temple chambers (2 Maccabees 6:4). This abomination caused the Jews to abandon the Temple until their successful revolt.

Obviously, as terrible as Antiochus had been, he did not completely fulfill the prophecies in Daniel, for Jesus said another abomination was coming, and then the Temple would be destroyed. This was almost fulfilled in A.D. 40 when the insane Emperor Caligula, thinking he was a god, almost succeeded in having an image of himself installed in the Temple. Ironically, partial fulfillment of this came from among the Jews themselves (Zealots who amidst the turmoil occupied the Temple in the winter and spring of A.D. 67 and 68). They permitted criminals to enter the Holy of Holies and committed murders in the Temple themselves. Finally, they crowned their sacrilege with a circus-like investiture of one Phanni, who according to Josephus "was such a clown that he scarcely knew what the priesthood meant."

I personally believe that "the abomination that causes desolation" will find its ultimate fulfillment in the future and that the destruction of Jerusalem is a paradigm which contains the essential elements of the Great Tribulation at the end of time. The already multiple fulfillment of the term argues for this. Also, "the man of lawlessness" referred to by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–10 supports the view that "the abomination that causes desolation" refers to the ultimate Antichrist who will also fulfill Daniel's prophecies. The destruction of Jerusalem and the advent of a God-usurping personage will signify the approach of the end of the age. (PTW-Mark)

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## THE FOLLOWING WRITERS FAVOR MATTHEW 24:15-26 AS A PAST EVENT

As a general statement, note that the majority of older commentaries (pre-1900) interpret Mt 24:15ff as a prophecy fulfilled in the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD (See [Preterism](#)).

**John Calvin** interprets the **abomination of desolation** as the "*destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem, together with the overthrow of the whole Jewish government*" ([Commentary on Matthew](#)) But is that really what Mt 24:15 plainly states or is Calvin deriving some hidden meaning from the text? **Calvin** makes the mistake that so many of the "older" commentaries make, which is to replace ethnic and national **Israel** with the **church**, for example writing that "*The calamity of the Church shall last through a time, times, and half a time*, (Da 7:25)". To place the "church" in a the book of Daniel which was written by a Jew to a Jewish audience in exile, is a critical hermeneutical error which invariably will lead one to significant misinterpretation of the normal reading of the text as it would have been understood by the Jewish readers, not only in exile but post-exile.

**R T France** ([Preterist](#)) - Whatever the precise fulfilment of Jesus' warning, it seems clear from what follows that it is in the events of the Jewish War of AD 66-70 that he sees the reappearance of Daniel's desolating sacrilege. (Tyndale NT Commentary- Matthew; also author of top rated commentary - NICNT)

**Hagner** - If Matthew means by the "abomination that desolates" something to be accomplished by the Romans in A.D. 70, that does not prevent the elastic symbol from also being applied to something lying in the future. But that possibility is not in the evangelist's mind. (Word Biblical Commentary) **Comment:** Notice the incongruity of this statement - on one hand Hagner seems to leave open a future eschatological fulfillment of Mt 24:15 but on the other hand he discards it because he is able to read Matthew's mind!

**Albert Barnes** - The abomination of desolation means the Roman army, and is so explained by Lu. 21:20. The Roman army is farther called the abomination on account of the images of the emperor, and the eagles, carried in front of the legions, and regarded by the Romans with divine honours.

**Adam Clarke** like Barnes interprets the **abomination** as the Roman Army - This abomination of desolation, St. Luke, ( Luke 21:20, Luke 21:21;), refers to the Roman army; and this abomination standing in the holy place is the Roman army besieging Jerusalem." **Comment:** Clearly Clarke spiritualizes the phrase "holy place" for there is no way the Roman army could be standing in the Temple which is clearly the plain sense of the phrase "holy place."

Other commentators who interpret the **abomination of desolation** as the **Roman Army** - [John Trapp](#), [Joseph Benson](#), [Phillip Schaff](#), [William Burkitt](#), [John Wesley](#), [Daniel Whedon](#), [Rhoderick Ice](#), [Thomas Coke](#), [Marvin Vincent](#), [A T Robertson](#), [Expositor's Greek Testament](#).

**Johann Bengel** - The time of flight is joined in Luke 21:20 with the actual moment of the approach of the army; and Eusebius mentions (H. E. iii. 5), that at that very time the Divine warning to fly had been repeated. The holy place, therefore, does not here signify the temple, or the holy of holies, for it would have been too late to flee after that had been profaned, but a definite place without and near the Holy City; in short, that very place which our Lord (as He had often done) regarded as made holy by His presence, whilst He was uttering these words: cf. Acts 7:33. **Comment:** Notice what Bengel does -- he recognizes that there is a problem having the Roman army standing in the holy place, so what does he do? He simply changes the plain meaning of holy place! I hope you see why I am including writers who favor a past historical fulfillment of Mt 24:15. Since they refuse to let the text speak for itself, they are forced to invent a host of rationalizations.

**Reformation Study Bible** (R C Sproul) on the **abomination of desolation** - The phrase is from Daniel. In Da. 9:27; 11:31 it refers to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (**Ed comment:** Da 11:31 is clearly a prophecy of Antiochus, but Da 9:27 is not for it occurs in the 70th week of Daniel). In 168 B.C. Antiochus erected a pagan altar in the temple. According to Josephus, he also sacrificed swine there. Shortly before A.D. 70 the Zealots were in the temple precincts during the war with Rome, and their presence could have been considered a **desecration** (**Ed:** Dear reader, can you see how one is compelled to come up with relatively far fetched speculations when one refuses to accept a simple, plain reading of the text!). (**Comment** - The notes in the Reformation Study Bible do not attempt to explain Mt 24:21 but simply skip over "the Great Tribulation!")

**John Gill** interprets the **abomination of desolation** as "the Roman army...the Roman armies were desolating ones to the Jews, and to whom they were an abomination." **Matthew Poole** and the Concordia Study Bible also interpret the abomination as the Roman armies! Jesus plainly states that the **abomination** stands in the Holy Place. Clearly the **abomination** cannot be the Roman army, as there would hardly be room in the Temple! The only way such an interpretation works is to disregard (or spiritualize) the clear words of Jesus! Do you see how absurd such an interpretation is when one refuses to let Jesus' words say what they say?

**Andrews Study Bible** on the abomination of desolation - The clear context of the next five verses (Mt 24:16-20) is the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in A.D. 70. Therefore, this prophecy of Daniel (Da 9:26-27) points to, among other events, the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. Mt 24:21-22 After the fall of Jerusalem and before the Second Coming of Christ the church was to go through oppression and persecution, as predicted in Da 7:21-26 Jesus promised that God in His sovereignty and love would limit the duration of that experience. (**Comment** - Notice how this note does not even interpret a **Jewish** prophet's writing to a **Jewish** audience in Babylonian captivity in a Jewish context, but as written to the church! This is an excellent example of the absurd interpretations that are imagined when one chooses to presumptuously jettison a literal interpretation of the Scriptures.)

## BRIEF CRITIQUE OF SEVERAL MORE RECENT TOP RATED COMMENTARIES ON MATTHEW

From the previous analysis, it seems relatively clear that if (and this is a critical "IF") one reads Matthew 24:15-21 seeking the plain, normal sense from Jesus' words, these passages have never been perfectly fulfilled in the history of the world! On the other hand if one feels Jesus' words have been fulfilled in 70AD, there are significant problems as alluded to above. To further illustrate the problems one encounters when the passage is interpreted as fulfilled in 70AD, we will present analyses of several of the top rated commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, because **NOT ONE** of these commentaries interpret Matthew 24:15 as a yet to be fulfilled future event. One wonders if there is a non-futuristic bias in these lists of "best commentaries". In fact, one of the best evangelical expository commentaries available on Matthew (John MacArthur's Matthew Commentary) does not even attain honorable mention status on the following two lists of "best commentaries" on Matthew (Use these lists with a healthy Acts 17:11-note mindset):

- [Best Commentaries on Matthew - Tim Challies](#)
- [Best Commentaries on Matthew - Ligonier Ministries](#)

**Now we will take a look at the Matthew commentaries to which Challies and Ligonier give the highest rank.**

**(1) Expositor's Bible Commentary - Matthew - D A Carson.** Carson's work is singled out for scrutiny because it is [Tim Challies'](#) highest rated commentary on Matthew and Dr Carson is highly respected (and rightly so!) So let's see how he interprets Matthew 24:15.

In explaining Mt 24:15 Carson first asks the question **'to what event does Jesus make this text (Ed: Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11) from Daniel refer?'** Carson then makes a relatively dogmatic statement that...

**The obvious** occasion, in general terms, is AD 70, **though certain difficulties must be faced.** Although *topos* ("place," GK 5536) can refer to the city of Jerusalem (cf. BDAG, 1011), the normal meaning of *topos hagnos* ("holy place") is the Temple complex (cf. BDAG; see Isa 60:13; 2Macc 1:29; 2:18; Acts6:13; 21:28). But by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the Temple in AD 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee." (Expositor's Bible Commentary, 2010).

Could it be that AD 70 in fact is not **"the obvious"** answer and that this is the reason there are **"certain difficulties?"** It is always difficult to force a square plug in a round hole! It is much better to let the text speak for itself and to compare Scripture with Scripture. The first difficulty Carson alludes to is the identity of the **holy place**. However if one examines the 60 NT uses of **holy place**, it is clear that they all refer to the Temple and none refer to the city. The second difficulty Carson alludes is more problematic and even Carson acknowledges that **by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the Temple in AD 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee**. Recall that the disciples had asked Jesus for a sign and Jesus gave them a clear sign, one that would be visible, one that could be seen (cf **"When you see..."**) = **the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place** So if it would have been too late to flee, why would Jesus have given such a specific sign? There would have been no need to give a sign! And it follows that if the sign was of no value, then Jesus' subsequent extended warning to flee the city in Mt 24:16-20 would have been superfluous. But we know that everything Jesus says has purpose, so there must be another answer. Carson goes on in an attempt to explain this significant difficulty writing that...

Mark's language is less explicit—**standing where it does not belong** (Mk 13:14) instead of **standing in the holy place**. Luke resolves the matter: **"When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near"** (Lk 21:20-24-note) (**Ed: See commentary on these Lucan passages**)—but now there is no explicit mention of **"the abomination of desolation."** Possibly Jesus said something ambiguous, such as Mark reports (**Ed comment:** Why would Jesus be *ambiguous* and then immediately give five verses emphasizing that the reader must flee Jerusalem immediately? That simply makes no sense if the sign was *ambiguous*!). Luke, writing for a Gentile audience less concerned with Daniel, emphasizes the aspect of warning (**Ed comment:** But as explained in my commentary on Lk 21:20-24 Luke gives an entirely different "sign". Luke's "sign" is outside

the city, while Matthew's sign is in the city, specifically in the Temple!) Matthew, believing the allusions to Daniel important for his Jewish audience because Jesus drew attention to them, makes explicit reference to "**the abomination of desolation**" and to "**the holy place**," since the setting up of the abomination in the holy place is the inevitable result of the pagan attack."

Notice that because of the difficulty in trying to make Mt 24:15 "fit" an AD 70 fulfillment, Carson compares the **CLEAR UNMISTAKABLE SIGN** in Matthew 24:15 with a distinctly different "sign" in Luke 21:20, a sign pointing to the subsequent desolation of the city of Jerusalem in 70AD. In explaining why Luke 21:20-24 has no mention of an **abomination of desolation**, Carson hypothesizes that "Possibly Jesus said something **ambiguous**." Considering the fact that Jesus was giving a "sign" followed by a warning to flee, it is highly unlikely that Jesus was **ambiguous**! He does not mention the other possibility that the signs given by Jesus in Matthew and Luke are different because these are signs of different events, one past and the other yet to be fulfilled.

**Carson** makes an interesting statement (with which I agree) that "there is reasonably good tradition that Christians abandoned the city, perhaps in A.D. 68, about halfway through the siege." But think about that for a moment. What was the "**sign**" that even made this possible? The city had to have a siege, an encircling Roman army, as described in Luke 21:20, but there would have to be a lull in the siege to allow Jews to escape. And historically that seems to be what happened as **Fruchtenbaum explains**. If that is true, then why would Jesus even need to give a second and different sign? I think the answer is clear -- the second sign points to a different event, one that has not yet occurred in history. While there are similarities between the discourses in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, there are significant differences as highlighted by a **chart depicting similarities and differences**.

**(2) Craig Blomberg - New American Commentary - Matthew** (Ranked number four in [Tim Challies'](#) top 5, and in the "Runners Up" after the top five in the [Ligonier's list](#)) -

Although **Blomberg** ends up favoring a 70AD fulfillment, he does seem to entertain the possibility that Jesus' warning in Mt 24:15-20 refers to a yet future event writing

"The imagery of sacrilegious desolation and the temple's destruction (Mt 24:15) calls to mind Second Thessalonians and particularly the appearance of the "man of lawlessness" in God's temple (2Th 2:3-4). Given the repeated patterns of God's activity in history, these parallels should not surprise us. (**Ed comment:** Notice Blomberg really does not address clear resemblance of the abomination of desolation in Mt 24:15 and the abomination committed by the "man of lawlessness" in God's Temple, but instead simply says "*these parallels should not surprise us*." Perhaps not, but what about the fact that the best "commentary" on Scripture is Scripture - see Compare Scripture with Scripture. Blomberg basically chooses not to talk about the parallel between Mt 24:15 and 2Thes 2:3-4, this latter prophecy clearly awaiting a future fulfillment and thus lending credence to a similar futuristic interpretation of Mt 24:15ff!)

Undoubtedly, much that surrounded the destruction of the temple and the Jewish war in A.D. 70 will be repeated, probably on a larger scale, just prior to Christ's return (**Ed comment:** This begs the question what does Blomberg think "*will be repeated?*" Does he think an **abomination standing in the holy place** will be repeated? He does not elaborate).

But given the thoroughly Jewish nature of all of the details of Mt 24:15-20, their close correspondence to the actual events of the mid-first century, and the more explicit wording of Luke 21:20-24 (**Ed comment:** As noted elsewhere in these notes all commentaries that interpret Mt 24:15ff as fulfilled in 70AD reference this passage in Luke, but as discussed elsewhere this passage not only has a different "sign" but also has multiple other differences compared to the similar passage in Matthew 24! **See Simple Chart Comparing Luke 21 and Matthew 24**), there is no *reason* to take any of Matthew's text here as looking beyond the events that culminated in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. (**Ed comment:** I strongly disagree with his dogmatic statement! There is one *reason* and it is the fact that the "**abomination of desolation**" Daniel described in Daniel 9:27-note has not taken place! But if one interprets Daniel 9:27 as fulfilled in Antiochus IV Epiphanes, then that problem text is removed, except that to the best of my knowledge there is no historical evidence that Antiochus ever made a seven year covenant with the Jews and broke it after three and one-half years, 1260 days, 42 months or time, times and half a time! **See the "coincidentally" similar eschatological time phrases** = 3.5 years, "Time, times, half a time", 42 mo, 1260 days)

**Blomberg** also encounters difficulty when he tries to explain the **Great Tribulation** of Mt 24:21 - He writes...

Another "**then**" (**tote**) appears. It does not seem to mean *later* but *at that time* or *beginning immediately* (**Ed comment:** Which begs the question "**At what time?**" If we examine the context Jesus clearly tells us the "*time*" - "**When [an expression of time] you see the abomination of desolation...**". Blomberg continues...) —the NIV does not even break for a paragraph. But the concept of a period of unparalleled distress (based on Da 12:1-note) causes problems (**Ed comment:** **Why does it cause problems?** In simple terms, it causes

problems because a 70AD fulfillment simply cannot explain Mt 24:21!). If these two verses simply depict the horrors surrounding the war of A.D. 70, it is hard to see how Mt 24:21 could be true (**Ed comment:** I am thankful for his honest comment that it is difficult to explain Mt 24:21 if one adheres to a 70AD destruction!). If they point to some end-time sacrilege, just before the Parousia, then it is hard to see how Matthew allows for a gap of at least two thousand years between Mt 24:20-21 (**Ed comment:** To reiterate, it is NOT "hard" at all to see, if one simply takes at face value the flow of Jesus' clear, visible starting signal in Mt 24:15, followed by His words of warning in Mt 24:16-20 and then by His crystal clear explanation of why it so imperative that the Jews flee in Mt 24:21. Blomberg continues...) It is probably best, therefore, to understand this period of great distress, or "**the great tribulation**," as it is more commonly known, as the entire period beginning with the devastation of A.D. 70 and continuing on until Christ's return (cf. "immediately" in Mt 24:29) (**Ed comment:** It is interesting that Blomberg calls attention to the time phrase "**immediately**" because if one reads Mt 24:15-21 literally the Great Tribulation is in fact followed "immediately" by His return and that in fact is how "**those days shall be cut short!**" Mt 24:22! Oh, the "tinkering" that one must invoke if one refuses to read Jesus' words literally!)

**Rosscup** adds **Blomberg** "appears to hold a post-tribulation rapture of the church (370), but with some lack of clarity as to how that would be consistent with other aspects of his views."

**(3) Leon Morris. The Gospel According to Matthew** (Pillar Commentary). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992. - (Ranked second in [Tim Challies'](#) top 5, and ranked fourth in the [Ligonier list](#))

**Morris** explains Mt 24:15 writing that "There has been a good deal of dispute about the precise meaning of the expression **the abomination of desolation**) in this context, but there can be no doubt that Jesus was referring to some "abominable" thing, that is, something that brought or would bring defilement to the Temple. It would stand in **the holy place**, that is, the temple (**Ed comment:** So far, so good. Morris is thankfully interpreting the text literally to this point.) At the siege of Jerusalem many horrific things took place as zealous Jews fought over the Temple and defilement of some sort certainly took place. **The reference seems to be to something of this sort rather than to what the Romans did when they captured it, for by that time it would be too late to flee; there were opportunities earlier.** (**Note:** My bolding, italics and color added for emphasis)

**Ed Comment:** Notice Morris uses the phrase "*seems to be something of this sort*" which expresses a degree of uncertainty. However recall that Jesus is answering the disciples' request for signs in Mt 24:3 but it makes little sense that He would give them a sign with a high degree of uncertainty. Thankfully Morris astutely recognizes that if one interprets the Roman army as the **abomination** as do so many of the non-literalistic interpreters, there is a *significant problem!* Unfortunately, Morris does not even make mention of the possibility of the Antichrist nor does he quote the clear parallel passage by Paul in 2Thes 2:3-4!

**(Morris) Let the reader understand....**encourages the reader to think hard about the words: "*it means, Look more deeply into this, because what is said is less than what is meant*" (Fenton).

**Ed comment: I absolutely agree** - this prophecy requires one to spend significant time studying the prophecies of Daniel and not just try to make the **abomination** fit with past historical events, which is sadly the most common approach to interpretation of Matthew 24:15!

**(Morris)** But clearly He is saying that there will be some sacrilegious happening that will pollute and empty **the holy place** and that his followers should take notice of it when it occurs."

**Ed comment:** To Morris' credit whether he meant to do it or not, he leaves open the door that this prophecy could await a fulfillment at some time in the future. (Bolding added)

**Morris** has an interesting note on Mt 24:21 - "This is underlined with the information that it will be of a magnitude unparalleled in the entire history of the world; **such trouble has never been, nor will it be equaled thereafter.** (There is an unusual piling up of negatives—*oud ou me*—that makes for a very emphatic negation.)"

**Ed comment:** Another astute observation! Indeed by using three negatives Jesus is making it very clear that the **great tribulation** He is predicting will never, absolutely ever occur again in the history of the world! This fact alone would be strong support against the commonly held view that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was the "great tribulation." Notice Morris' statement that this trouble will not be equaled thereafter. As discussed in these notes, the Jews have experienced far worse tribulation under Adolph Hitler than they did under the Roman general Titus! This fact alone should make anyone who adheres to Mt 24:15-21 as a historically fulfilled event pause and make an honest, non-biased reappraisal of their interpretation!

**Rosscup** adds this critique on Morris' commentary - "One of the world's best-known evangelical, **amillennial** NT scholars provides a thorough, clear, well-studied and mature tool based on the Greek but highly readable even for those who do not know

Greek. Morris usually surges quickly to the crux, and gives main views, reasons for his choices, word meaning, contextual factors, background, and customs. His work here is right up with the No. 1 commentaries in all-around contribution. In prophetic passages such as Matthew 24-25, one will see an **amillennial** perspective near its best."

**(4) Craig Keener. The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary** - - (Ranked fifth in [Tim Challies'](#) top 5, and ranked third in the [Ligonier list](#)) The following critique of Keener's writing style is somewhat more complicated because Keener's writing style and comments are very difficult to follow compared to most of the other Matthew commentaries.

**Introductory Comment:** It is interesting that Challies writes "Keener's work receives high recommendations **and** (emphasis is Challis') significant warnings about the limits of its usefulness." Unfortunately, Challies fails to elaborate on his "**significant warnings**." While I do not know the nature of Challies' warnings, in reading Keener's comments on Matthew 24:15ff there was one sentence that caused me great alarm --"**Even in the New Testament the language may be mythological at points**" Really? I admit that I do not possess a theological doctorate (I am a medical doctor) but I steadfastly refute that statement by Keener. In fact, this one statement by Keener ought to serve notice that his comments no matter how erudite (and they are probably the **MOST** erudite of the top 5 commentaries on Matthew), should be read with great caution and a healthy Acts 17:11 Berean mindset, lest one be misled from the plain meaning of the inerrant, plenary inspired ([verbal plenary inerrancy](#)) Words of Jesus in Matthew 24. Below are selected excerpts from Keener's commentary most of which are followed by my comments.

### **KEENER'S EXPLANATION OF THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION**

**Keener** explains the **abomination of desolation** writing "the language of Jesus' reference to a desolating sacrilege in the sanctuary (Mt 24:15) suggests a more specific Biblical allusion. Daniel's language stands behind that of Maccabees and Josephus. When Daniel spoke of the "abomination that would result in desolation," one text referred to the events surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes, who claimed to be deity and oppressed Israel (Da 8:13; 11:31, 36-39); another text, however, associates the same phenomenon with **the cutting off of an anointed ruler**, close to the time of Jesus (Da 9:26-note [NOTE: All "note" additions after the Scripture are links to my commentary on Daniel] = "*Then after the sixty-two weeks the [anointed one] will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its **end** will come with a flood; even to **the end** there will be war; desolations are determined.*"). Further, **the end** had not come after Antiochus' desecration of the temple (Da 11:31-note; cf. "then" in Da 12:1-note - "*there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time*"), allowing the possibility that another desolation would come (Da 12:11-12-note). The image of this final tribulation period was reapplied....Jewish speculation concerning the end time regularly reapplied Daniel's figures in various manners. Revelation seems to reapply Daniel's tribulation period to the period between Jesus' first and second comings (Rev 12:1-6, 10) (**Ed:** see [Revelation 12 Commentary](#)); some scholars have understood Matthew 24 similarly....

**Keener** continues to explain the **abomination of desolation** - "Jewish people recognized that shedding innocent blood in the sanctuary would profane it (1Mac 1:37NRSV; Jos. Ant. 9.152; so also Mt 23:35), and some even saw this defilement as a **desolation** (1Mac 1:39NRSV; 1Mac 2:12NRSV). Josephus indicated that the shedding of priestly blood in the sanctuary was the desecration, or "**abomination**," that invited the ultimate **desolation** of A.D. 70. (**Ed comment:** I must question Josephus' credentials as a trusted interpreter of Scripture! I am not even aware that he was born again.) **Very close to three and a half years after the abomination** (cf. War 6.93), the temple was destroyed and violated even more terribly.

**Ed comment:** **Keener** seems to accept that that Daniel 9:27-note is **7 years** as he says "very close to three and a half years after the abomination the temple was destroyed." The problem with that statement is that Daniel clearly dates the **abomination** in Daniel's Seventieth week whereas the **destruction of the Temple** described by Daniel was in the sixty-ninth week - see Da 9:26-note! Not only that, but interpretation of eschatology is not like horse shoes, so "close" does not count! Daniel 9:27-note dogmatically states the covenant is broken at the midpoint of the 7 which would be 3.5 years, which in turn fits beautifully with 6 other similar time phrases! **See similar eschatological time phrases** = 3.5 years, "Time, times, half a time", 42 mo, 1260 days. In short, Keener's interpretation of the "**abomination**" would not even remotely correlate with Daniel's specific chronology!)

**(Keener) - After the temple burned**, the Romans erected on the site of the temple their standards, which bore the emperors' images and were housed with idols in the army camps, then offered sacrifice to them.

**Ed comment:** Do you see the problem one encounters when you compare Jesus' words in Mt 24:15 with what transpired historically? Recall that Jesus says the abomination [whatever it is] stands in the **holy place**, the Temple. So if one postulates that the Roman idolatrous sacrifices are the abomination, according to history they occurred **AFTER** the Temple was burned. For Jesus' prediction to be fulfilled, one would have to have an intact **holy place**!

**(Keener) -** Jerusalemites had once preferred death to permitting these standards to enter the city....But Jesus' warning must apply to the earlier rather than the final desecration, because shortly after the Romans surrounded Jerusalem escape became

increasingly difficult (e.g., Jos. War 5.420-23, 449).

**Ed comment:** Here is the problem that all those who see a historical fulfillment if they interpret the abomination as the Roman army. Once the Roman army had surrounded Jerusalem, it would have been too late to escape.

**(Keener)** - In Matthew, the tribulation seems to begin with the sanctuary's desecration in A.D. 66 and concludes with Jesus' return (Mt 24:29). If, as I think most likely, Matthew writes some years after 70, this allows several interpretive options:

In Matthew 24 Jesus (each of the enumerated comments is from Keener)...

**(1)** skips from this tribulation to the next eschatologically significant event, His return (Fuller 1966; cf. Lk 21:24; especially compare Mt 24:21, "nor ever shall," with Da 12:1; cf. Jos. War pref. 1);

**Ed comment:** This comment by Keener demonstrates the problem that the [Preterist](#) view presents. Clearly Jesus did not return in the first century [unless one invokes view #5 below!] and yet in context His return is linked with the sign of the beginning of the end - see Mt 24:14 [**the end shall come**] which in turn (in context) links to Mt 24:15! Recall the question the disciples asked Jesus in Mt 24:3 was what is "**the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**" He will return at the end of the age and the **abomination of desolation** is a visible sign of the beginning of **the end**, a sign that warns the Jews to flee and a sign that His return will soon follow as Jesus clearly states = "immediately after **the tribulation** of those days [**Which tribulation?** The **great tribulation** He had just described in Mt 24:21, clearly linking the beginning of this **great tribulation** with the appearance of the **abomination of desolation standing in the holy place** in Mt 24:15] "and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky" (Mt 24:29-30)

**(2)** regards the whole interim between the Temple's demise and his return as an extended tribulation period ("immediately"—Mt 24:29; e.g., Carson 1984b: 507);

**Ed comment:** Jesus said there would never again be anything like it. To make all history from 70AD to >2016 AD the **great tribulation** is defies common sense!

**(3)** prophetically blends the tribulation of 66-70 with the final one, which it prefigures (see Bock 1994: 332-33);

**Ed comment:** This option seems to suggest a past and a future fulfillment and as noted below even [Keener](#) admits to favoring "elements of (3)! This is how a partial preterist might interpret Mt 24:15, as fulfilled historically in 70AD and yet prefiguring a final future fulfillment at the end of the age.

**(4)** begins the tribulation in 66 but postpones the rest of it until the end time;

**Ed comment:** Is he saying the "tribulation" has a gap? It sounds like that is what #4 is postulating.

**(5)** intends His "return" in Mt 24:29-31 symbolically for the fall of Jerusalem.

**Ed comment:** To interpret Mt 24:30 as symbolic is patently absurd!

**(Keener concludes)** I currently favor options (1) or (2) with elements of (3).

**(Keener then adds)** (Against the view of a "spiritual" coming are the many emphatic statements about a personal, visible coming in the context—Mt 24:27; Gundry 1982: 491.)

**Ed comment:** Here is Keener's comment from his earlier IVP commentary on Matthew - "*Although many scholars (including a number of conservative scholars) prefer option 5, the many emphatic statements about a personal, visible coming in the context probably rule out a symbolic coming the way they would a "spiritual" one.*" I agree wholeheartedly with this comment. Jesus is coming back visibly, bodily, and in a cloud, exactly like He ascended (Acts 1:9-11, Rev 1:7-[note](#))

**(Keener)** The third option may in fact deserve more attention than my current inclination has given it: certainly the prophetic perspective naturally viewed nearer historical events as precursors of the final events (**Ed:** This suggests Keener sees some merit in a future fulfillment!).

**(Keener continues)** In any case, the view (circulated mainly in current popular circles) that Matthew 24 addresses only a tribulation that even readers after 70 assumed to be wholly future is not tenable; Matthew understands that "**all these things**" (probably referring to the question about the temple's demise—Mt 24:2; Mk 13:4) will happen within a **generation** (Mt 24:34), language that throughout Jesus' teachings in Matthew refers to the generation then living (e.g., Mt 11:16; 12:39, 45; 16:4; 23:36; cf. Mt 27:25).

**Ed comment:** Mt 24:34 is a difficult verse to interpret. Some like Keener say it refers to the generation living at the time Jesus



spoke these words which would refute a future interpretation of Matthew 24:15-22. While I admit that this passage is difficult to "fit" with futuristic interpretation, to base one's entire interpretation on a problematic passage is also very tenuous. That is especially true when there are so many problems (as discussed above) with the interpretation of Matthew 24:15-22 as prophecy fulfilled in 70AD. See the **Matthew 24:34 Commentary** for a discussion of the multiple ways Mt 24:34 has been interpreted. **Keener's** comment that Matthew uses "language that throughout Jesus' teachings in Matthew refers to the generation then living" is not completely accurate. In fact Keener only lists 5 Matthew references to generation (e.g., Mt 11:16; 12:39, 45; 16:4; 23:36; cf. Mt 27:25), but there are actually 13 occurrences of **generation** in 10 verses and several lend themselves to an interpretation that is compatible with a future interpretation of Mt 24:15. (see **Matthew 24:34 Commentary**).

**(Finally Keener concludes)** Further, Luke dispenses with much of the symbolism and lays the emphasis almost entirely on the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, in which Judean slaves were carried among the nations. For Luke, the "abomination" that brings about desolation becomes simply the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem, promising desolation (Lk 21:20-note).

**Ed comment:** As has been stated in Luke 21:20-24 Jesus gives a different **sign** [encircling army] and has no mention of an unprecedented time of distress. There are also a number of other differences between Matthew 24 and Luke 21-see [Chart comparing Matthew and Luke](#).

**(5) Davies and Allison ([Matthew 19-28- International Critical Commentary](#) - Not ranked in [Challies'](#) top 5, and fifth in [Ligonier's list](#))** This commentary seems to offer a hybrid preterist and futurist interpretation of Mt 24:15ff. This commentary is the only one of the highly ranked commentaries that even considers the possibility that Mt 24:15 might be the future Antichrist.

Luke seems to refer it to the destruction of the temple in AD 70 (Lk 21:20), and many commentators think this also the reference in Matthew. That is possible. But it is no less likely that our evangelist **had in mind some future, eschatological defilement and destruction, and perhaps even activities of an anti-Christ** for 2Th 2:3-4 shows the early existence of such a tradition within Christianity."

Let me summarize the significance of accurate interpretation of the abomination of desolation in Matthew 24:15 by quoting from Jewish believer [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum](#):

Concerning the events of the second half of the Tribulation, all together, the Messiah said eight things.

**First:** the Messiah dealt with the specific event that will mark the beginning of the second half of the Tribulation: the Abomination of Desolation standing in the holy place (v. 15). The Abomination of Desolation will involve two stages. The first stage will be when the Antichrist will take over the Jewish Temple, sit down in the Holy of Holies, and declare himself to be god (2 Thes. 2:3-10). The second stage of the Abomination of Desolation will be when the False Prophet will make an image of the Antichrist and stand it up in the Holy of Holies (Rev. 13:11-15; Dan. 12:11). This act of the Abomination of Desolation will signal that the second and worse half of the Tribulation has begun.

**Second:** the Abomination of Desolation will be the signal for the Jews to flee out of the Land (vv. 16-20); this flight is also recorded in Revelation 12:13-17. This passage reflects a sense of urgency in Israel's flight. In fact, the whole emphasis is on speed and quickness. This emphasis is especially evident in the Messiah's listing of the three difficulties that may be encountered in this flight. The first difficulty is for women who are pregnant or have infants. In both cases, this makes quick flight difficult as any woman in that condition can certainly verify. The second difficulty is in relation to the winter, when weather conditions can also limit a speedy escape especially through wadis such as the one leading to Petra. The third difficulty is in relation to the Sabbath, a day when all public transportation closes down. For these two reasons, they are advised to pray that this Abomination of Desolation, which will indeed come to pass, will not come on the Sabbath day or during the winter months, during the rainy season.

**Third:** the reason for this flight (v. 21) is because at this time worldwide anti-Semitism will break out in all its fierceness. Satan's attempt to annihilate the Jews once and for all will have begun in earnest.

**Fourth:** Israel will survive this terrible period, though greatly reduced in number (v. 22).

**Fifth:** the second half of the Tribulation will be characterized by a false messiah, as typified in the counterfeit son, the Antichrist (v. 23).

**Sixth:** the latter half of the Tribulation will be characterized by many false signs, miracles and wonders, for the purpose of worldwide deception. These false signs will be performed by both the Antichrist (2 Thes. 2:8-10) and by the False Prophet (Rev. 13:11-15).

**Seventh:** the Messiah warned that there will be people saying that the Messiah has returned here or that the

Messiah has returned there, and that the Second Coming has secretly occurred (vv. 25-27). The Messiah warned the Jews of that day not to believe any such rumor or statement and come out of hiding because, unlike His First Coming, the Second Coming will not be in secret. When the Messiah returns the second time, all men will see it, for it will be like a flash of lightning surrounding the world.

**Eighth:** the Messiah gave a hint as to the place of His Second Coming in verse 28. He said that where the body is, there will the eagles (better translated as "vultures") be gathered together. The "body" refers to Israel, while the "vultures" refer to the Gentile nations coming against the body of Israel. The place of the Second Coming of the Messiah will be in that place where the body of Israel is located, and where the Gentile nations are gathered together. The exact place is known as Bozrah (in Hebrew) or Petra (in Greek). That is where the "body" will be (Mic. 2:12-13); that is where the "vultures" will be gathered to come against them (Is. 34:1-7; 63:1-6); and that will be the place of the Second Coming (Hab. 3:3).

To summarize, in this passage, the Messiah presented the events of the second half of the Tribulation, showing it to be an especially difficult period for Israel which will culminate in the Second Coming of the Messiah. But He has not yet answered the second question that concerned the sign that will signal the Messiah's Second Coming. ([Footsteps of the Messiah - Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum- Recommended Read](#))

## THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

**Tony Garland** has the following discussion on the **image of the beast**..

Scripture indicates that the Beast who attains worldwide worship (Rev. 13:8) "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2Th. 2:4). **But there is a catch—the Beast is not God. In particular, he lacks God's unique attribute of omnipresence. So as long as he himself remains sitting in the Temple, he is unable to venture forth on the various campaigns which are associated with his activities at the time of the end. This seems to be the motivation behind the instructions by the False Prophet that the [earth dwellers](#) should "make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived"(Rev. 13:14). Having established the image, the False Prophet is "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" (Rev. 13:15 cf. Rev 14:9). This is perhaps one of the most remarkable statements in all of Scripture as it appears that the False Prophet is allowed, by the sovereignty of God's permissive control of evil, to give the image life.**

Although we can't be sure, it seems reasonable to think that one purpose of the image is to continue to occupy the holy place within the Temple allowing the Beast to venture forth to attend to his many responsibilities—leaving an icon (image) present as the focal point of worship. Notice that both the Beast and his image are the objects of worship (Rev. 13:15; Rev 19:20). Those who refuse to worship the image are killed!

Although the man of sin himself first sits in the Temple (2Th. 2:3-4), Jesus infers that something inanimate is set up in the holy place: **"Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place. . ."** (Mt. 24:15). The **abomination** in this verse is not a person (masculine or feminine) but a thing (neuter). Perhaps it is the image of the Beast. It is impossible to know for certain. Yet, this would help explain one purpose of the image of the Beast.

Following the judgments of the sixth trumpet "the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols . . ." (Rev. 9:20). Interestingly, the image of the Beast is the ultimate work of their hands since the False Prophet "deceives those who dwell on the earth . . . to make an image to the beast" (Rev. 13:14). Thus, they themselves make the ultimate idol (icon) of their own worship!

The image of the Beast is typified by Nebuchadnezzar's gold image which his subjects were required to worship on penalty of death:

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true,...that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?...if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" (Da 3:14-15-[note](#))

In the same way that Nebuchadnezzar's image received worship on his behalf, so will the image of the beast receive worship together with the Beast himself. ([A Testimony of Jesus Christ - Image of the Beast](#))

## THE TRIBULATION TEMPLE

[Tony Garland](#)

Several passages of Scripture indicate that the activities of the Antichrist involve a future Jewish Temple:

Daniel 9:27-note - The prince who is to come confirms a covenant for the duration of the **Seventieth Week of Daniel**. In the middle of the week, **'he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.'** This implies an preexisting Temple within which sacrifice and offering had been taking place.

Daniel 12:11-note - The daily sacrifice will be taken away and the Abomination of Desolation is set up. The context indicates that this occurs during "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a [Jewish] nation" (Da 12:1). A Temple must have been standing in which the daily sacrifices were being offered.

Matthew 24:15 - Jesus predicted that the Abomination of Desolation would stand **'in the holy place.'** This refers to a location within the Temple.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 - Paul indicated that one of the acts of the man of sin would be to exalt himself "above all that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sits as God **in the temple of God**, showing himself that he is God."

Revelation 11:1-note - John is told to measure "the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there." The context is during the Tribulation, prior to the return of Christ.

It is beyond all doubt that **a Temple exists at the time of Antichrist**. The only question which remains is **which Temple?** As we have already mentioned, most [preterist interpreters](#) take [Nero](#) to be The Beast and understand the fulfillment of his overthrow by Christ (Rev. 19:20) to be his suicide in A.D. 68. They see John's mention of a Temple in Revelation 11:1-2 as [internal evidence for an early date](#) for the writing of Revelation.

If this were an acceptable explanation and interpretation, then the Tribulation Temple would be none other than the Second Temple prior to its destruction by Rome in A.D. 70. However, attempts to find fulfillment of the book of Revelation, not to mention all the other related prophetic themes, in the events of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 require an enormous amount of creative and imprecise interpretation, not to mention outright reversal of textual meaning.<sup>75</sup> Although preterists maintain that since John is told to measure the Temple (Rev. 11:1-note) it must therefore have been standing in John's day, this is not necessarily so:

Regarding Preterist assertion that this is Herod's temple, to be destroyed in 70 A.D., there are at least two problems with this view. Firstly, most scholars date the book of Revelation after that destruction and secondly, It does not matter at all whether the temple is thought to still be standing in Jerusalem at the time that John sees the vision, since that would not necessarily have any bearing upon a vision. John is told by the angel accompanying him during the vision to 'measure the temple' (Rev. 11:1-note). Measure what temple? The temple in the vision. In fact, Ezekiel, during a similar vision of a temple (Eze. 40-48) was told to measure that temple. [Preterists] would agree, that when Ezekiel saw and was told to measure a temple, that there was not one standing in Jerusalem.<sup>76</sup>

There is an additional problem with the preterist view that the Tribulation Temple is the Second Temple: no one in the early church—the saints who lived closest to the times of both Nero and John—understood the preterist scheme. They did not see Nero as the Antichrist and the destruction of Jerusalem as the fulfillment of the book of Revelation. Some of the earliest interpreters, like [futurist interpreters](#) of today, expected the Temple to be a rebuilt Temple future to John's day:

Therefore, when he [the antichrist] receives the kingdom, he orders the temple of God to be rebuilt for himself, which is in Jerusalem; who after coming into it, he shall sit as God.—Ephraim the Syrian, A.D. 373. (Thomas Ice and Timothy J. Demy, When the Trumpet Sounds)

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous

the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that "many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I )

As we discuss elsewhere, the [Date](#) of the writing of the book of Revelation is most likely in A.D. 95 or 96 at the end of Domitian's reign. At that time, no Temple stood in Jerusalem. **Therefore, the passages mentioned above which have not yet been fulfilled require the rebuilding of a Jewish Temple.** It would appear that this Tribulation Temple must be in place no later than the midpoint of The 70th Week of Daniel in order for the man of sin to sit in the Holy Place and for the Abomination of Desolation to be set up. The Temple may actually be built well in advance of that event, especially since it appears that the breaking of the covenant between the Antichrist and "many" in Israel contravenes the resumption of sacrifice and offering which would previously have been taking place at the site of the Temple (Da 9:27-note). Either the Tribulation Temple will be complete by the time the sacrifice is resumed or, as in the days of the rebuilding of the Second Temple, the sacrifices will be resumed while the construction of the Temple is in progress.

As we discussed in relation to the [Temple of the Believer](#), there is nothing which precludes the existence of a Jewish Temple side-by-side with believers who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. This was the situation for almost four decades after the Day of Pentecost until the destruction of the [Second Temple](#):

The early Jewish church—before the destruction of the Temple—was indwelt, sealed, and filled with the Spirit and yet continued to worship in the Temple! This would imply that the Third Temple could be built during the church age and even sacrifices commenced without there being a necessary conflict with "spiritual worship."  
(Thomas Ice and Timothy J. Demy, When the Trumpet Sounds)

Moreover, a rebuilt Jewish Temple would most likely be the product of orthodox Judaism which rejects the Christian reality of the Temple of the Believer. So views concerning the compatibility of a physical Temple while a spiritual Temple already exists within each believer may be irrelevant. There is also the possibility that the Church will be taken in the [Rapture](#) prior to the construction of the Tribulation Temple. Finally, we note that during the [Millennial Kingdom](#), a physical Temple will exist alongside believers in Jesus.

As to the practicality of rebuilding the Temple, there is much controversy. Considerable debate attends the identification of the precise location of Solomon's Temple upon the Temple Mount and whether the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque preclude any possibility of a future Jewish Temple on the Mount.

There is also disagreement concerning whether a Jewish Temple could be built upon the Temple Mount while the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque continue to stand. Some investigators claim that the Second Temple stood at a slightly different location than that occupied by the Dome of the Rock. Others say this is a moot point because Muslims would never allow the Jews to build anything anywhere upon the Temple Mount so long as Islam controls the location. Similarly, orthodox Judaism considers all Islamic presence on the Mount to be a defilement of their historical holy location. It is beyond the scope of our treatment here to consider the issues related to the precise location and ability to rebuild. See [Temple-Related Websites](#).

**See also:**

- [How Soon the Tribulation Temple- Part I -- Thomas S. McCall](#)
- [Problems in Rebuilding the Tribulation Temple Part II -- Thomas S. McCall](#)
- [Where is the Ark of the Covenant - Thomas S. McCall](#)
- [Ready to Rebuild - Thomas Ice](#)
- [Ready to Rebuild- The Imminent Plan to Rebuild the Last Days Temple- Thomas Ice, Randall Price, John F. Walvoord](#)
- [Preterism And Antiquity- Was Preterism a View of the Early Church - By Ron J. Bigalke Jr.](#)

Clearly, there is not a single event that occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem which can be said to fulfill Daniel's description and Christ's reference of Daniel in Matthew 24:15.

**Eusebius** wrote, "when finally, the abomination of desolation, according to the prophetic declaration, stood in the very temple of God, so celebrated of old, but which now was approaching its total downfall [sic] and final destruction by fire; all this, I say, any one that wishes may see accurately stated in the history written by Josephus" [Book III, Chapter V].

Schaff quoted Eusebius for his information and Eusebius based his history upon the accounts of Josephus' The Wars of the Jews. In The Wars of the Jews 6.4.1—5.4, **not once did Josephus record any abomination of desolation in the Jewish Temple prior to it being destroyed.** After the Temple was destroyed, Josephus recorded,

And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy [6.6.1].

**(ED COMMENT: Notice Josephus records the "holy house" was burned, then the Romans bought their idolatrous ensigns and set them against the Eastern Gate -- the ensigns standing at the Eastern Gate does not fulfill Jesus' prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation standing in the holy place." It is close, but this is not a game of "horseshoes" but the serious words of warning from the Omniscient One Who makes no mistakes in the details. Every jot and tittle will be fulfilled exactly as Jesus predicted!)**

Schaff also documented the preceding quote from Josephus. Within a quotation, he wrote,

"Thus was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the **abomination of desolation standing in the holy place**"

A casual reading of Schaff's History of the Christian Church would seem to indicate that Josephus wrote the preceding sentence, but since the sentence cannot be found in Josephus' section on the destruction of Jerusalem, it is obvious that the sentence is the conclusion of Schaff. He referenced "Daniel 9:27; Matt. 24:15; comp. Luke 21:20" as being fulfilled in the destruction.

Eusebius was correct in referencing Luke 19:42-44 and Lk 21:23-24 (Book 3, Chapter 7) and Schaff was correct in referencing Luke 21:20 as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. However, Eusebius was incorrect when referencing Matthew 24:19-21 and Schaff also when referencing Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15. **The reason why both historians are wrong in quoting the Daniel and Matthean passages is that Josephus recorded the Roman sacrifices (desolation) as occurring after the fire destroyed the city and the Temple.**

Furthermore, as Buswell mentioned, there was no opportunity for the Jews to escape the city as Jesus commanded in Matthew 24:15-21. **Josephus recorded that Titus had a wall constructed which encompassed the entire city of Jerusalem "to guard against the Jews' coming out....So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city" (5.12.1, 3).** It was due to the wall encompassing the city, preventing any escape, which constituted a famine that consumed the Jews (5.12.1-4). (Referencing Josephus, Eusebius [Book 3, Chapter 6](#) also mentioned the famine that consumed the Jews because of the inability to escape from the midst of the city. [Ed: Here is a direct quote from Eusebius - "*To this account Josephus, after relating other things, adds the following: The possibility of going out of the city being brought to an end, all hope of safety for the Jews was cut off. And the famine increased and devoured the people by houses and families. And the rooms were filled with dead women and children, the lanes of the city with the corpses of old men.*"]) Titus did not enter the city of Jerusalem until after the construction of his wall and the famine consumed the Jews. Therefore, it would be impossible to heed the commands of Jesus to flee the city because of witnessing the abomination of desolation spoken in Matthew 24:15. It should be mentioned again that any sacrilege on the part of the Romans was after the city and Temple were destroyed.

Buswell provided the reasons why much of the events of Matthew 24 do not correlate with a date of AD 70.

**First**, "There was no possibility that anybody could flee from Jerusalem."

**Second**, "Titus does not in any way resemble what Daniel said of the Prince of the Covenant."

**Third**, "There was no covenant with Titus or Vespasian or anybody else remotely resembling the covenant of Daniel 9:27."

**Fourth**, "The event which Schaff calls the abomination of desolation did not occur in the midst of any recognizable seven year period. There was nothing three and one half years before or after which in any way corresponds to Daniel's prediction."

**Fifth**, "There was no resurrection of the dead (Daniel 12:2). The Son of Man did not appear in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30) nor gather His elect with the sound of a trumpet (Matthew 24:31)."

**Sixth**, "The sacrifices were not stopped by Titus but by the Jews themselves."

Schaff demonstrated that the ceasing of the sacrifices was not the result of Titus. He wrote,

"The daily sacrifices ceased July 17th, because the hands were all needed for defence" but the Temple "was burned on the tenth of August, A.D. 70, the same day of the year on which . . . the first temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar." ( Schaff, History, 397-98)