

# The Abomination of Desolation (1)

Our question this month concerns Matthew 24:15: “I’ve been told that the phrase, “abomination of desolation” in Matthew 24:15 refers to the Antichrist. Is this true, and if it is, what proof is there in Scripture? Also, if the phrase refers to the Antichrist, why is this name used for him in Matthew 24?”

In its entirety Matthew 24:15, 16 reads: “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:) then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains....”

As Matthew 24:15 indicates, this phrase is also found in Daniel. It is there a total of three times. In Daniel 9:27 the Word says, “And for the overspreading of abominations he shall make desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. Daniel 11:31 says, “And they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.” Daniel 12:11 is the third reference: “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination the maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

Several things are evident from these verses in Daniel: (1) that this abomination, whatever it is, concerns the sanctuary, that is, the temple, and the daily sacrifice; and (2) that it is something through which the offering of the daily sacrifice is ended and the sanctuary polluted.

One’s view of the abomination of desolation depends in great measure on one’s interpretation of the whole last part of the prophecy of Daniel and the whole of Matthew 24. Especially the time when the prophecy of Daniel is fulfilled is a matter of disagreement.

Some look for the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy in the future. According to Premillennialism and Dispensationalism, the abomination of desolation is a reference to Antichrist, who will be revealed just prior to the thousand years of Christ’s earthly reign - the millennium. There is some disagreement among them about the details, but the fulfilment of Matthew 24:15, indeed, the whole of Matthew 24, is in the future.

Postmillennialism sees the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecies and of Matthew 24:15 in the past and connects it especially with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. To them the abomination of desolation is a reference to the desecration of the temple in A.D. 70 by the Roman general, Titus.

We believe that there are elements of truth in both these views, but that neither goes far enough. To limit the fulfilment of the Daniel’s prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation to the past means that neither Daniel’s prophecy nor Matthew 24 has any relevance or application today. To push the fulfilment entirely into the future does the same thing. In both cases the prophecies become matters of curiosity only.

Our view of prophecy is that for prophecies of this kind there is an *on-going fulfilment* of the prophecy, usually including an immediate and very literal fulfilment near the time the prophecy was given, a further limited fulfilment in the New Testament and a final and complete fulfilment at the end of all things.

We believe, therefore, that the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy and of Matthew 24:15 includes the desecration of the temple in 165 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes, the further desecration and destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 by the Romans, as well as the final revelation of the Antichrist himself and his opposition to the church. Of this more next time.

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