

I. Mark 13:14-23 - The Sign: The Abomination of Desolation

A. The sign of the impending destruction of the Temple was the 'abomination of desolation'

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. Mark 13:14

1. Unlike wars, rumors of war, and earthquakes, which are NOT signs that Jesus' Word is about to be fulfilled, there IS a SIGN - the abomination of desolation.
2. The NIV translates this as "the abomination that causes desolation" but the literal rendering is "the abomination of desolation" (as is translated in ESV, KJV, and other translations).
3. This is a phrase from Daniel - this is why the text says 'let the reader understand'.
And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. Daniel 9:27 ESV
 - a. A very obscure phrase in Daniel! (also 11:31; 12:11)
 - b. But Daniel's visions center on 4 empires - Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
 - c. Everything culminates during the Roman Empire
 - d. So this abomination of desolation had to happen during the days of the Roman empire (NOT thousands of years later!).

4. The Holy Spirit interprets this for us through Luke
When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.
21Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. Luke 21:20-21
 - a. Luke writes for Gentiles & interprets it for them
 - b. The sign that the desolation is about to happen is when the Roman armies surround Jerusalem!
 - c. This is the sign that the countdown to destruction is in the final moments!
 - d. This is when everyone should flee away from Jerusalem!
 - e. Sadly, this happened near Passover, and hundreds of thousands of Jews fled INTO Jerusalem - and were destroyed along with the city and Temple.
5. But Jesus warned the disciples to flee when this happened, for Jerusalem and the Temple were NOT going to be delivered but rather desolated and destroyed!
6. This was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans besieged and then destroyed Jerusalem, desecrated the Temple, and killed an estimated 1 million people.
7. Some want to escape this by saying Luke is discussing 70 AD, but this is not what Jesus was talking about in Mark 13/Matthew 24. This is not possible for several reasons:
 - a. Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21 all record the same teaching by Jesus. They give the same setting, and most of the wording is very similar.

- b. In all three Gospels the discussion about the abomination of desolation (or desolation of Jerusalem in Luke) are preceded by the statement that he who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13/Mark 13:13/21:19).
- c. In all three Gospels the sign of the abomination includes the instruction to flee to the mountains, and warning not to go into the city or delay in flight.
- d. In all three gospels, shortly after the discussion of the desolation, Jesus indicates that “after the distress of those days” heavenly signs will occur (quoting from Isaiah about the fall of Babylon).
- e. Thus, it is irrefutable that Luke has not imported this discussion from elsewhere - he is merely interpreting it for Gentiles who are not familiar with the book of Daniel.

8. Thus, the ‘abomination of desolation’ is the Roman army which surround Jerusalem, and ultimately destroys the Temple.

B. NOTE: If anyone wants to dig into Daniel’s seventy-seven’s and the ‘abomination of desolation’ more deeply, I covered this in a series on the book of Daniel. Specifically you can look at the following:

- 1. [Daniel’s Seventy Sevens](#) (taught on October 24, 2021)
- 2. [After Hours Episode 205 “When Were Daniel’s Seventy-Seven’s Fulfilled”](#)

- 3. I would also remind everyone that we interpret difficult or obscure passages in light of the clear passages and teachings of Scripture. Daniel 9:24-27, which covers the seventy-sevens and the abomination of desolation, is a notoriously difficult passage. The Hebrew is very difficult, and it is an apocalyptic vision. Thus, we must interpret it in light of much clearer passages - such as Luke 21! Any interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 (an obscure vision) that does not line up with Luke 21 (clear teaching by Jesus) must be abandoned.

C. The abomination of desolation and the Temple.

- 1. Matthew 24:15 is thought by some to indicate that the abomination of desolation must be done in the Temple. It reads:

“So when you see **standing in the holy place** ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand — Matthew 24:15

- a. First, I would note that the holy place certainly could refer to the Temple, but it could also refer to Jerusalem which was the Holy City. In fact, Daniel 9:24, which begins the passage on the seventy-sevens and the abomination of desolation, refers to Jerusalem as the holy city!
 “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and **your holy city** to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Daniel 9:24
- b. Thus, it is possible that the ‘holy place’ is simply the city of Jerusalem.
- c. However, it is likely that the full meaning includes both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple specifically.

2. Some translations of Daniel 9:27 specifically include the Temple:

And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” Daniel 9:27

3. It can be shown that the Temple was not only destroyed by the Romans, but it was also desecrated by both the Zealots prior to the Romans, and then by the Romans as well.

- a. Josephus notes that the Zealots ate the consecrated food that was only for the priests and that they defiled the Temple with murders so that the ‘Temple was defiled everywhere with murders’ (Wars 5:1:2).
- b. In fact, the abominations wrought by the Zealots themselves were so great that the High Priest Annus lamented “Certainly it had been good for me to die before I had seen the house of God full of so many abominations; or these sacred places, that ought not to be trodden upon at random, filled with the feet of these blood-shedding villains.” Thus, these Jews, who declared themselves zealous for the cause of God, actually did an abomination of desolation in the Temple.

4. Furthermore, when the Romans finally broke through the walls of Jerusalem, they did abominations and desecrated the Temple as they destroyed it.

- a. The Roman soldier’s standards were eagles and were objects of religious devotion. When they conquered the Temple, they set up these idolatrous standards in the Temple and made sacrifices to them.

- b. 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, (18) and set them over-against its eastern gate. And there did they offer sacrifices to them: and there did they make Titus Imperator (19) with the greatest acclamations of joy. (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 6.6.1)

5. Thus, the abomination of desolation is fully seen to be the surrounding of the holy city of Jerusalem by the Roman eagles, followed by the description of the Temple itself, first by the Zealots and other Jews, and then finally by the Roman army.

6. It is also interesting to note that Josephus viewed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as the fulfillment of Daniel’s vision. He wrote “In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government; and that our country should be made desolate by them. All these things did this man leave in writing, as God had shewed them to him. Insomuch that such as read his prophecies, and see how they have been fulfilled, would wonder at the honor wherewith God honored Daniel.” (Antiquities 10.11.7)

7. All of this shows that it is clear that ‘the abomination of desolation’ was fulfilled in the events leading up to and including the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

- D. The good news in all of this is that in the New Covenant the Temple is not a building but the people of God themselves!

1. Jesus said the Old Covenant Temple would be destroyed - and it was!
2. Jesus had said a time was coming when people would no longer need to go to Jerusalem to worship

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:21-24

- a. Jesus said the time of worship being tied to a location was coming to an end - and it did!
- b. In the New Covenant we do not need to travel to a Temple, for we are the Temple!

3. Both the individual believer and the church are now the Temple of God:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 1 Corinthians 6:19

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16

- a. John 14-16 is a long teaching by Jesus on His final night with the disciples - and it is largely about the coming of the Spirit to dwell in believers and how He will carry on the ministry of Jesus.
- b. 1 Peter 2:4-10; Ephesians 2:11-22, Acts 1:8 and many other places in the New Testament refer to this important and glorious truth.

4. The abomination of desolation brought an end to the Old Covenant era and its Temple. These had been obsolete since Jesus had initiated and sealed the new covenant by his death and resurrection,

and in 70 AD they were done away with forever!
By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear. Hebrews 8:13

5. All God's people - believing Jews and Gentiles - are now the Temple of God, and we will NEVER be replaced with a physical Temple again!