What Is the Abomination of Desolation?
Scripture: Matthew 24:15
Code: BQ012313

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). (Matthew 24:15)

During the end times, the Antichrist will head a confederacy of ten European nations that will generally correspond to the territory of the ancient Roman empire (see Dan. 7:24; cf.2:40–43), and he will at first pretend to be Israel's deliverer from her enemies, and she will make an alliance with him (9:27). But after he is victorious over the nations from the south, north, and east who have come against Israel, he will reveal his true evil character and his hatred for Israel and for God (Dan. 11:40–45). It is while occupying Israel under the guise of being her protector that the Antichrist will commit **the abomination of desolation**.

Bdelugma (**abomination**) denotes an object of disgust, repulsion, and abhorrence. In Scripture it is used primarily to denote things associated with idolatry and gross ungodliness. The Hebrew equivalent was often used of rites and paraphernalia associated with the wicked conduct of pagan religions. In the book of Revelation it is used to represent the immoralities and spiritual uncleanness of the false religious system known as "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots" (17:4–5). In the new heaven and new earth there will be "nothing unclean and no one who practices abominations and lying" (21:27).

The abomination of desolation may be translated, "the abomination which makes desolate, or lays waste." In other words, **the abomination** *causes* the **desolation**.

The prophet Daniel referred to the abomination of desolation three times (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Virtually every Bible scholar, no matter what his views on eschatology, identifies that abomination as the sacrilege committed by Antiochus IV, the Syrian king who ruled Palestine from 175–165 b.c. as a surrogate of the Greek empire. 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" (v. 21), made numerous excursions into Egypt (vv. 24–27), broke his covenant with Israel (v. 28), and desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem (v. 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.

Antiochus Epiphanes set up an idol in the Temple to be worshiped by the Jews, but the Antichrist will set himself up as God and demand worship from all mankind. He will end all sacrifice in the Temple and commit the abomination that makes **the holy place** desecrated and desolate, a place utterly detestable to Jews.

Then the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, "the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, … takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess. 2:3–4). He is "the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved" (vv. 9–10). That is the abomination of desolation.

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.

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