Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Abomination of Desolation
Scripture: Matthew 24:15
Code: 2369

Let's open our Bibles together to the 24th chapter of Matthew. Matthew chapter 24. This great chapter is our Lord's own sermon on His second coming. It details for us the events surrounding the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from His own mouth. What a tremendous privilege to study this great text.

You know, people in our world are always wishing for a better day, always hoping for a better time, always wanting to see the alleviation of the distresses and the problems that plague human society. But the message of Scripture is that before there is ever a better time, there is going to be an infinitely worse time. In fact, human society has to look forward to a time that is going to be more severe than any time they have ever known. That time is described rather briefly for us in just one verse in this particular chapter, and I want to draw your attention to it, it's verse 21. "For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

In that very brief statement, the Lord says that the world is to look for a time that will be worse than any other time it has ever known. And the Lord even gives it a name: Great Tribulation. Now, this isn't anything new because there have been other prophets than our Lord Jesus Christ who also have spoken of this same time. It is a time of tremendous trouble, which encompasses the world but centers on the nation of Israel. To see how the prophets of Israel spoke of it, let's go back to Isaiah chapter 10. Isaiah chapter 10. And as Isaiah looked forward to that day, that day of the Lord, that day of great judgment, that day of establishing the kingdom of Messiah, that day of salvation for Israel, that great climactic day when man's work on earth, as it were, done by his own hand and design is done and God takes over, he says this in verse 20: "It shall come to pass in that day" – that great day, the end of man's day, the beginning of God's day – "that the remnant of Israel and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob shall no more again lean upon him who smote them but shall lean upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth."

Now, that tells us that there is coming a time of great stress for Israel, a time when they will be killed. And there will be a remnant who escape and will learn the lesson to never lean again on anyone other than the Lord. The indication is that in that great day, that end day, the people of Israel are going to lean on someone who turns out to be not their friend but their enemy who offers himself for support and then destroys them. And they'll learn in that day to lean only on the Lord. "The remnant shall return" – verse 21 says – "even the remnant of Jacob unto the mighty God, for though thy people Israel be like the sand of the sea yet a remnant of them shall return, the full end decreed shall

overflow with righteousness for the Lord God of hosts shall make a full end." In other words, at the time of the full end, at the time of the very end, at that day of judgment, that time of establishing the time of righteousness, the kingdom of Messiah, Israel is going to go through a massive betrayal by one they trusted who turns out to slaughter them. They're going to go through a time of great trouble from which they will try to escape.

Now let's look at it in the words of Jeremiah the prophet, chapter 30, and see what other dimensions he adds to his insights as he looks at this time. Jeremiah chapter 30 verse 5: "For thus saith the Lord, we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace." Jeremiah looks far ahead, doesn't see peace, he sees trembling and fear. "Ask now and see whether a man doth travail with child. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in child pain" – birth pain – "and all faces turned into paleness?" The most excruciating human pain, that of giving birth to a child without any anesthetic, without any care as typically women did in that time, sort of symbolizes the pain of society in the future. When Jeremiah looks ahead he sees, as it were, in the imagery of prophetic vision, men with hands down on their knees, as it were, in agonizing pain over what is about to take place. The world in pain, Israel in pain.

"Alas" – verse 7 says – "for that day is great so that none is like it." Just as it was in Matthew 24:21, this is a day like no other day. "None is like it, it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it for it will come to pass in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck and burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more enslave them but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David, that is a Messiah, their king, whom I will raise up under them." So it is going to be a day of great judgment, a day of great distress, the time of Jacob's trouble, and out of it is going to come salvation and out of it is going to come the raising up of Messiah and His kingdom. So both Isaiah and Jeremiah look forward to a time of severe trouble, a time of severe pain, a time of death, a time from which Israel will run to escape, followed by the Messiah's kingdom.

Now notice the last chapter of the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 12 in verse 1. And Daniel the prophet speaks also of the very same day, and he says in verse 1: "At that time shall Michael stand up" – Michael is an angel – "the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people." Michael's unique role in God's economy is to protect His special people, and Michael will stand up for their protection. "Because there will be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time. And at that time, thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

There's going to be a time of Jacob's trouble, says Jeremiah. There's going to be a time of trouble, says Daniel. A time of devastation, a time of purging, a time of judgment out of which God will redeem a remnant and bring the kingdom of Messiah.

Now notice, please, Zechariah chapter 13 verse 8. "'And it shall come to pass in the land'" – actually, throughout the land – "says the Lord, 'two parts in it shall be cut off in death and a third shall be left.'" In other words, there's coming a time in the land of Israel when two out of three will die, and He will bring the third part through the fire and refine them as silver is refined and test them as gold is tested. "'They shall call on My name, I will hear them, I will say, "He is My people" and they shall say, "The Lord is my God."'" In other words, a time of purging, a time of judgment, a time of death to two out of three. A third is preserved and they are brought to the awareness that the Lord is God. And this – verse 14 says – is the day of the Lord. It is the day of the Lord. It is the day – says verse 2 – when the nations are gathered against Jerusalem to battle and the city is taken and the houses are rifled and the women are ravished and half of the city goes forth to captivity and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. And you can stop at that point.

Now, let me pull that together very simply. Jesus said there is coming in the future a time unlike any other time, a time of incredible, indescribable horror to the world but particularly focusing on the nation Israel. It is a time of which Isaiah spoke, of which Jeremiah spoke, of which Daniel spoke, and of which Zechariah spoke. So it really isn't anything new that our Lord is saying. He is reiterating what was said of old, a time like no other time. If Israel thinks it has endured unbelievable holocaust in the past, then they need to take stock of what the prophets have said and what the Lord Jesus said, that they have not yet endured what they shall in the future. For there is coming a holocaust unlike any other. And it will not only impact Israel, but it will impact the world. And things are not going to get better; they're going to get worse. In fact, they're going to get worse than they've ever been the worst of all.

Yes, just prior to the worst time of all, there will be a brief time of false peace. So as we look ahead in future, analyzing the events of man's day, we could expect to have a time of false peace followed immediately by a holocaust without description and precedent, followed immediately by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what the prophets have said. That's what Jesus says because in verse 29 of Matthew 24, He says immediately after the tribulation, what happens? The sun is darkened, the moon doesn't give its light, the stars fall, and powers of heaven are shaken. And then appears the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. So this is the time right preceding the coming of Christ.

Now, it's impossible not to see this prophetic picture, this chronology, as simply as it's stated here by our Lord, by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Zechariah. A time of great distress, great trouble for the world, centering in the nation Israel, followed by the purging salvation of Israel, the coming of Messiah to establish His glorious and eternal kingdom. So Jesus here is preaching a sermon related to His second coming. It is a sermon not only about His second coming, which appears in verse 29, but also about the time before that which He Himself calls, in verse 21, the Great Tribulation.

Now, what brought about this sermon? Why is He preaching this sermon and to whom is He preaching it in chapter 24? Let me tell you why. Jesus has entered into the last week of His earthly life. Friday He will die. So He doesn't have much time left. He spent all day in the temple. He cleansed it on Tuesday, threw out the money changers and the buyers and sellers and purged it outwardly. And once He had cleansed it on Tuesday, then He could go back to it and not be defiled by it. So He did that. He took His disciples and He taught all day. The teaching was public, to begin with, as He taught the multitude that teemed into the place because of the week of the Passover. But after some of His teaching, the leaders of Israel were upset so they stopped Him in His tracks and they started to ask Him questions. The first of which was: By what authority do You do these things? Who gave You permission to teach the way You're teaching and to do what You're doing? And that engaged Him in a dialogue that went on for the rest of the day with these false Jewish leaders.

The result of that dialogue, basically, was an opportunity for Him to articulate the fact that God was now setting Israel aside. For centuries, the nation Israel had been the custodian of God's Word, the custodian of God's truth. But all of that was going to change because God was going to take the kingdom away from them and give it to a people who were more worthy than they. In fact, He said that in chapter 21 verse 43 as explicitly as it could be said. "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it" – "a people bringing forth the fruits of it." He was saying to the Jewish religious leaders, "You are no more to be called God's people in the national sense. You are no more to be custodians of God's truth." Now, as we learn in Romans 11, this was only a temporary setting aside, but nonetheless a real setting aside. He says to them, "The kingdom will be given to a people who bring forth the proper fruit."

And then in chapter 22, remember, also in His encounter with the leaders, He gave them a parable about a wedding feast held by a king for his son, and all the invited guests – who symbolize Israel – refused to come. And verse 7 says: "When the king heard that" – chapter 22 – "he was angry, sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." In other words, God is going to move out in judgment against a people who refused to come to the wedding feast of His Son. And then, in verse 9: "He told his servants; Go to the highways and as many as you find, bring them to the marriage." And so a new people is brought in to be the special custodians of God's Word and God's truth. And Ichabod, the glory has departed, is written for a time on the nation Israel.

The sum of it comes at the end of chapter 23 in verse 37, in Jesus' last public sermon, His last message to the populous of Israel. His final word to the religious leaders: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under wings and you would not. Behold your house is left unto you ruined, desolate." Empty waste. That is the final statement of judgment on Israel for the rejection of the Messiah. That is it. He has indicted them, indicted their leaders, and by indicting the leaders, indicted all the people who followed the leaders. And now says

their house is left desolate – Ichabod, the glory is departing. God is moving away to another people from Israel.

But I'm so glad the sermon didn't end with verse 38. In verse 39 He said: "For I say unto you, you shall not see Me henceforth until you shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" That's a Messianic epithet. When Jesus rode into the city and they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they said: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." That is a Messianic affirmation. And He says to them, "You'll not see Me again until you recognize Me as your Messiah.

That's very hopeful, isn't it? Because that tells us that even though Israel is laid waste and even though the nation is desolate because of the rejection of Messiah, there will come a day when indeed they will recognize their Messiah and say: "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." It's what Zechariah saw when he said: "They will look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as for an only son." So yes, the house of Israel is desolate, but yes, there is a future time when they will recognize their Messiah.

Now, you have to imagine the disciples at this point because they're listening to all of this. They hear the sermon, which devastates the system of religion in Israel. They see Jesus cleanse the temple, and they know He's bringing to an end that evil, hypocritical system. They hear Him talking about destruction in chapter 24 verse 2, how that the temple is going to be razed – R-A-Z-E-D – to the ground, and there won't be one stone left upon another, but the whole thing will be thrown down. That's exactly what happened to the very letter. And so they see Him come sweeping in with all of these statements about devastation and destruction. Does this bother them? Not really. Because as we pointed out in our previous study, you remember, that if any disciple was a student of Scripture, he would know that in the great kingdom of Messiah, there was going to be a new temple, the temple of Ezekiel 40 to 48, that glorious temple. Not this temple built by a non-Jew, Idumaean king by the name of Herod but a temple that had the qualities of that glorious temple seen in Ezekiel 40 to 48. So they would not have had a problem with Him razing the temple to the ground. They would not have had a problem with Him devastating the hypocritical religion – the prophets said that was going to happen. The prophets said the nation had to be purified.

So when they hear Jesus say, "This temple is coming down, and you're not going to see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.'" Their idea is that He's going to knock that temple down very soon and be back in full Messianic presence to set up His kingdom because, you see, they see no gap between the first and second coming. The Old Testament prophets didn't delineate a first coming, a long time, and then a second coming; they just bunched it all into one thing. That's why the time in between is known as the mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament. They didn't see that there was a first coming, going back to heaven, thousands of years, then a second coming. No, they saw it all at once. Their eschatology said Messiah comes, Messiah judges His enemies and the ungodly, Messiah cleanses Israel, He purges the temple, He gathers the

elect, and He sets up His kingdom. And so they could see all of this happening in days or weeks.

And I believe at the end of chapter 23 and the end of this sermon, they have a greater hope of the kingdom than they've ever had in all their experience with Jesus because they have seen Him riding into the city to the hallelujahs and hosannas and blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lords of the crowd, the kids in the temple had said it to Him the next day, and now He has cleansed the temple, and now He talks about tearing it down, and then He talks about coming in full presence as the Messiah, and they believe, I think, more than they've ever believed it that momentarily it's all going to break loose and they don't understand that there'll be a long period of time.

So in excitement and anticipation, verse 3. They have now left the temple ground, only Jesus with the disciples privately, it says. They've gone to the top of the Mount of Olives on their way back to Bethany where they were staying with Lazarus and his family. And He stops at the top of the mount, sits down and they said to Him: "When shall these things be?" And you can just sense the fever pitch, the tremendous anticipation that this has got to blow right soon because of what they've already seen that week. It's all coming together. They saw the forerunner, John the Baptist, then came the Messiah. He did the miracles, He taught, He preached, and now He's come into the hallelujahs and hosannas and now He's cleansed the temple, and now He talks about ripping down this Idumaean building, and it must mean the great exalted building of Ezekiel is going to go up and He's going to establish His kingdom, and the people are going to say: "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." And so they say: "When?" And even later on in Acts 1, they say: "Is it the time now that You're going to bring the kingdom?" They believed it was momentary.

And not only do they ask when, but in verse 3: "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" The word "coming" – *parousia* – means "presence." It isn't to say they thought He was going away and coming back, it is to say that they thought He would come in full presence. *Parousia* is presence, the full presence of Messianic glory. What is the sign of Thy presence and the end of man's age? What do we look for? Is there an angel coming out of heaven with a trumpet? What is it? Is it a cataclysmic reconstruction of the temple supernaturally? Is it the knocking down of the temple? What is it? What is the event that signals Your coming in full presence?

Now, with that question, the Lord then preaches the message concerning His coming. And He gives them the things to look for, the signs to look for. And not to them because they're long dead, but to all who will ever read the Scripture. And starting in verse 4, we have signs of the second coming. Signs of the second coming.

Now, I want to add as a footnote here so you're not confused, the Rapture of the church is not discussed in any place in Matthew 24 or 25. That is not here. We wait later for a fuller understanding of that. This is a message given to the context of those Jews about the second coming of Christ. The Rapture is a subject that comes up in the epistles. We'll deal with that at a later time. In fact, probably

in this study somewhere, we'll insert some things about that. But He is giving them a description of the time of the second coming and the signs that lead up to it.

Now, He starts in verse 4, giving them a series of general signs that the people alive at the future time should look forward to. He doesn't tell them how far future it is. He doesn't tell them because every believer has always lived with a sense of intimacy – a sense of imminency, rather, that Christ could come at any point. So He doesn't tell them any time. He just says "signs."

Notice, please, the first sign is deception. Verse 4: "Many will come and deceive." And verse 5 says the same thing. The second sign is dissension, war, rumors of wars, so forth. Verse 7, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom. Third, devastation – famines, earthquakes. The fourth is desecration. Verse 9, they will deliver up the saints. Fifth, defection – many of them will be offended and betray one another and hate one another and so forth. And the final is declaration, verse 14, the worldwide preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

So He says look for deception, dissension, devastation, desecration, defection, and declaration. Those are the signs. And we went through those in detail and I showed you how they parallel Revelation 6 to 19. None of these happened in the church age, none of these happened at the destruction of Jerusalem. From verse 4 on, there is no discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is absolutely foreign to this text. And that's amazing because I read about 12 commentaries this week, 11 of them fit the destruction of Jerusalem in here somewhere, and the other one isn't sure. There is no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem here in 70 A.D. This is the future, prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The destruction of Jerusalem was a judgment for its own time, for its own sake, to the people at that age. It is not the end of the age, it is not the sign of the coming of Messiah – that is future.

So all these six things mark the end time. And I showed you the key to that. Verse 8, would you notice it? All these surrounding verse 8 are the beginning of birth pains. Please, the word "sorrow" doesn't help us to interpret this text if that's what it says in your edition of Scripture. It is birth pains that is the Greek term. And you remember I said to you, when do birth pains come, at the beginning of pregnancy? All during pregnancy? No, they come at the very end of pregnancy. And when the birth pains start coming, you know birth is near. Jesus purposely chooses that as birth pains, just like the prophet of old saw the men, as it were, in travail, going through the agonies that would issue in the birth of the kingdom. All of these events stack up at the very moment of the coming of the kingdom and they are parallel to the seals and the trumpets and the bowls of Revelation. And you remember the seals happen sort of elongated. And then the trumpets are faster. And then the bowls are rapid-fire as there is an increasing frequency and intensity of those final pains as there is in the birth of a child. So it's a graphic picture.

So all of these things have nothing to do with the Rapture of the church. They have nothing to do with the destruction of Jerusalem. They have to do with the time of the Tribulation and the speeding up of events, painful events, that bring about the establishing of Messiah's kingdom. So He gives them this big picture of general things, but He knows that's not really what they're asking because their question was: What is the sign? What's the one event that says we know this is it because we might see wars and we might see deceptions and deceivers and we might see defectors and we would see the gospel being preached. That could – we could see that even now today. There could be a lot of things we see. How do we know that this is really it? So He says: "All right, I'm going to give you one sign that kicks the whole thing off." And in verse 15, He says: "When you therefore shall see" – stop there for a moment. When you see this – the end of verse 15 – you better understand.

So He's given them some general signs, the birth pains at the very end of man's day that result in the birth of the kingdom. But He gives them here the trigger that sets the whole thing off. This is absolutely a fabulous verse. And we're not going to get past this verse because it's so filled with truth. And we're not even going to exhaust it this morning, but it is a key verse in understanding this transition from what He has said through 14 to what He's going to say from 15 to 31 – very, very key.

"Now, when you who are alive in that day" – and He uses the prophetic "you" as we pointed out in our last study. "When you who are alive in that day see this, you know you're in the Tribulation. Here is the trigger that sets the birth pains of verses 4 to 14 loose on the earth. This is the key event."

You say, "What is that event?" Look at it. "When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, whosoever reads, let him understand." When you see that, you can understand. That is the sign. Now let's go back to Daniel 11, and maybe I'll get a little further into the insight so that you'll understand where we're going. Now, in Daniel 11, we meet a very important personality, and we call him antichrist. He is called here the willful king, the king who does his own will, who does not regard the god of his fathers, the desire of women nor any god. He magnifies himself above all – verse 37. In his estate shall be honor, he honors the god of fortresses, the god of might, and so forth. And this is a description of the great antichrist, the great willful king who does his own will, who flaunts his dislike and hatred toward the true God and His Christ, and he sets up his own power and his own strength.

And what happens if you put the biblical picture together is, in Daniel 2 we find that there will be in the end time a rising of the old Roman Empire. The final form of the Roman Empire has ten toes. And it is territorially reconstructed Rome. The old Roman Empire occupied western Europe and some of eastern Europe as well, of course, but in the new final form of the Roman Empire which is crushed by the coming of Messiah, it shows this big image, the final form a ten-toed representation of the Roman Empire, which is smashed by the Messiah who is called "the stone cut out without hands." So the Messiah comes and crushes a final ten-nation confederacy, which is like the old Roman Empire. But what's going to happen is, out of that system – according to Daniel and according to the book of

Revelation – will rise a great leader.

And this guy will rise out of that European confederacy and he will become a savior to Israel. He is going to be the one who is the protector of Israel. They're going to make an alliance with him, as we'll see in a little while, for their own protection against the Arab-Russian alliance, which will come into a final form as Ezekiel 38 describes it and comes against them. They do it for their own protection. He, by the way, is the one spoken of in Isaiah 10 who is the one they lean on who smites them. Because in the midst of that alliance he destroys them. Israel has made an alliance with this guy. He is in control. The powers of the world move into Israel as described in the 11th chapter of Daniel. It's described with detail. At the time of the end – verse 40 – the king of the south comes, the king of the north comes, all these powers come in and then comes tidings out of the east, that great army from the east. And in this initial conflagration that happens, the antichrist and his western power is victorious. But it's at that point when he's made his alliance with Israel, he's become Israel's protector, the world comes to fight against him, to fight against and take Israel, in that battle, he wins – he wins. And when he wins, he then commits the abomination of desolation as we'll see in Daniel.

Now let's go back to Matthew and we'll begin to pick up all of this and pull it all together. In Matthew chapter 24, we're looking just at this one verse, verse 15. When you see the abomination – now, what is an abomination? *Bdelugma* – it's a strange word – basically means that which is abhorrent, that which is detestable, that which is utterly repulsive to God. The word is primarily used to speak of things associated with idolatry. It is used in Revelation 17:4 and 5 of the abominations of the false religious system known as Mystery Babylon, the prostitute, the harlot. It is used in Revelation 21:27 where it talks about the fact that in the final heaven there will be nothing there that abominates, nothing there that is repulsive to God. The Old Testament predominantly associates it with idolatry and the artifacts and the activities and the rites and rituals and ceremonies and idols that go along with idolatry. So it is a word that has basically to do with heathen gods, idol gods, which are detestable to the one true God.

Now, you will notice there's a genitive form here in the Greek. It is the detestable thing which desolates, which lays waste, which ruins, which desecrates. So there's going to come, then, a great event in the future of Israel in which there will be an idolatrous act that is an abominable thing to God, that is a detestable thing to God, and that will cause the ruination and the destruction and the devastation and the waste of the holy place. You see it there? The holy place.

Now, what is the holy place? Some people say the land. Some people say the nation, the people. Well, what – some people say the city of Jerusalem. What is the holy place? In Acts 21:28, it says, I think, very simply what it is. Here Paul came back to Jerusalem after his journeys into the Gentile area. He wanted to reaffirm his commitment to the Jews. He wanted them to know that he was not a traitor to them in any sense. So he went into the temple to go through some purification ritual with some of his Jewish friends. And when he was in there, there were some Jews from Asia who had

known him over there and knew that he preached the gospel. So they started a riot. And this was their accusation against Paul in verse 28 of Acts 21: “Men of Israel, help. This is the man” – that is, Paul is the man – “teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place and further brought Greeks also into the temple and hath polluted this holy place.” And it can’t mean anything but the temple. Can mean nothing but the temple. And I don’t see any reason for it to mean anything other than that in verse 15 of Matthew 24. It is the temple, the holy place.

That’s nothing new for us. The Old Testament calls it the holy place. There was the holy place and then there was the holy of holies, of course. But the whole place was called the holy place, that place set apart unto God. And it is a specific place. So I think it very clearly indicates the temple. And it happens when it is established in the temple that there is something detestable to God that devastates, ruins, and lays waste that temple. Now, you say: “Well, how do we know what this is?” Well, it helps us, it gives us a key in verse 15, see it there? It’s that abomination of desolation, not just any abomination, not just any event, but the one spoken of by Daniel the prophet. The one spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Now all we have to do is go back and find out what Daniel said. Let’s do it. Chapter 11.

Now, in chapter 11, the first part of the chapter – and this is a rather long chapter. It’s devoted to some historical things and the latter part to the end time things. But while you’re looking in chapter 11, notice verse 31. And here in verse 31 we have a very, very graphic description of an interesting historical figure. And by the way, I don’t know that any Bible commentary that I’ve ever read, no matter what their viewpoint on prophecy, has ever interpreted this any other way, at least no reputable scholar has, than as a reference to an historical figure by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes. He was a Syrian king who basically reigned from about 175 to 165 B.C. He called himself Epiphanes which means “the great one.” He wasn’t a very modest fellow, so he called himself Antiochus Epiphanes, Antiochus, the Great One. The people called him Antiochus Epimanes, which means “maniac.” So – I suppose they didn’t call him that to his face, but that’s what they called him.

But anyway, this particular man is a very interesting figure. In verse 31 it says this about him, and if you study the whole text, it’s clear who it is. History makes it very obvious. “Forces shall stand on his part and they’ll pollute the sanctuary of strength, take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate.” There’s that same phrase again. He is going to bring about an abomination of desolation, that is Antiochus Epiphanes. So here we have a historical picture of what the end time abomination is going to be like. He was a great persecutor of the people of Israel. If you read – have an old Catholic Bible or you can get an Apocrypha, you’ll find the books of Maccabees, 1 and 2 Maccabees. If you look in there, you’ll get a whole rundown on Antiochus because it was written in the period in which he lived, a period about 400 years after Daniel prophesied and prior to the New Testament era. But you read in there that he tried to stamp out Jewish religion, and in so doing, he slaughtered thousands and thousands of Jews, including men, women, and even children. He, in the worst act, as far as Jewish history is concerned, desecrated the temple. He abominated the

temple by going in there and slaughtering a pig on the altar and then stuffing pork down the throats of the priests and then setting up a god in that place. An abomination – a Greek god. I think it was Zeus.

And so this was a time – it wasn't just one act, he put Zeus in there, and the temple became desolate, the Jews never went back. They wouldn't go near the place. They wouldn't go to a defiled place. And the daily sacrifice was completely stopped. And that's exactly what 11:31 of Daniel says he would do. He would come along, pollute the sanctuary, he did, slaying a pig on the altar, took away the daily sacrifice, that's exactly what happened, they made no more sacrifices there, and the place was so abominable that it became desolate, the Jews never went back, and that is exactly right. And it was not changed until the Maccabean revolution overturned his power and they were able to go back to their religion.

Now, that sacrilege committed by Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C. is a foretaste and a preview of the final kind of sacrilege that will be committed in the end time. It'll be very much the same – very much the same. And Daniel speaks of that one back in chapter 9. So let's go back to 9. By the way, Daniel mentions abomination of desolation three times – three times.

Now, back in chapter 9 – and I don't want to spend a lot of time on this, we don't have the time, but in chapter 9, Daniel has a tremendous prophecy about the history of Israel redemptively. And he says in verse 24 that 70 weeks – 70 heptads, 70 weeks of years – the weeks here are weeks of years – 70 weeks of years, seventy times seven or 490 years are determined on thy people Israel, at the end of which transgression is finished, sin is ended, iniquity is made reconciliation for, everlasting righteousness comes, visions and prophecies are sealed up, and the most holy Messiah is anointed.

Now, there it is, folks: 490 years to the end, 490 years to the kingdom of Messiah when sin is done and the righteousness reigns in the kingdom. You say: "Wow, if we can find out when it begins, we can find out when it ends." Well, we can find out when it begins in the next verse. "Understand it from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem." When was that? That was Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes in 440s made a decree to rebuild the temple, to rebuild the city, and let the Jews do that. That's when it started. And so you can start counting from there – seven weeks, threescore and two weeks, that's 69 weeks. It'll be 69 weeks unto the Messiah the Prince, 69 weeks to the Messiah the Prince, and it's been calculated to be exact to the very day when Messiah came.

Now, that leaves how many weeks left? One week. There's one loose week and that's the problem. We know the 69 ended when Messiah came. But the 70th hasn't come yet, so we have an undetermined time gap between the 69th and the 70th.

Now, verse 27, there is a prince in verse 26 who will come in the future. This prince is going to come and he's going to bring desolation. There's that word again that means ruination, devastation. And he's going to come and make a covenant with Israel for one week. And in the middle of that week, he

will cause the sacrifice and the offerings to cease – just exactly like Antiochus Epiphanes did. And we know this isn't talking about Antiochus because all of this is connected to the coming of Messiah, isn't it? All of this is connected to the end of sin and the end of transgression and the end of iniquity and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness and the anointing of the Most Holy and the time of the kingdom. So it's got to be at the second coming.

But he's going to go into halfway through those seven years, which will be three and a half years, 42 months, 12 hundred and 60 days, cause the sacrifice to stop, and then he's going to bring the over-spreading of abominations that make desolate. There's the abomination of desolation. And he's going to do this until the consummation and that which is determined shall be poured out upon the desolate. In other words, he's going to do it till the end and God's final judgment. So the future ruler, the future prince, the prince, the willful king, the little horn, the antichrist, the beast out of the sea, whatever you want to call him, the man of sin, the son of perdition, various terms, he is going to make a covenant with Israel during that final week.

So what you have, then, is the coming of Christ and just before that you have a seven-year period. That seven-year period is initiated when Israel makes a covenant with this prince, this king who is the leader of the western confederacy who will be a protector for Israel. Halfway through the week, he turns on Israel, stops their sacrifices, sets up an idol in the midst of the temple, stops all of their worship, makes them worship this false god, this false idol, abominates the place so that it goes into ruination and Jews won't go near it.

Now go to chapter 12 of Daniel. Listen very carefully in these last few moments. In Daniel chapter 12 verse 11, please, he mentions it again. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away" – that's the abomination of desolation, and the abomination that makes desolate set up – would you please notice it's set up, it doesn't happen in one moment, it becomes permanent? That's why Matthew 24:15 says "shall stand in the holy place." It isn't a momentary thing, it is something set up there that is an abomination that ruins the place and it's made permanent there. It stands there.

So from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there'll be a thousand, two hundred and 90 days. You say: "Wait a minute, from the time in the middle, 12 hundred 90 days, that's 30 days more than three and a half years. Where did the extra 30 come from? Revelation 12:6 says it will be 12 hundred and 60 days, Daniel says 12 hundred and 90 days. Why the disparity?" I think the best explanation of that is that it is in those 30 days after the Tribulation has ended that the Lord, when He comes to the Mount of Olives, as it says in Zechariah, creates a great valley into which all the nations of the world are gathered to be judged. And I believe Daniel has taken us 30 days beyond to give us that timeframe in which there will be the judging of the nations described in Matthew 25 as the judgment of the sheep and goats, in which all the living people still on the earth at the end of the Tribulation are gathered together to the Lord to be judged as to their suitability for heaven and hell. And it is that 30-day period, which we see here in Daniel, that is

added to the Revelation text.

Further, look at verse 12: “Blessed is the one who waits and comes all the way to the thousand, three-hundred and thirty-five days.” Now, we got 45 more days. The blessed people are going to last another 45. I mean, if you’re in that – so the implication here is that a judgment occurs at the 12 hundred and 90 period and that’s what I think is being described. There’s a 30-day period in there in which that judgment of the nations takes place. Blessed are those who go into the next 45-day period. What’s that? I believe the next 45-day period that goes to 13 hundred and 35 is a transition time for the setting up of the kingdom. The Lord establishes His throne in Jerusalem. The Lord sets us in places of rulership, in places of representation as envoys throughout the world and establishes His kingdom, begins to bring the nations to Him, starts disseminating the rules and the principles for the Messianic millennium and that is that 45-day period.

So Daniel then sees the abomination of desolation. Then Revelation takes us 12 hundred and 60 days, end of Tribulation. Thirty more days for the judgment of the nations. Forty-five more days for the establishing of the millennial kingdom and then on into the kingdom. Prophecy is so explicit. But the thing that triggers it all is the abomination of desolation, the desecration of the holy place.

Now, you say, “Well, okay, I’ve got that. But what is it?” Let me show you what it is. Go to the 13th chapter of Revelation, and this is it as specifically as it can be stated. Revelation 13. We ought to give you a degree for this message this morning. Boy. Now, in Revelation 13, we meet the antichrist. He’s the beast and he rises. And it says in verse 5 of Revelation 13: “There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies and power was given to him to continue 42 months,” there’s that same three and a half years. He only goes for 12 hundred and 60 days, three and a half years, 42 months. He doesn’t last beyond that. That’s his time period. That 30-day period is a time after the Tribulation has ended. So 42 months he does his blasphemy. See, he starts out with this nice, peaceful pact. He makes a covenant. In the middle he starts his blasphemy. He starts to blaspheme God. He opens his mouth – verse 6 – and blasphemes against God. He blasphemes His name, His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

All right, he starts attacking God in that mid-week point and we see specifically how he attacks. Watch this. He makes war with the saints, he overcomes them. Power is given him over all kindreds, tongues and nations; and all that dwell upon the earth shall what? Worship him. What’s the abomination desolation? Who is the idol set up in the holy place? It’s him. He sets himself up as the idol. He sets himself up as the object of worldwide worship.

And then beginning in verse 11, you meet his cohort, the false prophet, who is another beast. He comes up and he does great signs and wonders. At the end of verse 14, his job is to bring the world to worship the image of the beast. He gives power to the image – verse 15 – so that it can speak, and so forth and so on. I don’t know, with all the robotics we have today, that this would even be a

problem. It could be so marvelous that we wouldn't know it wasn't actually a human being. Then again, it may be. Who knows what Satanic things can come out of this kind of situation? But he causes the whole world to worship, and as many as don't worship the image of the beast are going to be slaughtered. Now, there's the abomination.

Antiochus Epiphanes set up a Greek god. This one's going to set himself up. Now, you get the picture. As we move toward the end of human history, Israel is going to be more and more in a vulnerable position. And to protect themselves from that holocaust which they don't want to happen, they're going to align themselves up with a seemingly friendly western European power headed up by a prince, a leader, a great leader, an attractive leader. This particular leader is going to be their strength, their support, and their help. The world is going to come against him and Israel at one point out of their hatred for Israel. He will defeat them all and in that moment, he will betray his real heart and he will also take power over Israel. He will desecrate their holy place. Now, having defeated the world and having all of them at his feet, he sets himself up to be worshiped.

He becomes that god of all gods that the world must bow before and establishes the abomination of desolation. From that moment that he establishes that, and the daily sacrifice, which will be in the rebuilt temple in that time, stops and Jewish people no longer go near the place. From that moment on, the Great Tribulation begins. It lasts 42 months, 12 hundred and 60 days, three and a half years, followed by a 30-day period of judging and a 45-day period of transitioning into the millennial kingdom.

Now, there would be perhaps one other passage you ought to take note of and that is, of course, Paul's reference to this guy doing this in 2 Thessalonians where it says that he will come – in verse 4 – exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he as God sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. And he comes – in verse 9 – with the working of Satan with all power, signs and lying wonders and deceivableness of unrighteousness, and so forth. So he comes and actually sets himself up as God. Now, that's the abomination of desolation.

Now, let me just wrap this up very quickly. Listen, I want to read you some things right out of contemporary history. What's going to bring Israel to this? I'll tell you what it is. It's their fear of Russia and the Arabs. I talked to some leading men in Israel when I was there in the military and also who are teachers and so forth, and they are afraid of the Arabs. They're not afraid of their physical ability, they're not afraid of their mental ability, they don't trust them because they know the hatred is so deep. They're afraid of Russia. Whenever they seem to be able to take over a cache of weapons among the Arabs, they're always Russian weapons. They know there is a Russian-Arab alliance and they know the hatred runs deep. And they know that that's the enemy they have to fear. And they are increasingly being surrounded by that Russian-Arab alliance.

It fascinates me that in Ezekiel 38, the Bible says that in the end time, the king of the north, “Rosh,” Russia, is going to come against Israel. And allied with the king of the north will be Persia. Now, ancient Persia occupies the territory of two contemporary nations, Iran and Afghanistan. Five years ago I couldn’t figure out how Afghanistan fit into that, now I know. Afghanistan is now Russian occupied, Russian controlled. Libya, on the south, we didn’t know a few years ago why Libya was included in that same kind of prophecy – we do now with Gaddafi, and we know where his leanings are. There is a circling Russian alliance that poses a tremendous threat to Israel. And we don’t understand that. But let help you to understand it.

Islamic expert Lance Lambert has said this: “Islam has at its very heart a dogmatic belief that it must triumph. Ultimately, those who confess that Muhammad is not the prophet and that the Koran is not the final word of God are worthy only of death. Westerners cannot conceive of nations that base their whole policy and program on Islamic theology. But that is precisely what is happening in Iran, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. It is the same thing that we witnessed in the rise of Fascism in Italy with Benito Mussolini or the rise of Nazism in German with Adolph Hitler. It is not just ideological; it is theological. Muslims actually believe that their god has given them the oil weapon in order to finally win. Can you not see that Israel is an affront to Islam? A Jewish nation with a Jewish leadership, a Jewish army is an obscenity in the eyes of Islam. That is why the Bible says there will be war after war, all centered on those few square meters of land where the temple once stood where now the Mosque of Omar and Al-Aqsa stand. Is it not interesting that Syrian president Assad disarmed every PLO man that’s gone into Syria? They know they are producing terrorists for the subversion of the whole free world in this little beautiful land of Lebanon. The PLO has established a worldwide base for terrorism. In fact, the KGB world center for terrorism is in Beirut.”

We know the Islamic world hates the Jew. And it is a theological war. And those soldiers over there told me it’s just this simple: treaties mean nothing, pacts mean nothing. If Allah says kill Jews, they kill Jews. And all that has to happen is somebody like Khomeini or somebody else stands up and says, “Allah says kill the Jews.” Has nothing to do with promises or anything else.

And Russia’s hatred is the same. Arkady Polishchuk is a Russian Jew born in Moscow, was educated at Moscow University. He majored in Marxist philosophy. He became a leading Soviet journalist, writing for *Izvestia* and *Pravda*. He became a radio/TV commentator. Disillusioned, became an active dissident, traveled all over the USSR documenting Soviet violations of the Helsinki agreements, particularly related to their persecution of Jews and Christians. And eventually Polishchuk became a Christian. This is what he says:

“Communism was my religion. As a child, my first song was about Lenin, my first poem was about Stalin, and my dream was to become a Communist party member. I was one for nearly 15 years. That’s why it is so difficult for me to get rid of my Marxist ideology because it is my religion. Isn’t it a beautiful idea to build paradise on earth? Communism is the only ideology that promises that. They

have been fighting Christianity for 65 years, killing millions of Christians in Soviet camps and prisons. Communism can exist only where no other ideology exists. They have killed other ideologies but Christianity continues to grow. That's why it's such a danger. Since coming to the West, I found out that you Westerners are also brainwashed. Being a liberal here is good. Being conservative is bad. If you want to put the strongest label on an enemy, you call him a Nazi Fascist, you never call him a Communist, yet Stalin killed far more people than Hitler. And every communist society today is based upon power and killing, fear and brainwashing. Top church officials from the Soviet Union come to the West to tell about freedom of religion in Russia. The Soviets use these people as diplomats as part of their propaganda machine to make you believe there is freedom of conscience in Russia. As a boy in the streets of Moscow, I was beaten many times for being Jewish. There is real anti-Semitism there. I only got into Moscow University through very unusual circumstances."

And listen to this. "The Soviet Union is the most powerful empire in history. Like any other empire, it must keep growing. That's why they always try to expand into Africa, the Middle East, *et cetera*. But the Middle East is a very special place for the Soviets – not just because of oil and military strategy, but because of Soviet hatred of Jews. Soviet officials just hate Jews. They want to destroy the State of Israel. There's a certain demonic dimension about this that is impossible to explain."

You want to know why they'll attack? Because they are prompted by Satan himself who has generated hatred of the Jews to try to wipe that people out. And as you see a Russian-Arab alliance growing, you know that the whole prophetic picture is coming together. And they're going to be surrounded by this power. They're going to try to escape by seeking an alliance with a man who is also Satanically energized. They think they have found safety and he turns to be their betrayer, devastates and destroys the nations of the world, including Israel, sets himself up as God, and that brings the Tribulation. Now, once that trigger goes, what should be their reaction? That's next Sunday's sermon. Let's pray.

Let me just say this, and I thank you for giving me a few extra moments this morning to finish this, but before we go and a final word of prayer is given, I just want all of you to stay where you are for just a moment, be courteous to those around you who might be distracted. I just want you to realize that all of this having been said, it's important that you in your own heart be prepared to face the future. And that can only be done through faith in Jesus Christ. These are thoughts that should sharpen our focus on priorities for the day in which we live. And I hope that first sharpened focus is your relationship with the living God through Christ. And what are you doing with your time and talent and where are you investing yourself in the days that are ahead for God's glory?

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