

May 9, 2010

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION
MATTHEW 24.15

Jesus dealing with events that will happen within that generation (23.36; 24.34). The destruction of the Temple (AD 70) is a cosmic event involving the end of the entire old creation and birth of a new creation.

In answer to the disciples questions, Jesus begins to teach them what will be happening within a generation concerning the passing away of the old creation and the birth of the new creation. One of those signs will be the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

1. FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS (15-22)

The abomination of desolation (15)

birth pains = tribulation for the disciples (as well as many other things; cf. v. 9). 24.15-28 is expansion/explanation of that theme.

This abomination of desolation will be a marker that lets them know they need to leave Jerusalem and go to the mountains.

“let the reader understand.” Must understand what this AoD is so that they will know what to look for. If you don’t know, go figure it out.

Cf. Dan 11.31 (cf. also 9.27; 12.11) - used specifically in Daniel but a general pattern of Scripture.

In general *an abomination of desolation is particular detestable practices among God’s people that cause God to vacate and eventually destroy his “house.”*

AoD can only be committed by those who are part of the house; i.e. the people of God. They are tied to the house, the Temple, b/c they are the house. (cf. e.g. 1Cor 6.18-20; 1Pt 2.5)

Some have special relationships with the house. 1) The priests - special servants of the house. Let in worship and responsible for keeping the house clean.

2) Leaders in Israel; i.e. king & elders - throne of Solomon = the throne of YHWH (1Chr 29.23); elders are extensions of that rule. When they corrupt judgment, they corrupt the house.

This abomination at root is *liturgical* corruption and, therefore, falls more upon the heads of the priests than anyone else. Pattern in history covering huge swathes of history.

Basic pattern: the people of God commit some form of idolatry, God gives them a warning by withdrawing his presence to some extent, giving them a taste of judgment to come if they don’t repent. Then, if they don’t repent and sin matures, God leaves the house and sends servants to destroy it completely.

Cf. Ex 32 and the golden calf incident. Aaron (the high priest, though not yet “officially”) leads the people to corrupt worship. YHWH becomes angry, threatens to destroy, Moses intercedes, & God spares. YHWH moves outside the camp; outside the “house of Israel” (initial taste of judgment though not total desolation).

God comes back to the midst of his people when Tabernacle is built.

Sin matures. During time of Samuel (the last judge) Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phineas, are corrupting the priesthood (cf. 1Sam 1-4). Ark goes into exile to the Philistines (the glory departs; 1Sam 4.19ff.), Tab destroyed at Shiloh.

Solomon: builds the Temple in partial fulfillment of promise to David. Restrictions on kings: forbidden to multiply wives, horses, & silver and gold (Dt 17.16-17). Heart of devotion to YHWH led astray by foreign women.

Rehoboam has opportunity to correct some of the wrongs of his father. Instead he intensifies them in many ways. God again is angry with his people. Shishak, king of Egypt, comes up to Jerusalem and takes the treasures of the Temple (1Kg 14.25-26). Warning given by God.

Sin matures through this period. During Ezekiel’s day (also Jeremiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, *et al.*), God is about to go into exile

before his people to Babylon. Reasons found in Ezek 8: idolatries (“house leprosy”).

Liturgical corruption causes God to forsake his Temple/house and will send the Babylonians/Chaldeans to finish them off.

Daniel’s prophecy concerns the time of the empire; the time after the Babylonian exile (some events occur in “intertestamental” period).

Four beasts (Dan 7) - Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, & Rome. Daniel lives in the Babylonian and Medo-Persian stages of empire.

Medo-Persia - God sets up Cyrus as a new Solomon, his Messiah (cf. Isa 44.28; 45.1). Commissions the re-building of the Temple (cf. 2Chr 36.22-23). (Time of people like Nehemiah & Ezra)

Ezra - re-establish the priesthood determined during the time of Solomon: the line of Zadok (1Kg 2.35).

Third beast, Greece & Alexander the Great, arises. Leopard beast with four wings and four heads (Dan 7.6). Conquers the empire, dies, and distributes the empire to 4 of his generals (cf. Dan 11.4).

Kingdom to the north = Syria, ruled by Selucids. south = Egypt and the Ptolemies. Israel is in the middle.

Alexander and Greek empire - Hellenization (“Greek-ifying”). The whole language and culture, central to which is their gods.

Many in Israel were sympathetic to Hellenization. Became entrenched in society. Sadducees emerged from sympathizers and began to control the priesthood. Pharisees arose from anti-sympathetic elements.

Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), king of Syria. Antiochus wanted to remove the distinctiveness of Israel through Hellenization for political purpose.

Joshua/Jason - of the line of Zadok, brother of the high priest. Displaced his brother by bribe to Antiochus. Menelaus displaced Jason by the same method. He was not of the line of Zadok. Line of Zadok never restored.

Antiochus is spoken of in Dan 11.29ff. Takes action against the holy covenant. “Arms” stand up - Jason and Menelaus who accomplish his task. They pervert the priesthood and cut off the “regular” or “continual” (Dan 11.31); i.e. the whole priestly service.

They corrupted the worship and in doing so did the abomination or the detestable thing that causes desolation.

Antiochus comes back after being defeated in Egypt. Kills many people in Israel, sacrifices a pig on the altar of the Temple, and sets up an altar to Zeus.

Maccabees/Hasmoneans rose up in revolt, won, but did not restore the proper priesthood.

AoD (liturgical corruption) spoken of by Daniel. Now in the 1st c. Jesus goes in and cleanses the Temple to restore it but they refuse to worship rightly the God of their fathers by rejecting Jesus and his church.

Sin has matured. The glory is departing. Now the final signs that God has abandoned his Temple (i.e. desolation), then the Gentiles of the empire will be sent to finish it off.

The Roman invasion will make it evident that the abomination of desolation is standing in the holy place. This is the sign that will tell them to flee to the mountains.

Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees in 23.34ff. that he would send to them prophets, wise men, and scribes. This is what he does after his ascension. They will ultimately reject Jesus and his church—the true worship of the God of their fathers—and will consequently be destroyed.

1. The people of God are the only ones who can desecrate the Temple through abominable worship practices causing God to forsake certain churches.