

The Abomination of Desolation

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A significant component of the **“great tribulation”** will be the **“abomination of desolation”** (Mk13:14a,19). In God’s eyes, “idolatry” is the most heinous form of abomination (Jr32:34-35). The “image of the beast”, idolatry, will be at the heart of the hegemony of the “beast power” (Rv13:14b-15). The “beast power” will use the “mark of the beast” to force worship of the “image” (Rv13:16-17).

The Olivet Prophecy: The 6th Seal, **“the heavenly signs”**, marks the beginning of God’s wrath on humanity (Rv6:12-17). All three Synoptists reference the “heavenly signs”. Both Mark and Matthew are explicit that the **“heavenly signs” follow the “great tribulation”** (Mk13:24-25, Mt24:29, Lk21:25). Preceding the “heavenly signs” in all three Synoptists, there are more details on the “great tribulation”. Mark and Matthew both report Jesus’ allusion to the “abomination of desolation” as part of “the great tribulation” (Mk13:14a,19, Mt24:15,21).

Daniel’s Prophecies: Matthew’s hint, **“spoken of by the prophet Daniel”**, suggests we can learn more about the “abomination of desolation” from the Book of Daniel. The Book of Daniel twice prophesies an occurrence of the “abomination of desolation” (Dn11:31, 12:31). From Daniel’s perspective these prophecies were for the “future”. Looking back over history, we can identify **at least three historical fulfillments of the prophecy** of the abomination of desolation: **Antiochus Epiphanes** 167BC, **Pompey** 63BC, and **Titus** 70AD. The objective of Antiochus Epiphanes was the thwarting of the plan of God – the total annihilation of the people of God. Pompey’s actions were incidental, but the desecration comprised spilling human blood on the altar and his entry into the Holy of Holies – both blatant violations of the Holy Place. Titus had little to do with the abomination in his time – the primary desecration comprised the bloodlust and impiety of the Jewish factions during their occupation of the Temple. In every instance, there was **a complicated sequence of government actions** which served **to stop the True Worship of God**.

What is an “Abomination”? The word abomination is used for the vilest sorts of sin. “Idolatry” is the worst form of “abomination” (Lv20:13, Dt12:31, 14:3, 27:15a). The word is seldom used in the New Testament. Jesus used it of the attitude of the Pharisees (Lk16:14-15). The actions of the “Beast Power” are called “abominations” (Rv17:4-5).

A Problem of Translation: The word, תמיד - tamid, in Daniel 8:11, 12, 13, 11:31, and 12:11 is translated “regular burnt offering” in ESV. KJV and NKJV translate “daily sacrifice”; other English translations are similar. Where *tamid* is used definitionally in Exodus 25:30, 27:20, 28:29, 30, 38, 29:38, 42, and 30:8, it is clear, that ***tamid* encompasses the entire temple service, NOT just any particular sacrifice**. A reasonable translation would be **“Temple Service”** or **“worship service”**. The bad translation leads to the popular misunderstanding that “the abomination of desolation” is a single act, the stoppage of some particular sacrifice. However, it is clear from the meaning of the word, and from every historical precedent, that the **“the abomination of desolation” is a complicated series of actions resulting in the desecration of the True Worship of God**. This is exactly what the Book of Revelation depicts.

The Hegemony of the Beast Power: Daniel predicted the Beast Power (Dn8:23-25, 11:36). By the time of the 5th Seal, the Beast Power has hegemony, **a time of worldwide prosperity** (Rv13:1a,3-4,6-8,11-12a,13-14a, 17:1-3a,4b-6a, 18:2aβ,3,7,9,11,17b-18). “The world” will mourn the destruction of the “Beast Power”.

The “Image” of the Beast: The root of all evil is idolatry – Satan has used false religion, worship of idols, to deceive, confuse, and enslave humanity since the Garden of Eden. **Idolatry is the abomination par excellence** (Jr32:33b-35). The central component of the “Beast Power” will be an **“idol”** the **“image of the beast”** (Rv13:14-15). The Beast Power will enforce its worship through the **“mark of the beast”** (Rv13:16-17, 14:9-10a,11b, 16:2). The point of all this is to give us faith to endure in the face of the Beast Power so that we can participate in the Kingdom of God (Rv14:12, 19:20, 20:4).

Jesus Warning: Jesus adjures us to be wary of the “abomination of desolation”, **“let the reader understand”**. It is clear from the words of the Bible and from the historical precedents that the “abomination of desolation” is much more than a single action or event. The Book of Revelation makes no mention of the abomination of desolation, but it does clearly identify the actions of the “beast power” which are consistent with “the abomination of desolation”. **The Church of God is the Holy Place of the New Testament** – the focus of Satan through the Beast Power is to kill and/or compromise True Christians; **to destroy the Church**; to thwart the Plan of God; truly the **“abomination of desolation”**.

Although the “abomination of desolation” remains somewhat enigmatic, the historical precedents combined with prophecies give us considerable understanding. We can’t look for any specific preconceived simple notion of fulfillment – when we see it, the specific details are almost certain to surprise us. However, the general features are clear: the **“abomination of desolation” will be a product of the hegemony of the beast, the image of the beast, and the mark of the beast. The target of the “abomination of desolation” will be the True Worship of God**. This has been revealed to us to give us courage to trust God in faith to give us the strength NOT to compromise, but to **endure to the end, even in the face of death: “the one who endures to the end will be saved.”**

The material is based on the paper **“The Olivet Prophecy”** and on the document **“The Three Pillars of Revelation”** available at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>. The PowerPoint slides are located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/presentations>.