

The Devastation in Abomination

Mark 13: 14-20

As we continue our study in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus offers additional details concerning the end times and the coming Tribulation upon the earth. While these verses are shrouded in mystery, and difficult to discern, they do reveal actual events that will transpire upon this earth prior to the second coming of Christ.

Our text today deals with the middle of the Great Tribulation – a time of suffering and desolation unlike this world has ever experienced. Not only will there be intense persecution of those who believe in Christ, but God will also pour out His wrath upon this earth for the sin and wickedness that has permeated the world at that time. Clearly this will be a dreadful time for all who remain on the earth.

As we continue to examine the Olivet Discourse, I want to discuss the [affirmations](#) of Jesus as we consider: [The Devastation in Abomination](#).

I. The Appearance of Abomination (14a) – *But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand.)* Jesus spoke of the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation standing within the Temple. Consider:

A. The Identity (14a) – We can accurately identify the “abomination of desolation” as the anti-Christ, who will appear on the world stage during the Tribulation. He will be the minister of Satan, wreaking havoc and destruction upon the earth. He is prophesied in Daniel and revealed in Revelation. *Rev.13:5-8 – And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.* ^[6] *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.* ^[7] *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.* ^[8] *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

- Some argue this event has already happened and that Jesus is not speaking of literal events. We do know that Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple in 178 BC, prior to the birth of Jesus. *Antiochus Epiphanes, the King of Syria, conquered Jerusalem and tried to force Grecian culture upon the Jews. He wanted the Jews to become full-fledged Greeks both in custom and religion. He knew that to be successful he had to destroy the Jewish religion. Therefore, He did three of the most horrible things that could ever be done in the minds of the Jewish people. He desecrated the temple by (1) building an altar in the courtyard to the Grecian*

god Zeus, (2) by sacrificing swines' flesh upon it, and (3) by setting up a trade of prostitution in the temple chambers (cp. [1 Macc. 1:20-62.](#))ⁱ Some argue this prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 when Titus destroyed the Temple and burned Jerusalem. I am convinced Jesus spoke of literal events that will transpire during the Great Tribulation.

B. The Atrocity (14a) – We also see the corruption and devastation the anti-Christ will bring on Jerusalem, and those throughout the world. Three and a half years after making the covenant with Israel, anti-Christ will break his covenant and begin a campaign of corruption and mayhem. This will be ushered in as he storms the newly rebuilt Temple and sets himself up, within the holy place, as God. [2 Thes.2:4 – Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.](#) At this moment, the horrified Jews will know they have been deceived, but it will be too late. The campaign of death and destruction will begin in earnest. Anti-Christ will destroy countless saints of God throughout the world, including all who refuse to worship him. [Rev.13:7-8 – And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.](#) ^[8] [And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.](#)

II. The Abundance of Devastation (14b-18) – Here Jesus spoke of the great devastation the world will endure at this moment in time. Consider:

A. The Proclamation (14b) – [then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains.](#) We must remember that the world will be in the midst of the Great Tribulation at this time. The anti-Christ will have his grip on power, ruling the world under the direction of Satan himself. The seals will begin to be opened in heaven, and God will unleash His wrath upon the earth. While the entire world will be forced to deal with the devastation of the Tribulation, Jesus speaks directly to those who are dwelling in Judea. He speaks directly to the nation of Israel. Although the anti-Christ will not discriminate with his plan of devastation and suffering, he will direct much of his anger and destruction toward the nation of Israel. Jesus warns those who dwell in Israel at that time to flee into the mountains in an effort to escape the suffering brought about by anti-Christ.

- Through this specific warning, we discover that much of the hatred and animosity of anti-Christ will be directed at Israel. Satan tried to eliminate Israel in an effort to destroy the bloodline of the Messiah. They will face an intense and especially hateful attack during the Tribulation. Israel has always been forced to deal with the assault of the enemy. This continues today, with most of the Arab nations, and much of the world opposed to her existence as a nation.

B. The Separation (15-16) – *And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: [16] And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.* Jesus revealed the urgency this moment will require for those in Judea at that time. There will be no time to make any last-minute preparations. They will need to immediately flee into the mountains in an effort to escape the devastation anti-Christ will bring. Those on the housetop will not have time to go into the house and gather any additional provisions. Those who are caught out in the fields will not have time to return home to gather clothes for the journey. When the moment of desperation strikes, they will need to flee immediately into the mountains, seeking safety and shelter.

- All of this will be set in motion by the anti-Christ desecrating the Temple and setting himself up as God. Following that event, he will unleash his campaign of terror against Israel. When they hear of the abomination of desolation in the Temple, they will need to immediately flee into the mountains.

C. The Desperation (17) – *But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!* Jesus offers a specific warning to the women who are pregnant or nursing children when that dreadful time comes. He knew this would be a very difficult journey to make, emotionally and logistically, much less with the added stress that accompanies pregnant and nursing mothers. They will not only have to care for themselves, but also for their unborn or infant children.

- Clearly, we see in this warning of Jesus the difficulty and desperation of that moment. Many today laugh and joke about hell and the end times, but this will be no laughing matter. Those who are forced to deal with this, especially the believing Jews in Israel, will face a time unlike any they've experienced. Can you imagine having to flee into the mountains with basically what you can carry in your hands, without knowing exactly where you will spend the night and what type shelter or provision will be available? This will be a startling reality for many in that day.

D. The Supplication (18) – *And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.* Jesus also revealed that these should pray that they are not forced to flee into the mountains during the winter months. Matthew warned of having to flee on a Sabbath. We understand the difficulties associated with traveling in the winter months. Also, even though these will be Jews who have received Christ as Savior, they would likely be hindered by legalistic, unbelieving Jews if they were forced to flee on the Sabbath. They could face being stoned or abused by those who greatly restrict activities on the Sabbath days. Simply, Jesus warned this time will have sufficient difficulty without added stress and hindrances. They should pray that their escape would be quick and easy.

III. The Presence of Tribulation (19-20) – Jesus also spoke of the presence of tribulation and great difficulty in that day. Consider:

A. The Severity (19) – *For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.* Jesus warned when the Tribulation comes, it will be a time of devastation unlike the world has ever experienced. It will be a time of unrivaled suffering and wrath, past and future. While the book of Revelation reveals great detail of this time in Chapters 6-16, it remains beyond our ability to comprehend. The prophets of old had insight to this time of devastation, and yet they too were unable to fully grasp its enormity. *Joel 2:1-2 – Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; [2] A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.*

- I am convinced that humanity lacks the vocabulary and wisdom to fully describe the horrors that will be unleashed upon the earth during the Tribulation. It is beyond our ability to comprehend an event worse than some of the atrocities recorded in human history. Consider for a moment the campaign of terror Hitler unleashed against the Jews during World War II. I thought of the suffering and devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as atomic bombs were dropped on them. Consider the brutal tactics of ISIS and many of the extremist today. Jesus declared our world has yet to experience the suffering that will be endured in the Tribulation.

B. The Sovereignty (20) – *And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.* The Tribulation will result from mankind's utter rebellion toward God and rejection of the Gospel. When grace is rejected, wrath and judgment are all that remain. One cannot argue that God would be just in destroying all of creation for its rebellion. In fact, none deserve the mercy and favor of God. However, Jesus revealed that even in wrath, God will show mercy and grace. The world could not endure an extended period of destruction that will transpire during the Tribulation. If those days were not limited in duration, all flesh would perish from the earth. God has set the bounds of time regarding the Tribulation. Some believe this speaks of a supernatural shortening of days during the Tribulation. I have no doubt God can do whatever He pleases, but I believe it speaks merely of a predetermined duration.

- God will be merciful for the elect's sake. There is some debate as to whom that speaks of exactly. Some contend that it speaks of the nation of Israel being the elect, God's Covenant people. Others contend it speaks of those who receive the Gospel and are saved during the

Tribulation. I have no problem with either and believe that it may speak of both. Whatever the case, God will show mercy in the midst of wrath and judgment.

Conclusion: I think we all can agree that this is a very sobering passage. Jesus spoke prophetic words that will be fulfilled according to the sovereign plan of God. Every word Jesus spoke will be carried out just as He said. The world will face unknown and unprecedented wrath and devastation. The Tribulation will be a time of suffering and despair for the world.

The question of the hour today is – have you been saved by the grace of God? Have you realized your need for Christ, repented of sin, and believed that He died to pardon your iniquity and rose again for your justification? If not, I urge you to respond in repentance and faith today unto salvation. If you are saved, I pray this passage will create a desire within you to share the Gospel and reach the unsaved while there is time and opportunity!

ⁱ Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Mark.