

# The Abomination of Desolation

[Mark 13:11-18](#)



We are studying Mark 13, which is known as the Olivet Discourse. This is our Lord's teaching on the "Last Days" and His Second Coming. As we study this chapter, we must keep in mind its context, and the disciples' question:

*"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"* (Mark 13:4 NASB)

What things are they asking about? If we look at Matthews' account, we see that just prior to beginning the [Olivet Discourse](#), Jesus says:

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"* (Matthew 23:37-38 NASB)

What house is being left desolate? This is a reference to the Temple:

*And as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down."* (Mark 13:1-2 NASB)

Jesus had given many warnings about Jerusalem's fall and the fact that the kingdom of God would be taken from them. It is in this context that the disciples ask:

*"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"* (Mark 13:4 NASB)

We could put the disciples' question this way, "When will the temple be destroyed, and what will be the sign of your presence in power and glory as Messiah and the end of the Jewish age?"

In verses 5-13, Jesus tells them that many things will happen prior to His [parousia](#) that should not alarm them. One thing He tells them in these verses is that the gospel must be preached to *all the world* before the end comes. We saw in our last study that, according to Scripture, the gospel was preached to *all the world* before A.D. 70.

Let's look at verses 9-13:

*"But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them."* (Mark 13:9 NASB)

Who is Jesus talking to? It's His disciples! All the "you" references in this verse are the disciples. Did the disciples experience floggings, hatred, and death? Yes! All you need do is read the book of Acts. Mark elaborates further on this:

***"And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. 12 "And brother will deliver brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13 "And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. (Mark 13:11-13 NASB)***

The disciples experienced all of this before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, just as the Lord said they would. It was unmistakably fulfilled in every detail!

Right in the midst of this statement about being brought before governors and kings, He says:

***"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. (Mark 13:10 NASB)***

Indicating that there is some tie between these; the preaching of the gospel would bring persecution. The disciples did, in fact, experience this persecution for preaching the gospel prior to A.D. 70. But thousands of believers today are still suffering persecution for the gospel.

It is estimated that as many as 160,000 Christians die for their faith each year. Christians die for their faith every day. They are sold into slavery and buried alive in Sudan. They are raped and executed in Central America and the Balkans. They are burned alive, beaten and stoned in India, Indonesia, and the East Timor. They are imprisoned and abandoned by their families in the Middle East.

Today violence against Christians is widespread primarily on the continents of Africa and Asia, but Christian persecution exists in every country on the planet every day of the year. Many today still suffer as the disciples did. We are truly blessed to live in a country that allows us religious freedom!

Jesus said that the gospel would be preached to all nations, and then the end would come. Paul, in several of his epistles, clearly tells us that the gospel had, in fact, been preached to all nations prior to the [destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70](#). We looked at this in depth in our last study, but let me add something here.

<b>PROPHECY/COMMAND</b>	<b>FULFILLMENT</b>
<b><i>"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole <u>world</u> for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (Matthew 24:14 NASB)</i></b>	<b><i>But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE <u>WORLD</u>." (Romans 10:18 NASB)</i></b>
World is the Greek <a href="#">oikoumene</a>	World is the Greek <i>oikoumene</i>

<p><i>And He said to them, "Go into all the <u>world</u> and preach the gospel to all creation. (Mark 16:15 NASB)</i></p> <p>World is the Greek <a href="#"><u>kosmos</u></a></p>	<p><i>which has come to you, just as in all the <u>world</u> also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; (Colossians 1:6 NASB)</i></p> <p>World is the Greek <i>kosmos</i></p>
<p><i>And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all <u>creation</u>. (Mark 16:15 NASB)</i></p> <p>Creation is the Greek <a href="#"><u>ktisis</u></a></p>	<p><i>if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all <u>creation</u> under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. (Colossians 1:23 NASB)</i></p> <p>Creation is the Greek <i>ktisis</i></p>
<p><i>"Go therefore and make disciples of all the <u>nations</u>, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19 NASB)</i></p> <p>Nations is the Greek <a href="#"><u>ethnos</u></a></p>	<p><i>but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the <u>nations</u>, leading to obedience of faith; (Romans 16:26 NASB)</i></p> <p>Nations is the Greek <i>ethnos</i></p>
<p><i>but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the <u>earth</u>." (Acts 1:8 NASB)</i></p> <p>Earth is the Greek <a href="#"><u>ge</u></a></p>	<p><i>But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE <u>EARTH</u>, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE <u>WORLD</u>." (Romans 10:18 NASB)</i></p> <p>Earth is the Greek <i>ge</i></p>

Every word used by the Spirit to describe the gospel being preached in all the world is also used by the Spirit to describe the fulfillment of Jesus' mandate to preach the gospel to all the world! To maintain that the Mark 13:10 has never been fulfilled is to deny the clear statements of Scripture.

***"And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. (Mark 13:13 NASB)***

There is much debate about what this verse means. Some take it to mean that if they did not remain faithful to Christ to the point of death, they would not be redeemed. I can't buy that. It makes our salvation a work. It is saying that if we don't endure, we will be lost. I believe that the Bible very clearly teaches that salvation is a gift, and that it cannot be lost:

*But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, (Romans 4:5 NASB)*

*For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19 NASB)*

*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (Romans 11:6 NASB)*

None of the elect of God will ever be lost:

*and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:30 NASB)*

What, then, is He saying here?

*"And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. (Mark 13:13 NASB)*

I think He is telling the believers that if they remain faithful right up to the end, they will be saved from physical death in Jerusalem's destruction. The Greek word "saved" is [sozo](#). It means: *"to save, i.e. deliver or protect (lit. or fig.): heal, preserve, be (make) whole."* It is often used of physical deliverance. The Christians who did not endure, but turned back to Judaism, died in the fall of Jerusalem. Those believers who remained faithful fled to the mountains as the Lord told them to, thus saving their lives.

Now in verses 14-18, Jesus gives them a sign that they can't miss as to the destruction of the temple, His [parousia](#), and the end of the Jewish age:

*"But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Mark 13:14 NASB)*

If you have heard any "end time" preaching, I'm sure that you have heard about the "abomination of desolation." The "popular version" goes something like this: All events written in the book of Revelation are future (to us) events (Even though when they were written in the first century—and the Lord said the book of Revelation was given to show His servant the things which "**must shortly**" come to pass). Seven years before the Second Coming, all Christians on the earth will be secretly whisked away to heaven. Automobiles driven by Christians will suddenly be driver-less; planes piloted by Christians will be pilot-less, teachers teaching school will suddenly be missing students; I'm sure you've seen the pictures at the Christian book stores. Dead saints also will come out of their graves at this time in the first resurrection.

Then will come the [Great Tribulation](#), when all the horrible things in the book of Revelation are poured out on this ungodly planet. The Jews are going to build a new temple in Jerusalem, and the Jewish sacrifices will be re-instituted. Then, during this time, [the Beast of Revelation 13](#) will arise. This Beast will enter into the temple at Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be God. He will then put into the temple a statue of himself, which they say will be "the abomination of desolation."

[Walvoord](#), commenting on this verse says, *"Such a temple will be rebuilt and these prophecies literally fulfilled (like Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70 wasn't literal enough). If upon this revival of their sacrificial system such a future temple is suddenly desecrated, it would constitute*

*a sign to the nation of Israel of the coming time of great trouble just preceding the Second Coming."*

Now, is that what Jesus is talking about in our text? No! Jesus is talking about something that would happen in His generation:

***"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Mark 13:30 NASB)***

Every Christian I know (including myself) was taught false ideas about the future [Second Coming](#) of Christ from their earliest Christian days. We have read books on it, seen movies about it, and seen pictures depicting it. It was all we were ever taught, it is the only teaching many know about the Second Coming. Thus, every Christian must **unlearn** unbiblical teaching before they can understand the truth of Scripture.

I guess our first task is to get an understanding of what the "abomination of desolation" is. To the Jews, an "abomination" was anything that involved the worship of false gods in sacred places:

***Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh [key-mosh] the detestable [Shiqquwts] idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. (1 Kings 11:7 NASB)***

The word "detestable" used here is the Hebrew word [Shiqquwts](#) (ha-koots), which means: "an abomination."

***'So as I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye shall have no pity and I will not spare. (Ezekiel 5:11 NASB)***

"**Abomination of desolation**" is a Hebrew expression, meaning: "an abominable or hateful destroyer." To the Jews, the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel, brought to their minds the Assyrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes.

According to Jewish history recorded in the Apocrypha, the passages in Daniel were fulfilled in the time between the Testaments. 1 Maccabees records how [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) (who ruled Syria from 174 to 164 B.C.) came against Jerusalem and what he did that the Jews called "the abomination of desolation." Antiochus, had surnamed himself Epiphanes, which means "*the God Made Manifest.*" It was his goal to stamp out the Jewish religion. A royal edict was proclaimed suspending the practice of the Jewish religion on pain of death. He even turned priests' rooms and the Temple chambers into public brothels. In December 168 B.C., the Temple was dedicated to Zeus, and over the alter was placed a statue of Zeus which resembled Antiochus. A pig was sacrificed on the alter itself! This was a filthy abomination in the sight of the Jews.

[Josephus](#) said of Antiochus Epiphanes, "He also spoiled the temple, and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for three years and six months....he compelled the Jews to dissolve the laws of their country, and to keep their infants uncircumcised, and to sacrifice swine's flesh upon the alter" (Josephus, vol. 1, pp. 10-11).

So the Jews say this was fulfilled by Antiochus, but in all the verses that talk about the "abomination" terms are used that are translated as being *gender neutral* describing the abomination as an "it", and not a "he".

***"But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Mark 13:14 NASB)***

The King James Version and the NKJV add "*spoken of by Daniel the prophet.*" The

NIV and the NASV leave this out in this text but all have it in Matthew:

***"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 NASB)***

So Jesus tells us that this "abomination of desolation" had been "*spoken of by Daniel the prophet.*" This expression, "abomination of desolation," is found three times in Daniel:

***"Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. <sup>27</sup> "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations [shiqquwts] will come one who makes desolate [shamem] even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." (Daniel 9:26-27 NASB)***

This passage clearly refers to something which is to follow the coming and death of Messiah; i.e. to something connected with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Keil and Delitzsch, in their *Commentary on Daniel*, say, "*The interpretations (of Daniel 9:24-27) may be divided into three principal classes. 1. Most of the church fathers and the older orthodox interpreters find prophesied here the appearance of Christ in the flesh, His death, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. 2. The majority of the modern interpreters, on the other hand, refer the whole passage to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes....*" (Daniel, p. 336)

***"And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination [shiqquwts] of desolation [shamem]. (Daniel 11:31 NASB)***

***"And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, and the abomination [shiqquwts] of desolation [shamem] is set up, there will be 1,290 days. (Daniel 12:11 NASB)***

According to Jewish history recorded in the Apocrypha, these passages were fulfilled in the inter-testament period. Many today still see in these verses in Daniel, a reference to Antiochus, but **Jesus said** in His day that the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel was yet future:

***"But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Mark 13:14 NASB)***

Who is the "you" here? It is the disciples! The disciples could not have seen it if it happen in Daniel's day. It was something future to them that they would see. Jesus bypassed any declared fulfillment in [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) and interpreted the prophecy as relating to the events at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Many commentators find an allusion to the standards of the Roman legions in the expression, "The abomination of desolation." The eagles were objects of worship to the soldiers. We know from Josephus that the attempt of a [Roman general, Vitellius](#), in the reign of Tiberius, to march his troops through Judea was resisted by the Jewish authorities, on the ground that the idolatrous images on their ensigns would be a profanation of the law.

[B.H. Carroll](#) says, "*Pilate, at that time Roman Procurator, sent from Caesarea, the seaport of that country on the Mediterranean Sea, a legion of Roman soldiers and had them secretly introduced into the city and sheltered in the tower of Antonio overlooking the Temple, and these soldiers brought with them their ensigns. The Roman sign was a straight staff, capped with a metallic eagle, and right under the eagle was a graven image of Caesar. Caesar claimed to be divine. Caesar exacted divine worship, and every evening when those standards were placed, the Roman legion got down and worshiped the image of Caesar thereof, and every morning at the roll call a part of the parade was for the whole legion to prostrate themselves before that graven image and worship it. The Jews were so horrified when they saw that image and the consequent worship, they went to Pilate, who was at that time living in Caesarea, and prostrated themselves before him and said, 'Kill us, if you will, but take that abomination of desolation out of our Holy City and from the neighborhood of our holy temple.'*" (An Introduction of the English Bible, p. 263-264)

Mark says, they will see this "abomination of desolation" ***"standing where it should not be"*** Matthew says *"Standing in the holy place."* This abomination should not be in the holy place. This does not need to be understood as the temple only, but Jerusalem also, and any part of the land of Israel. To the Jews, all Jerusalem was considered holy:

***Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, (Matthew 4:5 NASB)***

***"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. (Daniel 9:24 NASB)***

***"And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. (Revelation 11:2 NASB)***

Mark says, ***"Standing where it ought not,"*** Matthew says, *"Standing in the holy place."* which mean the same thing. But Luke really clears it up for us:

***"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. (Luke 21:20 NASB)***

By reading the surrounding verses, you cannot deny that this is a parallel account to Mark and Matthew's Olivet Discourse. Parallel accounts cannot have a different meaning. By combining Luke's statement with secular history, it is clear that Cestius Gallus and his Roman army were the abomination of desolation. It was fulfilled in A.D. 66 when the Romans surrounded the city of Jerusalem.

[Chrysostom](#) wrote: "*For this it seems to me that **the abomination of desolation** means the army by which the holy city of Jerusalem was made desolate.*" (The Ante-Nicene Fathers)

[Augustine](#) wrote: "*Luke, to show that the abomination spoken of by Daniel will take place when Jerusalem is captured, recalls these words of the Lord in the same context: **When you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army**, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand (xxi. 20). For Luke very clearly bears witness that the prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled when Jerusalem was overthrown.*" (vol. 6, p. 170)

[C.H. Spurgeon](#) wrote: "*This portion of our Saviour's words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ's disciples saw "the abomination of desolation," that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatries, "stand in the holy place," they knew that the time for their escape had arrived; and they did flee to the mountains.*" (Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom. . p. 215).

The Roman armies were an abomination and desolating ones to the Jews; not only because they consisted of heathen men, and uncircumcised, but also because of the images of their gods, which were upon their ensigns: for images and idols were always an abomination to the Jews. Now our Lord observes, that when they should see the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem, with their ensigns flying, and these abominations on them, they should conclude its desolation was at hand.

This was, therefore, Christ's explanation of the abomination of desolation. The Roman army, heathen, with heathen images and standards, ready to sacrifice to idols on the temple altar, working the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple.

Mark then adds "*(let the reader understand)*" this is designed to draw the attention of the reader of Daniel to the passages' true meaning. In other words, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, that is the **sign** of the destruction of Jerusalem, the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

This makes a lot of sense when we take the word of Jesus to the disciples literally:

***"But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Mark 13:14 NASB)***

He is talking to His disciples. He told them when "**you**" see the "abomination of desolation;" not the Jews in general, not the Jews of some future generation. How would the disciples see it if it is yet in our future? The Liberty Commentary says, "You, must be taken generically, since the disciples have not lived to see this take place." Jesus said they would see it, the Liberty Commentary says they didn't. I wonder who we should believe? The New Testament says nothing about a temple being set up in our future. The Scriptures talk about a rebuilt temple, but they are referring to the rebuilding of Solomon's temple, which is what Jesus is saying is going to be destroyed. Jesus was talking about an event that would happen in His generation (Mark 13:30). The predicted "abomination of desolation" mentioned by Jesus is a thing of the past, fulfilled during the events of A.D. 66-70.

***"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. (Luke 21:20 NASB)***

Luke says "**armies**," not "army," so some say this did not happen when the Roman army (singular) destroyed Jerusalem. If you read the historical accounts, you will see that Jerusalem was destroyed by "armies" (plural). Syria sent over 25,000 soldiers, Arabia sent 6,000 soldiers, all of which were under the command of Rome. It was a multi-national coalition of armies and Rome was in control.

Phillip Schaff, in his, *History of the Christian Church*, gives us a vivid picture of the destruction of Jerusalem:

*Titus (according to Josephus) intended at first to save that magnificent work of architecture, as a trophy of victory, and perhaps from some superstitious fear; and when the flames threatened to reach the Holy of Holies he forced his way through flame and smoke, over the dead and dying, to arrest the fire. But the destruction was determined by a higher decree. His own soldiers, roused to madness by the stubborn resistance, and greedy of the golden treasures, could not be restrained from the work of destruction. At first the halls around the temple were set on fire. Then a firebrand was hurled through the golden gate. When the flames arose the Jews raised a hideous yell, and tried to put out the fire; while others, clinging with a last convulsive grasp to their Messianic hopes, rested in the declaration of a false prophet, that God in the midst of the conflagration of the Temple would give a signal for the deliverance of his people. The legions vied with each other in feeding the flames, and made the unhappy people feel the full force of their unchained rage. Soon the whole prodigious structure was in a blaze and illuminated the skies.*

*It was burned on the tenth of August, A.D. 70, the same day of the year on which, according to tradition, the first temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. "No one," says Josephus, "can conceive a louder, more terrible shriek, than arose from all sides during the burning of the temple. The shout of victory and the jubilee of the legions sounded through the wailing of the people, now surrounded with fire and sword, upon the mountain, and throughout the city. The echo from all the mountains around, even to Perea, increased the deafening roar. Yet the misery itself was more terrible than this disorder. The hill on which the temple stood was seething hot, and seemed enveloped to its base in one sheet of flame. The blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain were more in number than those that slew them. The ground was nowhere visible. All was covered with corpses ; over these heaps the soldiers pursued the fugitives.*

*The Romans planted their eagles on the shapeless ruins, over against the eastern gate, offered their sacrifices to them, and proclaimed Titus Imperator with the greatest acclamations of joy. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." (Philip Schaff, vol. 1 pp. 397-398).*

The "abomination of desolation" is a past event, fulfilled in the events of A.D. 66-70. It was a sign for the disciples that Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, and for them to flee from Jerusalem in order to escape the great tribulation which was coming upon the Jewish people:

***"But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Mark 13:14 NASB)***

Notice what Mark says at the end of this verse, ***"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."*** When the Roman armies were seen surrounding Jerusalem, this was the sign to get out of the entire country as soon as possible. They were not to be concerned when they HEARD of wars and rumors of wars but, when they SAW Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, THIS was a sign to flee to the mountains. If this were a global tribulation, as so many view it, what good would it do to "flee to the mountains"?

The phrase ***"standing where it should not be"*** must mean the city itself, for by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A.D. 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee. The exhortation to flee is given to those in the adjacent country as well as to those in the city. The temptation was probably to run into the city for protection from its walls, but Jesus said, "flee to the mountains." While the Christians fled, the Jews in general rushed into the city, resulting in a horrible blood bath.

The church historian [Eusebius](#) (270-340), who wrote the only surviving account of the Church during its first 300 years, writes, "The whole body, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella."

Josephus gives us an account of the Roman army pulling back from the battle at Jerusalem for no apparent reason:

It then happened that **Cestius** was not conscious either how the besieged despaired of success, nor how courageous the people were for him; and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world. But when the robbers perceived this unexpected retreat of his, they resumed their courage, and ran after the hinder parts of his army, and destroyed a considerable number of both their horsemen and footmen." (Josephus, [The Wars of the Jews](#), book II, Chapter XIX, Section,7)

[William Whiston](#), (1737) the translator of Josephus, has this footnote:

*There may another very important, and very providential, reason be here assigned for this strange and foolish retreat of Cestius; which, if Josephus had been now a Christian, he might probably have taken notice of also; and that is, the affording the Jewish Christians in the city an opportunity of calling to mind the prediction and caution given them by Christ about thirty-three years and a half before, that "when they should see the abomination of desolation" (the idolatrous Roman armies, with the images of their idols in their ensigns, ready to lay Jerusalem desolate) "stand where it ought not"; or, "in the holy place"; or, "when they should see Jerusalem any one instance of a more unpolitic, but more providential, compassed with armies"; they should then "flee to the mountains." By complying with which those Jewish Christians fled to the mountains of Perea and escaped this destruction.*

History records that for no known reason [Cestius Gallus](#), [suspended the siege](#), ceased the attack and withdrew his armies. At this time every believing Jew had the opportunity to flee the city as the Lord had instructed them:

***"And let him who is on the housetop not go down, or enter in, to get anything out of his house;  
16 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. (Mark 13:15-16 NASB)***

The idea here is that when the armies came against the city, they were to get out as fast as they could. Delay might mean being captured, turned back, or perhaps even being killed. The general thought is clear and impressive. They were to waste no time in making their escape from the doomed city.

***"But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! (Mark 13:17 NASB)***

Women who were pregnant or had nursing babies would have a difficult time fleeing from the city.

***"But pray that it may not happen in the winter. (Mark 13:18 NASB)***

To flee from your home and have to live in caverns in the mountains would be more difficult in the winter.

The instructions Jesus gives His disciples about what to do, in view of verse 14, are so specific that they must be related to the Jewish War. If these verses were speaking of some future Second Coming

of Christ, none of these conditions would matter. Jesus spoke these words to His disciples and history records that all these things took place in A.D. 66-70 in the Jewish war. These verses have nothing to do with a future Second Coming of Christ.

In spite of all the evidence, biblical and historical, some see "the abomination of desolation" as referring to an event in our future. Because they cannot accept that the Lord returned in A.D. 70, they say this event has not yet happened. Some do see this as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but they look for yet **another fulfillment** in the future. This is called the "Double-sense Theory." The proponents of this theory contend that the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem were but a type of the final eschatological events which they believe are still to come.

On the Double-sense Theory of interpretation, James Stuart Russell says this, "*Far be it from us to make God speak with two tongues, or to attach a variety of senses to His Word, in which we ought rather to behold the simplicity of its divine author reflected as in a clear mirror (Ps. xii. 6 ; xix. 8.) Only one meaning of Scripture, therefore, is admissible: that is, the grammatical, in whatever terms, whether proper or topical and figurative, it may be expressed.*"

Dr. John Brown, in his work, *Sufferings and Glories of the Messiah*, writes, "*Dr. Owen's remark is full of good sense' If the Scripture has more than one meaning, it has no meaning at all: and it is just as applicable to the prophecies as to any other portion of Scripture*" (p. 5, note).

What would keep any one from applying this "double-sense" principle to the prophecies concerning the life and death of Christ? Should we expect a "second fulfillment" of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection by some man in the twentieth century? Why not? Once God fulfills that which was spoken, it is finished.

After many predictions about the kingdom of God being taken from Jews and about Jerusalem's destruction, the Lord told His disciples that not one stone would be left upon another of the temple, it would all be destroyed. The disciples responded with the questions; "***When, and what will be the sign of your presence and the end of the Jewish age?***" In answer to their question, Jesus tells them that first the gospel must be preached to all nations, and then the end would come. Then He tells them that THEY (not some far distant generation) would see the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet. He told them it would be a sign to THEM of His presence and the end of the Jewish age. He said it would all happen in THEIR generation. It did! They saw the "abomination of desolation," and when they did, they fled to the mountains. Jesus can be trusted, His Word is true.

We need to begin to take the words of Scripture seriously, Jesus said He would return to that generation and He did. It is time we gave up our fleshly futuristic heresies and embraced the living presence of Jesus Christ. It's time we believed his words:

***Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." (John 18:36 NASB)***

***Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21 NASB)***

Despite the clear words of Jesus, many are looking for a physical kingdom. His kingdom is here now, it was consummated in A.D. 70, it is a spiritual kingdom, not a physical fleshly kingdom, and it did not come with observation.

---

This message preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on June 3, 2007. [Media #368](#).



Berean Bible Church provides this material free of charge for the edification of the Body of Christ.  
You can help further this work by your prayer and by sending a contribution to:

[Berean Bible Church](#)  
**2000 Centerville Turnpike**  
**Chesapeake, VA 23322**