

# The Abomination of Desolation

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By David Curtis

Matthew 24:15-20

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"There is nothing more delightful to an honest mind than truth; nor more important than religious truth. In the holy Scriptures, a complete system of the latter is revealed. But it has unfortunately happened, that through prejudice and indolence, from whence has arisen implicit faith in the opinions of others, and sometimes from a misguided piety, truth has been concealed from the view of mankind, and Christ and his Apostles have been made to speak a language derogatory both to reason and religion, and directly contrary to fact and experience." N. Nisbett, M.A

This is perhaps no more evident than when we look at what some have done to the teaching of Jesus' Olivet Discourse. They make Christ speak a language derogatory both to reason and religion, and directly contrary to fact and experience.

As we study this chapter, we must keep in mind its context, and the disciples' question.

**Matthew 23:38(NKJV)** *"See! Your house is left to you desolate;*

**Matthew 24:1-2 (NKJV)** *Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

Jesus had given many warnings about Jerusalem's fall and the fact that the kingdom of God would be taken from them. The disciples reacted with questions:

**Matthew 24:3 (NKJV)** *Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*

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 4-14, 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 AD 70.

Now in verses 15-20, 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.

**Matthew 24:15 (NKJV)** *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),*

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 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 reinstated. 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 [Matthew 24:15](#), says, "Such a temple will be rebuilt and these prophecies literally fulfilled (like Jerusalem's destruction in AD 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 ([Matthew 24:34](#)).

Every Christian I know (including myself) was taught the 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.

**1 Kings 11:7 (NKJV)** *Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.*

**Ezekiel 5:11 (NKJV)** *'Therefore, as I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity.'*

"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 Old and New 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 priest's 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).

Jesus said that this "abomination of desolation" had been "*spoken of by Daniel the prophet.*" This expression, "abomination of desolation," is found four times in Daniel.

**Daniel 8:13 (NKJV)** *Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?"*

**Daniel 9:26 (NKJV)** *"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.<sup>27</sup> Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."*

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)

**Daniel 11:31 (NKJV)** *"And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.*

**Daniel 12:11 (NKJV)** *"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.*

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.

Dr. John A. Broadus said, "It is evident that our Lord interprets the prediction in Daniel as referring to the Messiah, and to that destruction of the city and temple which he is now foretelling; and his interpretation is authoritative for us."

I agree, Jesus bypassed any declared fulfillment in Antiochus Epiphanes and interpreted the prophecy as relating to the events at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 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 (1947) 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)

Matthew says, they will see this "abomination of desolation" "*Standing 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.

**Matthew 4:5 (NKJV)** *Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,*

**Daniel 9:24 (NKJV)** *"Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city....*

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

Mark says, "*standing where it ought not,*" meaning the same thing. But Luke really clears it up for us.

**Luke 21:20 (NKJV)** *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.*

By reading the surrounding verses, you cannot deny that this is a parallel account to 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: (379) "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: (1888) "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).

Albert Barnes wrote: (1949) "The abomination of desolation means the Roman army, and is so explained by Lu, xxi. 20. The Roman army is further called the **abomination** on account of the images of the emperor, and the eagles, carried in front of the legions, and regarded by the Romans with divine honours" (Matthew p. 254)

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.

*"Whoever reads, let him understand"* is designed to draw the attention of the reader of Daniel to the passages' true meaning. When ye shall see the abomination which makes desolation spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, standing in the holy place, where it ought not to be. In other words when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies,' that is the sign of the destruction of Jerusalem.

This makes a lot of sense when we take the word of Jesus to the disciples literally. *"Therefore when YOU see the 'abomination of desolation.'"* 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 Bible says nothing about a temple being set up in our future. Jesus was talking about an event that would happen in His generation ([Matthew 24:34](#)). The predicted "abomination of desolation" mentioned by Jesus is a thing of the past, fulfilled during the events of AD 66-70.

The prophecy in Luke says "**armies**," not "army," so some say this did not happen when the Roman army (singular), destroyed Rome. 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. (6) 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." (7)

The Romans planted their eagles on the shapeless ruins, over against the eastern gate, offered their sacrifices to them, and proclaimed Titus Emperor with the greatest acclamations of joy. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." (8) (Philip Schaff, vol. 1 pp. 397-398).

The "abomination of desolation" is a past event, fulfilled in the events of AD 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.

Frank Gaebelin, in The Expositors Bible Commentary, says this, "Although many commentators hold that Matthew here portrays not just the Fall of Jerusalem but also the Great tribulation before Antichrist comes, the details in vv. 16-21 are too limited geographically and culturally to justify that view. "

**Matthew 24:16 (NKJV)** *"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.

The phrase in verse 15 "***Standing in the holy place,***" must mean the city itself, for by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in AD 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.

"7. 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."

John Gill (1949) says this, "...it is remarked by several interpreters, and which Josephus takes notice of with surprise, that Cestius Gallus having advanced with his army to Jerusalem, and besieged it, on a sudden without any cause, raised the siege, and withdrew his army, when the city might have been easily taken; by which means a signal was made, and an opportunity given to the Christians, to make their escape: which they accordingly did, and went over to Jordan, as Eusebius says, to a place called Pella; so that when Titus came a few months after, there was not a Christian in the city." (John Gill, on Matthew 24:16).

Foy Wallace (1966, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 352). "It is a remarkable but historical fact that Cestius Gallus, the Roman general, for some unknown reason, retired when they first marched against the city, suspended the siege, ceased the attack and withdrew his armies for an interval of time after the Romans had occupied the temple, thus giving every believing Jew the opportunity to obey the Lord's instruction to flee the city. Josephus the eyewitness, himself an unbeliever, chronicles this fact, and admitted his inability to account for the cessation of the fighting at this time, after a siege had begun. Can we account for it? We can. The Lord was fighting against Jerusalem Zechariah 14:2: 'For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city: The Lord was besieging that city. God was bringing these things to pass against the Jewish state and nation. Therefore, the opportunity was offered for the disciples to escape the siege, as Jesus had forewarned, and the disciples took it. So said Daniel; so said Jesus; so said Luke, so said Josephus"

History records it, 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.

**Matthew 24:17 (NKJV)** *"Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup> And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes."*

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.

**Matthew 24:19 (NKJV)** *"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!"*

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

**Matthew 24:20 (NKJV)** *"And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."*

To flee from your home and have to live in caverns in the mountains would be more difficult in the winter. The man made Sabbath rules imposed on the Jews by the Pharisees would make fleeing on the Sabbath more difficult because few would help, and many would try to prevent traveling farther than a Sabbath day's journey. Jesus clearly expects these events to take place while the strict Sabbath law is in effect.

The instructions Jesus gives his disciples about what to do, in view of verse 15, 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 AD 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 AD 70, they say this event has not yet happen. Some do see this as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 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. For example, William Hendriksen, in his commentary on Matthew, says this about "the abomination of desolation," "When shall this - destruction of Jerusalem and its temple - be? Jesus answers it now, but in such a way that the answer suits more than one event in history."

So the double-sense advocates can say, "Yes, these verses speak of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 but they also speak of a future abomination of desolation." One of the leading Dispensationalists of our day shows why the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Matthew, cannot be taken in a double-sense.

John Walvoord, in his commentary on Matthew, says this, "This portion of the Olivet discourse is crucial to understanding what Christ reveals about the end of the age. The tendency to explain away this section or ignore it constitutes the major difficulty in the interpretation of the Olivet discourse. In the background is the tendency of liberals to discount prophecy and the practice of some conservatives of not interpreting prophecy literally. (Which is exactly what Walvoord does, he does not interpret it literally. He sees it as a yet future event) If this prediction means what it says, it is referring to a specific time of great trouble which **immediately precedes the second coming of Christ**. (This is correct, but because he sees the second coming as a earth burning, end all event he cannot let the Scripture mean what it says) As such, the prediction of the great tribulation is 'the sign' of the second coming, and those who see the sign will be living in the generation which will see the second coming itself." (Right again, Jesus was speaking to his disciples, wouldn't that be a literal interpretation? The sign was to them, the Lord returned to them, in that generation.) Accordingly, the interpretation of G. Campbell Morgan, which relates this to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the view of Alfred Plummer, which relates it to the second coming of Christ as if fulfilled in the first century, are unjustified interpretations, if the passage is taken seriously." Why? If you are going to take this passage seriously you need to see it as fulfilled in that generation as the Lord said it would be. (Walvoord doesn't see a double-sense here because he realizes that there would have to be multiple second comings.)

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 tropical and figurative, it may be expressed.)"

'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.' - Dr. John Brown, Sufferings and Glories of the Messiah, p. 5, note.

"The consequences of admitting such a principle should be well weighed. What book on earth has a double sense, unless it is a book of designed enigmas, And even this has but one real meaning. By what laws of interpretation is it to be judged? By none that belong to human language; for other books than the Bible have not a double sense -attached to them."

"I hold that the words of Scripture were intended to have one definite sense, and that our first object should be to discover that sense, and adhere rigidly to it. I believe that, as a general rule, the words of Scripture are intended to have, like all other language, one plain definite meaning, and that to say that words do mean a thing merely because they can be tortured into meaning it, is a most dishonorable and dangerous way of handling Scripture."--Canon Ryle, Expository Thoughts on St. Luke, vol. i. P. 383.

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's time we believed his words:

**John 18:36 (NKJV)** *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."*

**Luke 17:20-21 (NKJV)** *Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."*

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

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on December 21, 1997.