

## The Abomination of Desolation Sign

“Let us understand”

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Amidst the many heavenly signs given us in the last-days, there is one *sign* rarely discussed. It does not originate in the heavens, but in the temple of God. It is “the abomination that makes desolate.” This is Daniel’s **sign** for believers, those who *clearly understand* God’s word. It was repeated by Christ in Matthew 24 to help new Christian believers 40 years into the future escape the coming destruction by the Roman army in 70 AD. This same prophecy has ties to our day too. It is the takeover of a latter-day temple by “the man of sin,” the “anti-Christ,” the “son of perdition” - *and those that follow him* – evil ones, *and* those that have been deceived (see 2 Thess. 2:4). To avoid deception of all kinds, we must remove ourselves from idolatry and turn to God.

Who do you believe and have faith in, God or man? Who do we trust today (see 2 Ne. 4:34; Psalm 118:8; Jer. 2:13)? Our born again Christian friends are wary of man, whereas Latter-day Saints are taught to “follow the Prophet” and other men, those who are called “prophets, seers, and revelators.” This is one reason why many other Christian people believe Mormons are not “Christian.” Too many Latter-day Saints look to leaders, the arm of flesh, rather than Jesus Christ and the Father for light. Who we believe and trust determines what we believe. The Saints have been taught that Daniel’s “abomination of desolation” is the destruction of Jerusalem, and that we are to stand in holy places when it occurs. These “holy places” are our ward and stake buildings, along with the temple. There our leaders will guide us into safety. This, however, is not what God’s word says. Instead, it is the “man of sin” who will stand in THE Holy Place in near future, and there desecrate it, profaning the temple, and worse yet, blaspheming the God of gods. This act of idolatry will turn to His desolation, and that of those who follow him.

### Correct Understanding of the Abomination of Desolation

Throughout scripture, “*the abomination of desolation*” is a major “*covenant violation*”- specifically that of **idolatry** (see Deut. 7:25, 13:6-16, 17:2-5, 18:9-12, 27:15, 32:16). In the historical records and prophetic books, “abomination” always describes *idolatry*, and often with child sacrifice (1 Kings 11:7, 2 Kings 23:13). This includes Daniel 9 and 11! Daniel uses the word *siqqus*, a term that always appears in connection with *idolatry*. Typing in “*Abomination of Desolation*” into Google, takes us immediately to the LDS church website, and other websites. Note the differences below.

LDS Website:                      When we see Jerusalem attacked we the Saints are to stand or gather in holy places – wards, stakes and temples, with our leaders guiding us.

Best Christian Websites:      It is the “man of sin, the anti-Christ who **stands** in *THE* Holy Place (singular), blaspheming God and in His Temple, making himself God, deceiving many. This is the ultimate “abomination” that will **make desolate** *the profaned temple, the anti-Christ himself, and those that follow him!*

Bible scholars generally agree that the first of three fulfillments of this prophecy occurred with the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He ruled Palestine from 175-64 B.C. King Antiochus treated Israel with such violence and contempt that the Israelites rebelled against him. When he came to suppress the rebellion, his forces entered the temple, stopped the regular sacrifices, and set up an idol of or an altar to Zeus, and then offered swine there as a sacrifice. This great abomination is clearly tied to **idolatry**. It brings *desolation* because it defiles the holy place at the heart of Israel, and replaces God with a mortal king. It led to desolation. There are two other ties to this prophecy. The second was in 70 AD when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. The Romans practiced idolatry openly. Christ warned His disciples of this coming destruction 40 years in advance in His prophecy in Matthew 24. He and Daniel also spoke of a **greater**, last-days fulfillment of this prophecy, a *future* one yet to come. It will mirror the first, historic (or *past*) event of king Antiochus Epiphanes IV, but this time by one much more powerful, by one who desires to be king over all the earth - the anti-Christ. He will attempt to fool many into believing he is THE returning Christ.<sup>1</sup>

History is just one of a number of sources that gives us correct “*understanding*” of this important coming **sign**, given that we might not be deceived. The Lord addressed Daniel’s prophecy in Matthew 24:15. Immediately following it, Bible editor’s then added the phrase, “*whoso readeth, let him understand.*” In D&C 84:117, the Lord added, “*setting forth clearly and understandingly the desolation of abomination in the last days.*” We must *understand* this sign to benefit from it.

Where do we as Saints get our *current* “*understanding*” of Daniel’s prophecy of “*the abomination of desolation*”? Most likely from the Prophet Joseph Smith, who gave us JST Matthew 24:12-13, along with our policies and traditions. Sadly

Joseph Smith's interpretation of this particular scripture is not consistent with the sources listed hereafter. We must go to God on this one and consult as many other witnesses as we can to "*clearly understand*" this prophecy for our day. All men can error, including Joseph Smith and other leaders. Note the words of Christ to Joseph about his errors and sins, and his need to repent in D&C 2:2-3; 3:3-11; 5:21, 31, 35; 7:2; 20:5; 24:2 and 29:3. Men, even very good men, can serve as purposeful "*stumbling blocks*" for us as **a test** - to see who we will follow; God, or men. **Idolatry** is to put *men or things* before God, or in-between Him and us! It is one of the great tests for Latter-day Saints today. We are to have oil in our *own lamps* if we are to enter into Zion - the Bridal chamber with God.

Sources that help us clearly understand Daniel's prophecy of "the abomination of desolation" are:

1. **God's Revelation to us via Prayer** We should go to God in all things. We must have faith and trust in Him! (See 2 Ne. 4:34; Psalm 118:8; Jer. 2:13).
2. **The Gift of the Holy Ghost** Those born-again have been given the Holy Ghost as their guide to take them to the Tree of Life. It is an important endowment of power from on high – the gift and power of the Holy Ghost to provide the "truth of all things" (Mor. 10:4-5).
3. **God's word in Scripture – Correctly Understood** When the Savior addressed Daniel's prophecy, He reminded us, as did Daniel, that we must correctly *understand* it, that the sign may do us good! Much of scripture features an historic (past) and prophetic (future) fulfillment of God's word. The prophecy of Daniel, addressed by Christ in Matthew 24 is no different.
  - A. Daniel 9:27, 11:31 (see the New Jerusalem Bible text of Daniel, as it follows the original Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew more accurately)<sup>2</sup>
  - B. The Massoretic text of the Old Testament / Provide additional clarity
  - C. Mark 13:14 / "But when ye see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought naught, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains."
  - D. Matthew 24 / JST Matthew 24 gives us our "current understanding" of this prophecy
  - E. 2 Thess. 2:4 / The "man of sin" will be revealed in our day, to those with "eyes to see"
  - F. D&C 84:117 / The Lord addresses need for clear understanding of Daniel's prophecy
  - G. D&C 112:24-26 / The judgments begin at "my house" and upon those who have professed to know the Lord, but have not.
4. **History** The abomination of desolation has a historic context (past) fulfillment. It was when Antiochus Epiphanes IV (a Selucid king) set up an idol of Zeus in the Jerusalem temple. He also offered up a pig to him on the temple's altar. The *Holy Place* (singular) is believed to be the future temple rebuilt in Jerusalem, also profaned, but this time by the anti-Christ, the "man of sin," who will blaspheme against God in His own house.

**Context** Matthew 24 is the Olivet discourse that begins with Jesus telling his disciples that the temple will be destroyed (24:1-2). The disciples then asked Jesus to explain: "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" (24:3). The disciples probably thought they were asking one question. The fall of Jerusalem, Jesus' return, and the end of the age were one complex event in their minds. It may seem to us that they asked three questions:

- When will the temple fall?
- What is the sign of Jesus' return?
- What is the sign of the close of this age?

A close reading of Matthew 24, however, reveals that Jesus heard and answered two questions from his disciples. Bible scholars will disagree about how much of this passage is devoted to each question, but they generally agree that 24:3-35 mostly refers to events leading up to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. This segment ends with Jesus promising "this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place" (24:35). A generation normally lasts 40 years in Scripture, and Jerusalem and its temple did fall within 40 years, as Jesus said. So his core prediction was fulfilled by AD 70. The Roman armies were always an abomination in that they carried with them idolatrous images of the emperor, whom they worshiped. And those armies brought desolation because their commander leveled the city and entered the holy of holies, defiling it.

The line “let the reader understand” (24:15) means that those who read Matthew—which would have been written before AD 70—must be ready to flee when they see Roman armies besieging Jerusalem. Indeed, the parallel account in Luke 21 makes this point explicit: “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies . . . flee to the mountains” (Luke 21:10-24). In fact, many Christians did flee, sparing their lives, when they saw Rome's armies coming. Eusebius, the first great historian of the church, says that when the Romans fell upon Jerusalem, “the church at Jerusalem . . . left the city, and moved to a town called Pella” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Christian Cruse, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1955, 86-87).

Jesus, ever the Good Shepherd, told the first Christians how to survive those most harrowing years of the church's infancy. **He also predicted that another abomination of desolation, like the one tied to Antiochus Epiphanes, will occur in our day.** When Jesus gives instruction concerning future events, His purpose is not to satiate our curiosity or answer all or our speculative questions. Instead, His purpose is to protect and guide and instruct His people. Jesus gave relatively little attention to the question “*When*,” though he did give us a **sign** tied to it – when we see “the abomination of desolation” set up in His temple. Rather than providing specifics of when, the Lord addressed another question “How shall we live faithfully?” This is best done today by removing **idolatry** from our lives. To do so we must diligently search God’s word, that we might not be deceived. It is a useful sacrifice for all those who love and worship Him. We are to place our *faith* and *trust* in Him, and *come to Him* in prayer for answers. We will then have needed *oil* (the Spirit) in our lamps to guide us, that we might be prepared for the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

### End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> *The Deceiver* Satan and his servants desire to *deceive* man. Satan – “the man of sin” is the god of this world and wants all in it to worship him. He will come in the last-days as a false messiah to many cities, and to those of Islam. Many will proclaim him king. Those who won’t worship him will be punished, many beheaded. He may come in a white and gold robe and speak elegantly. He will eventually speak against the living Christ, claiming he is the god we must worship. He will not allow anyone to touch him, as this would reveal who he is.

In 3 Nephi 11, our Lord Jesus had all 2,500 present at Bountiful touch the wounds of the Atonement in His body, one by one, that they might have a sure witness of who He is, and the reality of His presence among them. It is a sure sign of the Master, our Savior and King, the God of light and love. It is a significant contrast.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Jerusalem Bible Translation* Note Daniel’s words in this translation; “So when you see the appalling abomination, of which the prophet Daniel spoke, set up in the Holy Place [temple – let the reader understand] then those in Judea must escape to the mountains.”

This is **the sign** for believers, those who seek to *clearly understand* God’s word, those living in 70 AD, *and* those today who wish to be ready for what is coming in the near future! Note that there is no mention of destruction of Jerusalem in connection with this coming *abomination*, but instead it concentrates on an *abomination that is set up in the temple*. “The abomination that maketh desolate” will be the takeover of a latter-day temple, probably the new one in Jerusalem - once again, and this time by “*the man of sin*,” “the *anti-Christ*,” the “*son of perdition*” *and those that follow him* – including good people who **have been deceived** (see 2 Thess. 2:4).

This “*man of sin*” will “retire and take furious action against the holy covenant and, as before, will favour those who forsake that holy covenant. Forces of his will come and profane the citadel – sanctuary; They will abolish the perpetual sacrifice and install the appalling abomination there. Those who break the covenant he will seduce by his blandishments, but the people who know their God will stand firm and take action. Those of the people who are wise leaders will instruct many; For some days, however, they will stumble from sword and flame, captivity and pillage. And thus stumbling, little help will they receive, though many will be scheming in their support. Of the wise leaders some will stumble, and so a number of them will be purged, purified and made clean – until the time of the end, for the appointed time is still to come.

The king [“the man of sin,” “the son of perdition” of 2 Thess. 2:3-4] will do as he pleases, growing more and more arrogant, considering himself greater than all the gods; He will utter incredible blasphemies against the God of gods, and he will thrive until the wrath reaches bursting point; For what has been decreed will certainly be fulfilled. Heedless of any god whatsoever, he will consider himself greatest of all” (Daniel 11:29-37, New Jerusalem Bible).