



# *The King's Ransom*

Matthew 20:28

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Text

Matthew 24:15-25

Topic

Jesus warns the Jews in the Great Tribulation to not be fooled into coming out of hiding by reports He has returned prematurely

Title

*"Lookin' for the Lord in All the Wrong Places"*

Introduction

See if you recognize this movie dialog:

"Abominable! Can you believe that? Do I look abominable to you? Why can't they call me the Adorable Snowman or... or the Agreeable Snowman, for crying out loud? I'm a nice guy."

It's the Abominable Snowman, banished to the Himalayas in *Monsters Inc.*, complaining to Mike and Sully.

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Matthew 22:15-25

*"Lookin' for the Lord in All the Wrong Places"*

I don't know about you, but "abominable" isn't a word I much use; and, when I hear it, I always associate it with the legendary Yeti.

Our text speaks, not of "abominable," but of an *abomination*:

Mat 24:15 "Therefore when you see the '**ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION**,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

Not a phrase we use everyday, either. Neither did the followers of Jesus use it every day - **but they all knew immediately what He meant from their history and their reading of the Book of Daniel.**

We're going to see exactly what is "the abomination of desolation," and show how it is the pivotal statement in this chapter for understanding everything else The Lord says.

Additionally, as interested as we may be in end times prophecy for its own sake, we also want to find insight for living our own lives, right now.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Look Closely At What The Lord Is Showing You, and #2 Listen Carefully To What The Lord Is Saying To You.

#1 Look Closely At What The Lord Is Showing You

(v15)

Let's get right into "the abomination of desolation."

This term is found three times in the book of Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

Its definition is found in Daniel 11:31 in the prophecy written by Daniel concerning a Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned over Syria from 175-164BC, about four hundred years after Daniel wrote.

In his prophecy, Daniel predicted, "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.**" (11:31).

This was fulfilled in history, so there's no doubt as to what Daniel meant. Antiochus Epiphanes was a great persecutor of the people of Israel, as recorded in the apocryphal books of First and Second Maccabees. In attempting to stamp out the Jewish religion, he murdered thousands of Jews, including women and children, and desecrated the Temple of Israel, which precipitated the Maccabean revolt.

Antiochus, in attempting to stop the Temple sacrifices, offered a sow, an unclean animal, on the altar, to render the Jewish Temple abominable to the Jews. According to First Maccabees 1:54, "Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering." A statue of a Greek god was installed in the Temple. For a time, the sacrifices of the Jews were stopped, and the Temple was left desolate.

Jesus predicted that the action of Antiochus in stopping the sacrifices, desecrating the Temple, and setting up an idol in the Temple, is going to be repeated in the future.

This future abomination is described in Daniel 9:27: "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many [Israel] for one week [literally, one 'seven,' meaning for seven years]; 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."

The prediction is that a future leader will do just what Antiochus did in the second century BC. This future leader is the antichrist.

Further light is cast on this in Daniel 12:11, where it states, "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," or approximately three-and-a-half-years preceding the second coming of Christ.

- The New Testament, in Second Thessalonians 2:4, describes the same period, with the leader setting himself up as God in the Temple.
- Revelation 13:14-15 also records that an image of the leader will be set up in the Temple.

It may seem clear to you that these events Jesus was referring to are all in the future. However, in the past decade or so there has been a resurgence among Christians in the popularity of what is called *preterism*.

The term *preterism* comes from the Latin *praeter*, which is a prefix denoting that something is "past" or "beyond."

The preterist view of the end times is based on a symbolic view of the Book of Revelation that holds most of its prophecies have already been fulfilled, with the exception of the Second Coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead to either everlasting life or everlasting damnation.

Of particular importance to preterists is the argument that the end time prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in 70AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. That, they say, was "the abomination of desolation."

Preterists you may recognize and read include R.C. Sproul and Hank Hannegraaf.

You will see throughout Jesus' discussion of end times events that He was looking past the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem in 70AD to a literal Great Tribulation.

Look closely at these events. None of the things He spoke of in Matthew twenty-four happened in 70AD, starting with the fact that no image was set up by a leader desecrating the Temple.

Speaking to the generation that would be alive at the time, Jesus said they would be able to "see" this event and recognize it because it was described in detail in the Bible.

If we don't "see" it in history, then it hasn't happened, and is future.

Before we move on, to talk about what the folks in the Great Tribulation will see and recognize, let's talk about us.

What do we see?

Well, on a prophetic level, we see quite a bit. We see Israel, a nation again in her promised land, and that is a direct, literal fulfillment of many centuries old Bible prophecies.

We see a lot of other things, which we bring to your attention weekly in our *It Might Be Today* prophecy updates.

Here is something to bear in mind. In light of what we see, the apostle Peter asks us, "What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God...? (Second Peter 3:11-12).

We should be pursuing God above all else so our lives can be used by God to make a difference with the Gospel.

Every now and again there's a story about something tragic happening to someone while bystanders, well, stand by and do nothing.

We know too much about what is happening in the world, and what is going to happen, to be spiritual bystanders.

Peter said we were to be "looking for the day of God." The Lord wants us to see His coming for us, by faith, and live our lives accordingly.

What are you enduring today? What light affliction is assailing you; or what trial or trouble? The Lord is coming to take you home. Your departure is booked; your destination is being prepared. You're almost there, so don't grow weary in well-doing.

Finish well.

## #2 Listen Carefully To What The Lord Is Saying To You

(v16-25)

The "abomination" Jesus predicted has not yet occurred. It's coming, in the future, in the middle of a week of years (according to Daniel).

A week of years is seven years. Three and one-half years is the mid-point.

Jesus was talking about the seven year Tribulation. In verses four through fourteen He described general characteristics of the time after His ascension into Heaven that go right into the first half of the Tribulation. At the mid-point, three and one-half years into it, the man we know as the antichrist will do what Antiochus did centuries ago, and more.

When that happens, if you are a Jew living in Israel, what follows is your survival strategy.

Mat 24:16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

Mat 24:18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Mat 24:19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

Mat 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

First, please notice that Jesus was warning Jews in Jerusalem. This is a specific command to a specific group of people about a specific future event.

The mention of being on the housetop or field suggests urgency. Just run for it with whatever clothes you have.

Women who are pregnant, or with infants, are going to want to grab provisions. *Don't*. Just run.

Winter and the Sabbath highlight potential difficulties to those refugees fleeing. Regarding the Sabbath, Jews are forbidden, by their traditions, to travel very far. Even today, in Israel, some ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods are barricaded on the Sabbath to prevent driving. In Jerusalem and some other Israeli cities with large Orthodox populations, public buses do not operate on the Sabbath.

It creates a dilemma, but they should do what the Lord says.

Why must Jews flee immediately? For one thing, the moment the Temple is desecrated, the antichrist will go from protecting Jews to persecuting them.

But another reason they must flee immediately is because God has promised to supernaturally protect them during their flight, and to provide for them in the wilderness for the next three and one-half years. It's not going too far to suggest that God's protection will only extend to those who go immediately. Those who tarry will find themselves caught.

In Micah 2:12 God said, "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, Like a flock in the midst of their pasture; They shall make a loud noise because of so many people."



Here is a more complete description of the Lord's protection - the same event as presented in Revelation 12:12-14, but from the perspective of Heaven, showing us that the devil is behind the antichrist.

Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Rev 12:13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child [Israel, through whom was born Jesus]

Rev 12:14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [three and one-half years], from the presence of the serpent.

The Bible further indicates that it is to Bozrah that the Jews will flee to be protected (Jeremiah 49; Isaiah 63). Bozrah is a region in southwest Jordan where the ancient fortress of Petra is located.

If you read about Petra, you'll see it is easy to defend, because it is only accessible through what is called the *Siq*, a very narrow opening in the natural rock.

Of course, Satan is not thwarted by a narrow doorway. God will supernaturally protect His people in the wilderness.

By the way, regarding preterism, in 70AD there was no flight by the Jews into the wilderness where they would be nurtured by The Lord for three and one-half years. **This is all future prophecy.**

Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

If the Jews in Jerusalem do not immediately escape, they will be caught instead in a time of horrible, unprecedented tribulation upon the earth.

J. Dwight Pentecost provides the following description of the use of the word "tribulation" in the Bible:

The term tribulation is used in several different ways... It is used in a non-technical... sense in reference to any time of suffering or testing into which one goes. It is [also] used in its technical... sense in reference to the whole period of the seven years of tribulation, as in Revelation 22:2 or Matthew 24:29. It is also used in reference to the last half of the seven year period, as in Matthew 24:21.

The Old Testament predicted a time of tribulation that Israel is destined to endure that will result in national repentance and receiving the Lord as their Messiah at His Second Coming. Jeremiah 30:7 refers to it as the time of Jacob's trouble.

It's probably best to refer to the seven years as the Tribulation, and the last three and one-half years as the Great Tribulation, because that is when it really amps up.

It is the period that is described in chapters six through eighteen of the Revelation.

Listen carefully to what Jesus said. No time in Jewish history - including the Holocaust - fits the description of the Great Tribulation predicted by Jesus and described by John. It is future.

The preterist position - it's just wrong.

Mat 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Wait - isn't the Great Tribulation three and one-half years long???

It is. The word for "shortened" means *cut off*. It's use here means that the Great Tribulation will go exactly as long as God has indicated, not one day more, then be cut off. If it could go beyond the borders God has set for it, all humanity would be destroyed.

Maybe a better word would be "limited." Those days will be limited to the three and one-half years that God has prescribed for them.

In the Revelation, Jesus sequentially opens seven seals on a scroll. The seventh seal starts a series of seven trumpets being blown. The seventh trumpet starts the pouring out upon the earth of seven bowls.

The fourth seal (6:7-8), predicts a fourth part of the earth perishing. In Revelation 9:13-21, the sixth trumpet refers to a third part of the world's population being killed. These are only part of the great catastrophes which fall one after another upon the world and which will climax in a great world war (16:12-16).

The final judgment just before the second coming, described as the seventh bowl of the wrath of God, consists in a great earthquake, which destroys cities of the world, and a hailstorm, with hailstones weighing a talent, or as much as eighty pounds.

Putting all these Scriptures together, it indicates that the Great Tribulation will mark the death of hundreds of millions of people in a comparatively short period of time.

None of that has happened; but it will.

Who are the elect? Israel is the elect in this passage. They are God's elect nation. Israel, as a nation, is corporately elect.

Notice they are not saved, not born-again, at the time of their flight into the wilderness. Corporate election does not guarantee their salvation. Individual Jews still need to be saved by grace through faith in Jesus.

But when the Lord returns, all Israel **will** be saved.

Zec 12:8 In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.

Zec 12:9 It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zec 12:10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

The apostle Paul said as much, too; "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).

Mat 24:23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.

Mat 24:24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Mat 24:25 See, I have told you beforehand.

In the Revelation, we're told that the image of the antichrist set up in the Temple comes to life. "The image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (13:15).

There will be other deceiving miracles, signs and wonders; but the Lord has told the Jews beforehand to not be drawn out of their fortress.

The antichrist and the devil will try unsuccessfully to lure the elect Jews out from their fortress in order to destroy them.

Sadly, many people all over the world will be deceived, and be lost for eternity:

2Th 2:9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,  
2Th 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

2Th 2:11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

2Th 2:12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Need I mention, there is no record of false christs or false prophets or signs or wonders in 70AD? You just cannot in any way say that these things have already been fulfilled.

There is scholarly debate on whether or not Satan can do a genuine miracle, even with God's permission. There are good men on both sides.

Whether they are genuine but-meant-for-evil miracles, or they are Houdini tricks, people will be led astray.

It will be important for the Jews who see the abomination of desolation to listen carefully to what Jesus said, and to follow His instruction to the letter.

It's no less important for us, today, to listen and obey. The Lord tells us much, in His Word, about how to live. All of it comes from the heart of a Father wanting what is best for His children.

Is there something that God is telling you, but that you are resisting?

Maybe He has asked you to do something; to go somewhere. It's time to obey.

Maybe He has been telling you something, but you won't receive it. It could be a reproof; but it might be something rewarding that you are having a hard time believing by faith on account of your current circumstances.

In our reflection this morning, look at what The Lord is showing you, and listen to what He is saying.

