

# Jesus' Olivet Discourse

Matthew 24 & 25



Matthew 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),

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew 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.

In the vocabulary of Judaism of that time, an **abomination** was an especially offensive form of idolatry. Jesus describes a gross form of idolatry that will usher in great destruction.

**Standing in the holy place** means that the **abomination of desolation** takes place in the Jewish temple. This is the only possible meaning of the phrase **holy place**.

The mention of **the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION'** alerts us that we have come to the middle of the Tribulation. We know this because the phrase was first used in the Book of Daniel. In the famous prophecy of the Seventy Weeks Daniel was told about the final 'week' of seven years that comprise the Tribulation. Prominent in Daniel's prophecy was the arrival on the world scene of the leader of the revived Roman Empire. He will do the following:

Daniel 9:27 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."

First the coming world leader will **confirm a covenant with many for one week**. It means he enters into a seven-year agreement with Israel during which time he promises to protect her. It brings a tenuous peace to the Middle East. Israel is allowed to rebuild the Temple and the Jews begin offerings and sacrifices in the **holy place** of the Temple.

In the **middle** of the seventieth week, that is, at the end of three and a half years, an idolatrous image of the world leader will be set up in the **holy place**. All men will be ordered to worship this abominable idol. Failure to comply will be punishable by death.

The Revelation discusses this in some detail. A false prophet comes along and we're told,

**Revelation 13:15** He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

The **beast** is the name the Revelation gives to this coming world leader. We most often refer to him as the antichrist. He has many names:

1. Man of sin (2Thessalonians 2:3).
2. Son of perdition (2Thessalonians 2:3).
3. The lawless one (Second Thessalonians 2:8RV).
4. The little horn (Daniel 7:8).
5. The prince that shall come (Daniel 9:26).
6. The willful king (Daniel 11:36).

After Jesus announces the abomination the text says, **whoever reads let him understand**. There's a lot to understand:

1. First, understand that Jesus believed Daniel was a prophet!
2. Second, understand that Jesus took Bible prophecy literally.
3. Third, understand that prophecy is immensely practical.

Most of all, **understand** what you should do. If you are a Jew living in and around the Temple,

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

Failure to bow to the beast will be most easily detected in **Judea**. Zechariah declares that following the abomination of desolation the Jews will indeed flee. But only one-third of them will make it to safety:

**Zechariah 13:8** And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die, But *one*-third shall be left in it:

**Zechariah 13:9** I will bring the *one*-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This *is* My people'; And each one will say, 'The LORD *is* my God.' "

Tragically, two-thirds of the Jewish nation will be caught in the flood of persecution that will follow Antichrist's declaration of war against them. The violence and bloodshed will be staggering - beyond anything this world has ever seen.

Most Bible teachers believe the remainder of the Jews will run to the ancient city of Petra located in present-day Jordan. Petra is located sixty to one hundred miles to the south of Jerusalem in a mountain chain. The site remained unknown to the Western world until 1812 when it was discovered by Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. Enclosed by towering rocks and watered by a perennial stream, Petra not only possessed the advantages of a fortress but controlled the main commercial routes which passed through it to Gaza in the west, to Bosra and Damascus in the north, to Aqaba and Leuce Come on the Red Sea, and across the desert to the Persian Gulf.

There is a story that evangelist W.E. Blackstone spent \$8000 in the 1920's to have copies of the New Testament and gospel tracts placed in the caves at Petra so that Jews would be able to recognize their Savior at the final hour.

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Haste will be needed. There will be no time to pack or otherwise prepare. Pregnant woman and nursing moms will not be spared the wrath of antichrist. Winter will make escape more difficult. As far as the Sabbath, a Jew who is observing the law can only travel a Sabbath day's journey – which is not far enough away from danger.

Matthew 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.

This description isolates the period from all the inquisitions, massacres, and genocides of history. This prophecy could not have been fulfilled by any previous persecutions because it is clearly stated that it will be ended by the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus referred to it as **great tribulation**. Technically the seven years are the **Tribulation** and the last three and one half years are the **Great Tribulation**.

When we began our studies on the Olivet Discourse we pointed out the Jewish-ness of it. This section is filled with references to the holy land and to the Jews. It's a reminder that the Tribulation is the time of Jacob's Trouble. It is the seventieth week of Daniel that was decreed especially for the nation of Israel.

Jews and Gentiles will have to endure the Tribulation. **The church will not!**