

People of God, we have been looking at the Olivet Discourse, and last week we noted that the context leading up to Mark 13, the original audience, the grammar, scriptural allusions, and the historical fulfillments, all pointed to a fulfillment of this prophecy within the lifetime of the disciples, and how all these things came to a completion in 70 AD with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Titus.

We also noted that Jesus spoke to his disciples about the signs that would take place to indicate when the temple was about to be destroyed. He gives them signs that would happen all around them throughout the empire – wars, earthquakes, famines, false messiahs – and he told them about the signs that would happen specifically to them – they would be brought to trial, they would stand before governors and kings, they would be hated by all for Christ’s sake.

Now Jesus is going to give his disciples another sign that would indicate when these events of the temple’s destruction would take place, and it would be something that happens in Jerusalem. Jesus says this:

*But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (and Mark adds in this parenthesis – Let the Reader Understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

Now, I think we need to compare this with Matthew and Luke and see what they say to help us understand what is the Abomination of Desolation.

Matthew says, “*So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*”

And Luke says something a little bit different.

*“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”*

So right off the bat, let us just note that there is a connection between the Abomination of Desolation, whatever that is, and with the Armies surrounding Jerusalem, which would indicate that its desolation has come near. That is when the Jewish Christians who still lived in Jerusalem and in Judea knew it was time to flee from Jerusalem and go into the mountains of Pella.

Now, Matthew makes notice of the Prophet Daniel, who uses this phrase, or a form of it in multiple places in his prophecy. In 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. The phrase that he uses is “abomination that makes desolate.”

What is the abomination that makes desolate? In scripture we see that Pagan false gods and their wicked worship practices are called Abominations (11:5,7; 2 Kings 23:13; 2 Chron. 15:8; Isa. 66:3; Jer. 4:1; 7:30; 13:27; 32:34; Ezek. 5:11; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 20:7-8, 30). Also, because of Israel’s great sinfulness, even the sacrifices that they make to Yahweh are also sometimes called abominations.

So abominations, as a category, have to do primarily with worship. An abomination is a liturgical and ritual idolatry that may have an accompanying wicked practice. And what this abomination brings about and causes is desolation. The Abomination that makes desolate.

We can actually see in Scripture some of examples of this.

What usually happens is that there is some abomination surrounding the worship of God. God gives his people a warning by punishing them in some way, and then by withdrawing his presence giving them a foretaste of the greater judgment to come if they don’t repent. If they don’t repent and sin matures God sends judgment upon his people to destroy them completely, and God leaves their presence, leaving the house of God desolate.

We see this pattern happen in the first part of the Bible. In Ex. 32 Israel is guilty of committing idolatry with the golden calf. God instructed the Levites to then kill all those who had committed idolatry with the golden

calf, and on that day 3000 people were killed. Interestingly, Moses tells the Levites that that was the day they were ordained for the service of the Lord. Their ordination service was the killing of idolaters.

Thereafter, in Ex. 33, God says that he will not go up with Israel into the Promised Land, for they are a stiff-necked people, and God may consume them on the way. So we see that with the killing of the 3,000 and God presence no longer being with Israel for a time, this is the first warning of judgment.

But Sin matures and we fast forward to 1 Samuel where we learn of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, that they used to lay with the women at the entrance to the tent of meeting in Shiloh, and they used to steal parts of the sacrifice from the people.

As a result of this maturation of sin that developed during the time of the judges, God brought the Philistines to fight against Israel, and then they killed Hophni and Phineas and took the ark of the covenant. Upon hearing of this Eli fell down dead. The wife of Phineas gave birth at that time and named her son Ichabod, for it means, the glory has departed.

So, from the idolatry with the golden calf (Ex. 32) to the capture of the Ark of the Covenant at Shiloh (1 Sam. 4), we could see this as one complex of events in which liturgical idolatry - abomination - brought about a desolation - God leaving his house and people, leaving it desolate. This would be the first complex of events in which we see the Abomination which brings about Desolation.

This pattern is seen again beginning with King Solomon. He committed all sorts of idolatry. He built high places for the gods of his foreign wives, who turned away his heart from the Lord. These high places he built were specifically called abominations.

*“For Solomon went after the Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammorites. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the Ammonites.”*

The initial judgment then was that the Lord raised up adversaries to attack Solomon, and the first mentioned was Hadad the Edomite. The Edomites are going to show up again, so remember them. Then God tore the kingdom into two. This was the initial judgment of this phase.

Obviously Israel’s sin matured until the Temple of Solomon was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 BC. It was while Ezekiel was already in Exile that this event happened and Ezekiel sees a vision of the Lord departing from the temple because of its abominable idolatries. In Ezekiel 8 God says,

*“Son of Man, lift up your eyes now toward the north.” So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and behold, north of the Altar Gate in the entrance, was this image of jealousy. And he said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far away from my sanctuary? But you will see greater abominations still.”*

And he does, more abominations committed by the Priests and Levites in the Temple. So God calls forth the executioners to come to slay the wicked, and then the Glory of God departs from the temple and Jerusalem. Soon after Ezekiel sees the vision, Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon. This is the second complex of events known as the Abomination of Desolation.

The third event happens after the New Temple was built under Ezra and Nehemiah. And when you read in Nehemiah 10 that the people, the Levites, and the Priests, the gatekeepers, the servants, the singers, the nobles and all the people, all made a covenant before God that they would be obedient by not marrying the foreign women, they would keep the sabbath day holy by not buy or sell grain on the sabbath, they would maintain the

service of the temple by giving their tithe. Then in chapter 13 we see Israel break the covenant in those very places they just promised to obey. Nehemiah's prayer is that God would not destroy them for violating the covenant.

Eventually history tells us that during the time known as the intertestamental period, there would come what I consider to be that first initial judgment for Israel's unfaithfulness. And I need to talk about some details of history here, because Jesus specifically tells the reader to understand what was spoken of by the prophet Daniel. So, allow me to explain to you as I understand.

Alexander the Great spread Greek Culture everywhere he went. After He died his empire split into four kingdoms. Daniel 11 speaks specifically of two of those kingdoms, the North and the South. The Kingdom of the North was roughly in Syria, and the South was roughly in Egypt. Israel was in the Middle, and many times these two kingdoms would fight against each other and the Israel was the battleground, as well as the prize.

In Israel there were some who were favorable toward Greek Culture, Hellenization, as it is called, and there were those that were not. In the second century BC, the King of the North was a man named Antiochus Epiphanies. He ruled over Israel from Syria in the North, and he often tried to force Greek culture on the Jews. Some accepted it, but he faced much resistance and opposition.

Well, in order to get more people to be sympathetic with Greek customs and culture he put a Greek Sympathizer in the position of High Priest. A man named Onias III was the high priest, and he was of the Priestly line of Zadok.

Onias III did not want Israel to become Hellenized, but Onias' brother Jason did. So Jason purchased the high priesthood from Antiochus

Epiphanes, only to have a man named Menaleus purchase it from the king a few years later at a high price.

Menaleus was not of the priestly line of Zadok, but he was a Benjaminite. After that Onias was murdered, and now Antiochus Epiphanes could do what he wanted in Israel, having his Hellenized High Priest to spread Greek Culture throughout Israel.

During this time, Antiochus was fighting a war in with the king of the south in Egypt, and a false rumor was spread that he died in battle. So Jason, the deposed high priest, led a revolt of 1,000 soldiers against Jerusalem to take the High Priesthood back from Menaleus. During this revolt Menaleus fled the city and hid in the castle. Jason, the once high priest, killed thousands of his own countrymen during the revolt, thinking they were his enemies.

When Antiochus, who was on his way back from being defeated in Egypt, heard of the riots in Jerusalem, thinking that Judea had revolted against his rule. So, being enraged from his defeat in Egypt, and at the revolt, he entered the city with great violence. In three days time Antiochus Epiphanes executed 80,000 people, men, women, and children, and then he restored Menaleus to the High Priesthood. And after being restored, Menaleus led Antiochus Epiphanes into the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem, and there he offered a sacrifice of a pig on the Altar of God, and set up an altar to Zeus. This took place in 176 BC.

This event came to be known as the Abomination of desolation, for it is believed to have been foretold by Daniel the Prophet. It says, *He shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular (burnt offering?). And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate” (11:31).*

Now since this event was already in the past when Jesus prophesied, Christ is telling us that the abomination of desolation that he is talking about, is

going to be like the one Daniel prophesied about. So that means we should be able to see some similarities between the event that Daniel spoke of, and what Jesus speaks of. And when those events happen in Jerusalem the Christians will know it is time to flee.

Now I think that the Abomination of Desolation that was set by Antiochus Epiphanies and the Menaleus the false High Priest and the destruction of the city and the slaying of the people, was the first abomination of desolation in this last complex of events. It was the first warning.

But sin increased and matured, and in the fullness of time Christ comes to the temple to inspect it, only to find that it is full of corruption. So, he departs the temple, just as God had departed before, and he prophecies of its coming doom. The Apostle's then were sent to command Israel to repent, and flee from this wicked generation, but for the most part they don't. And so God destroys the temple again, this time by the hands of the Romans under General Titus.

Now what did we say was the definition of abominations that bring about desolations? It was idolatrous and sinful practices surrounding the worship of God. So what was the abomination that brought about the desolation in 70 AD? It was the spiritual fornication and idolatry of the Jewish leadership who were morally corrupt, who harbored insurrections, who devoured widows houses, and all of that. But I would say that mostly their greatest abomination was they rejected Jesus and they killed his apostle's. It was not one specific event, per se, but the ever maturing sin and wickedness and idolatry that haunted the temple.

Listen to what Rev, 18 says:

*“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!<sup>a</sup>  
She has become a lair for demons  
and a haunt for every unclean spirit,  
every unclean bird,*

*and every detestable beast.<sup>b</sup>*

*<sup>3</sup>All the nations have drunk<sup>c</sup> the wine  
of the passion of her sexual immorality.*

*The kings of the earth have committed immorality with her...*

We know that sexual immorality is the way God describes idolatry. And we also know that Babylon the Great is Jerusalem because at the end of this passage it says specifically: *In her was found the blood of the prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth* – the word “earth” literally being, “the land,” referring to the land of Israel.

Jesus already condemned Jerusalem in Matthew 23 for this very reason, saying,

*<sup>29</sup>Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous. <sup>30</sup>And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ <sup>31</sup>So you testify against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup>Fill up, then,<sup>g</sup> the measure of the sin of your fathers. <sup>33</sup>You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape the sentence of hell?*

*<sup>34</sup>Because of this, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and others you will flog in your synagogues and persecute in town after town. <sup>35</sup>And so upon you will come all the righteous blood shed on earth (on the land), from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. <sup>36</sup>Truly I tell you, all these things will come upon this generation.*

During Sunday School last week I taught about how the word *latreia* is a word that is used in Greek to refer to Israel’s sacrificial system of worship. Jesus says in John 16:2 *that the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are offering service – latreia, to God.* I believe the idolatry in the temple, the liturgical sexual immorality that Babylon the Great / Jerusalem the Harlot committed was not only the sacrificial worship

they offered to God after Christ had already provided the one sacrifice for all, and not only their blatant immorality and corruption, but it was also the abomination of the “sacrificial worship” they offered to God in killing Christ and the prophets and the saints.

So then, what was the thing or person that the people were to see to know that it was time to flee? It specifically says in Mark, *“When you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be, then flee to the mountains.”*

Who is he? At the outbreak of the Jewish War, Jewish Zealots moved in and occupied the Temple area, and committed horrible acts in the temple. They murdered many people in the temple, including the priests; they freely went about into the holy of holies, where they actually made the garrison and stronghold of the tyrannical and lawless rule. These acts of sacrilege climaxed in the winter of 67-68 when a clown named Phanni was invested as the new high priest.

The retired high priest Ananus said, *“It would have been far better for my to have died before I had seen the house of God laden with such abominations an its unapproachable and hallowed places crowded with the feet of murderers.”*

Now Phanni the clown may be the “he” Mark was referring to. We don’t know.

The Zealots also called forth the Edomites, the Idumeans, to help them in their revolutionary fight against the Romans. Remember God sent the Edomites to attack Solomon. They camped outside the walls with an army of 20,000 soldiers and 4 generals. This was part of the armies that Luke talks about when he said, when you Jerusalem surrounded by Armies, know that its desolation draws near.

The zealots who were already inside broke open one of the gates and allowed the Edomite army in. They fell upon the people with violence and killed some 8000 people in the outer court of the temple, filling it with blood. Among the slain was Ananus the high priest. Josephus thought that it was this act of the killing of the high priest that brought about the judgment of God.

Eventually the Idumeans left, leaving the city to the zealots. And some think it was also around that time the Christians fled the city and went to Pella.

Eventually the Romans under General Titus surrounded the city, until the time came for them to destroy the city. When they came in they set up their legionary standards in the temple which they offered sacrifices to. Daniel 9:27 says, "*And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the end is poured out on the desolater.*" Maybe Titus and his legionary standard which had eagles on them, and which were worshiped in the temple, was "the wing of abomination."

It was in fact this incident that many compare with what Antiochus Epiphanes did, which Daniel 11 called the Abomination of Desolation. Both Antiochus Epiphanes and Titus waged war on the city, built sacrifices to false gods in the temple, both armies plundered the city and killed its inhabitants. And under Titus, the city itself was completely and utterly destroyed until not one stone was left upon another, just as Jesus predicted.

The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD by Zealots, Idumeans, and the Romans, and the Jews, the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians; the capture of the Ark of the Covenant in Shiloh by the Philistines told in 1 Sam. 4; these are all historical and visible judgments in the past, that are meant to warn us today

in the New Covenant about the extreme dangers of idolatry and sinfulness in the church.

It was abominable worship practices which brought the judgment of God upon His people, and it will be the abominable worship practices and our ungodly living which we offer to God today that will again bring his judgment upon us.

In Revelation Jesus threatens judgment upon his churches when he says, for example to the church in Ephesus: *“Remember therefore from where you are fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand unless you repent.”*

He says to the Church in Pergamum, who have been practicing sexual immorality, *“Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.”*

To Sardis he says, *“If you will not wake up I will come a like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.”*

And what he says to all the churches is : *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

So what sorts of abominable things might churches do that would cause Jesus to come and war against them and remove their lampstands and leave them desolate?

- Tolerating the teachings and practices of sexual immorality;
- Tolerating and promoting false teachers, false prophets, and false christs
- Blending Christianity with new age demon worship
- Basically, anything that comes out of Hill Song church and Bethel school of supernatural ministry and church
- The abominable worship practices of many megachurches and charismatic and Pentecostal churches

- Just about every single televangelist
- not holding fast to the truth but teaching doctrines of demons;
- losing your first love for Christ;
- turning the faith of Christ into a means for getting rich;
- capitulating to the Spirit of the age and to the false god of consumerism;
- giving undo allegiance to the state at the expense of obedience to God.
- committing the abomination of Molech and happily murder children in abortion;
- forsaking suffering with Christ for ease, comfort, riches, and safety
- These are just the ones I could think of off the top of my head. But if you are interested in seeing some of the crazier things being done in churches check out the Museum of Idolatry. Just google it.

All these things which are so common in American churches can threaten to leave us desolate if we are not on our guard. Already we see churches being made desolate. COVID has been called the judgment of God. It is his warning shot across the bow. And already we see God removing lampstands.

It is predicted that over the next 18 months The United States could see 1 out of every 5 churches close for good. And why? Perhaps God is leaving these churches because they are not being faithful to Him first. Perhaps those churches that have given in to the spirit of the age have committed such abominations that God is leaving them desolate.

Jesus told his disciples that when they see these things, they were to flee to the mountains. We know they fled to Pella.

If your church is giving in to these things and is committing abominations, then you need to flee. Flee to Pella, and come to Christ the Redeemer Church!!

In Revelation 18, it is said about Babylon the great, which is the wicked city of Jerusalem, *Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues...*

People of God, the wrath of God came upon that generation of people living in Jerusalem when the temple was destroyed 70 AD. It however it just the last scriptural example in a long line of examples that have been given to us in the Bible to warn us of the spiritual dangers that follow those who forsake the Lord by committing abominations and doing detestable things in God's sight.

If and when churches become desolate in America, it will not be because of the world. It will not be the muslims, it will not be the sexually immoral, it will not be the state, or the communists. If Christ removes lampstands from churches it is because the church has practiced that which is abominable and detestable in God's eyes.

Any external force that arises against these churches to make them desolate, happens because of unfaithfulness within those churches first. If the church is a mess, it is not the worlds fault. We must repent.

So let us understand the history of God's providence and covenantal dealings with his people, and let us examine our own times and understand where we are at, what our condition is, and let us be on our guard so that we do not commit those abominations which would leave us desolate as well.