

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 31 August 2025. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Abomination of Desolation

Matthew 24:15-27

On **10 June**, in **323 B.C.**, a history-changing event took place: a 32-year old Macedonian man named **Alexander** died in the city of Babylon, after a brief battle with typhoid fever. For ten years prior to his death, Alexander and his Greek armies had, with lightning speed, toppled the Persian Empire, and taken control of all the lands from Greece to India; but now that Alexander was dead, his newly-won empire was thrown into turmoil. Alexander's four generals began to fight with each other, to try to gain control of the empire; but eventually, the Greek Empire was broken into four pieces. **Cassander** took control of Macedonia and Greece; **Ptolemy** took control of Egypt; **Lysimachus** took Thrace and Asia Minor; and **Seleucus** took control of Syria, and most of the Middle East.

Now, how did the Jewish people fare during this tumultuous time? Israel now fell under the control of the **Seleucid kingdom**; and for a century or so, the Seleucid kings were relatively tolerant toward the Jews. They allowed them to worship Jehovah, and to practice the Law of Moses, without interference. But then, in **175 B.C.**, things began to change. A proud Seleucid king named **Antiochus IV** arose to the throne; and in **169 B.C.**, Antiochus made war against the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt, and succeeded in taking control of most of the country. However, the Ptolemies appealed to Rome for help against Antiochus; and in 168 B.C., the Romans forced Antiochus to withdraw his troops from Egypt.

Now, Antiochus had two overwhelming traits. First, he was a very sore loser; and secondly, he had an enormous ego. After his defeat in Egypt, he was angry and humiliated; and he was looking for some poor soul on which to vent his wrath. Well, guess who ended up being his victim? **The Jewish people**. In **December of 167 B.C.**, on the 25th of the month *Chislev*, Antiochus erected a statue of Zeus in the Temple, and offered a swine on the altar, and desecrated it. He then decreed that circumcision be banned; that ownership of Scripture be banned; and that sacrifices to Jehovah be banned. Jews were not even permitted to *call* themselves "Jews"; and those who defied his decree were tortured and killed. However, Antiochus didn't stop there. He also demanded that the Jewish people *worship him*; and to show that he was a "god," he gave himself the surname "**Epiphanes**" (which essentially means "god manifest"). From this point onward, he launched a brutal genocide on the Jews (at least, on all the Jews who refused to worship him, and the Greek gods). It was a very dark time; and it seemed that Israel's very existence was about to be obliterated. But then, a man named **Mattathias Maccabees**, and his sons **Judas, Jonathan, and Simon**, raised up an army to fight against Antiochus. These Jews were poorly trained, outgunned, and outnumbered; yet,

God enabled them to **“be strong, and do exploits.”** The Jews took back control of Jerusalem; and on **14 December**, in **164 B.C.**, the Temple was rededicated to Jehovah.

Now, perhaps you’re wondering why I’ve given you this big history lesson. Is this story really so important? Yes, it is! You see, the atrocity that Antiochus committed against the Jews is a foreshadowing of *another* atrocity that *another* tyrant will commit in the future. In Scripture, this man is called **“the Antichrist”**; and the crime that he will commit against Israel is called **“the Abomination of Desolation.”** This morning, we will see what *Jesus* said about this terrible future event. We will see what this event will mean for believers who will be living during the future **Tribulation** period; and we will also see how we can apply these things to *our* lives. The title of this message is ***The Abomination of Desolation.***

Read Matthew 24:15-27.

I. The despicable deity in the Temple (v. 15)

In the past few weeks, we’ve been studying **Matthew 24**. In this passage, Jesus revealed to His disciples that the day was coming when the Temple would be completely destroyed, with not one stone left upon another. Of course, the disciples were shocked to hear this; and they asked Jesus *when* this terrible event would happen. Also, they wanted to know what would be the **“sign”** of His coming, and of the **“end of the world.”** Now, Jesus didn’t reveal *when* the Temple would be destroyed (although He gave them some more details about it); but He did list some **“signs”** for believers to look for, to let them know when His return is drawing near.

Now, thus far, we’ve examined the first 14 verses of this chapter; and in these verses, Jesus revealed some of the things that will unfold in the early days of the Tribulation period. Devastating world wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes will be just a few of the “warmer-uppers” of God’s judgment during this time. (According to **Revelation 6:8**, the *pestilences alone* will result in the death of ¼ of the world’s population!) There will also be an intense, worldwide hatred, betrayal, and murder of Christians during the Tribulation, such as has never been seen before. Jesus also said that there will be unparalleled spiritual deception. Many false christs and false prophets will arise, and will deceive many. However, Jesus also said that there will be a worldwide revival during this intensely dark time. In **Revelation 7 and 14**, we are told that 144,000 Jewish men will preach the Gospel throughout the world; and multitudes of people will be saved through the witness of these men.

Now, as we saw in **1 Thessalonians 4**, the prophetic event that will happen immediately before the Tribulation will be the Rapture—the “catching up” of all

believers of this church age, to meet the Lord in the air. In the twinkling of an eye, God will resurrect all believers of this church age (both those who have died, and those who are still living), and will snatch them up to Heaven, just before the Tribulation begins. However, the Rapture is not the actual event that will mark the beginning of the Tribulation. The thing that will mark the beginning of the Tribulation period will be the signing of a **“covenant.”** This seven-year deal will be brokered by the Antichrist; and he will mediate this seven-year treaty between Israel and many other nations. Undoubtedly, this will be the “peace treaty” that so many world leaders have been trying to broker for decades. It will probably involve the surrender of a large portion of Israel’s land to the Palestinians (or to the U.N.) in exchange for peace—and in exchange for the right to rebuild the Temple on the Temple Mount. We know that there will be a deal such as this, because the Scriptures make it clear that there *will* be a Temple during the Tribulation period, on the Temple Mount. Many Jews will believe that the Antichrist is their Messiah, because he managed to do what had seemed utterly impossible.

However, the Jews will be horribly deceived in this wicked man. At the midpoint of the Tribulation (at the 1,260-day mark, to be exact), he will betray the nation of Israel. How will he betray them? First, he will **order the sacrifices in the Temple to cease**. Secondly, he will **set up an image** of himself in the Temple, and demand that everyone on earth worship it. Thirdly, **he himself will sit down** in the Temple, and will demand that everyone worship him as God. Fourthly, He will command that **every soul on earth take his mark** of 666 in his right hand or in his forehead. **Revelation 13:16-17** says, ***“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”*** This vile blasphemy is what Jesus called **“the abomination of desolation”**; and it will mark the beginning of the *second half* of the Tribulation. Everything we’ve just read in **verses 15-26** is a description of those last 3 ½ years of judgment.

Read Daniel 9:25-27.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4.

In this **Thessalonians** passage, Paul makes it clear that there *will* be a Temple during the Tribulation, and that the **“man of sin”** will sit down in that Temple, and declare himself God. Though this Temple will be built by the vilest man who ever lived, it will still be the place where the Jewish people will profess to worship Jehovah: and thus, Paul calls it “the Temple of God.” With this in mind, I’d like to point out something

about this Tribulation **“temple.”** The word for **“temple”** that Paul uses here is the word *naos*; and this word refers not to the entire temple complex, but specifically to the *Holy of Holies*. In Old Testament times, the Holy of Holies was a symbol of the throne room of God; and the Ark of the Covenant, which rested in the Holy of Holies, was the symbol of God’s throne. So, by sitting down in the Holy of Holies (perhaps even on a reconstructed Ark), the Antichrist will be claiming to be God! He will demand that everyone take his mark “666” in his right hand or forehead in order to buy or sell; and by taking that mark, people will be acknowledging the Antichrist as “God,” and will be casting their lot with him, *forever*! The Antichrist will also erect an **“image”** of himself in the Holy of Holies, which will be empowered to have **“life,”** and to **“speak”**; and he will command that everyone worship this image. Perhaps this **“image”** will be an extremely realistic AI robot; but whatever it is, it will deceive most of the world.

Folks, do you see how Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the Antichrist? The Antichrist will do almost exactly what Antiochus Epiphanes did—except with much more sophisticated technology. He will claim to be “God manifest,” and will hunt down and kill all Jews (and *Gentiles*) who believe on Jesus of Nazareth. Let’s go back to the book of **Daniel**, and see what Daniel prophesied about this man; and as we do so, we will see how Antiochus Epiphanes was a type, or foreshadowing, of the Antichrist.

Read Daniel 8:3-12 / 11:21 – 12:1.

The Antichrist will be the most wicked man who has ever lived. He will be the “seed of the serpent,” whom God warned us about all the way back in the Garden of Eden. Yet, in a way, the Antichrist will be the very epitome of rebellious mankind. You see, what the Antichrist will *literally* do is what we *all* have done—in our *hearts*. We are all sinners and rebels; and we have *all* sat smugly down on the throne of our own hearts, and have, in practice, denied God, and declared *ourselves* “God.” Some people *literally* believe that they are “gods,” because they have bought into the pantheistic lie that everything and everyone is “God.” Others wouldn’t *verbally* declare themselves to be “God”; yet, they *practically* live their lives as though they were “God,” because they do whatever pleases *me*, instead of what pleases God. However, when a sinner comes to *Christ* in faith and repentance, and yields the throne of his life to Him, everything changes. When you believe on Jesus, He comes into your heart, and takes His place as Lord and Master; and *He* is now your sinless Representative before God the Father. And the best part is that one day, all who believe on Jesus will be brought into His very presence in Heaven, to abide with Him forever. Have *you* received Christ as your Saviour? If not, *why* not? Don’t end up in the fiery prison with the Antichrist for the rest of eternity: repent and believe on Christ, and receive eternal life!

II. The dire days of the Tribulation (vv. 15-22)

(Read Matthew 24:15-22 again.) Three times in the book of **Daniel**, God foretold of the blasphemous act that will be committed by the Antichrist at the midpoint of the Tribulation. In **Daniel 9**, it is called “*the overspreading of abominations*”; in **Daniel 11** and **12**, it is called “*the abomination that maketh desolate*”; and here in **Matthew 24** (as well as in **Mark 13**), Jesus called it “*the abomination of desolation.*” Folks, if God mentioned this event three times in **Daniel**, and twice in the Gospels, then He obviously considers it very important for us to know! First, God is warning those of us who are living right now, in this age of grace, to repent and believe on Christ now, so that we *won’t* be left here on earth during the Tribulation period, and so that *won’t* experience the wrath of the Antichrist, after he commits this abomination. Secondly, He is warning those who *will* miss the Rapture, and who *will* find themselves going through the Tribulation period (especially the Jews who will be living in the land of Israel), to be ready to flee from the wrath of the Antichrist as soon as this event takes place. From this point until the end of the Tribulation, God will allow Satan to pour out his wrath on the Jewish people—and especially on Jewish believers—as never before. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes outlawed the worship of Jehovah, and ordered the Jews to worship pagan gods (and *himself*, in particular), so the Antichrist will outlaw the worship of the true God, and will order the whole world to worship *him*, on pain of death.

Now, this raises some questions. First, *how many* Jewish believers will there be by the midpoint of the Tribulation? And secondly, how will the believing Jews living in Israel even *survive* during the first half of the Tribulation? We are told, in **Revelation 6**, that multitudes of believers will be beheaded for their faith in Christ, from the earliest days of the Tribulation. How, then, will Jews living in Israel (right at “ground zero” of Antichrist’s global kingdom), *not* lose their lives long before the midpoint of the Tribulation?

The answer is simple: God will *supernaturally protect* the Jewish believers—and especially those Jews living in Israel. In **Revelation 11**, we are told that the two witnesses in Jerusalem will literally breathe fire from their mouths, and slay their enemies, whenever anyone tries to hurt or kill them! The Bible also tells us that the 144,000 witnesses will have the seal of God in their foreheads, and will have divine protection. I’m sure the Antichrist would *love* to murder the two witnesses, and the 144,000, and all their converts, long before the midpoint of the Tribulation; but God won’t let him. There will be a massive revival of Jewish people throughout the first 1,260 days of the Tribulation, right there in Jerusalem. In fact, in **Zechariah 13:9**, we are told that a whopping 1/3 of the Jewish people will be brought through the fires of the Tribulation, and will repent, and call on the name of the LORD. There will be *loads* of Jewish people being saved and turning to Jesus, right under the Antichrist’s nose!

Yet, the time of revival in Jerusalem will suddenly end. Satan will be kicked out of the heavenlies for the last time, right before the midpoint of the Tribulation; and he will then pour out his wrath on the Jewish believers, by inciting the Antichrist to commit the Abomination of Desolation. Let's look at **Revelation 12**, and see how this will play out.

Read Revelation 12:6-17.

Folks, there is no doubt about it: the “woman” here in **Revelation 12** is *believing Israel*. How do we know this? Well, let's review what we've learned in the last few weeks. First, we know that the “70th week of Daniel” will be a *literal seven-year* period, because the *first* 69 weeks of years were literal seven-year periods. We know, therefore, that the second half of the Tribulation—which both Daniel and the Lord Jesus said will begin with the Abomination of Desolation—will be a literal 3 ½ years (1,260 days). We know then, by comparing **Matthew 24** to **Revelation 12**, that this “woman” who will have to flee into the wilderness for 1,260 days *is* believing Israel. This woman is not “the church” (as most of professing Christendom falsely claims): it is *Israel*. (You'll notice that Jesus urged His followers to pray that their flight be not on the “sabbath day”—something that would be meaningful only to Jews living in *Israel*, where sabbath laws are in place.) Where, then, will these believing Jews flee? What will their hiding place be? All we know is that it will be somewhere outside the land of Israel—most likely in the wilderness of modern-day Jordan. As we saw in **Daniel**, the Antichrist will *not* be able to take control of the countries of Edom, Moab, and Ammon; and these ancient countries comprised what is, today, the country of Jordan! Now, think about that! How would a man who is able to take control of the *entire world* not be able to conquer a tiny country right next-door to Israel? *Because God will be protecting the believing remnant of Israel, who will be hiding there!* The Antichrist's armies will come after them like a flood; but God will literally open up the ground, and swallow them up alive!

Folks, I believe we can find some application in this. Jesus said that the Tribulation will be so dire, that unless those days were shortened, *no one* would be left alive. Yet, in the midst of all this carnage, God will preserve a remnant of His people. If God will be able to protect the Jewish remnant during the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, right there in Jerusalem, and then protect them for the *last* 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, somewhere in the wilderness of Jordan, then can He not protect you and me? The safest place to be is in the very centre of God's will! The Scripture says, **“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”** In **1 Peter 3**, Peter says, **“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the**

Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” Now, this certainly does not mean that God’s people will not *suffer*. We know this to be so, because in the very next verse Peter says, ***“But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.”*** In other words, God will not allow us to suffer any more than *He allows*; and whatever suffering He *does* allow is for our good. So don’t be afraid of man! Should God call you to serve Him in a dangerous place, trust Him, and obey Him!

Throughout this church age, God’s people have suffered for His name. For example, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, people were required to call Domitian “*Dominus et Deus*”—“Lord and God”; and they had to show their devotion by burning incense to him. Those who refused were put to death. Some Christians at the time (apparently forgetting that the Rapture will happen *before* the Tribulation starts, and that the Antichrist will reign in *Jerusalem*) even thought that Domitian might be the Antichrist! Yet, through it all, God protected His people. In every age, God’s people are *always* small in number, and weak in power; but the Lord enables us to ***“do exploits”*** (seemingly impossible tasks), *if* we trust Him! Isaiah wrote, ***“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”***

Christian, you may feel ill-equipped to take the Gospel to a hostile world; but in Christ, you have all power you need. Rest in Him, and let Him ***“do exploits”*** through you—just as He will do through the believers during the Tribulation! If we really believe that Jesus is the only way to Heaven, then we *must* obey the Great Commission, no matter the cost. An atheist named **Penn Jillette** once put it this way. He said, “If you believe that there’s a Heaven and Hell, and [that] people could be going to Hell... and you think that, *Well, it’s not really worth telling them this, because it would make it socially awkward...* How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible, and *not* tell them that? I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you...there is a certain point where I tackle you—and this [snatching people from hell] is more important than that.”¹ Brethren, he’s right! We have a job to do; and we need to get serious about it. We should be assembling together every time these doors are open, and praying corporately for the lost. We must work, and watch, and pray, and sacrifice, and do all that we can to tell others about Christ, before our time in this world is up, and the day of God’s wrath falls on this world!

III. The dangerous deceivers of the Tribulation (vv. 23-26)

(Read Matthew 24:23-27.) Earlier in this discourse, Jesus said that there will be *many* false prophets during the Tribulation; and now, He is saying it yet again. During the Tribulation, there will be a revival of idolatry and witchcraft, and an outpouring of demonic activity, such as the world has never seen. Though the Antichrist will destroy the ecumenical, one-world religion at the mid-point of the Tribulation, and will replace it with the worship of himself (and of Satan), the priests and shamans of the old pagan religions will find easy employment in the new Antichrist religion! The same old arts of divination and witchcraft will be used. The only difference is that the idols will now portray just one man—the Antichrist!

By the way, in **Zechariah 13**, the Bible says that when the Messiah descends to earth, and the nations stand before Him to be judged, there will be believing parents who will testify against their own children, who had practiced divination during the Tribulation. They will point to their own sons and say, ***“Thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD”***; and the parents themselves will carry out their children’s execution, in the sight of all the people. It will be a different day, folks! The tables will be turned. God will allow Satan’s servants to slaughter His people during the seven long years of the Tribulation; but when Christ returns, all who rejected Him (and who are still alive) will be slain. Let’s see what Zechariah said about this.

Read Zechariah 12:9-10 / 13:1-5.

Folks, that phrase ***“in the name of the LORD”*** is significant! Apparently, even during the Tribulation period, when Satan worship is being practiced everywhere, there will still be false prophecy that is done in *the Lord’s name*. This shouldn’t be surprising, since even today, in many occultic societies, idol worship is mixed with an acknowledgment of Jehovah’s name. For example, when a Freemason attains to the Royal Arch degree of the York Rite, he is told that the real name for God is “Jabulon.” This name is a mixture of the name “Jehovah,” “Baal,” and “On” (another name for Osiris, the ancient Egyptian mystery god).² Satan delights in perverting the things of God; and he will continue to do so during the Tribulation.

Now, please look closely at what Jesus is saying in these verses. Christ is strongly emphasising the fact that during the Tribulation, there will be deceivers who will come along and say, ***“Lo, here is Christ, or there.”*** Apparently, there will be false diviners who will claim that Christ has *already* arrived on earth, and that He is in some secret place: and even the elect will nearly believe them. (This means that there will be false prophets even among believers!) That is why Jesus *heavily* emphasised that anyone who says such a thing is lying! When Christ returns at the Battle of Armageddon, it will not be a hidden thing. His appearing will be like lightning flashing across the sky. In other words, *no one* will miss it. *Every eye* will see Him! **Revelation 1:7** says, ***“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye***

shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”

Folks, there is only one way to discern truth from error: and that is through the Word of God, and the Spirit of God. Even now, the spirit of Antichrist is in the world; and there are many “antichrists” all around us. That is why we must continually immerse ourselves in the Word of God, and let the Spirit of God be our Teacher. In closing, let’s take a look at what the Apostle John said to the church of Ephesus, in regard to the “antichrists” who had been among them.

Read 1 John 2:18-21, 27.

What is this “**unction**,” or “**anointing**,” that John keeps talking about in this passage? This “**anointing**” is not literal oil, which is poured on the body; it’s an *internal, spiritual* anointing. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit of God. Every believer is anointed *internally* by the Holy Spirit, who lives within us; and as priests before God, we are able to “**know all things**.” This doesn’t mean that we are omniscient: it simply means that anything that God has revealed in His Word, we have the ability to understand, through the Holy Spirit.

The members of the church of Ephesus needed to know the difference between the truth of Christ, and the lies of the antichrists, who had crept into their assembly; and the only way they could have this discernment was through continual immersion in the Word of God. The same is true for us today. No Christian has been saved so long, that he no longer needs to keep reading the Scriptures daily, or attending God’s House faithfully. Christian, ground yourself in *this Book*, and let the Spirit of God lead you into all truth, so that you will not fall into deception and spiritual ruin in your life!

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask: “Are you saved? Have you been born again?” The time is short; and Christ will one day appear in the clouds, to take the believers out of this world, to be with Him in Heaven. If you are not sure that you will be among those who will be caught up to be with Christ, now is the time to get it settled! Christ died on the cross to pay the debt of your sin, and rose again from the dead, so that you, too, might receive a resurrected, glorified body, fit to dwell in Heaven. Don’t put off this matter of salvation! Christ wants to forgive your sin, and come into your heart. Please repent in your sin, and ask Jesus to be your Saviour today! And if you are saved already, don’t be half-hearted and lukewarm in your service to Christ. Be strong in the Lord, and let Him do “**exploits**” through your life!

¹ Charles Darwin (Special Introduction by Ray Comfort, *The Origin of Species: 150th Anniversary Edition* (Alachua, FL: Bridge Logos Foundation, 2009, p. 41.

² Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Masons* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2001), p. 108.