



THE LAST DAYS

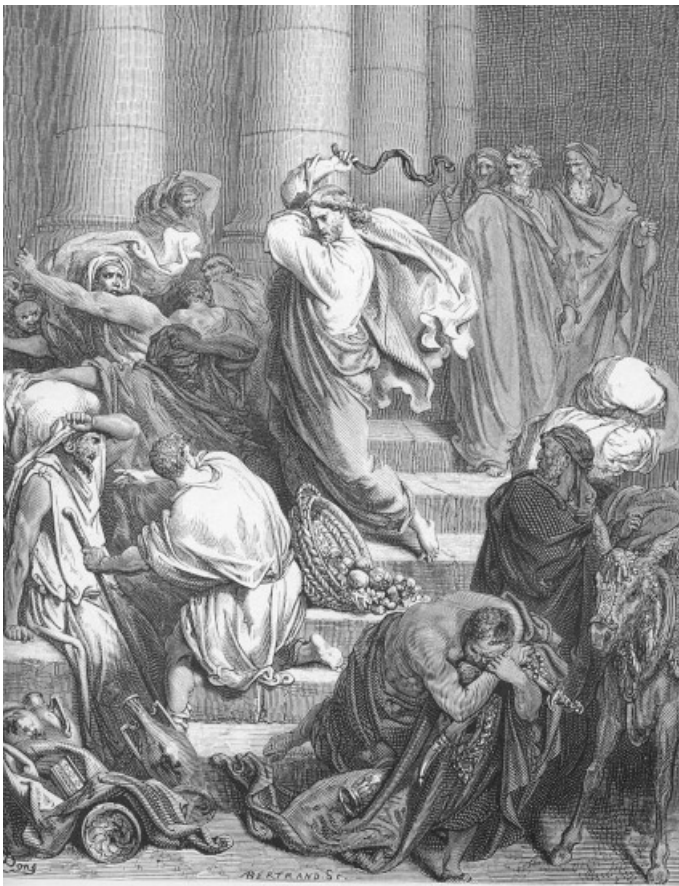
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RETHINKING BIBLE PROPHECY IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY

‘Eschatology’ is the study of last things. Christians should never fear having their eschatological ‘system’ scrutinised by the plain teaching of the Bible. If you subscribe to the currently popular “Left Behind” system of eschatology, prepare to be challenged by Scripture and history. Moreover, prepare to gain a greater respect for the integrity of the Bible.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

PART ONE BY JAMES B. JORDAN



THE BUYERS AND SELLERS DRIVEN OUT OF THE TEMPLE
My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. ... (Luke 19: 46)

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law (Heb. 7:12). For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (Heb. 7:18). For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second (Heb. 8:7). In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4). For even that which was made glorious had not glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excellet. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious (2 Cor. 3:10-11).

Here begins a series of studies in the Abomination of Desolation, or Desolating Sacrilege. As a result of my studies in Leviticus, I have come to the conclusion that the abomination of desolation spoken of in Daniel 9 and Matthew 24 is none other than apostate Judaism, and that the Man of Sin spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2 is the apostate High Priest of Israel. In this essay I wish simply to set out the gist of my interpretation.

I am taking for granted the fundamental preterist position as set forth by Jay Adams in *The Time Is at Hand* and by David Chilton in *Paradise Restored* and *Days of Vengeance*. With this in mind, let us turn to Daniel 9:26-27.

26. Then after the 62 weeks, the Messiah [Jesus] will be cut off [excommunicated by the religious rulers of Israel] and have nothing [the cross, Phil. 2:7]; and the people of the Prince [the enthroned Christ] Who is to come will destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [Temple]. And its end will come with a flood [like

Jeremiah 7:1-11 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house and proclaim there this word and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD!' "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. "Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. "Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—that you may do **all these abominations?** "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD.

Noah, like the threats of Deut. 28; like the locust flood of Joel]; even to the end there will be war [the Jewish War of 66-70 AD]; desolations are determined.

27a. And He [Messiah the Prince] will confirm a covenant [by fulfilling the Old Covenant as the New Covenant] with the many [the Church] during one week [the 70th week]. But in the middle of the week He will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering [by dying on the cross, and thereby ending the sacrificial system].

Now we come to the statement that “on the wing of detestable things, or abominations, comes one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” (v. 27b). In the past, I have taken the wing as a reference to the eagle, and thus jointly to Edom and Rome, both of whom are symbolized by the eagle in the Old Testament. The Romans and Idumeans together managed to destroy the Temple. The Idumeans (Edomites) invaded the Temple and filled it with human blood. The Romans sacked it. I understood the last phrases of the verse to be saying that in time the Romans would also be destroyed.

There is a problem with this view. Those who ignore the Idumean invasion of the Temple cannot deal with Jesus’ statement in Matthew 24 that the abomination of desolation stood in the holy place. Luke’s parallel statement that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies (actually a reference to the Idumean-Zealot conspiracy that let the Edomites into the Temple) is not equivalent: surrounding Jerusalem is not the same as standing in the Temple. Only the Idumeans stood in the Temple.

But is this enough? The other passages in Daniel to which Jesus alludes indicate that counterfeit worship was set up in the Temple, and that this was the abomination of desolation. Prophesying of Antiochus Epiphanes, Gabriel (?) tells Daniel that “forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice, and they will set up the abomination of desolation” (Dan. 9:31; 1 Maccabees 1:41-61). At the end of Daniel, the preincarnate Christ (?) tells him that “from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days.” In my opinion this has to do with the same event, the 1290 days being thrice 430, but days instead of years (Ex. 12:40), while the 1335 days of the next verse go back to

the 45 years between the Exodus and the Conquest of the land (Dt. 2:14; Josh. 14:6-10). The oppression of Antiochus will be worse than that of Egypt, but much shorter. Blessed is he who endures to the end and sees the land reconquered. All this is a type of the New Covenant, of course.

With this in mind, though, it certainly seems that the mere presence of wicked Edomites and Zealots in the Temple is not enough. We need to have a cessation of true sacrifices and an implementation of counterfeit ones. And of course, that is exactly what happened in the New Covenant. With the death of Christ, the sacrificial system came to an end. Any blood sacrifices offered after the cross were potential abominations.

Returning to the time of the Maccabees and Daniel 11, we need to ask who were the “forces from him” that desecrated the sanctuary and set up the desolating sacrilege? They were the reigning High Priests Jason and Menelaus, who apostatized to Greek religion, and who invited Antiochus to help them take over Jerusalem for their own purposes (Josephus, Antiquities 12:5:1). In the same way, the apostate High Priests between A.D. 30 and 70 cooperated with the Romans in order to suppress the Christian faith and in order to maintain their own Sadducean combination of Greek philosophy and apostate Judaism. The whole of Old Testament theology points us to this. The “wing of abominations” goes back to Numbers 15:37-41, where every Israelite was commanded to wear a blue tassel, called a wing, on his garments. (“Corner” is literally “wing.”) This was the “wing of holiness,” to remind Israel to obey the law (v. 40). Every Israelite was a member of a heavenly people, and “flew” about the throne of God on these blue (heavenly) “wings.” Naturally, an apostate Israelite would no longer have “wings of holiness” but “wings of abominations.” Their leader, the High Priest, would be the preeminent example of this.

(A full study of the “wing” motif would be a large undertaking. Let me call your attention, however, to the wings of the cherubim, on which God sat enthroned. The wings on the garments of the Israelites meant that they, too, were cherubim, and were to guard God’s holiness. The High Priest, described in Ezekiel 28:11-19 as the true spiritual King of Tyre, is called a cherub. Counterfeit cherubic wings carrying a

counterfeit Ark to a counterfeit Temple are pictured in Zechariah 5:5-11, and this is relevant background to the destruction of Jerusalem, because these also are wings of abomination. Notice also that apostate Jerusalem in Revelation 18:2 is said to be a “dwelling place of demons and a haunt of every unclean spirit, and a haunt of every unclean and detestable bird.”)

The idea of abomination is thoroughly Levitical. Unclean food was called abominable, or literally detestable, because you were to spit it out. If they ate detestable food, they would become detestable, and God would spit them out. This is clearly set out in Leviticus 11:43, 18:28, and 20:23, and see also Revelation 3:16. This was all symbolic of sin, of course. It meant that God would spit out the people if they corrupted themselves with idolatry, since the unclean animals were associated with idols and with the idolatrous nations. (Compare Paul’s “table of demons.”)

False worship is idolatrous worship. When the Jews rejected Jesus and kept offering sacrifices, they were engaged in idolatry. This was the “wing of abominations” that took place in the Temple. It is why the Temple was ultimately destroyed. The particular desecration that took place was the massacre of converted Jews that took place just before A.D. 70, as prophesied in the book of Revelation. It was the blood of those saints (Rev. 14) that Jerusalem was made to drink (Rev. 17) to her own destruction.

A full picture of this is provided in Ezekiel 8-11. I shall not expound the passage at this point, but simply direct you to it. There you will see that when the apostate Jews of Ezekiel’s day performed the sacrifices, God viewed them as an abomination. He called the holy shrine an “idol of jealousy, that provokes to jealousy” (8:3). The Jews had treated the Temple and the Ark as idols, and so God would destroy them, as He had the golden calf. Ezekiel sees God pack up and move out of the Temple, leaving it empty or “desolate.” The abominations have caused the Temple to become desolate. Once God had left, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar swept in and destroyed the empty Temple. (When we remember that Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied at the time, the correlation becomes even more credible.)

This is what happened in Matthew 24. Jesus had twice inspected the Temple

for signs of leprosy (Lev. 14:33-47; the two so-called cleansings of the Temple in John 2 and Matthew 21). Jesus had found that the Temple was indeed leprous, and as the True Priest He condemned it to be torn down, in accordance with the Levitical law. "And Jesus came out from the Temple [leaving it desolate; God departing] and was going away [compare Ezekiel], when His disciples came up to point out the Temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another which will not be torn down'" (Matt. 24:1-2).

(Note that the counterfeit Ark is removed from Israel right after a description of house-leprosy in Zechariah 5:4. The message in Zechariah was that when God's Temple was rebuilt, wickedness would be removed. This is a type of the New Covenant: When the Church was established, God sent leprosy into the Temple, and it became a seat of wickedness.)

With this background we can interpret Daniel 9:27b much more clearly:

And on the wing of abominations [apostate Jewish clothing of the High Priest] will come one who makes desolate [the apostate High Priest], even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate [at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70].

Thus, verse 27 is simply an expansion of verse 26. Verse 26 says that the Messiah will be sacrificed; verse 27 explains that this ends the sacrificial system. Verse 26 says that the invasions will desolate the Temple and that it is determined. Verse 27 says that wrath will be poured out on the apostate Jews and their High Priest, whose actions desolated the Temple, and that this is decreed. This correlates magnificently with 2 Thessalonians 2, as we shall see in the next section.

Now, just because these events were fulfilled in A.D. 70 does not mean that they are irrelevant to us. Churches can also apostatize, and Christ warned the Seven Churches that they too could be destroyed if Christ departed from them. They would be "desolate" and their worship would be "abominable" (Rev. 2-3). The destruction of the Temple and of its Jerusalem-culture, as portrayed in the remainder of Revelation, was thus a warning to the Seven Churches: If you do the same thing, God will do this to you. Thus, the principles are still in

force, and serve to warn us today: If our churches depart from Christ, He will destroy both them and our society, which grew up around them.

The Man of Sin

We have surveyed what is meant by the abomination of desolation. We suggested that it refers to sacrilegious acts performed by the religious leaders of Israel, captained by their High Priest, right in front of God's face in the Temple. Later studies in this series will provide evidence for this interpretation, and will survey the numerous times the abomination of desolation occurred in the Old Testament, before returning to a detailed study of the events prophesied in the New Testament. This time we complete our introduction by surveying 2 Thessalonians 2. We shall see that the Man of Sin in that passage is most likely the High Priest of Israel.

2:1. Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him.

This could refer to the final coming of Jesus at the end of the world, or to His soon coming to render judgment on Jerusalem. There was a "gathering" that took place right after the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:29-31), and so this verse could be referring to that event. In that case, the verses that follow predict something that will happen right before this gathering. On the other hand, this verse may refer to the Last Advent, as the preceding context in chapter 1 seems to indicate. Whichever is the case, the verses that follow deal with something that is in the near future in Paul's day, something that must take place before the AD 70 advent, and thus also before the Final Advent.

2. That you may not be quickly shaken from your mind or be disturbed either by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is upon us.

Every Lord's Day is a day of the Lord, but that clearly is not what Paul has in mind. In the Old Testament, God's times of national judgment were called days of the Lord, and so the A.D. 70 Advent was a day of the Lord. Of course, the Final Advent is also a day of the Lord, the climactic one. The Thessalonians were looking for a near day of the Lord, an idea they must have gotten from Paul's teaching. Accordingly, this verse almost certainly is referring to the A.D. 70 Advent, which Paul tells them is near but not as near as certain false teachers

have led them to believe. In my opinion, this understanding of verse 2 settles which Advent verse 1 is referring to.

3. Let no man in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy [of many believers, Matt. 24:10] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.

The next verse makes it clear that this is the apostate High Priest, prince of the Temple, no longer a man of God's law but a man of lawlessness, no longer a son of Abraham but a son of destruction.

4. Who opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God and every object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the Temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

The High Priest had opposed Christ and God, and thus had opposed the true meaning of all the worship objects in the Temple. "The scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses," Matthew 23:2. Those who reject God make themselves God, Genesis 3.

6. And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.

The Church and her evangelism in Palestine created fence-sitters who were restraining apostate Judaism. An example is Gamaliel, Acts 5:33-42. Perhaps the falling away of so many early Christians into the Judaizing heresy would release the Man of Sin.

My own best guess is that the restrainer is the presence of believers in Jerusalem, whose presence kept Sodom from being destroyed. Their captain was James.

7. For the mystery of lawlessness [the apostate Judaizing counterfeit of the Pauline Gospel Mystery] is already at work; only he who restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

The Church would be removed from Jerusalem before her destruction; also possibly this means that the fence-sitters like Gamaliel would either be converted to Christianity or would be "converted" to a whole-hearted adoption of apostate Judaism, and in either event would stop restraining. Josephus records that the Zealots and Edomites slew one such restrainer, Zechariah the son of Berechiah or Baruch, in fulfillment perhaps of Matthew 23:35. After the removal of this restrainer, all hell broke loose. See Josephus, Jewish War 4:5:4. Since Jesus had mentioned this man by name, possibly it is he who is particularly referred to here, as one they "know."

My own best guess, however, is that it is James who is referred to. James was

martyred in A.D. 62 by a particularly wicked High Priest, Ananus, who was immediately deposed. He was succeeded by Jesus the son of Damneus, who was succeeded by Jesus the son of Gamaliel. Presiding over all these acting high priests, however, was the retired but still active Ananias, the same Ananias whom Paul rebuked in Acts 23:3. This corrupt man presided over everything in the Temple like a spider. Shortly after James's murder the Temple of Herod was finally completed. If there is anyone who is a likely candidate for Man of Sin, or at least the first person to occupy that position, it is Ananias. You can read about him briefly in Josephus's *Antiquities* 20:9, where the martyrdom of James is also recounted. (I might add that according to Luenemann's commentary on Thessalonians, which is part of Meyer's *Commentary on the New Testament*, an expositor named Harduin suggested that Ananias was the Man of Sin; Meyer's Commentary, vol. 7, p. 614.)

8. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and nullify by the appearance of His coming.

The "breath of His mouth" might refer to Gospel preaching, which slew apostate Israel, as Chilton points out in his liturgical remarks throughout *Days of Vengeance*. But the Greek verb translated "consume" is used for Divine destructive fire in Luke 9:54 and in the Greek Old Testament. My believe is that this verse pictures Jesus as the True Dragon, of whom Satan is the counterfeit (compare Job 41). We can correlate this with the outpouring of fire on Jerusalem in the book of Revelation.

The "appearance of His coming" refers to Daniel 7:13 and to Jesus' prophecies in Matthew 26:64, that the High Priest would "see" (discern) the Son of Man "come" to the Father to receive His Kingdom. When the fact of that "coming" become apparent ("appears"), the Jews will be without excuse, and will be destroyed. Note: the "coming" is not the

Second Coming, nor is it a "coming in wrath upon Jerusalem," but is the event predicted in Daniel 7:13 and shown in Revelation 5. Christ came to the Father at the ascension, and this was "shown" to Israel for 40 years. When Israel rejected this "second chance," they were destroyed. Jesus' entrance into the heavenly Temple "nullified" the earthly high priesthood and the earthly Temple.

Ananias was slain by Zealots in A.D. 66. Those who followed him enthroned in the Temple were equally bad. The whole company of them was brought to an end in A.D. 70.

9. The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan [the High Priest as son of Satan, not of Abraham; "You are of your father, the Devil," John 8:44], with all power and signs and false wonders [see Chilton and Josephus on the situation in Jerusalem just before the end].

10. And with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. [This clearly describes the situation of apostate Judaism.]

11. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false. [Compare Romans 1:21-32 and 1 Kings 22:19-23.]

12. In order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness.

When the Veil of the Temple was rent, the mystery locked up in the Holy Places was revealed. Parallel to this, the mystery of evil, the counterfeit of the gospel mystery, was also released (Zechariah 5:8; Revelation 17). Initially, many Jews accepted the gospel, but then under the influence of the mystery of lawlessness, many apostatized into the Judaizing counterfeit. Between the years AD 30 and 70, the mystery of lawlessness gained momentum, until it drew forth an Antichrist, the Man of lawlessness, who "incarnated" the mystery of iniquity. Parallel to this social development of wickedness was the continuing building of the Temple in Jerusalem, which was

completed in A.D. 64. (Parallel to the development of wickedness and of the false Temple was the development of the true Church and Temple of God during this period.) The statement that this Man sat in the Temple, passing judgments on God Himself (on Christ and His followers), indicates that the focus and concentration-point of this phenomenon was in the High Priest, who was the head of Judaism and thus also of the Judaizers.

It was the preaching of the gospel and the presence of believers in Jerusalem that restrained the mystery of iniquity from reaching a climax (Gen. 18:22-33; Rom. 9:29; Rev. 11:8). I believe that the removal of that restraint happened initially with the martyrdom of James, and was worked out as the faithful Jewish Christians were massacred by the Jews and Judaizers during the next few years, immediately preceding the investiture of Jerusalem (see Revelation 7:3-8; 11:3-13; 14:1-4, 12-20; 15:2-4). Revelation 11:3-13 shows that the death of some Christian witnesses caused many Jews to convert, and I believe it is this event that Romans 11 prophesies. This multitude of new believers were massacred in Revelation 14, joining their Savior "outside the city." This massacre of Christians was the climactic abomination of desolation. At this time, when the Zealots were butchering people right and left, other Christians fled the city (Matt. 24:15-21). By driving the Christians from the city, the Jews and Judaizers drove the presence of God from their midst, leaving the city desolate. The blood of the martyrs of Revelation 14 was poured out on the city in Revelation 16 and was drunk by the Harlot in Revelation 17:3-6.

Thus, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that the world-shaking events they were expecting were not going to happen immediately, but over the next couple of decades they would watch them unfold.

Next: An Overview of the Pattern

"The only valid objection against this general interpretation is that the destruction of Jerusalem did not occur within the seventieth week—within the period of seven years. The seventy weeks extended to about 33 A.D. The destruction of Jerusalem, of course, came in 70 A.D. A close examination of the passage in Daniel does not disclose any definite statement that the people of the prince were to cause this destruction within the seven years. Within the seven years the destruction of the city *was determined* by its rejection of Christ and his apostles. Because of that rejection the people of the prince that shall come *shall destroy* the city and the sanctuary."

"If the seventieth week were postponed we would still be in our sins!"

—J. Marcellus Kik *An Eschatology of Victory*