

Sermon Title: The Abomination of Desolation
Scripture Text: Mark 13:14

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-13-19

There is a time of great trouble coming to this earth. You might be saying: "Uh, wake up—it's here!" Well, things aren't getting better, I grant you that. But there is this time coming called the Tribulation, or the "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14; NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted), or, for prophecy buffs, the 70th Week of Daniel—"week" being an anglicized translation of the Hebrew "seven"; Daniel was given 70 "sevens," or 70 seven-year periods (Dan. 9:24), a time to cover prophecy concerning the fulfillment of God's work with Israel.

The passage that we are going to study this morning, and the context where we are studying in the so-called "Olivet Discourse," presents details about this terrible time to come. Jesus said these things to His disciples during His final week before He went to the Cross, just a couple of *days* before He went to the Cross. And He was helping them to understand that the events that they understood to be of the end times were correct, but they didn't understand the timing yet (see Acts 1:6-7); they didn't understand that He was going to be going away after He died and rose again, and that He would return at a later date to bring the kingdom of God to Earth. Now, they had started to catch on, and they said: "Yeah, we get it. We're going to have to wait. It's already been three days, and You're talking like it might even be *all week!*" They had *no idea* of at least a 2,000-year span of time.

That period just before Jesus comes—that Tribulation time—will encompass the entire world (Rev. 3:10). But it's going to focus *in a special way* on the nation of Israel and the people of Israel. This is one reason why you'll continue to see the pronoun "you" here in the Olivet Discourse. It's like in our verse this morning, He says: "When *you* see the abomination of desolation..." Well, who did Jesus say that to? The disciples. *They* didn't see this come to pass; but He's saying that to them and, by extension, through the inscripturated words of the Bible, He's addressing the whole nation of Israel—and, for that matter, the rest of the world—about this time that will immediately precede His second coming (see Mk. 13:37).

There are a lot of examples of that in the Old Testament prophets, where you'll see "you"—it's like, "And *you* who are alive at that time" (cf. 1 Thess. 4:15); God said that through Isaiah, through Zechariah, even about things all the way into the Millennium—because the "you" has to do with "you," the nation of Israel. We just saw it in the Triumphal Entry, earlier in Mark: "you" will see the Savior coming and riding on a donkey. Well, He said that in Zechariah 9:9, and Zechariah never saw that.

But looking ahead to the time of the tribulation and the aftermath, there's a lot of prediction of this. Isaiah Chapter 10, Verse 20—Isaiah wrote this: "Now in that day the remnant of Israel"—that means "a little bit of Israel"—"the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped"—meaning, there's something that will have to be escaped—"will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel." So there's a prediction that, just before He comes to set up the kingdom, His people Israel—those who *remain* at that time—will turn to Him (Rom. 11:26-27). Isaiah's words match what we know from Daniel: a time is coming when *most* of the people of Israel will be massacred by an enemy that they think is their friend, and only a remnant will elude the slaughter (see Zech. 13:9; Rom. 9:27). That time will not come until, as we just saw, the remnant of Israel will turn to the Lord and trust in their Savior.

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Jeremiah echoed this. Jeremiah Chapter 30, Verses 5 through 9. And I'm going to give you a lot of things this morning that might have some words around the edges you don't quite understand, but I think you'll get to see the big picture as it comes together. Jeremiah 30, starting at Verse 5. He writes: "For thus says the Lord, 'I have heard a sound of terror, of dread, and there is no peace. Ask now, and see if a male can give birth"—that doesn't happen—"Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale?" He's saying this is something unprecedented, something you would think impossible. "Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress"—Jacob being the father of Israel—"but he will be saved from it. It shall come about on that day," declares the Lord of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.' " Still way off in the future, but He was predicting it. And we know Jesus came, just as predicted.

One of Daniel's references to this time: Daniel Chapter 12, Verse 1—"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise." That's a reference to "Michael the archangel" (Jude 9). "And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued." Do you see some recurring themes there? Unprecedented suffering and tribulation; much loss of life; spiritual purging; and those who are found standing in the grace of God, believing in the Savior—the King—will be the ones that enter the kingdom.

Now, as much as Israel has suffered, it's not over. God kept His promises to Israel. He promised to bless them if they were faithful (Deut. 28:1-14); He promised to bring curses upon them if they weren't (Deut. 28:15-68). They *weren't*. God kept His promises (see 2 Tim. 2:13). Starting in 722 B.C., Israel—the northern tribes—was taken off into captivity. By 586 B.C., the southern tribes had joined them. They were oppressed. And from that time on, even those who returned to the land were never free as a nation, from then on. Jerusalem, and the temple there, was finally destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Jews have been scattered throughout the nations of the world. They have continued to be outcasts wherever they go. In just the previous century, many millions were exterminated by Nazi Germany and by the Soviet Union.

And it continues today; there are people alive today who would like to kill all of the rest of the Jews. Israel, as a nation, is *surrounded* by neighbors that want them *not to exist*; and they don't mind killing, if that's the way. Israel's only friendly border is with the Mediterranean Sea; everybody else wants to do away with them. And there are people around the world, willing to give their lives in what they believe is a holy war to accomplish the end of exterminating the Jews.

But there is coming a time, in the end times, far worse; it will exceed all of those things. In the Olivet Discourse here—so titled because Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives and gave this discourse—Jesus spoke of that coming time of horror in the world, and especially focusing on Israel, spoken of by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and others.

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When we entered this chapter—which is Mark's record of it; Matthew 24 and 25 is a little more thorough—I told you that I refer to the Olivet discourse as the nexus of Bible prophecy, or the Grand Central Station of Bible prophecy. There's so much that the Bible says, but all the pieces connect, if you will, through the junction box of the Olivet Discourse. Within the Olivet Discourse, I would say that our verse for today is the anchor-point of the nexus of Bible prophecy. We just saw, in Verses 4 through 13, what Jesus described as "the beginning of birth pangs." Like the labor pains that begin just before the end of the pregnancy, just before the child is born, there will be these things that will happen—and like labor pains, in ever-increasing intensity and painfulness, leading up to the culmination.

The first *specific* sign—He said there'll be wars and rumors of wars and false prophets, a lot of general things that are going to happen; and they'll be getting worse and worse—but the first *specific* sign of the coming of Jesus Christ to set up His kingdom on Earth is: "the abomination of desolation" (Mk. 13:14). And today, we study that predicted event. Pretty easy to outline this, because it's only one verse. We'll look at: What Did Daniel Say About It?—that'll take us to Daniel Chapter 9, Verse 27. And then: What Did Jesus Say About It?—which is our text in Mark Chapter 13, Verse 14.

What Did Daniel Say About It? Key phrase: "abomination of desolation"—something abominable is going to happen, and it's going to bring desolation, in a specific place. That phrase, and variations of it, is used to describe the desecration of the temple in Jerusalem. It is applied to two events, both specifically prophesied in the Bible. One has happened in history; the other is future. And Jesus is referring to the one in the future.

I want to take you back to Daniel. I don't have anywhere near enough time to sweep through the whole context in Daniel, but I want to take you back to a text in Daniel Chapter 8. There, in the midst of visions that Daniel saw—and remember, he was a prophet during the Exile—Daniel saw some things that symbolically portrayed the sequence of world empires. Get yourself a good study bible and go read through Daniel and read the notes; you're going to know more than most people, if you actually will do that. And he is going to see, in this sequence of images, a "little horn" which is part of the image that he saw of a goat, that grew up from the goat, which represents the Empire of Greece, which grew out of the Medo-Persian Empire. Now, there hadn't *been* a Medo-Persian Empire by that time; there hadn't been a Greek Empire by that time—but God gave Daniel this prediction.

We'll pick it up when Daniel's prophecy predicts not only that series of empires, but splitting up the Empire of Greece into four parts, following the death of Alexander the Great. Daniel 8, starting at Verse 8 and going through Verse 14—"Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly." That's the sudden spread of the Greek Empire. "But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown

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down. And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, 'How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?' He said to me, 'For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.' "

Got it? Clear, right? Greece is going to become really big, and when it gets to its greatest, it's going to split into four parts; Alexander the Great makes it great, and then it's split up. And out of one of those quarters of the remaining empire of Alexander the Great comes this "little horn" (NKJV, ASV, ESV, HCSB, KJV et al), as he is usually referred to in Bible prophecy. That refers to a king named Antiochus Epiphanes; he rose from the third division of the empire of Alexander the Great to rule the Syrian division, and he ruled it from 175 to 164 B.C. Now, embedded in that text we read in Daniel 8 was the phrase: He "caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth," and he "trampled them down." That's terminology from Genesis, referring to Jacob's family as "stars" (Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; cf. 37:9). In other words: this guy is going to be *really awful* to Israel—that's what that text is saying. There is going to be some extreme persecution of the Jews; and he gets even more specific: it's going to have to do with the temple and the sanctuary and the sacrifices.

Daniel gives more details of that prophecy of the evil exploits of Antiochus Epiphanes—it's in Daniel 11:2-35. Daniel 11:31 describes the desecration of the temple done by Antiochus Epiphanes: "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." So there's that term. Daniel 9, here again in Daniel 11, and Jesus refers to it.

By the way, there's a historical record of this in the book of Maccabees, a non-inspired book with part of the history of the Jews, but that part of the history is helpful to us. And when you put this together, what you have here is an example of *remarkable precision* within God's Word. The predicted timespan that Antiochus would put the temple out of business is 2,300 days—or, six and a third years. Now, if you try to convert the dates to our calendar, you'll probably get a headache; but those who have endured the headache tell us: the end of the sacrifices came September 6, by what would be 171 B.C. on our calendar, and ended December 25 in 164—or, 2,300 days later. How do you predict that a guy nobody's ever heard of—who hasn't been born yet, and won't be born for centuries—would take over the rule of a king that nobody's heard of, in an empire that doesn't exist yet, and do exactly this in exactly that place for 2,300 days? Why, you would have to be *in charge of human history* to be able to know that! And God did it! (see Is. 46:9-10)

Now, after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jews celebrated a re-cleansing of their holy place; and they celebrated it with what they call: "The Feast of Lights"—*you* probably know it by the word "Hanukkah." That followed the restoration which was led by a priest named Judas Maccabaeus. That's why they call those books "Maccabees"—the days of the Maccabees; it's not honey-flavored Mac and Cheese, it's a person that they're talking about.

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Now, all the disciples, sitting there listening that night to Jesus—they knew that story; that was part of their history. "Hanukkah"—or, "The Feast of Lights"—is the well-known Jewish feast which is *not* prescribe anywhere in the Old Testament, because it was a celebration of something that happened *after* the last page of the Old Testament was written, before the Gospels, in that "Intertestamental Period" of the Old Testament Era. The celebration of the Feast of Lights was a *big deal* in Israel. It was at one of those Feasts of Lights in Jerusalem, where the whole Outer Court of the temple would be *filled* with candelabra—hundreds, maybe *thousands* of lights lit—and that's where Jesus stood up and said, in John 8:12: "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

That was a remembrance of the re-cleansing of the temple, after the desecration in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes—which was a bitter, bitter time in Israel's history. God predicted it *precisely*, and it happened just as He said that it would. But as terrible as that was, at the hand of Antiochus Epiphanes, it was a foreshadow of *an even worse time* yet to come for the nation of Israel; it will happen in the final seven years before Jesus returns.

So, now look at Daniel Chapter 9, Verse 27. Somewhere—I think, embedded in our series on First Thessalonians—you'll find, in the section on First Thessalonians 4:13-17, a lot more detail of this, but we don't have time today; we'll just jump down to Daniel 9:27. This is the famous "70 Weeks" passage—70 "sevens," or 490 years; 483 of them have passed, 7 are yet to come. Here's what he's talking about at Daniel 9:27: "And he"—wait a minute, stop there! That's a pronoun; a pronoun needs an antecedent. What's the antecedent? It is: "the prince who is to come" (vs. 26)—we usually call him "antichrist" (Jn. 2:18). "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week"—for seven years—"but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

Now, that pivotal text says that the end times world leader—leader of a one-world government—will make a pact, or a treaty, with Israel for seven years. I think that's part of how you can come to power over the whole world: *actually* pull off peace in the Middle East, and actually protect Israel and bring peace there; I think that's part of how he's going to come to power. But halfway through that seven years, his real character is unveiled: he breaks his promises to Israel, and he commits a heinous act in the temple on the order of what Antiochus Epiphanes did—but worse. This event, at the hands of the one we usually call Antichrist—though Daniel calls him "the prince who is to come"—that's the one Jesus is referring to.

It's described another time by Daniel, in Daniel 12:11. It says: "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days." Now, on the Jewish calendar, that's three and a half years, with an extra 30 days thrown in. Three and a half years is a time very significant in the Book of Revelation: "One thousand two hundred and sixty days" (Rev. 12:6; cf. Rev. 11:2-3; 13:5; see also Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:14)—the 30 days added on is, apparently, the time it will take for the judgments to be unveiled that we're going to see later in the Olivet Discourse. And then the next verse in Daniel adds *another* 45 days. So, apparently it'll be: The "abomination of desolation"; then, three and a

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half years; 30 days for the judgments; and then, 45 days to set up the kingdom—and then the Millennium on Earth is underway (Rev. 20:4-6). That's a real quick sketch of background Biblical historical references to "the abomination of desolation" prior to Jesus.

Now, come to our one text for today in Mark Chapter 13, Verse 14. What Did Jesus Say About The Abomination of Desolation? He's been talking about the "birth pangs"—they're going to get worse and worse, stronger and stronger; and then, He says this, in Mark 13:14—"But"—okay, there's a conjunction; it's a conjunction with a disjunction. With "But" He means: "This is connected to what I just said—this *is* part of the 'birth pangs'—but *this one* is a standout." "But when you see the abomination of desolation"—and notice, our translation puts that in all-caps. What does that mean? It means those are words quoted from the Old Testament. "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains." Now, this is actually the beginning of a new paragraph. We saw "the beginning of birth pangs" (Mk. 13:8); now, we're going to get to the *really, really serious* birth pangs that lead up to the actual second coming. Next time, I'll pick it up there on the part about how "those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains"—I'll show you how that's all connected.

But notice: Jesus calls *special attention* to this predicted event. There are parallel accounts to this: Luka 21:20 describes that time in a slightly different way. Jesus is recorded there as saying: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies"—in other words, there has been peace...three and a half years...but now, all of a sudden, the Antichrist's armies have surrounded the city—"then recognize that her desolation is near." Matthew has the most thorough description of it: Matthew 24:15 and 16—"Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet"—so we know *exactly* where this term came from—When you see it "standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."

Now, you put all this together—Daniel 9:24 through 27, and what Jesus says here—we realize this event will happen as the promises that the Antichrist makes to Israel are broken. Israel's temporary peace is going to be shattered, and Jerusalem is going to be surrounded by enemy nations threatening to destroy her in an unprecedented kind of way.

So here's a real quick overview of a sequence of events: The Rapture happens. That is a sign-less event; no one knows the day or the hour. If anybody tells you that they know when the Rapture is going to happen, you are listening to a false prophet—or *at least* a very deceived, misguided one. If anyone tells you they know what year it's going to happen, they are lying to you. Nobody knows! This has been imminent. Paul said it could have happened in his day. "We who are alive and remain" (1 Thess. 4:15, 17), he said *at that time*, almost 1,900 years ago. But it is going to happen!

The Rapture happens, *and then* the birth pangs start (see Rev. 3:10). The world is in chaos; out of that, the Antichrist rises to power. He heads up a confederation of nations; he's going to be a world leader like none ever before. At that same time, Israel is going to *quickly* rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. How do we know that? Well, there are specific prophecies of things

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that have to happen *in the temple in Jerusalem*; and right now, we're fresh out of Jewish temples in Jerusalem—and have been since A.D. 70. There are people around the world today who have already stockpiled all the materials they need; when the time comes, that temple is going to happen really, really fast!

The Antichrist makes his pact with Israel, guaranteeing them security and safety for seven years. For a while, he protects Israel; but then, his true character, his hatred for Israel, is unmasked. And while occupying Israel under the guise of providing protection, he is going to desecrate the temple, stop the sacrifices that have been going on there, and commit his version of "the abomination of desolation." The temple is going to remain in that condition until the second coming, three and a half years later—1,260 days, plus 30 for the judgment, plus 45 for setting up the kingdom (Dan. 12:12).

Now, when Antiochus Epiphanes—sort of the *junior* "abomination of desolation" guy—when he committed *his* awful desecration, he sacrificed a pig on the altar in Israel, just in the face of everything about what God says in the sacrificial system. And he set up, in the temple, an idol to the pagan god Zeus. When the Antichrist commits *his* brand of abomination, he's not going to defer to Zeus or any other god; he's going to *set himself up* as God. Notice how Jesus worded it: When you see this abomination "standing in the holy place"—that might be a little bit unclear by itself, but we know from other texts: this is going to be nothing less than this satanically-empowered, satanically-motivated man demanding that the world worships *him*.

It's described also in Second Thessalonians 2:3-4; there, some people had swooped into Thessalonica and told them that the Day of the Lord was here, and Paul says: "Uh...no, it's not!" And he says this: "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it"—referring to "the day of the Lord" (vs. 2)—"will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed"—same as the Antichrist, same as "the prince who is to come"—"the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." He's going to demand: "Worship me" (cf. Rev. 13:15).

We don't have to explore it all, but just one more little facet of this, I think, will help you. The Antichrist is going to be the master deceiver of all times. It describes things that he does as "signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9, NKJV); there's a legitimate debate over whether he *actually* does miracles that deceive, or he's such a good deceiver that he can make it *look like* he's doing miracles. The point is: it doesn't matter; he's going to deceive. If he *does* have miraculous powers, he's going to find a way to die and come to life again—but only God can do that, so I think it's all a hoax; I think it's all a deception. He's going to pull off this apparent resurrection (Rev. 13:3)—who would you want to copy, more than Jesus, if you want the world to worship you—and he's going to cross over from being this worldwide political dictator to being a false god himself. John puts it this way, in Revelation 13, Verse 8—"All who dwell on the earth"—and in the Book of Revelation, Earth-dwellers, or "those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10), that's kind of code for the unbelievers at that time—"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain."

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That's what Jesus is referring to, back in Mark 13:14—"When you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be"—and let's stop with this next phrase: "(let the reader understand)." Now, that's really interesting. How much of your Bible are you supposed to understand? The whole thing, right? So, here's something really significant, when you have the words *in your Bible* that say: "Let the reader understand." Now, notice: the words have been placed in parentheses by the translators; and that's true, because it isn't part of the prophecy—Daniel didn't say, "Let the reader understand," only this passage in the Olivet Discourse. It is the command to you and me today. Of everything else that we've been studying, the only command to you and me is: "Make sure you understand." Order from God! If you don't understand this, you haven't yet been able to put together the Bible, because this is the nexus of Bible prophecy.

"Let the reader understand." There are two possibilities concerning that phrase in parentheses. One is: it might be something Matthew and Mark were inspired to add. If so, it's their instruction—their inspired instruction; the Holy Spirit said it through them (2 Pet. 1:21)—it's their instruction for those who would come later, not the hearers that day. Jesus didn't say, "Come on, guys! Understand this." It's: "Let the *reader* understand," making sure that everybody who ever read this would know how important it is to understand it. So it could have been Matthew's and Mark's way of saying that this is going to be crucial information for those who are alive *in the time of the fulfillment* of this. I take it that way.

But the other legitimate possibility is: maybe Jesus actually said those words. And we come to the same conclusion: if it was Jesus saying it, it's *Him* saying He expects this text to be studied and corroborated with Daniel and understood by those who are alive in the final days before His coming, and all who live in between, to know that this is the beginning of the worst of the birth pangs. I tend to think Matthew and Mark were inspired to put this in, because I can't see Jesus talking to the disciples when He has their attention, and He says: "When you see the abomination of desolation...let the reader understand!" I can just see Peter saying, "Who's *reading*? Reading *what*?" I think this is inserted by the Holy Spirit so that we understand: God the Holy Spirit put all of this together in the Scripture for us. By the way—can you imagine the intensity with which people who come to believe in Christ during the Tribulation are going to study the prophetic portions of the Bible?—the *whole* Bible, for that matter?

Now, how do we apply a message on this subject? You're "the reader"; I'm "the reader." We are ordered to "understand." Now you understand how the Antichrist is going to defile the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, how that event is a crucial sign of the very near coming of Jesus Christ. But what does that do for you today, tomorrow, in your walk with Jesus Christ? Well, don't go to Israel and defile the Jewish temple; that's a pretty easy one—there *is* no temple, you can't get there and do that. Understand: this prophecy of Daniel—it's over 2,500 years old! This prophecy of Jesus, on that night on the Mount of Olives, is 1,980-plus years old. The fulfillment is sometime in the future. And if you understand, as we do, a Pretribulation Rapture, you're not going to even be around to see the "abomination of desolation," so how is this profitable for you and me today? What are we, "the readers," supposed to understand? I'll close with a couple suggestions; I'll let the Holy Spirit help you make the personal applications, as necessary.

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One lesson I see that is profoundly obvious: Learn the lesson of the *precision* of the Word of God. The details of the things predicted by Daniel and fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes—*mind-boggling!* Hundreds of years ahead of time, accurate to the day. When details in the Bible are predicted, they are going to be fulfilled *with precision*. The lesson is about how God fulfills prophecy. Everything that God says will happen—it'll *happen*, just as He says. The fulfillment of Bible prophecy is always literal, according to the natural meaning of the words. *We are not free* to allegorize or spiritualize specific promises.

That's the problem that I have with brothers and sisters in Christ who are "Amillennial" or "Postmillennial"—they say there's no such thing as the "thousand years." They'll take the Bible very literally when it talks about who Jesus is and what He accomplished on the Cross and all of that—get the gospel just right; and they'll say, "We take the Bible for *just what it says*." And in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 20, in the first seven verses there are six uses of a Greek word that means "one thousand years," and the meaning is: "one thousand years," and the correct translation is: "one thousand years," and the alternative meanings and alternative translations *don't exist* because it means "one thousand years"; and there are people who say: "The one thing we know *absolutely for sure* is that 'one thousand years' *does not mean* 'one thousand years!'" Well, what *does* it mean? "Well, we don't know; kind of a long time...Maybe a golden era." No! It means "a thousand years"! And everything leading up to the thousand years *means what it says!* So take God's Word at face value for what it says. You can *certainly take that* to the bank today. (see Rev. 9:15; 21:17)

Number 2—Things are going to get much worse in the world. Are we headed that way? Yeah. Is the slide getting steeper and greasier? Well, yeah—just like the Bible said: "Evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse" (2 Tim. 3:13). But understand: before Jesus comes and puts things right side up, it's going to be more upside down than you ever dreamed possible. And the paragraph that we just started—with verse 14 in Mark 13—it's going to go on a little bit later and say: "Those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will." (vs. 19). The world is getting worse. We're setting the stage. Right now, nations are aligned against Israel, and it's starting to look ever more like what Ezekiel and other Old Testament prophets described as what will be the alignment of nations at the Battle of Armageddon!

But you don't have to enlist for the Battle of Armageddon; that's not the point. The point is: it's coming together; and in the final seven years before He returns, in addition to how evil *the world* is, there's also the wrath of God that's going to be poured out on the unbelieving world in a series of cataclysmic judgments! That, along with the most evil leader of all time, who is going to dominate a one-world government and a one-world religion...understand, friends: if you have believed a faith that is meant to provide you comfort and wealth and health and security, *you have not believe the gospel of Jesus Christ!* Now, you're secure *in Him*—nothing can disturb your peace in Him; you have "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1; cf. Rom. 8:1), but in this world, it's going to be more and more unacceptable to practice Christianity as we march toward the second coming (Rev. 12:17).

Sermon Title: The Abomination of Desolation
Scripture Text: Mark 13:14

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-13-19

So, if you're ashamed to speak up for Jesus Christ; if you're ashamed to proclaim the gospel when it looks like that's not a popular thing to do, I think you really need to go and examine your faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Maybe you haven't yet come to the point of saving faith—and I pray today is the day that you make that true commitment. And if you don't make it today, I will pray for you; I will pray that you are *unthinkably miserable* and incapable of sleep and *any sense of comfort*, because you need to be scared spit-less—because this is *God's judgment* that is coming! (see Heb. 10:31; cf. Ecc. 12:14; Matt. 12:36; 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Rev. 19:15; 20:10-15)

And having said that, my final suggestion is: you don't need to fear any of these things that are coming. Why? "Well, I have my escape hatch! I'm a Christian; God's going to take me out when the Rapture comes!" That's not the point. Matthew 10:27 and 28—Look how Jesus put it: "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops"—tell people about Me! "Do not fear those who kill the body"—there are plenty of them—"but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (see Matt. 25:41, 46; Lk. 16:22-24; Rev. 14:10-11) In other words: Turn to God. When you fear God, you need fear *nothing else* (Ps. 27:1).

Let's pray:

Father, we fear You. We tremble before You, in the sense of understanding that there is nothing in us that would make us worthy of Your favor or fellowship with You. And yet, Father, we know that all that fear is cast away by Your love, shed upon us in Jesus Christ. As we go about in this world, thank You for the privilege to know You and to walk with You, to worship You in spirit and in truth, with likeminded people. But as we go from this place, make us accurate, bold, faithful, loving proclaimers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And help us to have the courage to call people to faith in this one and only Savior. Have Your way with us to that end, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.