

Handout 7

The Abomination of Desolation

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Daniel 9

Daniel’s Prayer

A. *Daniel* 1:1–2 (the occasion)

1. Reading the prophecies of Jeremiah, Daniel realizes that the time given for Israel’s exile in Babylon is supposed to be 70 years.

B. *Daniel* 1:3–15 (the prayer, part 1 > confesses the sins of Israel)

1. On behalf of the entirety of the Jewish people, Daniel confesses the sin that has resulted in the city of Jerusalem being destroyed and the people being in exile in Babylon. He acknowledges that this is in accordance with all that God said and that God is perfectly just and righteous in his judgment of the people.

C. *Daniel* 1:16–19 (the prayer, part 2 > asks for the restoration of the temple and Jerusalem)

1. Daniel asks God for mercy. He asks that God might restore the temple and the holy city Jerusalem, not because of any merits of the Jewish people, but the sake of his name.

Gabriel’s Response

A. *Daniel* 1:20–23 (the occasion)

1. While Daniel was praying, the angel Gabriel comes to Daniel in a vision. He instructs Daniel that, because he is highly esteemed by God, Gabriel has been sent to grant Daniel insight and understanding.

B. *Daniel* 1:24 (citations below from NASV)

1. “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city”
 - a. God has decreed that 490 years have been decreed for the people of Israel and for Jerusalem. What does he mean by that?

(A) Daniel is dwelling in Babylon, in exile, because the people of Israel sinned against their God. Daniel is asking God if God, in his mercy, might not restore Jerusalem and the temple and restore the people of Israel back to Jerusalem. What is God’s answer? It is this: Okay, I will do that Daniel. But it will not necessarily be permanent. I will give them 490 years without any threat of judgment—like the judgment I poured out on Israel when I destroyed the temple and the city and sent them into exile in Babylon. However, after the 490 years, the people of Israel and the city will once again be eligible for my judgment should they deserve it.

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- (1) 70 weeks = 70 periods of 7 years = 490 years
- (a) A “week” is literally a grouping of 7. Upon reflection, it becomes clear that the text of Daniel here is intending a “week” to denote a grouping of 7 years.
2. “to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to make an everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place”
- a. Here is a list of things that the people of Israel have been given 490 years to do. It seems apparent that the ongoing existence of the city of Jerusalem is conditioned on the people of Israel accomplishing the things on this list. God promises not to bring judgment against them during that 490 years. But he wants them to accomplish this list of things. Presumably, if at the end of the 490 years, they have not done the things on this list, then God will subject them to judgment once again. He will once again destroy the temple and the city.
- b. “to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity”
- (A) The transgression of Israel is their failure to be the people of God as God had asked them to be. They were sent into exile in Babylon because of this very transgression. God is saying you have 490 years to put an end to (“finish”) that transgression. You have 490 years to decide, once and for all, to act like my people and seek to serve me as your God.
- (B) To “make an end of sin” is basically synonymous with “to finish transgression.” It means fundamentally the same thing. The sin they need to make an end of is their sin of not choosing to honor, serve, and obey God.
- (C) To “make atonement for iniquity” is also synonymous with “to make an end of sin” and with “to finish transgression.” The people of Israel are alienated from God because of their rebellion against and indifference toward him—that is, because of their transgression. They need to be reconciled to him. That is, they need to make atonement for their transgression (iniquity)—which is to say, they need to be reconciled to God because of their transgression which has left them alienated from him.
- c. “to make an everlasting righteousness”
- (A) This is the positive reality that corresponds to what the first three phrases describe. If one puts an end to sin and transgression, then he embraces righteousness. “To make everlasting righteousness” is to resolve in one’s heart to be righteous in the eyes of God by committing irreversibly to honor, serve, and obey God. It is “everlasting” in the sense that it is constant and lasting.
- d. “to seal up vision and prophecy”

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- (A) I am not confident that I understand this correctly, but my best guess is that it means something like "stop the prophecy conveyed by this vision from coming to pass." Gabriel is about to go on to prophetically predict that the Jews will commit an abominable evil to which God will respond by judging them with devastating circumstances and their city Jerusalem with complete destruction. They could stop this from coming to pass if they commit to being open and receptive to God and his purposes rather than being rebellious against them. Within the time allotted for them to "get their act together," they are going to be tested. They can prevent the coming destruction if they do good rather than evil when tested.
- (1) The phrase make an end of sin employs exactly the same very as it used here. If we rightly translate it "make an end of sin," then we could justly translate this phrase "make an end of the vision and prophesy." The sense of that would most likely be "make an end of the prophetic prediction conveyed to you in this vision."
- e. "and to anoint the most holy place"
- (A) Anointing something is very frequently connected with inaugurating a person, place, or thing into the service of God in some sense. So, "anointing the holy of holies" would, at first blush, seem to be a ritual to inaugurate the holy of holies into service as the holy of holies once the temple is rebuilt. This could, of course, be a simple religious act that was in fact performed upon the completion of the temple rebuild. However, that seems too pedestrian to make this list. This is a wild guess, but perhaps it refers to the return of the glory of God that departed from the tabernacle in the time of Samuel (? , I think). Yahweh had, in the time of Moses, made his glory physically manifest in and about the holy of holies in the tabernacle that he had Moses build. Later in the history of Israel, the Glory of Yahweh departed from the tabernacle, no more to be seen, because of the unrighteousness and faithlessness of the people of Israel. Malachi predicts that one important thing that is going to happen again in the last age is a return of the Glory to the temple. Is that what Gabriel has in mind here? He says, you have 490 to get your act together, become a righteous people, and induce Yahweh to return to the Holy of Holies in the temple and "anoint" it for his service.
- f. Whether I have rightly understood each and every one of the phrases in this To-Do list that Gabriel gives to Daniel, the overall sense of it seems clear to me: God is telling Israel through Daniel that he is setting aside 490 years during which he promises to bring no judgment upon them (nor to decree any judgment upon them). There is something he expects them to do during that time. He expects them to make a genuine, lasting commitment to truly be his people and faithfully serve him. If they do so, then history will go one direction. It will go in a good and beneficial direction for Israel. But if they do not do so, history will go in a bad direction for them. It means that God will bring judgment upon them once again. This, I think, is the gist of what Gabriel is promising them. The prophetic vision then goes on to predict another

judgment that will come upon them. But that is because Israel will not take up the offer to escape it by choosing to serve God and be his people.

C. *Daniel* 1:25 (citations below from NASV)

1. "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"
 - a. The Messiah will enter into history 483 years after the time when a decree goes forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.
 - (A) The 483 years is calculated thus: 7 "weeks of years" + 62 "weeks of years" = 49 {7x7} years + 434 {62x7} years = 483 years.
 - (B) It is difficult to pinpoint which decree Gabriel is speaking of here. There were more than one, at different stages in the history of the return from exile. If we could know with certainty at exactly what point the requisite decree went forth, then we could calculate exactly what date Messiah came.
 - (1) We also do not know exactly at what point in the life of Jesus is being considered by Gabriel's prophecy as the time when Messiah the Prince came. Was it at his birth? His baptism? Or perhaps it was at the point of some other significant event in Jesus's life. We have no way of determining that from Gabriel's language here.
 - (a) What we do know is this: from whatever point the requisite decree to rebuild Jerusalem is considered to have gone forth to whatever point in the life of Jesus is considered to be the inauguration of the Messiah will be exactly 483 years.
 - (C) Gabriel says that the Messiah is going to come after 7 weeks and 62 weeks. Why does he divide the 69 weeks up into these two parts—7 weeks and 62 weeks? For an answer to this, we must look at the statements that Gabriel makes immediately after this.
 2. "it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress"
 - (A) This is a prediction that the city will be successfully built again, even though there will be significant opposition.
 - (B) Notice the structure of what Gabriel says: "There will be 7 weeks and 62 weeks until the Messiah arrives. The city and temple will be built again (in the face of significant opposition) and, then, after the 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut down." [See discussion in D. below] Note that the Messiah cannot be cut down (killed) unless he has come into history. Hence, this is tantamount to Gabriel saying "and, then, after the 62 weeks, the Messiah will arrive, only to be cut down." This provides an important clue to why Gabriel divides the 69 weeks into 7 weeks and 62 weeks. There will be 7 weeks (49 years) during which time the temple and city are going to be under construction. Presumably, the rebuilding will be essen-

tially completed at the end of 49 years. Then, after the rebuilding has been completed, there will be 62 more weeks (434 more years) where the people of Israel will dwell in a rebuilt city with a rebuilt temple and where God continues to withhold any judgment against them, patiently waiting for them to repent and decide to truly be his people.

D. Translation of 9:26–27 (MT)

1. *Then, after the sixty-two weeks, the Messiah will be cut off and come to nothing. And the people of the ruler who is coming will destroy the city and the holy sanctuary. And its complete destruction will be with a flood. And up to its complete destruction is war. Devastations are decreed. Now the covenant holds firm for ‘the Many’ for the one week. But after half of the week, it will put sacrifice and offering to an end. And because of the extreme of abominable acts is one who devastates, even to the point of the complete destruction that has been decreed. It will be poured out together with the devastation.*
 - a. “...after the sixty-two weeks”
 - (A) Beginning at *Daniel* 9:24, the angel Gabriel informs Daniel that 70 seven-year [weeks] periods have been decreed for the Jews and for the holy city. If the people of Israel get their act together within that 70 seven-year time period—that is, if they repent and begin to behave as the people of God that God is calling them to be, then presumably God will bless them and secure the city in safety and peace. However, if they do not get their act together within that 70 seven-year time period, then presumably God has decreed that the city will be destroyed and the people subjected to devastation.
 - (1) Gabriel proceeds to predict three different parts to the 70 seven-year periods that he is predicting for Israel. The first part will be a period of 7 seven-year periods within which the temple will be rebuilt. The second part will be a period of 62 seven-year periods. Finally, there will come a single, final seven-year period that will complete the 70 seven-year periods that he is predicting for Israel.
 - (2) In *Daniel* 9:25, Gabriel tells Daniel that the Messiah will come after the first two parts of the 70 seven-year periods. After the 7 seven-year periods and then again *after the next 62 seven-year periods*, the Messiah will come. So, in other words, after a total of 69 seven-year periods, the Messiah will come. This means that, after the Messiah has come, there will remain one final seven-year period (of the 70 seven-year periods granted to Israel) until Israel’s 490 year probation (70 x 7 years) comes to an end.
 - b. “...the Messiah will be cut off and come to nothing.”
 - (A) This is a prediction of the crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah. After the Messiah has arrived and entered history, his fate will be to be killed by the Jewish establishment.

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- c. "And the people of the ruler who is coming will destroy the city and the holy sanctuary."
- (A) We know now that the people of the ruler who is coming are the Roman soldiers under the command of the Roman general (or, under the rule of Caesar). God has destined this "ruler" to come and exact judgment on the people of Israel for their egregious sin against God when they crucified his Messiah. Their judgment will be to destroy the city and the temple. This occurred during the first Roman war against the Jews in 70 A.D.
- d. "And its complete destruction will be with a flood."
- (A) The "flood" here is the flood of God's wrath poured out in great abundance against the Jews. Angered by their killing of his Messiah, God will bring complete destruction to the city of Jerusalem and to the temple.
- e. "And up to its complete destruction is war."
- (A) The destruction of the city (and temple) will be as a result of war waged against it by the "ruler" whom God has appointed to bring judgment upon the people of Israel. The complete destruction will not occur until after a period of devastating war waged against Israel.
- f. "Devastations are decreed."
- (A) The devastating times that Israel will be made to endure are a result of the divine decree. God has decreed that a judgment of very devastating circumstances will be exacted on Israel for their sin of killing his Messiah.
- g. "Now the covenant holds firm for 'the Many' for one week."
- (A) The "covenant" that is in view here is the covenant that Gabriel is announcing to Daniel in this very vision. Namely, God is promising Israel (he is covenanting with Israel) that he will grant them a probationary period of 490 years (70 x 7 years). God will not decree any judgments against them before the end of that time. If, within that 490 year time frame they repent of their rebellion against God and become his people—honoring and serving him faithfully—then they will never again be judged by God. God judged them when he sent them into exile in Jerusalem. (That is why Daniel is in Babylon praying for God to restore the city and the temple.) But God will not do that again, if they repent and faithfully serve him. God is promising them (through the covenant being announced to Daniel by Gabriel) that they have a full 490 years to decide to do just that, to faithfully serve God as his people. God promises that he will not decree judgment at any time before the 490 years has come to an end.
- (B) So, for the covenant to "hold firm" means that God will not short-change Israel on the full 490 years. He will withhold any determination with regard to judging them until the 490 years has completely passed. This is significant because, in the middle of the final seven-year period (before the 490 years has come to an end),

the Jews will crucify God’s Messiah. Even though they commit such an egregious sin before the 490 years is up, God will not decree judgment against them before the entire 490 years has passed. Hence, even after crucifying the Messiah, the Jews still have an opportunity to repent. And if they were to repent, they would forestall God’s judgment against them. So, for the covenant to “hold firm” means that God will absolutely wait for the entire 490 year period to pass before he decides the fate of Israel.

- (C) Gabriel says the the covenant holds firm “for one week” because his is speaking from a standpoint in time when the Messiah has come after 483 years [7 “weeks of years” + 62 “weeks of years”]. From that point in time, there remains *one* “week” of years remaining in the covenant that Gabriel is announcing. So, when he says the covenant will hold firm for one week, he means that the covenant will hold firm for one final week—that is, the covenant will remain in effect all the way to the end of the final (70th) “week” of years.
- (D) Gabriel describes the covenant here as a covenant that has been made with “the Many.” Who are “the Many”? The phrase “the Many” seems to be a term that Gabriel uses to describe the people of Israel. The logic of the phrase seems to be something like this: the people of Israel are a multitude of individuals [“the Many”], on the one hand; yet they are not all of mankind, but only a subset of mankind, and hence not “the All.”
- h. “...it will put sacrifice and offering to an end.”
- (A) The thing that will put sacrifice and offering to an end is the act that is described in the statement that immediately follows this one. Gabriel goes on to describe an act that is “the extreme of abominable acts.” What is that extremely abominable act? It is the crucifixion of God’s Messiah. The crucifixion of God’s Messiah, Gabriel says, will put an end to sacrifice and offering. Gabriel likely means the propitiatory sacrifices and offerings. Because the crucified Messiah will be the ultimate propitiatory offering offered up on behalf of sinful mankind, when he is crucified—an extreme abomination on the part of the Jewish people—there will no longer be any need to look to other sacrifices and offerings as propitiatory.
- i. “...because of the extreme of abominable acts is one who devastates”
- (A) We noted above that the “extreme of abominable acts” was the crucifixion of Jesus, God’s Messiah. It is the “extreme” because it is not the only thing the people of Israel did that God found abhorrent and abominable. Over the course of many generations, the people of Israel repeatedly did many things that were abominable in the eyes of God. But when they crucified God’s Messiah, that was the most extreme abomination that they ever committed. It was the extreme edge of all their abominations.

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- (B) Gabriel says that God has decreed that one will come and bring many devastating circumstances upon the people of Israel. Why will he come? Why will God decree such a thing? Because of the extremely abominable act of killing God's Messiah.
- j. "...even to the point of the complete destruction that has been decreed."
- (A) No only will the people of Israel endure many devastating circumstances because of the abominable act they performed (the crucifixion of Jesus), but they will suffer the complete destruction of their city and their temple. And this will be so because God will decree it. He will decree it as judgment for the abominable act that they performed.
- k. "It will be poured out together with the devastation."
- (A) The destruction of the city and temple that will come upon them will be a part of the wrath that is poured out against them by God in conjunction with all the other devastations that they will experience because they killed Jesus the Messiah.
- E. Translation of 9:26–27 (LXX)
1. *Then, after the seven and the sixty two weeks, his anointing will be set aside and he will not be. And a kingdom of Gentiles will destroy the city and the holy sanctuary in connection with the Messiah. And the destruction of it will be with wrath. And up to the time of complete destruction, it will be embroiled in war. Now the covenant will hold firm for 'the Many.' [There follows several very muddled lines of text that, I believe, were not part of the original Greek translation.] And at the completion of that week, the sacrifice and drink offering will be removed, and upon the sacred propitiatory offering there will be an abominable act that will lead to devastations to the point of complete destruction. Even complete destruction will be given together with the devastation.*
- a. "after the seven and sixty-two weeks"
- (A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-a. above.
- b. "his anointing will be set aside"
- (A) This statement in the LXX is not made explicitly in the MT. (Arguably it is implicit in the MT, however.)
- (B) What the LXX translators are making explicit here in this statement is that Jesus's "anointing" by God as the promised King of Israel is totally set aside and disregarded by the people of Israel when they reject him and kill him.
- (C) Taking this together with the statement that immediately follows, the LXX translators are saying "The Messiah's status as the anointed one will be completely disregarded with the result that he will be no more [i.e., he will be killed]."
- c. "and he will not be"
- (A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-b. above.

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- d. "And a kingdom of Gentiles will destroy the city and the holy sanctuary in connection with the Messiah."
- (A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-c. above.
- (B) The LXX, unlike the MT, makes explicit the connection between the destruction of the city and temple and the killing of the Messiah. That is what the LXX is attempting to do when it says that the destruction of the city and temple is "in connection with the Messiah."
- (C) The LXX does not emphasize that God's judgment is through an appointed "ruler" who is to come in the same way that the MT does.
- e. "And the destruction of it will be with wrath."
- (A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-d. above.
- (B) The LXX translators simply make literal what appears to be metaphorical in the MT (flood). They make it clear that it is the wrath of God that is the "flood" that brings the destruction.
- f. "And up to the time of complete destruction, it will be embroiled in war."
- (A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-e. above.
- g. "Now the covenant will hold firm for 'the Many.'"
- (A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-g. above.
- (B) The LXX translators, unlike the MT, do not make it explicit that the covenant is made firm for the final "week" of years. However, it is certainly implicit in their translation here.
- h. "And at the completion of that week, the sacrifice and drink offering will be removed"
- (A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-h. above.
- (B) The MT says, "after half of the week" [that is, in the middle of the week {=3.5 years}]. The LXX translators (if my text of the LXX is the right one) seem to say, after the final week is complete. This is not a significant difference. The MT is pinpointing the time when the propitiatory offerings become obsolete. Namely, in the middle of the week when Jesus is crucified. The translators are noting the significance of Jesus's crucifixion that will be found to have become a reality when the final week of the 490 years comes to an end. If what the MT says is true, then what the LXX says clearly follows. I think the LXX translators were mistaken to not recognize, and therefore reflect in their translation, that the MT intended to locate the point in time when the propitiatory offerings became obsolete.
- i. "and upon the sacred propitiatory offering there will be an abominable act that will lead to devastations to the point of complete destruction."

(A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-i. and also at D.-1.-j. above.

(B) The LXX translators seek to make it explicit that the abominable act by the people of Israel that is in view here is upon and against God’s Messiah. And they seek to make it explicit that that very abominable act committed by them against the Messiah fulfilled God’s purpose to have the Messiah’s death serve as a propitiatory offering. They render it “upon the sacred offering” (literally). But the sacred offering that they have in mind is the offering of the crucified body of the Messiah himself. The people of Israel committed an abominable act against the body of the Messiah. They crucified it. And, in so doing, they were accomplishing the divine purpose of rendering the Messiah’s body a “sacred offering.”

j. “Even complete destruction will be given together with the devastation.”

(A) See my notes on my translation of the Masoretic Text [MT] at D.-1.-j. and also at D.-1.-k. above.

F. Explanatory Re-write of 9:26–27

1. *Then, after the 7 seven-year periods and then the 62 seven-year periods—that is, at the end of the 69 seven-year periods—the Messiah will be cut down and will cease to be. In response, a Gentile people under the rule of a ruler who is destined to come will destroy both the city and the temple in response to what the Jews did to the Messiah. Its complete destruction will come in a flood of divine wrath. The city will be embroiled in war up to the time that it is completely destroyed. God has decreed devastating times in response to the killing of the Messiah. Now this covenant with ‘the Many’, giving them 70 seven-year periods, will hold firm all the way to the end of the one, final seven-year period. But, in the midst of that one, final seven-year period, there will come an end to sacrifice and propitiatory offering when a completely abominable act is committed—the most abominable act at the end of a long string of abominable acts—that results in the coming of the one who will bring the devastating times upon the city that God has decreed. Complete destruction will be poured out against the city and temple during these devastating times.*

a. Note that the completely abominable act that is committed that results in the coming of the one who will bring devastation to the Jewish people is *the crucifixion of the Messiah*. In other words, to use language that reflects more typical and familiar wording, the **ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** is *the crucifixion of Jesus*.

(A) Hence, the “abomination of desolation” is not some act at the end of this present age wherein the Anti-Christ (or Man of Lawlessness) desecrates the temple through some act of defilement that he performs. Rather, it is the abomination in the eyes of God committed by the people of Israel in the first century. They crucified God’s Son.

Olivet Discourse

Matthew 24:15–22

A. Matthew 24:15–16

1. NASV > “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judaea must flee to the mountains.”
2. My translation > “Therefore when you see the abomination that brings desolation that was spoken of through Daniel the prophet having taken its stand against the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judaea must flee to the mountains.”
 - a. In our notes above on *Daniel 9*, we have seen to what Daniel the prophet was referring when he spoke of the “abomination that brings desolation.” The abomination of which Daniel speaks was the abominable act of crucifying God’s Son, Jesus, the promised Messiah.
 - b. How can the abominable act of crucifying Jesus be said to have “taken its stand against the holy place”? To understand this we have to understand the concept of *the metonymy of cause for effect*.
 - (A) Metonymy is a category of the figurative use of language. Whenever we take the word that denotes one thing to represent another, different thing that is in some way connected to or associated with the first thing, then we have employed the figurative use of language called metonymy.
 - (1) To say, “I heard from the White House today,” is an instance of metonymy. The person saying this did not hear from the piece of architecture where POTUS lives. He heard from someone who lives or works in that piece of architecture (either POTUS himself or someone who works for POTUS). The piece of architecture is being used to represent or stand in the place of some person associated with that piece of architecture. Hence, the word denoting the building is not being used literally. It is being used figuratively, as a stand in for a person. This is called metonymy.
 - (B) The metonymy of cause for effect is a form of metonymy where the cause of some reality is being used to represent of stand in for the reality that came about as a result of that cause. Hence, the word denoting the cause is not being used literally. It is being used figuratively, as a stand in for that which resulted from it.
 - (1) Consider the context where a man hurls a careless insult at a stranger on the street and then finds himself being physically attacked by that stranger who was provoked to anger by the insult. In the attack, the rude man had to be taken to an ER where the gash over his eye was stitched up. And consider a description of the event that included the following statement, “They took him to

the ER where his thoughtless insult was stitched up by the doctor.” The author of this statement does not mean that a “thoughtless insult” was literally “stitched up.” Clearly, he means that the gash over the rude man’s eye was stitched up. This is a case of metonymy. A phrase that denotes the abstract concept (thoughtless insult) is being used to stand in for and represent the concrete reality of a gash over the man’s eye. Not only is this metonymy, but it is metonymy of cause for effect. The cause of the gash over the rude man’s eye was his thoughtless insult hurled at the stranger. The end effect of the rude man’s insult was to receive a gash over his eye. So, in the description of the event that runs, “they took him to the ER where his thoughtless insult was stitched up by the doctor,” the phrase “his thoughtless insult” (which is the cause of the rude man receiving a gash over his eye) is being used to stand in the place of its effect—the gash over the rude man’s eye. For it is the gash over the eye that is being stitched up, not his insult. This is a case of the metonymy of cause for effect.

- (C) In this passage we have a case of metonymy. To better understand the nature of the metonymy we need to understand what a literal description of this same reality would be. Fortunately, we have a literal description of this reality in the passage in *Luke* which is parallel to this. Luke describes it, “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies.” So, what is Matthew describing as having “taken its stand against the holy place”? The thing that has literally taken its stand against the holy place is the army that has surrounded it. But, using metonymy, Jesus uses the cause of the army standing there (the abomination that brings desolation) to stand in for and to represent its effect (a hostile army surrounding Jerusalem). According to Daniel, the reason Jerusalem is going to be besieged, embattled, and ultimately destroyed [the effect] is because the people of Israel rejected and killed God’s Messiah [the cause]. To describe the scene as “the abomination the brings desolation” standing against the holy place [Jerusalem], when what one intends to describe is the army of Rome surrounding Jerusalem, is to use the cause of the reality [the abomination] to stand in for its effect [a destroyer army].
- c. The “holy place” mentioned in Matthew’s translation here seems to be the holy city of Jerusalem.
 - d. Matthew describes the abomination the brings desolation as “having taken its stand against the holy place.” This makes sense when we realize that he is describing a hostile army. An army that is besieging a city, like Jerusalem, will take its stand in opposition to the walled city. That is what Jesus is saying here, as reported by Matthew.
 - e. Matthew inserts his parenthetical comment, “let the reader understand,” because he is acutely aware that Jesus’s employment of the metonymy of cause for effect in his statement has rendered his statement particularly cryptic and abstruse. So, Matthew warns the reader not to take Jesus’s statement at face value but to ponder what he was actually intending to say.

Mark 13:14–20

A. *Mark* 13:14–15

1. NASV > “*But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judaea must flee to the mountains.*”
2. My translation > “*But when you see the abomination that brings desolation having taken its stand where it must not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judaea must flee to the mountains.*”
 - a. The only difference in Mark’s account vis à vis Matthew’s account is that Matthew describes the army (the abomination that brings desolation) as having taken its stand “against the holy place” while Mark describes the army (the abomination that brings desolation) as having taken its stand “where it must not be.” It seems that Mark is describing the hostile army in position around the city as being in a place that does not bode well for the city. That is what he means by “where it must not be.” The army *must not be there* if things are going to go well for the city. While this says something slightly different from what Matthew’s account does, this is perfectly compatible with Matthew’s account. For an army to have taken its stand against the city is equivalent to saying that that army has taken its stand where it must not be, if things are to go well for the city. However, it gets at the same point from a different angle.

Luke 21:20–24

A. *Luke* 21:20–21a

1. NASV > “*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judaea must flee to the mountains, ...*”
2. My translation > “*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then those who are in Judaea must flee to the mountains, ...*”
 - a. Note that this account in *Luke*, while it reads very differently on the surface, is clearly a parallel account to the ones in *Matthew* and *Mark*. The significant difference arises because Luke offers a literal description of the event while Matthew and Mark offer a description of the event that employs metonymy. In order for these accounts to be in parallel, “Jerusalem surrounded by armies” must be equivalent to “the abomination of desolation having taken its stand against the holy place.”

(A) It is most probably that in Jesus’s original statement to his disciples, he employed something like the figurative language that Matthew and Mark use in their account. Luke then chooses to give the literal equivalent of Jesus’s figurative description. It makes more sense that Luke would give a literal equivalent of an original figurative statement than it does that Matthew and Mark would, for no

particular reason, turn a literal statement into a cryptic, abstruse figurative statement.

- b. Note that Matthew and Mark refer to the abomination that brings desolation that was spoken of through Daniel the prophet. This description, alluding to *Daniel 9*, captures an important truth: namely, the Roman army will besiege Jerusalem precisely because God has decreed desolation (or devastation) for the city because the people of Israel committed the utterly abominable evil of killing God's Messiah. Luke captures this important truth as well (albeit not so clearly and forcefully). For Luke says, "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, **then know that its desolation is near.**" The desolation of which Luke speaks here is the same desolation that Matthew and Mark (and Jesus) have in mind when they describe the armies figuratively as "the abomination that brings **desolation.**" These are references to exactly the same desolation: the desolation spoken over in Daniel the prophet.

Objections to this Interpretation: *Daniel 11:31 & 12:11*

A. Objection

1. In *Daniel 11:31* (and again in *12:11*), does not Daniel use the phrase "abomination of desolation" to refer to the desecration of the temple by the armies and supporters of Antiochus Epiphanes (the "king of the north"), the Greek king who tried to prevent the Jews from worshipping Yahweh in accord with the Mosaic Law? And does the phrase not refer to an act of setting up an idol in the temple and sacrificing unclean animals to that God on the altar? Or something like that?

B. Answer to objection

1. YES, *Daniel 11:31* is describing an event described in the book of *First Maccabees*. It occurs during the reign of terror of the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes who is called the "king of the north" in the book of *Daniel*.
 - a. In *Daniel 11:31* the phrase abomination of desolation refers to an act (or set of acts) that desecrates the temple, rendering it utterly unclean and unusable for the worship of Yahweh. It is an act that desecrates the temple because of the importation of idols and/or unclean animals into the temple, along with unclean acts in the temple precinct. Because of all the "uncleanness" that was involved, what occurred in the temple at this time was abhorrent and, hence, "abominable" in the eyes of God. It was primarily abominable because it involved such hostility and disregard for God's covenant with Israel. (What *Daniel* calls the "holy covenant.")
 - b. Because the temple is desecrated and utterly defiled, it becomes unusable as a place where the true worship of Yahweh can take place. Hence the temple is abandoned by true worshippers of Yahweh. It becomes "desolate" of such worship.

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- c. Therefore, in *Daniel* 11:31, the phrase the “abomination of desolation” means *the abhorrent desecration of Yahweh’s temple that resulted in the temple being left desolate of any true worship of Yahweh.*
2. However, this does not constitute an objection for the interpretation I have offered of *Daniel* 9 and the Olivet Discourse. The phrase “abomination of desolation” in *Daniel* 11:31 is used in a somewhat different sense to denote a different reality from what it is being used to denote in the Olivet Discourse. And it is used in a somewhat different sense to denote a different reality from what similar sounding assertions in *Daniel* 9 are being used to denote.
3. *Daniel* 12:11 is quite cryptic. It is difficult to know exactly to what it is referring. It could denote the same reality that *Daniel* 9 describes. Or, it could denote the same reality that *Daniel* 11:31 describes. But to whichever use of the phrase, “the abomination of desolation” it is parallel, it does not and cannot pose any objection to my interpretation of *Daniel* 9.

C. Objection

1. There are two different senses and two different events referenced by the phrase “the abomination of desolation.” On the one hand, it can denote the crucifixion of Messiah Jesus. But, on the other hand, it can denote the desecration of the temple that occurred in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees. The interpretation offered in these notes takes Jesus’s use of the phrase “the abomination of desolation” in the Olivet Discourse in the first sense. But this is wrong. Jesus is using the phrase “the abomination of desolation” in more like the second sense. However, Jesus is not referring back in time to the event that happened under Antiochus Epiphanes. Rather, he is looking into the future and predicting another event that was foreshadowed by Antiochus Epiphanes. In the future, an evil man will again desecrate the temple in a manner reminiscent of Antiochus Epiphanes.
- a. This is not a crazy idea, for it seems quite clear that in Daniel’s description of the “king of the north” in *Daniel* 11:1–45, he transitions from talking about the king of the Greek Seleucid dynasty in Syria (in *Daniel* 11:1–35) to referring (in *Daniel* 11:36–45) to some evil figure in the far distant future, arguably at the end of this present age. It is not unreasonable to think that Antiochus Epiphanes could foreshadow that future evil figure that *Daniel* 11:36–45 has in mind. And, therefore, it is not unreasonable to think that the desecration of the temple under Antiochus Epiphanes could foreshadow another desecration of the temple under the future evil figure that *Daniel* 11:36–45 has in mind.

D. Answer to objection

1. There are two reasons for concluding confidently that, in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus uses the phrase “the abomination of desolation” to allude to *Daniel* 9 and, therefore, to denote the crucifixion of Messiah Jesus.

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- a. When *Luke* records the same statement by Jesus as *Matthew* and *Mark*, *Luke* refers to Jerusalem being surrounded by armies as the equivalent of the “abomination of desolation” in *Matthew* and *Mark*. If, as *Luke* suggests, Jesus is using the phrase “the abomination of desolation” to describe a hostile army besieging Jerusalem, then he is not using it to denote a desecration of the temple by some abominable act.
 - b. Both *Matthew* and *Mark* interject “let the reader understand” into their account following Jesus’s reference to the abomination of desolation. If the abomination of desolation is literal—that is, if it literally denotes an event that desecrates the temple—then there would be no need to put the reader on alert that he needs to think carefully about what Jesus’s assertion actually means. Why does he need to think carefully about what it means if it straightforwardly and literally means a desecration of the temple? But, if it is being used figuratively to describe the crucifixion of Jesus, then grasping that meaning will require some careful reflection on the part of the reader. Because *Matthew* and *Mark* know that, they insert the alert into their accounts: “let the reader understand.”
 - c. I am not aware of any other, independent prediction of an event in the future that mimics the desecration of the temple under Antiochus Epiphanes (e.g., there is none in *Revelation*). The only reason to suppose that such a future event will occur is as an ad hoc assumption that would allow one to make sense of Jesus’s comment in the Olivet Discourse, if one—for whatever reason—is not disposed to see Jesus’s statement there as referring to his coming crucifixion.