



# PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

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## Understanding the “Abomination of Desolation”

by Jim Buller

Jesus said, “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (*whoever reads, let him understand*), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Matthew 24:15-16 (emphasis supplied). We need to understand the Abomination of Desolation. But how often do we skip over these strange terms in seemingly cryptic language?

Don’t be tempted to think that this applies only to “those who are in Judea.” Yes, these words did apply directly to the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century. But, because there is also an end-time application to the prophecy, *we too* need to understand it. Neither be tempted to think that the parenthetical “(whoever reads, let him understand),” was added by the writer of the book of Matthew, or someone who copied the manuscript at a later date. Notice the following quotation from *The Great Controversy*, page 340, “But Christ directed His disciples to the words of the prophet Daniel concerning events to take place in their time, and said: ‘Whoso readeth, let him *understand*.’” (Underlining supplied, italics by E. G. W.). Since Jesus Himself said this is something *we* need to understand, we would be wise to heed His advice.

Many of us are familiar with what is said in *Testimonies for the Church Volume Five*, pages 464-465. “As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us.” Based on this statement, it is easy to conclude that the Abomination of Desolation is the National Sunday Law. Although this *is* more of an *understanding*, it still leaves many questions unanswered. Such as: How do you get “National Sunday Law” out of “Abomination of Desolation?” So there must be more to it.

Let’s begin by looking at the meaning of the words in the term. “Abomination,” means something that is “gross,” or disgusting! “Desolation,” means to be totally wiped-out and destroyed. Now, let’s put these ideas together with the wording of the term in Daniel, where it is called, “the abomination *that makes desolate*,” or “the abomination *that causes desolation*.” (Emphasis supplied). Putting all this together, the term describes something that is so disgusting it is destroyed —such as killing a creepy

looking spider which comes into our house. Or, it could also describe a condition. When things have gotten so bad that they have to be destroyed —such as a pet that has become diseased, or mangled in an accident, and has to be “put down.”

Since Scripture explains Scripture, we need to look in the Bible for instances when things were so bad that they had to be destroyed. Almost immediately, the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah come to mind. It is interesting that both of these stories are also mentioned by Jesus in connection with the abomination that causes desolation. (See Matthew 24:37 and Luke 17:26, 28.) This helps our understanding quite a bit, for there are several other places in the Bible where Noah’s time is compared with the destruction of the world in the end.

But, it also raises another set of serious questions: Isn’t God’s grace sufficient to deal with any sin, no matter how bad? —and— What *is* so abominable that it has to be destroyed? So, let’s take out the concordance and look up the word “abomination,” and see what we can find about things that are so abominable that they have to be destroyed.

We quickly run into Leviticus 18. The first part of this chapter talks about the sins of the Canaanite nations, (most of them sexual in nature). Here we have another group that was destroyed because of their abominableness. The passage from verse 24 to the end of the chapter tells us a lot. It says:

“Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who sojourns among you, (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the Lord your God.”

The phrase, “vomited out,” should make us think of what is said in Revelation 3:16. Shallow, lukewarm, Laodicean Christianity must also be abominable to God. But before we dig deeper into Leviticus 18, we need to look at another Scripture dealing with the Canaanite nations that brings us to the issue from another angle.

Genesis 15 is one of the places where God promises the land of Canaan as an inheritance to Abraham and his descendants. He says for a time they will be strangers in a foreign land, because “the iniquity of the Amorites *is not yet full.*” (Verse 16, emphasis supplied). This gives us the idea that God has a way of *measuring* how bad people are. At Abraham’s time the Amorites, which were one of the major Canaanite nations, were not that wicked yet. But in the future they would be —and at that time, they would be destroyed.

We get this same idea of measurement in Daniel chapter 5, in the story of Belshazzar’s feast and the handwriting on the wall. The hand wrote, “Mene, Mene,

Tekel, Upharsin,” which literally means, “Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided.” The words “numbered,” and “weighed,” are both measurement terms. By drinking wine from the sacred cups, and praising the gods of metal, wood, and stone, the “iniquity” of Belshazzar and the Babylonian’s became “full.” As a result, the kingdom was “divided,” or separated, from them. These Bible stories, show us that God has a way of measuring how sinful a group of people are, and when a certain measurement is reached, their “iniquity is full,” and the group is destroyed.

Now let’s go back to Leviticus 18 and look at something more specific. In verse 21 it says, “You shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, ...” One of the worship rituals of the idolatrous Canaanites was sacrificing their own children. Most of us find this disgusting! And this definitely helps our understanding. But we need to analyze this practice even further. Although the answer seems simple, let’s ask the question: What is “wrong” with sacrificing your own children?

First, it is wrong to worship other gods. It is also wrong to kill. There are commandments against both of these. But, sacrificing your own children is *worse* than just worshiping an idol, or killing someone—you are *killing your own children!* Even most animals know better than that! They protect and care for their offspring. So, regardless of your religious beliefs, sacrificing your own children *should* go against your very nature! It should *obviously* be wrong.

But as bad as this is, these people weren’t just killing their own children. They were killing them for *worship!* To understand the significance of this, we need to think of the kind of activities we do for worship. Acts of worship are things we consider to be good things to do—in fact, the best of the best. What’s more, we do them publicly. Therefore, our acts of worship are a public statement of things that we think are good things—things that ought to be done.

For someone to kill their own children for worship shows that their thinking is seriously twisted! This should obviously be wrong to anyone. Yet by doing it as an act of worship, they are saying that it is something that is good to do! Like the Pharisees in Matthew 12, who attributed the obvious working of the Holy Spirit to Satan, the Canaanites had good and evil flip-flopped. Jesus warned the Pharisees that this was the Unpardonable Sin, because when one’s thinking becomes so twisted that God’s Spirit is considered to be satanic, how can He reach you? His offers of grace and pardon will only be rejected as something evil. As it says in Isaiah 5:20, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

We find this same twisted thinking describing the people before the flood in Genesis 6:5. It says, “every intent of the thoughts of [their] heart was only evil continually.” When this point is reached, and people no longer respond to God’s grace, the most merciful thing to do is to “put them out of their misery,” as they will only be continually hurting themselves and those around them. This was the case before the flood. In verse 11 it says, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” So, although there may not be a limit to God’s grace, it is possible for people to become so twisted that they will no longer respond to His grace.

All of the Bible stories we have looked at so far, have several interesting things in common. Each of these *groups* were destroyed because of their excessive sinfulness which was the result of twisted thinking. This twisted thinking was made evident by a group action which openly and blatantly rejected and defied God and His purposes. This action showed that the group, as a whole, was no longer responsive to God's grace and pardon. "The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn." (*The Great Controversy*, page 614.) The Abomination that causes Desolation then, is the equivalent to the Unpardonable Sin at a group, or national level.

If we look around in the Bible and in history, we can find other similar examples. Because the Abomination that causes Desolation has historically been a somewhat frequent occurrence, Jesus had to say that the signal event was, "the 'abomination of desolation,' *spoken of by Daniel the prophet*" —but that is a whole study in itself.

It is also significant that although probation closes for the group, it remains open for individuals willing to leave the group. Notice that in each of the stories mentioned in this study God pulled His people out of the group/nation *before* it was destroyed: Noah and his family were shut in the ark before the flood; Lot and his family were lead out of Sodom before it rained fire and brimstone, (though Lot's wife wasn't really willing to leave); Rahab and her family, were saved from the destruction of Jericho —one of the main Canaanite cities; those who heeded the warning to "flee from the midst of Babylon," (Jeremiah 51:6, 45), at the time of Belshazzar's feast and the take over by the Medes and Persians, (because they recognized the prophecies in Isaiah 44 and 45, Jeremiah 51, and Daniel 2, 7 and 8, applied to their time); and those who heeded Christ's warning, and fled before the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century A.D.

The end-time application of the points made in this study should be obvious, especially considering what is written in *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5*, page 451.

"By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God, our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness. When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.

"As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that *the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation's iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to return.* The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the time of Jacob's trouble. The cries of the faithful, persecuted ones ascend to heaven. And as the blood of Abel cried from the ground, there are voices also crying to God from martyrs' graves, from the sepulchers of the sea, from mountain caverns, from convent vaults: 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'" (Emphasis supplied.)

Before we close though, let's ask the question, How is it possible to get so twisted that God's grace and pardon are ultimately rejected? First let us realize, and humbly admit, that since we are all born as sinners, we all start out somewhat twisted. God wants to "straighten us out." To do this, He has promised to give us a new heart, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. But if we don't connect with God, and allow Him to change us, "*Satan takes the control of every mind that is not decidedly under the control of the Spirit of God.*" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 79, italics in original text!)

Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding." But Satan tries to deceive us, like he deceived Eve at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil saying, "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." In other words, "You don't need God to tell you what to do, you can decide for yourself" —and off we go. Then, he tempts us to do things we know are wrong. Afterwards, he stirs up our pride by encouraging us to rationalize that, "It really was OK." Each time we give in to these temptations, we get a little more twisted. If we grieve away the Holy Spirit and His attempts to influence us to do right, and continue to do things we know are wrong, we *can* reach the point where we believe it actually *is* OK. Instead of doing this, let us "humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord," (James 4:10), and recognize the foolishness of leaning on our own understanding. Let us admit that wrong is wrong, and ask God to change us by His grace.

In this study, we have found that the Abomination that causes Desolation is more than just a signal to flee. This term describes a very serious spiritual condition where a group of people, as a whole, become so twisted in their thinking that right has become wrong, and evil has become good. Thus, sin and selfishness become so desirable that God's grace and pardon are no longer accepted.

This condition is characterized by a group decision to act directly against the obvious working of God —such as making a law which enforces the breaking of God's commandments as an act of worship. By this act, the measure of the groups iniquity becomes full, they commit the Unpardonable Sin, close their own probation, and doom themselves to destruction. Remember that although probation for the group as a whole closes at the Abomination of Desolation, probation is still open for *individuals* who are willing to leave the group.

According to the prophecies, in our time laws will be enacted enforcing the papal sabbath. Those who assent to this law will receive the mark of the beast. Those who recognize the spiritual significance of this law, and are willing to leave the group will heed the warning "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues." Revelation 18:4. Let us "remember Lot's wife," and be willing to come apart from things that "twist" our thinking, and cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He works to "straighten us out."