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Clue #5 – Better Perspective on Matthew 24

https://endtimeupgrade.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Abom5.mp3

The three End of the Age chapters in the Gospels (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) all start with Jesus telling His disciples that the great temple would be destroyed, which is followed by their question, *"When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"* (Matthew 24:3) (Apparently, they were thinking that such a big catastrophe as the temple's destruction would surely herald His return and the End of the Age.) The Lord goes on to describe all kinds of signs leading up to His Coming, but He never really answers their question about the temple destruction.

Although the disciples have in mind the temple of their day, the Lord knew His Coming could not be linked to that temple's destruction. He first of all throws out some hints that the End would be further off than they were hoping: *"you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."* (Matthew 24:6) (See See Appendix excerpt for more information on this point.)

Then, to show that He hadn't forgotten the original question, after listing different "signs of the times", the Lord finally ties together the two

events that the disciples figured were interconnected, namely, His Second Coming and the temple's destruction: *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place."* (Matthew 24:15)

The vague reference here to a *"holy place"* and its *"desolation"* by some kind of *"abomination"* relates back to the original temple-destruction question, but also gives the hint that it's not the same temple. His answer let them know that His Coming would not necessarily coincide with the destruction of their temple (in 70 A.D. when the Romans sacked Jerusalem). There would have to be something different about it, something peculiar going on with this *"abomination of desolation".* And this suggested to His followers that the event of His coming might happen a little further down the line than they were hoping.

Since it was Jesus' startling prediction about the destruction of the temple that triggered this End of the Age discussion, it would seem fitting for the *"abomination of desolation"* to connect in some way with that event – even if it's referring to the destruction of, or damage to, a future temple; it would suit as an answer, or semi-answer, to the disciples' original question of *"when shall these things be* (the temple destruction)?" Even if it's not the same temple or *"holy place",* it will be located in the same city, maybe even the same exact location, and the same race of people who have returned there now.

In the Lord's eyes, it's the same scenario, but telescoped into the future – the modernized version of what happens in verse two about the ancient temple. (And this pattern is similar to the one in Daniel 9:26-27 about the invasion of Jerusalem: two events that take place very far apart in time – 70 A.D. and the near future – but because of their similarity, are seen almost as one.)

Thus, to be consistent with what happened in ancient times, the *"abomination of desolation"* should link with the temple's physical destruction in some way. And what could be more suitable for this role than the entrance of a destroying machine of some kind? Incidentally, the *"holy place"* may not be completely destroyed at this time, as the old temple was, but only partly. So it would seem anyway, judging from what the verses on this subject say – Daniel 8:11,13, 11:31, 2Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 11:2.

When the *"abomination of desolation"* finally arrives, that right away will more or less answer both questions posed by the disciples:

> **1) *"When shall these things be* (the future temple's destruction)*?"***
> **Answer: That will happen when a peculiar *"abomination of desolation"* will enter some kind of future *"holy place"* to destroy it (partially at least).**
>
> **2) *And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"***
> **Answer: The same appearance of the *"abomination of desolation"* will also signal the beginning of the Great Tribulation (and soon-coming End of the Age).**

Jesus summed it up thus: *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation… stand in the holy place… then shall be great tribulation."* (Matthew 24:15,21) Of course, there are other signs of the End that Jesus mentioned; but this is the one, in fact the only specific event He mentioned, which will give the signal for the start of the Great Tribulation; and consequently, that will pinpoint how much time is left before His Coming (the last 3½ years).

> **(What the Great Tribulation means is a big subject. Without going into too much detail, briefly, according to certain Scriptures, this period marks the last 3½ years before the return of Christ. It starts off with the Antichrist's breaking of the *"covenant"* by halting religious services in the Jews' rebuilt temple. (Daniel 9:27) This provocative act is followed by much religious persecution and other troubles, wars, and catastrophes. It ends with the return of Christ.)**

To review then, the destruction, or partial destruction, of the End Time *"holy place"* is actually part of a larger event – the destruction of Jerusalem – and is like a déjà vu of the events of 70 A.D. Luke 21, the companion chapter to Matthew 24 and Mark 13, makes mention of this tragic event: *"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."* (21:20) The "opener" in these three chapters was Jesus' startling prediction to the disciples of the temple's destruction; and He doesn't lose sight of that theme but uses it

to pinpoint for them the answer to their big question of when His Second Coming would happen.

The Lord uses their questions about the old temple and His Second Coming as a springboard into His discussion on the signs leading up to the End of the Age, which culminates with the destruction of a future *"holy place"* by some kind of futuristic and dreadful *"abomination of desolation"*; this is followed 3½ years later by His Second Coming and Rapture of the saints.

It would appear then that this whole discourse by the Lord about the future ties together better if we understand the *"abomination"* to be a weapon or vehicle of war, storming and pounding its way into the Jews' temple compound. A scenario like that seems to fit in well with how Jesus was trying to gear his discussion to the disciples' questions and their preoccupation at that moment with their ancient temple's destruction.

As a final note, it will help to understand that Christ's words about the future can be applied on two levels. For the disciples and faithful Jewish Christians of the 1st Century A.D., His words served to warn them not to hang around Jerusalem, to flee ahead of the Roman armies' onslaught in A.D. 70; this is a secondary application.

The primary application will come in the near future. For those who are alive in those days when the Great Tribulation starts (with the arrival of the *"abomination of desolation"*), Christ's words will serve to notify and encourage them as to the timing of His return (in 3½ years) and also to warn them to flee to places of refuge.

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Continue to Clue #6: Historical Precedents

APPENDIX: Excerpt from "Thoughts on Matthew XXIV" in *Aids to Prophetic Enquiry* by Benjamin Wills Newton, pgs. 77-78. Published 1848.

When, therefore, the disciples… heard Him speak of the desolation that was about to come upon that city and its temple, it was most natural that their thoughts should instantly revert to the testimonies of the prophets

respecting the closing events of the age – that they should think of what Daniel and Zechariah had written respecting the "last end of the indignation," and imagine that the Lord was speaking respecting that same final hour of visitation. How could they have thought otherwise, with the knowledge they then possessed? Hence, as soon as He had spoken of the desolation of the temple, they instantly said, "Master, when shall these things be?" – that is, when shall this destruction of which thou hast spoken fall upon this temple? – and what shall be the sigh of thy coming and of the end of the age?"

They instantly connected (and herein lay their error) the destruction of the temple with the end of the age, and with the manifestation of the Lord in glory. They imagined that when his prediction respecting the overthrow of the temple should be accomplished, He would appear in his glory and terminate the indignation against Jerusalem, by the destruction both of its Gentile oppressors and of his own adversaries in Israel. It was this error that the Lord Jesus in the succeeding prophecy sought to correct. He had no desire to lessen in their souls their apprehension [comprehension] of those great events which are yet to occur at the end of the age. He did not wish that they should forget one word which the prophets had spoken respecting that all-important crisis in the history of Israel and of men; but He *did* desire to correct their mistake as to the *time* of his appearing, and to enlarge their knowledge respecting the circumstances that were first to come to pass.

The history of the present dispensation – the dispensation in which we live – was that of which the disciples were chiefly ignorant. They imagined that the time of sufferering and reproach for the servants of God was nearly concluded, and that the kingdom of God was about immediately to APPEAR. They were uninstructed in the history of Christianity through the long eighteen hundred years which have since witnessed its rise and its corruption. The long absence of their Master from the earth – the character of the service in which they were about to be employed, in gathering together the Church of God – and all the attendant sorrows, were as yet unknown to them. Of the corruptions of professing Christianity, and how it would combine both with Judaism and national Gentilism in giving birth to the antichristian abominations of the latter day – of all this they knew nothing. They thought that the evil generation then

around them was almost immediately to pass away from before the presence of their Master, manifested as the King of Israel in his glory, and that it was to be succeeded by that new generation who should "know the Lord," whom men should call "priests of the Lord, and ministers of their God."

Accordingly, the first object of the Lord Jesus in this prophecy was to instruct them as to the character of the period in which they themselves were about to serve and to suffer. He knew that wars were about to come upon the land of Israel, to result in a more entire desolation of Jerusalem than any that yet had been. He knew that the sorrows thus about to come would in many respects resemble those more terrible calamities which are to conclude the age, and that his disciples, if not forewarned, would be likely to regard these early sorrows (especially when Satan had raised up false Christs around them) as signs of the near approach of the end. Against this He guards them. He tells them to beware of considering these things as signs of the end: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass. BUT THE END IS NOT YET."

[RETURN]

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