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In Matthew 24, the disciples asked Jesus about **the sign** of His coming, and the end of the age. Jesus gave them a list of events that must occur before His coming in glory after the tribulation. If you read this chapter carefully, you will see that all of the events before verse 15, while occurring before Christ's coming, are not necessarily "signs" of His coming. In other words, they must occur first, but even when they do occur, we still have no idea how long before Christ returns. These things are already occurring, and will continue until Christ returns.

Matt

24:6

6 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.**

(KJV)

However, when we get to verse 15, Jesus finally gives **the sign** that lets us know His coming is at hand. And that sign is something well established in Scripture.

Matt

24:15-18

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso  
readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

(KJV)

Notice that the "abomination of desolation" will occur in Judea. This is the area surrounding the Temple Mount. And, those living in Jerusalem and the surrounding area are instructed to flee to the mountains for safety. Why? Verses 21 and 22 provide the answer.

Matt

24:21-22

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

(KJV)

Notice also that the "abomination of desolation" will occur in the "holy place." This term was immediately recognized by Jews to refer to the Temple, specifically the part that housed the altar of incense, the menorah, and the table of showbread. The enclosure which housed the ark of the covenant was called the "most holy place."

Exodus

26:33-34

33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between **the holy place** and **the most holy.**

34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in **the most holy place.**

(KJV)

If you follow this phrase through the Scriptures, you will find that in nearly every place it occurs, it refers to the Temple. It is used in the books of Moses more than 40 times.

Jesus said that this event will fulfill the prophecies of Daniel.

Dan

11:31

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and **they shall pollute the sanctuary** of strength, and shall **take away the daily sacrifice,** and

they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.  
(KJV)

Notice the sequence of events here. First, the "sanctuary" will be polluted. How? It will be defiled by the presence of Antichrist. The forces of the Antichrist will enter the Temple. Next, the "daily sacrifice" will be stopped. This is the morning and evening sacrifice mentioned in Numbers 28:1-10. Finally, an object will be erected in the Temple. We know this is an object, because Mark 13:14 refers to it as a thing.

Mark 13:14  
*14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:*  
(KJV)

Notice that this object will be "standing." This is a rather unusual term to be used of an object. However, we find in Revelation 13:14,15, that an image of the Beast will be erected, which is given the power to speak. And, all are commanded to worship it or die. I think we can be fairly certain that what Mark refers to as "standing" in the holy place, and what Daniel mentions as being "placed" in the sanctuary, is this image of the Beast. This is what causes the "abomination."

The Apostle Paul elaborates further on this event in the following passage. He also sees this as a sign that must occur **before Christ returns**, and we are gathered together unto Him.

II Thess 2:1-4  
*1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*  
(KJV)

One of the reasons this event is **the sign** of Jesus' coming is found in Daniel 9. The prophecy of the 70 weeks indicates exactly how much time will elapse between this "abomination of desolation," and Christ's return. The 70th week is divided into two parts, with the "abomination" occurring in the "midst of the week." [The "week" here is 7 years].

Dan 9:27  
*27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*  
(KJV)

We have further confirmation that the coming of Christ will occur 3.5 years later from the following passage.

Dan 12:1-6  
*1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. 5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?*  
(KJV)

Here the conclusion of the matter is revealed to Daniel. He had previously seen the coming of Christ to defeat the Antichrist in Dan. 2:44, 7:13,14, & 8:25. Now, he is told that the resurrection of the righteous will occur then, and they will rule with Christ in glory. Throughout this book, whenever Daniel is given a vision, he seems to be mostly concerned about the timing of when Christ's kingdom will come. This passage is no exception. Daniel takes special note, in verse 6, concerning when all the things he has seen in his visions will be accomplished.

*7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. 8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand;*

but the wise shall understand.  
 11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.  
 12 *Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.*  
 13 *But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.*  
 (KJV)

This is one of the most fascinating passages in the Bible. Yet, it has been one of the most perplexing. It clearly gives the exact numbers of days counting from the "abomination of desolation." The question is, why the two different numbers, [1290 & 1335], and why does this seem to differ from the 3.5 years in verse 7, and the periods in Revelation, [1260 days]? Well, that's a topic for another article. The main point I want you to see, is that the "abomination of desolation" is the sign of Christ's return. It begins the countdown to His coming in power and great glory.

One final passage we should consider, clearly shows that the Temple will be standing and be in use when the events of Revelation unfold.

Rev 11:1-3  
 1 *And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*  
 2 *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*  
 3 *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*  
 (KJV)

Those who claim that the Temple need not be rebuilt in order for the "daily sacrifice" to commence should consider this passage. This is clearly speaking of the Temple in Jerusalem. And, it refers to the fact that gentiles will occupy the court. How is this possible? If the Temple Mount is shared with the Dome of the Rock, [the Temple being built to the north of the Dome], the Dome would literally occupy where the court of the Temple should be. The two witnesses will prophecy while the Temple is standing. Apparently, the Antichrist will defile the Temple, placing his image there for all to worship, while the two witnesses will continually harass him, calling down plagues from heaven, just like Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh.

I believe the evidence is overwhelming that a literal Temple must be rebuilt on the Temple Mount in order for these prophecies to be fulfilled. Since the "abomination of desolation" will occur in the Temple, 3.5 years before Christ returns, it must be constructed either before, or during the first half of the 70th week. I believe all of the dates that are being set by post-tribbers, and the claim that we are already in the last half of the 70th week, must be seen as impossible in light of these Scriptures. Unless the prophecy of the "abomination of desolation" given by Jesus in Matt. 24:15 is seen literally, it loses all of its significance as "the sign" of His coming. Jesus did not instruct us to watch for a 7 year treaty to be signed so we would know when His coming was near. He told us to watch for this event. All of the dates given so far will turn out to be a disappointment.

Many of the Jewish rabbis believe that the Temple will only be rebuilt on the authority of the Messiah when He comes. Since we know that the Antichrist will impersonate the Messiah, his ordering the Temple to be rebuilt, as a part of his "covenant with death," will give the Jews every reason to accept him as Messiah. Without this occurring, it is not likely that they would accept him. Of course, a remnant of Israel will not accept him as Messiah, and will be preserved by God, [Rev. 12], to be saved at the second coming of Christ, [Zech. 12:8-10].

### The Early Church

the Temple, and the 70th Week

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In several articles on this website I have argued that the second coming of Jesus will not come until certain things are fulfilled. One of these things is the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The reason this is necessary is because Jesus predicted the "abomination of desolation" in the "holy place" prior to His coming [Matt. 24:15], and Paul predicted the same [2 Thess. 2:4-6]. Daniel also predicted the stopping of the "Daily Sacrifice" in connection with the "abomination" [Dan. 11:31]. These things require the existence of the Temple on the Temple Mount. I have also argued for a literal 1260 day period between the "abomination of desolation" and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Nearly all pre-tribbers would agree with this scenario. However, I have received quite a bit of opposition from other post-tribbers. Some of them believe we are already well into the tribulation. Some have set dates. Some believe the Oslo Accord begun in 1993 is the 70th week. Since there is still no Temple in Jerusalem, some are saying that a literal Temple is not necessary to fulfill prophecy. Other post-tribbers claim that the 70th week was either partially fulfilled, or entirely fulfilled in the past. Some think this is just part of modern pre-tribulationism. I assure you, it is not. It is a very ancient belief, dating all the way back to the early Church.

Following are a few quotes that establish these things were held by the early Christians. The quotations are from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, dating from the second and third centuries. They establish a belief that the 70th week is a literal 7 years at the end of the age, and the "abomination of desolation" will occur when the Antichrist defiles the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. [Remember, these were written after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.]

Irenaeus:

"This he does, in order that they who do [now] worship the devil by means of many abominations, may serve himself by this one idol, of whom the apostle thus speaks in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Unless there shall come a failing away first, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he sitteth in the temple of God**, showing himself as if he were God." The apostle therefore clearly points out his apostasy, and that he is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped — that is, above every idol — for these are indeed so called by men, but are not [really] gods; and that he will endeavor in a tyrannical manner to set himself forth as God. 2. Moreover, he (the apostle) has also pointed out this which I have shown in many ways, **that the temple in Jerusalem** was made by the direction of the true God. For the apostle himself, speaking in his own person, distinctly called it the temple of God. Now I have shown in the third book, that no one is termed God by the apostles when speaking for themselves, except Him who truly is God, the Father of our Lord, by whose directions **the temple which is at Jerusalem** was constructed for those purposes which I have already mentioned; **in which [temple] the enemy shall sit, endeavoring to show himself as Christ, as the Lord also declares: "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which has been spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place** (let him that readeth understand), then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains; and he who is upon the house-top, let him not come down to take anything out of his house: for there shall then be great hardship, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be." [Against Heresies, Book V, XXV,1&2]

"This is also the unjust judge, whom the Lord mentioned as one "who feared not God, neither regarded man," to whom the widow fled in her forgetfulness of God, — that is, **the earthly Jerusalem**, — to be avenged of her adversary. Which also he shall do in the time of his kingdom: **he shall remove his kingdom into that city, and shall sit in the temple of God**, leading astray those who worship him, as if he were Christ. To this purpose Daniel says again: "And he shall desolate the holy place; and sin has been given for a sacrifice, and righteousness been cast away in the earth, and he has been active (fecit), and gone on prosperously." ... And then he points out the time that his tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight, they who offer a pure sacrifice unto God: And **in the midst of the week**, he says, the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and **the abomination of desolation shall be brought into the temple**; even unto the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete. **Now three years and six months constitute the half-week.**" [Against Heresies, Book V, XXV, 2]

"But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, **he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem**; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that "many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." [Against Heresies, V, XXX, 4]

Hippolytus:

"For the deceiver seeks to liken himself in all things to the Son of God. Christ is a lion, so Antichrist is also a lion; Christ is a king, so Antichrist is also a king. The Savior was manifested as a lamb; so he too, in like manner, will appear as a lamb, though within he is a wolf. ... The Savior raised up and showed His holy flesh like a temple, **and he will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem**. And his seductive arts we shall exhibit in what follows. But for the present let us turn to the question in hand." [Hippolytus, Extant Works, Part II, 6].

"Now Daniel will set forth this subject to us. For he says, And one week will make a covenant with many, and it shall be that in the midst (half) of the week my sacrifice and oblation shall cease. **By one week, therefore, he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the whole world** of which week the two prophets Enoch and Elias will take up the half. For they will preach 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth, proclaiming repentance to the people and to all the nations." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 43, 47]

"For he says, I shall make a covenant of one week, and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and libation will be removed. **For by one week he indicates the showing forth of the seven years which shall be in the last times. And the half of the week the two prophets, along with John, will take for the purpose of proclaiming to all the world the advent of Antichrist, that is to say, for a thousand two hundred and sixty days clothed in sackcloth.**" [Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXI]

"Then, when he is elevated to his kingdom, he will marshal war; and in his wrath he will smite three mighty kings, — those, namely, of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. And after that **he will build the temple in Jerusalem, and will restore it again speedily, and give it over to the Jews**. And then he will be lifted up in heart against every man; yea, he will speak blasphemy also against God, thinking in his deceit that he shall be king upon the earth hereafter for ever; not knowing, miserable wretch, that his kingdom is to be quickly brought to nought, and that he will quickly have to meet the fire which is prepared for him, along with all who trust him and serve him. **For when Daniel said, "I shall make my covenant for one week," he indicated seven years; and the one half of the week is for the preaching of the prophets, and for the other half of the week — that is to say, for three years and a half — Antichrist will reign upon the earth**. And after this his kingdom and his glory shall be taken away. Behold, ye who love God, what manner of tribulation there shall rise in those days, such as has not been from the foundation of the world, no, nor ever shall be, except in those days alone. Then the lawless one, being lifted up in heart, will gather together his demons in man's form, and will abominate those who call him to the kingdom, and will pollute many souls." [Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXV].