

Are We Seeing End Times Prophecies Coming to Pass in Israel?

The world today is a roiling cauldron of international tensions. Following the United States' humiliating exit from Afghanistan, war rages between the Taliban and the Islamic State. Civil war rages in Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb, Sudan and other parts of Africa. Ethiopian, Eritrean and Sudanese forces clash. The Islamic State insurgency threatens Iraq's stability, and the Boko Haram insurgency threatens Nigeria. The Syrian Civil War continues year after year. Israel-Palestinian tensions frequently flare up into open warfare. Russia besieges Ukraine. China threatens Taiwan. Iran is developing an "Islamic bomb" and announcing plans to destroy Israel. Murderous drug wars rage in Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela.

Are we seeing end times prophecies come to pass?

Jesus said, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." What is this "abomination that causes desolation" that the prophet Daniel spoke about?

In Daniel 9:27 the angel Gabriel tells Daniel that a future ruler will "confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." Gabriel also speaks of the "abomination that causes desolation" in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11.

Like many Bible prophecies, this prophecy in Daniel has two interpretations, two fulfillments. First, the "abomination

that causes desolation” refers to an incident in Jewish history under King Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus was a Greek king who reigned over the Seleucid Empire (including Palestine) from 175 BC until his death in 164 BC. He called himself “the magnificent god,” but his enemies called him “the madman” or “the insane one.” As an act of desecration, an insult to the God of Israel, he slaughtered pigs on the sacred altar and, by some accounts, forced the Jewish priests to eat it. He also set up an idol of the Greek god Zeus in the temple—the “abomination that causes desolation.” He slaughtered thousands of Jewish men and sold their women and children into slavery.

All of this took place in fulfillment of the prophecy of Gabriel to Daniel—and it happened 200 years before Jesus spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives. If the “abomination that causes desolation” of Antiochus Epiphanes had already taken place two centuries earlier, why did Jesus speak of the “abomination that causes desolation” as a future event? It’s because there are two interpretations, two fulfillments, of this one prophecy in Daniel.

There are also two valid ways of interpreting the Lord’s prophecy regarding the “abomination that causes desolation”:

- You can take this as a prophecy that will be fulfilled in a literal, physical way.

You can interpret it to mean that, when the Antichrist arises, he will physically reconstruct the temple in Jerusalem. Orthodox Jewish tradition holds that the third and final temple will be built on the original site when Messiah comes.

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But there’s a problem: the Temple Mount is dominated by structures that are holy to Muslims—the al-Aqsa Mosque, the

Dome of the Rock and the Dome of the Chain, plus four minarets. The Dome of the Rock is built around a rock that Muslims believe was the place where Muhammad began a night journey into heaven. To rebuild the temple on its original site, some or all of these Islamic holy sites would have to be destroyed. Can you imagine how the Muslim world would react to that? Of course, nothing is impossible with God, so the Lord's Olivet prophecy could be fulfilled in a literal, physical sense.

- You can take this as a prophecy that will be fulfilled in way that is figurative and spiritual, but absolutely real.

Many Reformed theologians hold this view—a view which says that we believers, who are the temple of the Holy Spirit, will experience the desecrating actions of the Antichrist. We will experience the acute suffering of witnessing the Antichrist's blasphemies and abominations. We—the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit—will undergo the agony of witnessing this loathsome creature, the Antichrist, exalting himself above God, demanding the worship of the world. We will even experience the unspeakable grief of seeing friends and loved ones bowing down in submission to this satanic monster. {eoa}

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